

RURAL GROWTH MANAGEMENT

A DISCUSSION ON GROWTH

JULY 24, 2012

DISCUSSION PAPER



ROCKY VIEW COUNTY
Cultivating Communities

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DISCUSSION PAPER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rocky View County grapples with a challenge common to all rural communities located on the edge of an urban centre – growth pressure. The county's population has increased by 16,573 residents over the last two decades and now stands at over 36,461 residents. The regional population has also grown, and although the rate of population of growth is expected to slow, a population increase from a 2011 base of 1.4 million residents, to 1.9 million by 2026 is projected. It is anticipated that a portion of this regional growth will be accommodated within the county. The challenge for Rocky View is to balance growth, while maintaining rural character.

Council recognizes a proactive approach is required to address growth and has released this discussion paper with the intent of stimulating discussion as part of developing the new Municipal Development Plan (County Plan). Through the County Plan public engagement process, the details of the revised strategy will be confirmed or modified.

The strategy proposes growth must adhere to three fundamental principles:

- the rural nature and importance of country residential, hamlet and agricultural communities must be maintained
- the fiscal impact of growth must be sustainable and minimized
- growth must occur in an environmentally responsible manner

The strategy addresses the amount of acceptable population growth noting:

- the percentage of the regional population located in the county has increased over time
- residential taxes generally do not offset provided services
- business taxes provide a net fiscal benefit as property taxes exceed service costs
- population growth provides a challenge to preserving rural character

The strategy suggests the County should reverse the trend of an increased share of the regional population with a long-term goal of lowering its proportion of the regional population to 2.5 per cent. This goal does not mean stopping growth, but rather moderating the rate of growth. Moderating growth takes time and requires the setting of priorities. The strategy acknowledges this is a challenging task and may require different approaches in different areas as (i) several hamlets have expressed a desire to grow, (ii) the County has committed to residential development in certain areas and (iii) some regions have lost population and it may be desirable to increase growth in those areas.

The strategy discusses the different types of rural communities found in Rocky View and proposes directing the majority of residential growth to seven country residential areas and eight hamlets that are identified based on existing approved policy documents. In order to moderate growth, the strategy proposes:

- priority setting in identified growth areas
- no new country residential Area Structure Plans (ASP) or significant multi-lot residential subdivisions outside of existing ASP boundaries will be supported, until such time as there is insufficient land for long-term growth

The strategy acknowledges the desire by some landowners in agricultural areas to convert agricultural land to a residential use. Reaching a consensus on the amount of conversion is difficult and public input through the County Plan process is required to provide policy direction. To inform discussion and provide policy options the strategy recommends the County release the following:

- a. a comparison of other Alberta rural municipalities' approach to country residential development
- b. policy options for public discussion addressing the amount of agricultural land converted to country residential use outside of area structure plans

The strategy recognizes with population growth an increased demand for services occurs and an associated financial cost. It proposes to encourage business development in selected areas to offset growth costs; contribute to the day-to-day cost of running the County (operating cost); and/or provide employment opportunities to Rocky View residents. Five different business types are identified and suggestions to support their development are provided. Business types include regional business centres, highway business development, agricultural business, hamlet business and home based business.

The strategy recognizes the impacts growth has on the physical environment. In order to grow in an environmentally responsible manner, the strategy proposes a series of location and operational criteria. These include avoiding environmentally significant areas; preparing integrated stormwater management plans; using adopted watershed management plans to guide development; and developing with the landscape to limit stripping and grading.

Finally, the strategy concludes with a brief discussion on implications, growth monitoring, priority setting and fiscal sustainability.

SECTION I INTRODUCTION

1.0 ROCKY VIEW TODAY

Rocky View County is unique as a rural community, but grapples with a challenge common to all rural communities located on the edge of a large urban centre – growth pressure. The County’s population has increased by 16,573 residents over the last two decades and now stands at over 36,461 residents,¹ an increase which parallels the high growth trend in the Calgary region. Despite the recent ups and downs of the economy, demand for residential growth in a rural setting is projected to trend upward, as is the demand for businesses serving the local and regional market.

With growth comes land use tension as long-term and new landowners seek to maximize the value of their land, while at the same time maintaining the social and environmental characteristics of their rural communities. With growth comes financial tension for the County government as the cost of physical and social infrastructure is weighed against the goal of maintaining long-term financial sustainability. On the positive side, growth provides new employment opportunities for residents and new tax revenues to enable the County to maintain and improve levels of services at a reasonable cost. Growth in the business sector provides the County with a healthy, balanced tax base and helps offset the cost of residential development.

Rural communities facing growth pressure struggle to maintain natural landscapes, retain hamlet traditions, preserve rural character and support agriculture. The challenge for Rocky View today is to find the balance between accommodating growth, while fostering the unique characteristics of its rural communities in the Rocky View of tomorrow.

¹ Data from on Statistics Canada 2011

In 2009, the County released a Growth Management Strategy (GMS), a long-term strategy to manage the municipality’s growth over the next 50 years. *“It was designed to respond to existing and new development pressures and proposals, and to provide a framework to direct where and how development would be most desirable for the good of the community.”* (GMS 2060 p.7). It was acknowledged that the initial GMS would be reviewed and updated, especially in cases where major County Plans are being updated.

Council has provided this review with the intent to stimulate discussion on growth (including the amount, location and type) through the process of developing the new County Plan (Municipal Development Plan). It is through the County Plan public engagement process the details of this updated strategy will be confirmed or modified.

2.0 UPDATING THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Historically, the County’s response to development proposed outside of an Area Structure Plan (ASP) or an application that differs from the policy direction of an ASP has been on a case-by-case basis. Rocky View County Council recognized the need for a comprehensive approach to development and the 2009 Growth Management Strategy was adopted as a proactive approach to address development demand. The original strategy was presented to the community in a series of open houses and received substantial comment. Recognizing the GMS was designed to be an evolving document, minor changes were made to the document with the expectation of future modifications.

Since the adoption of the 2009 GMS, the County has continued to receive informal feedback and engage the public in other planning processes. Key new information includes:

- Reeve's Task Force
- Council's Response to the Reeve's Task Force
- Agriculture Master Plan
- Community Amenity studies
- Parks and Open Space Master Plan
- Community Recreation Funding Model

In light of this additional information and to contribute to the discussion and policy development for the new County Plan, Council has prepared this discussion paper on rural growth. It is through the County Plan public engagement process that Council expects the details of the discussion paper on rural growth will be confirmed or modified.

3.0 THE PROPOSED STRATEGY

The strategy proposes growth must adhere to three fundamental principles:

- the rural nature and importance of country residential, hamlet and agricultural communities
- the fiscal impact of growth must be sustainable and minimized
- growth must occur in an environmentally responsible manner

The strategy suggests a broad strategic direction to manage residential and business growth by addressing the:

- acceptable amount of population growth
- general form and location of residential development
- cost of growth
- general form and location of business development

Key sections addressing the fundamental principles include:

Section 5.0 Building Communities of this strategy discusses the different types of rural communities found in Rocky View. The strategy proposes seven country residential areas and eight hamlets (identified in existing policy documents) as the primary County growth areas. As the County cannot support unlimited growth or simultaneous development in all areas, development should be prioritized through the application of a set of development criteria providing for fiscally responsible development over the long-term. To establish these development criteria, it is necessary to undertake a systematic process of research and analysis of the implications of growth of the various types of residential development. In addition, the strategy recognizes that extensive public consultation is required to ensure this new growth management approach is understood and supported by Rocky View County residents.

Section 6.0 Fiscal Sustainability recognizes growth costs and the need for the County to remain fiscally sustainable. The strategy confirms the requirement for subdivision proponents to pay the capital costs of development. The strategy proposes encouraging business development in selected areas to offset growth costs, contribute to the day-to-day cost of running the County (operating cost) and/or provide employment opportunities to Rocky View residents. Five different business types are identified and suggestions to support their development are provided. Business types include regional business centres, highway business development, agricultural business, hamlet business and home based business.

Section 7.0 Environment recognizes the impacts growth has on the physical environment. In order to grow in an environmentally responsible manner, the strategy proposes a series of location and operational criteria development should adhere to.

SECTION II BACKGROUND & STRATEGY DIRECTIONS

4.0 RURAL GROWTH

4.1 Growth Statistics

This section presents statistical data demonstrating Rocky View County's historical growth rates over the previous four decades. It also discusses growth forecasts for the county.

During the period 1988 to 2011 Rocky View's population more than doubled from 17,484 to 36,461 residents (Figure 1 and Table 1).

Figure 1: Rocky View County Population Growth 1988 – 2011

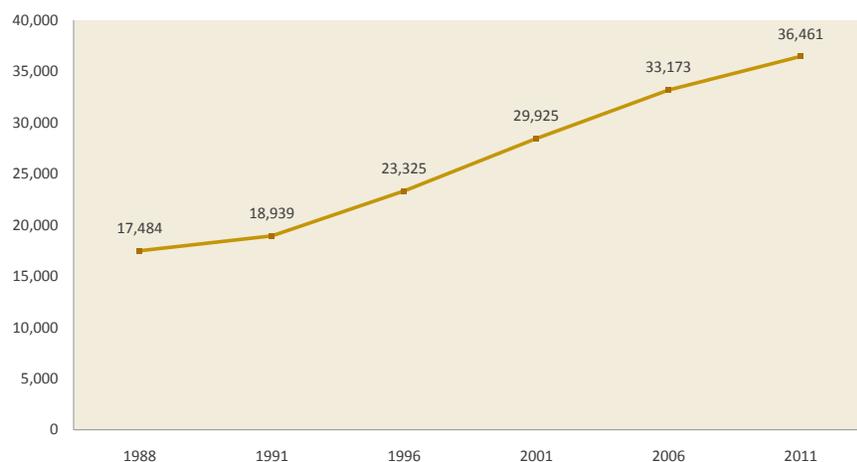


Table 1: Rocky View County Population Growth Rate 1988 – 2011

YEAR	POPULATION	INCREASE	RATE OF GROWTH (%)
1988	17,484	-	-
1991	18,939	1,455	7.7
1996	23,325	4,386	18.8
2001	29,925	6,600	14.3
2006	33,173	4,732	14.3
2011	36,461	3,288	9.9

Throughout much of this period, Rocky View's growth rate exceeded many other municipalities in the region. This regionally high growth rate has resulted in Rocky View's percentage of the regional population increasing from 2.41 per cent in 1971 to 3.11 per cent in 2006 (Table 2).

Table 2: Rocky View County Per Cent of Regional Population 1971 – 2006*

YEAR	1971	1996	2006
Rocky View County	2.41	2.78	3.11
City of Calgary	92.11	86.51	83.60

*Calgary Metropolitan Plan Population Assumptions

Calgary region's population is expected to grow from 1.4 million to 1.9 million residents by 2026 and to 2.7 million residents by 2056.²

² Urban Futures - A Context for Change Management in the Calgary Regional Partnership Area Future Population, Housing, Labour Force, and Employment

Depending on Rocky View’s percentage accommodation of the regional population, forecasted population growth changes in the County’s 2026 population may range from 47,500 to 70,680 residents (Table 3).

Table 3: 2026 Projected Population Ranges Based on a Regional Population of 1,900,000 Residents

PER CENT OF REGIONAL POPULATION	2.5%	3.11%	3.72%
2026 - County population	47,500	59,090	70,680
Population Change (2011 - 36,461 residents)	+11,039	+22,629	+34,219

4.2 The Right Amount of Growth

What is the right amount of growth? The right amount of growth means finding a balance between accommodating a reasonable increase in the residential population, as well as the business and industrial sectors, while maintaining the rural values and lifestyle citizens currently enjoy.

When considering the right amount of growth, the trend for the County to accommodate an increasing share of regional growth was considered significant from three perspectives:

Cost of Services – The 2006 Cost of Services Study prepared for the County noted, *“In general, residential development... does not generate sufficient revenue to offset their costs, although some traditional country residential developments are near ‘break-even.’”* Since the report was written, the County has provided additional fire services in some areas, increasing overall servicing costs.

Fiscal Benefits – Business development provides a net fiscal benefit to the County, with revenues from property taxes and other sources significantly exceeding the associated municipal expenditures.

Growth pressure – Substantive population growth provides a challenge to preserving rural character, retaining hamlet traditions, supporting agriculture and maintaining natural landscapes.

This strategy suggests the County should reverse the trend of an increasing proportionate share of the regional population with a long-term goal of lowering its proportion of the regional population to 2.5 per cent.

This does not mean Rocky View will not grow, but rather as the regional population increases, the population influx to the County will not accelerate, but rather moderate. Moderating growth:

- a. takes time, as Rocky View’s current percentage of the regional population grew over a period of 40 years
- b. means setting priorities so the County is not saying “no” but rather “not now”
- c. is a challenging task and may require different approaches in different areas, as:
 - i. several hamlets have expressed a desire to grow, in order to support and sustain commercial businesses which contribute to the overall quality of life within the hamlet
 - ii. the County has committed through planning approvals to substantial residential development in certain areas
 - iii. some regions of the county have lost population and it may be desirable to increase growth in those areas (Map 1)

A moderate approach to growth acknowledges the County’s role within the larger region by accommodating a reasonable proportion of regional growth, while aligning with the Provincial Land Use Framework Policy direction. The Land Use Framework promotes the efficient use of land and the need to minimize the amount of land permanently consumed for residential, commercial and industrial uses.

5.0 BUILDING COMMUNITIES

Each community in Rocky View is unique in terms of its history, its character and how it defines itself. Rural communities fall into three broad categories: agricultural communities, country residential communities and hamlets.

This section will explain the proposed policy approach for each individual residential form of development in the county.

5.1 Agriculture Communities

Farming and ranching families often identify themselves with nearby hamlets or towns; the physical landscape in which they are located; and/or their historical association with the land.

Residential development in agricultural areas (land outside of area structure plans) includes farmsteads, first parcels out and small country residential developments. A few of these country residential developments range in size from one to eight quarter sections. Approximately 38 per cent of the county’s population is found in these rural areas.

Words to describe agricultural areas:

- working land
- self-reliant
- quality of life
- space
- livestock
- 4-H
- independence
- distance
- privacy
- heritage
- community

Figure 2 – Population Percentage by Residential Type*

	POPULATION	
Hamlets	5507	14%
Country Residential within ASPs	17983	47%
Agricultural Areas	14694	38%
Total	38184	100%

*Based on 2006 County Census.

The extent to which residential developments in agricultural areas are supported by policy is a question most rural municipalities have difficulty reaching consensus on. Limiting residential acreages may impact an agricultural landowner’s ability to finance and support their operation or may be seen as a restriction of property rights. Conversely, an incremental increase in residential acreages directly impacts agricultural operations and the lifestyle of adjacent and local agricultural operators. From a fiscal perspective dispersed residential development requires increased road maintenance and upgrades, and may impact service providers such as the County and local school board.

The strategy recognizes further information and public input is required to provide definitive policy direction. It suggests the extent to which residential development is supported within agricultural areas should be explored as part of the preparation and public engagement for the new County Plan.

The strategy proposes the following:

- a. To provide context to the public engagement discussion, a comparison of other Alberta rural municipalities’ approaches to country residential development will be prepared.

- b. For the purposes of County Plan policy development, policy options will be prepared and discussed as part of the plan’s public engagement process. Options should consider:
 - i. the amount of agricultural land dedicated to country residential development outside of area structure plans
 - ii. preferred number of lots, the design and servicing of lots, cost implications to the County
 - iii. direction of the Provincial Land Use Framework (see sec. 6.0)
 - iv. the Reeve’s Task Force recommendations (see Reeve’s Task Force sec. 2 and 5)
 - v. recommendations of the Agriculture Master Plan (see Agriculture Master Plan sec. 3.24)

5.2 Country Residential Communities

Country residential communities are a traditional form of rural living and play a significant role in shaping the landscape and providing a sense of belonging to their residents. The County has a number of country residential communities, some formally defined by Area Structure Plan policy, while others have developed incrementally over time.

5.2.1 Country Residential Communities within Area Structure Plans

Traditional country residential communities account for a significant portion of Rocky View’s residential development. It is important the strategy and other County policies support and encourage this form of development.

Words describing country residential areas:

- space
- self-reliant
- quality of life
- landscape
- privacy
- nature
- support
- wildlife
- helping
- independence
- lifestyle
- peaceful

For Country Residential Communities within existing Area Structure Plans, the strategy proposes:

- a. communities develop in accordance with the policies identified in their Area Structure Plan (ASP)
- b. new development within the ASP must be technically sound and conform to current technical servicing requirements and master servicing plans and policies
 - i. servicing plans should address stormwater, water delivery, wastewater treatment and transportation needs
 - ii. development levies should be considered to cover County costs for stormwater management when reviewing applications for new subdivision proposals
- c. When a comprehensive ASP review occurs, consideration of compact country residential development as an alternative development form should be considered

Traditional country residential communities include Greater Bragg Creek, Bearspaw, North and Central Springbank, Elbow Valley, Sharp Hills/Butte Hills (Balzac East) and Cochrane North.

The existing country residential ASPs have identified extensive areas for future residential development. Achieving moderate growth requires consideration of the rate and extent of development within these existing plans. The strategy recommends:

- a. where an ASP provides direction as to the timing of development, the phasing recommendations should be adhered to
- b. due to the extensive size of some ASPs, communities and the County should consider reducing the overall area dedicated to traditional country residential development, and/or alternate forms of compact development when a comprehensive ASP review occurs

- c. Any boundary change to an ASP should be examined through a comprehensive ASP review undertaken by the County in consultation with the local community. General criteria to consider before expanding an ASP include:
 - i. amount of remaining undeveloped ASP land
 - ii. community support
 - iii. population goals for the local area and County as a whole
 - iv. market demand
 - v. utility servicing and stormwater management
- d. New country residential ASPs should not be supported until such time as the County deems it has insufficient land for long-term growth.

5.2.2 Country Residential Communities outside of existing Area Structure Plans

Within Rocky View, there are a number of informal country residential communities, which have incrementally developed over time, but do not have formal plans directing their development. This pattern of growth presents a challenge for the County to effectively develop in a way that makes efficient use of land and supports agriculture.

The strategy proposes:

- a. to accommodate limited country residential growth that infills previously fragmented land
- b. when proposed, infill development should
 - i. make efficient use of land by considering compact development
 - ii. be in accordance with current technical servicing requirements
 - iii. minimize impacts on agricultural operations as per the Agriculture Master Plan
 - iv. use existing roads for primary access
 - v. minimize internal road length
 - vi. minimize municipal servicing costs

Achieving moderate growth requires consideration of the rate and extent of new development. The strategy recommends significant large multi-lot residential subdivisions outside of existing ASP boundaries should not be supported until such time as the County deems it has insufficient land for long-term growth. The definition of a multi-lot subdivision (size, lots and form) will be determined once the amount of agricultural land dedicated to country residential development is determined through the County Plan process.

5.2.3 Compact Country Residential Development

Compact country residential development is an alternative form of development with limited county examples. Compact country residential communities have the feel and characteristics of a traditional country residential community; however, the residential footprint is smaller and it is associated with protected open space or a working agricultural landscape. Compact country residential development is encouraged in the Cochrane North ASP and in the Elbow Valley ASP.

Compact country residential communities should:

- a. reduce residential land consumption
- b. dedicate and preserve significant open space or working lands
- c. build with the landscape
- d. minimize impacts on agricultural operations
- e. use existing roads for primary access
- f. address utility servicing requirements (conserve water, wastewater, stormwater)
- g. minimize internal road length
- h. minimize municipal servicing costs

5.3 Hamlet Communities

Hamlets form a traditional part of the rural landscape. The strategy encourages the development of a strong sense of community identity and allows hamlets to thrive by directing population growth to them. The strategy proposes:

- a. development should be supported in the seven existing regional and local hamlets based on existing approved plans
- b. community planning processes should determine hamlet form, amenities and population size
- c. community planning processes may consider limits on the hamlet size and population
- d. hamlet services will be rural in nature and not equivalent to urban municipalities
- e. no new hamlets other than those identified in existing approved plans will be considered
- f. amendments to hamlet boundaries should be established through a comprehensive ASP review undertaken by the County in consultation with the local community. General criteria to consider before expanding an ASP or hamlet boundary include:
 - i. amount of remaining undeveloped ASP land
 - ii. community support
 - iii. population goals for the local area and county as a whole
 - iv. market demand

Words describing hamlet living:

- community
- affordable
- rural
- connecting
- participation
- friendly
- safety
- quality of life
- neighbours
- quiet
- space
- roots
- unique
- charming
- family

Although the strategy identifies seven hamlets, achieving moderate growth requires prioritizing the timing of hamlet development. In setting priorities the following general criteria should be considered as a starting point when developing a priority list:

- a. community support
- b. utilizing existing infrastructure
- c. growth goals
- d. market demand
- e. lot inventory

5.3.1 Regional Hamlets

Regional hamlets are intended to be complete rural communities, providing services to the surrounding rural region. Market-driven industrial uses on the periphery of the hamlet are welcome. Hamlet services and amenities are at a rural service level.

The goals of regional hamlets are to:

- a. create a sense of community through good community design
- b. allow for a variety of housing types
- c. provide commercial services to the local community and surrounding rural area
- d. provide regional amenities to the local community and surrounding region or be located within reasonable access to existing regional amenities
- e. provide local employment and small business opportunities
- f. capitalize on existing utility and road infrastructure

The strategy identifies five regional hamlets based on the following criteria:

- existing statutory plans
- existing areas of hamlet development
- availability of existing infrastructure (utility services and roads)

Hamlet of Langdon – The hamlet was established in the mid-1880s and is located in southeast Rocky View.

Hamlet of Conrich – An existing small hamlet located east of the City of Calgary was named after two real estate developers Connarcher and Richardson. Conrich is the focus of a number of proposed and approved developments, and is associated with the Conrich Regional Business Centre.

West Balzac – An area located between two large urban neighbours, the City of Calgary and the City of Airdrie. The existing ASP contemplates a new residential development.

Hamlet of Cochrane Lake – A developing hamlet that will be expanded to take advantage of Cochrane Lake and views of the Rocky Mountains. The Cochrane Lake Hamlet Plan was adopted in 2011.

Harmony – A comprehensively planned community, adjacent to the Springbank Airport, was approved for development in 2008.

5.3.2 Local Hamlets

Local hamlets are small rural communities located within predominantly agricultural areas. Local hamlets will experience some residential growth over time and may contain limited commercial development within the hamlet centre. Local hamlets are smaller and less intense than regional hamlets. Services and amenities will be determined by population levels and local planning process.

The goals of local hamlets are to:

- a. provide basic services to the community
- b. act as a community and commercial service hub for residents and the surrounding rural region

Local hamlets have been identified based on the following criteria:

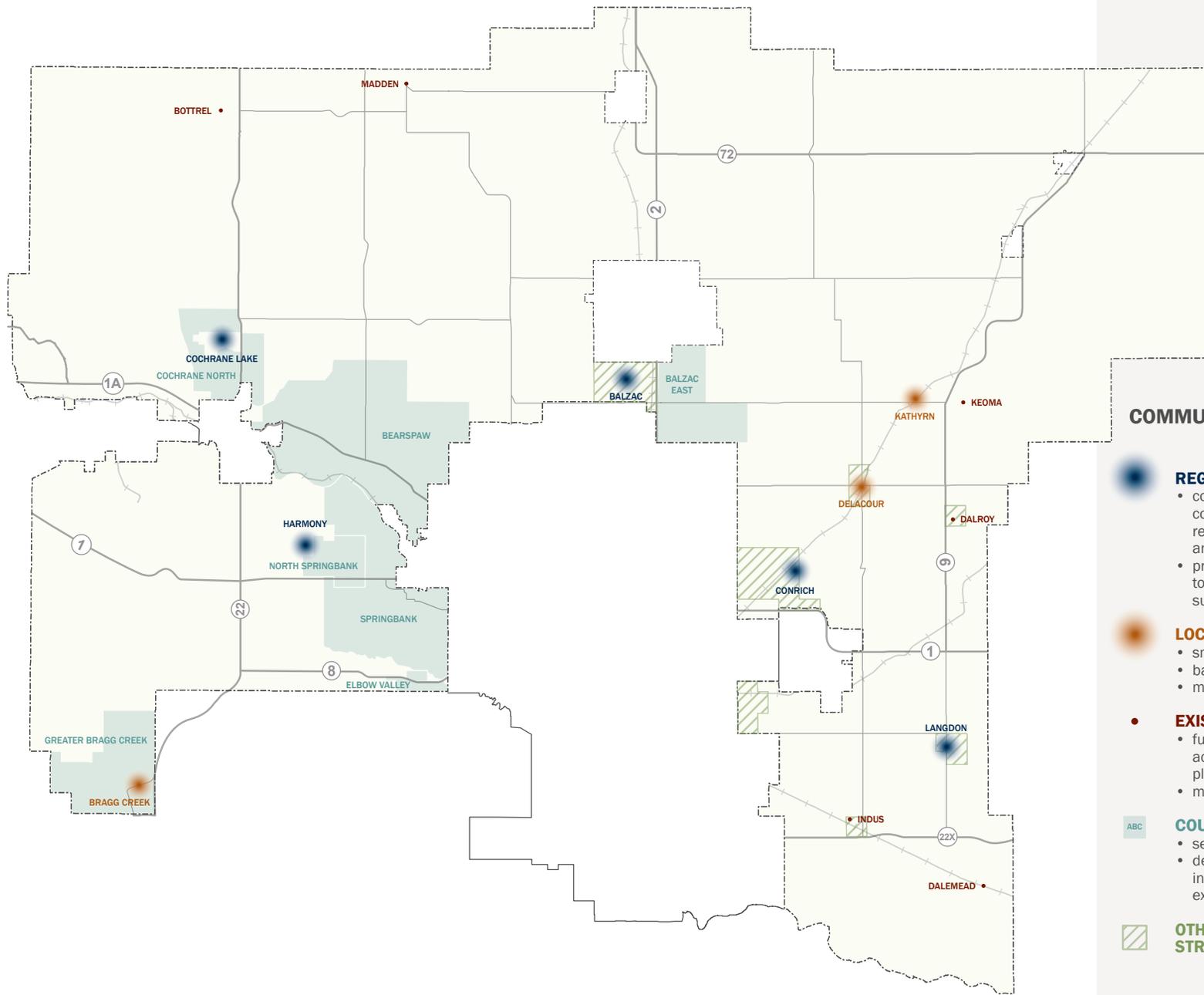
- existing statutory plans
- existing areas of hamlet development
- availability of infrastructure (utility services and roads)
- market conditions

From these criteria the following local hamlets were identified (Map 2):

Hamlet of Bragg Creek – Situated in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, Bragg Creek is an existing hamlet retaining its historic character.

Hamlet of Delacour – Named after the foreman of the crew building the Grand Trunk Railway, Delacour is located approximately 24 kilometres northeast of Calgary.

Hamlet of Kathryn – Kathryn is located 42 kilometres northeast of Calgary. Kathryn is the location of the Gardner School and the Kathryn High School with students attending from surrounding towns, hamlets and agricultural areas.



COMMUNITIES

- 
REGIONAL HAMLET
 - complete rural community including residential, commercial and hamlet center
 - provide amenities to hamlet and surrounding region
- 
LOCAL HAMLET
 - small rural community
 - basic services
 - mainly residential growth
- 
EXISTING HAMLET
 - future development in accordance with existing plans and the MDP
 - minimal future expansion
- 
COUNTRY RESIDENTIAL
 - self reliant
 - development form in accordance with existing plans
- 
OTHER AREA STRUCTURE PLANS



MAP 2 – RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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5.3.3 Other Hamlets

There are a number of existing hamlets in Rocky View of varying size. These hamlets play or have played an important role as social centres and service providers to the wider rural community. The strategy has not identified these communities as growth locations.

Proposed development within existing hamlets should:

- a. proceed in accordance with the Municipal Development Plan, or other adopted community plan
- b. be evaluated according to overall County growth strategy and implementation priorities

Existing hamlets include (Map 2) Indus, Dalemead, Dalroy, Keoma, Madden and Bottrel.

6.0 FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

Residential growth comes with an increased demand for services and an associated financial cost. The 2006 Rocky View County Cost of Services Study (available at www.rockyview.ca) suggests residential development does not generate sufficient revenue to offset associated serving costs, although some traditional country residential developments are near “break-even.” Conversely, non-residential development (business development) provides a net fiscal benefit to the County, with revenue from property tax significantly exceeding the costs of services provided to business. If a municipality has a viable and substantial business assessment base, the following benefits occur:

- the ability to offset the cost of residential growth
- a sustainable and attractive residential tax rate
- employment opportunities
- sustainable public services and amenities

The strategy proposes to increase the business assessment base and address the cost of growth by addressing capital costs, operating costs and supporting business development. In addition, the strategy proposes to support the viability of agriculture and home based business.

6.1 Capital Costs

Capital costs are the costs to build new infrastructure (roads, water lines, community halls etc.). The capital cost strategy is to ensure the developer is responsible for infrastructure construction costs. The strategy proposes:

- a. preference for development utilizing existing infrastructure
- b. continued requirement that site specific development costs (residential or business) are the developer’s responsibility
- c. off-site infrastructure improvements are paid by the developer
- d. continued collection of all infrastructure levies from approved developments
- e. consider the development of new subdivision levies for stormwater infrastructure in selected areas of concentrated residential or business development
- f. continued representation to the province regarding the need for municipalities to be able to levy developers for soft infrastructure (fire services, community halls, etc.)
- g. continue with the voluntary recreation contribution program

6.2 Operating Costs

Operating costs are the costs to run the County. Operating costs arise from hard infrastructure maintenance, infrastructure replacement (roads, stormwater ponds, utilities etc.), and soft service delivery (fire, policing, recreation, social services etc.).

The financing of operating costs occurs through property taxes, provincial grants and user fees. The amount of tax collected is determined by the tax rate and the assessed value of property.

It is proposed that business development provide a substantial contribution to County operating costs. This is primarily achieved by promoting business development in appropriate areas with the goal of increasing the tax assessment base.

Other proposed strategic directions include:

- a. ensure overall county development is cost neutral in terms of operating costs
- b. establish an optimal residential/business tax balance
- c. provide residential service levels appropriate for a rural municipality

6.3 Business Development

The strategy proposes to support and encourage five categories of business:

- regional business centres
- highway business development
- agricultural business
- hamlet business
- home based business

6.3.1 Regional Business Centres

Regional business centres are proposed as the primary areas of commercial, office and/or industrial development within Rocky View.

The goals of the regional business centres are to:

- a. provide regional and national business services
- b. provide regional and local employment opportunities
- c. contribute to optimally balancing the residential and business assessment base

Five regional business centres are identified. They are defined according to the following criteria:

- existing policy areas
- availability of existing infrastructure (utility services and/or roads)
- efficient connection to the provincial highway network
- possibility of multiple transportation options (roads, rail and air)
- market demand

The regional business centres include (Map 3):

Janet - Located southeast of Calgary, this was one of the first business centres in Rocky View and one of the county's most mature business centres.

Springbank Airport - Located to service airport-related commercial growth, this long standing business centre will complement a business campus proposed as part of the Harmony hamlet.

East Balzac - Located to the north and east of the Stony Trail Ring Road and Queen Elizabeth II Highway, this business centre provides superb access to road, rail and air networks. This new business centre has seen the construction of significant commercial development and regional distribution centres.

Conrich - Located north and west of the hamlet of Conrich; this developing business centre has been driven by market demand and the construction of the CN Logistics Park.

Crossfield South - Located adjacent to the Queen Elizabeth II Highway near Crossfield, this future business centre will build on existing industrial development and a strong relationship with the Town of Crossfield.

6.3.2 Highway Business Development

One of Rocky View's business advantages is the provincial highway system. The strategy proposes to use this infrastructure by supporting the strategic location of highway business development areas of limited size if they are in close proximity to intersections and interchanges.

The goals of highway business development are to:

- a. provide:
 - i. destination commercial and commercial service to the traveling public
 - ii. local business services
 - iii. local employment and small business opportunities
- b. contribute to optimally balancing the residential and business assessment base

Approval of highway business development areas should be based upon the approval of a comprehensive ASP and/or ASP amendment addressing:

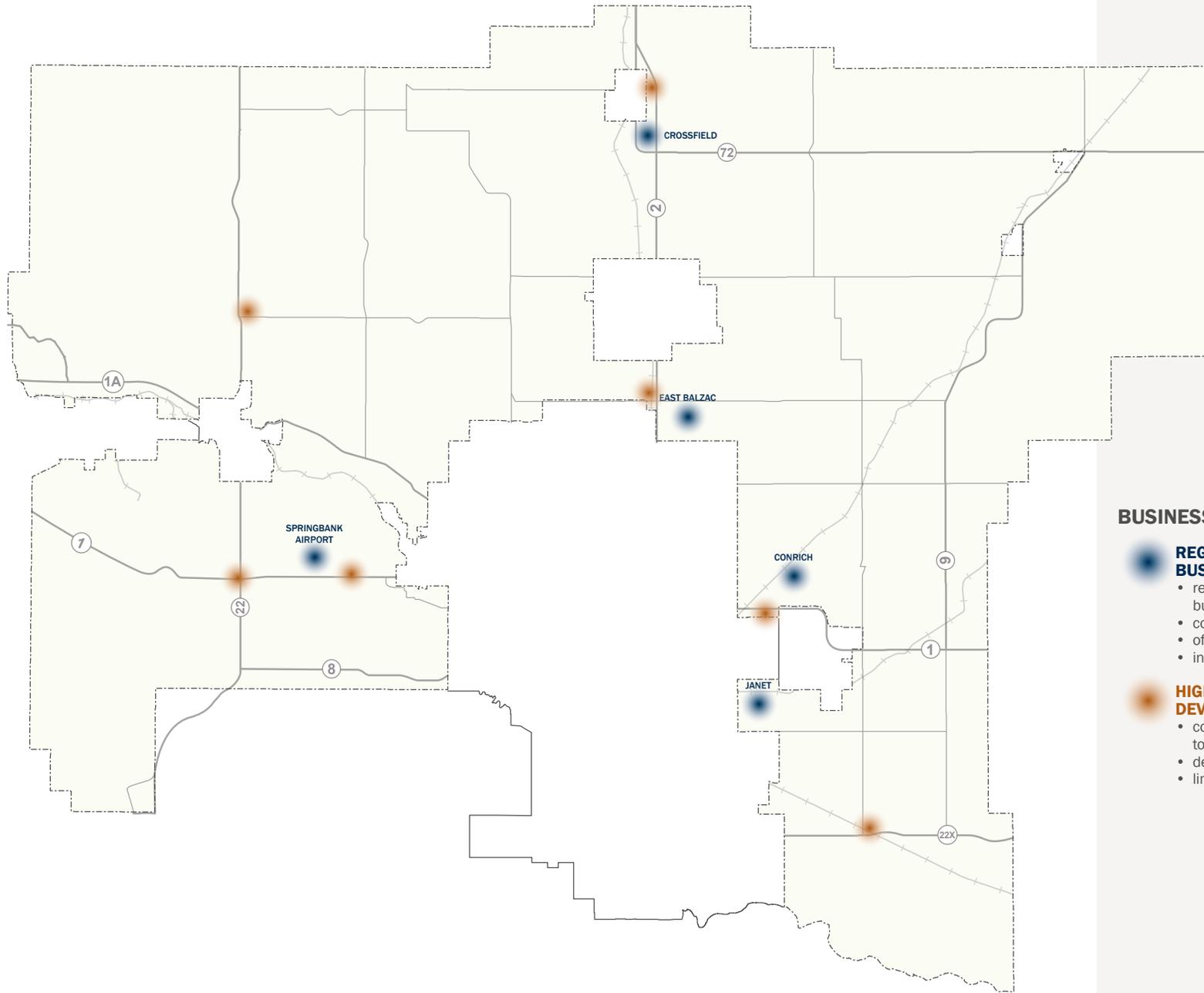
- a. the scale of development to the character of the local area and traffic volume
- b. interface design with existing agricultural/residential land
- c. utility servicing
- d. dark skies

Potential highway business development areas have the following criteria:

- a. existing areas of business development or policy support
- b. proximity to the provincial highway network
- c. proximity to highway intersections and interchanges

Based on these criteria, the following areas may be suitable for development (Map 3):

- intersection of Highway 1 and Highway 22
- intersection of Highway 22 and Highway 567, northeast of Cochrane Lake
- intersection of Highway 1 and Range Road 33
- highway 1 between Range Road 283 and 285
- west of Queen Elizabeth II and north of Highway 566
- east of Crossfield between Highway 2A and Queen Elizabeth II
- intersection of Highway 22X and Highway 791 near Indus



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

REGIONAL BUSINESS CENTRE

- regional and national business services
- commercial
- office space
- industrial

HIGHWAY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT (HBD)

- commercial services to the travelling public
- destination commercial
- limited size



6.3.3 Agricultural Business

Agriculture production is an important County business and economic driver. In support of agriculture, the Agriculture Master Plan (AMP) was adopted. The AMP focuses on supporting existing agricultural operations, while providing new opportunities for diversification of the agriculture industry.

The strategy proposes to support the recommendations of the Agriculture Master Plan by:

- a. directing the new County Plan to include:
 - i. policies to facilitate agricultural growth and diversity
 - ii. policies to increase agricultural land management flexibility
 - iii. transportation policy that supports agriculture
 - iv. policy encouraging the location of agriculture support services in agricultural areas
- b. focusing residential, business and industrial growth to strategic locations
- c. considering off-site marketing opportunities (farmers market) in community plans
- d. identifying rural growth principles for agriculture, country residential and hamlet development
- e. widening the range of home based business options on agriculture parcels
- f. ensuring new development provides adequate buffering with existing agricultural operations

6.3.4 Hamlet Business

Business development forms an important part of the social and economic fabric of a hamlet. The proposed goals for hamlet centre business are to:

- a. provide commercial services to the local and regional population
- b. provide local employment and small business opportunities
- c. contribute to visual appearance and social structure of the hamlet by providing the community a space to meet and converse

In addition to main street commercial development, office/industrial business areas are desirable in local and regional hamlets as they provide services and employment opportunities and contribute to fiscal sustainability by balancing the assessment base.

The extent of the business area within a hamlet will be determined by:

- d. the local planning process (hamlet ASP)
- e. hamlet size (encouraged in regional hamlets)
- f. market demand
- g. proximity to regional business centres and highway business development areas to ensure planned areas are not over built

6.3.5 Home Based Business

Rural living provides a unique opportunity for an entrepreneurial land owner to develop a home based business. The County provides home based business options for most residential and agricultural parcels. Current County regulations are structured to work best with smaller residential parcel sizes. The Agriculture Master Plan identified the need for policy broadening the opportunity for home based business options on agricultural parcels. The strategy recommends:

- a. explore broadening home based business opportunities on agriculture and non-agriculture parcels. As part of this process consideration should be given to:
 - i. the scale and scope of the home based business relative to parcel size
 - ii. ensuring the principle of no off-site impacts on adjacent landowners
 - iii. the impact on the transportation network

7.0 ENVIRONMENT

Growth impacts the physical environment by its location, cumulative nature and operational characteristics.

To address locational and cumulative impacts the strategy proposes:

- a. directing development to avoid environmentally significant areas
- b. using County adopted watershed management plans to guide development location and technical specifications
- c. adherence to the County's riparian and wetland policies
- d. country residential development is to work with the landscape (limit stripping and grading)
- e. directing comprehensive multi-lot development to existing ASP areas
- f. provide the option for compact country residential development in certain areas
- g. preference for development proposals that utilizes existing infrastructure

The strategy proposes the following operational characteristics:

- h. extension of the Balzac East Water Conservation Policy to all county serviced business areas
- i. preparation of integrated master stormwater management plans for all ASP areas
- j. consideration of development levies on new subdivision proposals to address the cost of stormwater control within ASP areas.
- k. adoption of low impact stormwater development (LID) techniques
- l. adherence to the County's Solid Waste and Wastewater Management Policy

SECTION III

POLICY CONTEXT

8.0 PLAN ALIGNMENT

It is important to consider growth and development decisions in Rocky View within the provincial and regional context. At the County level, it is a requirement of the Municipal Government Act (MGA) that all County plans are consistent with each other. The County must align its strategies and policies with the following:

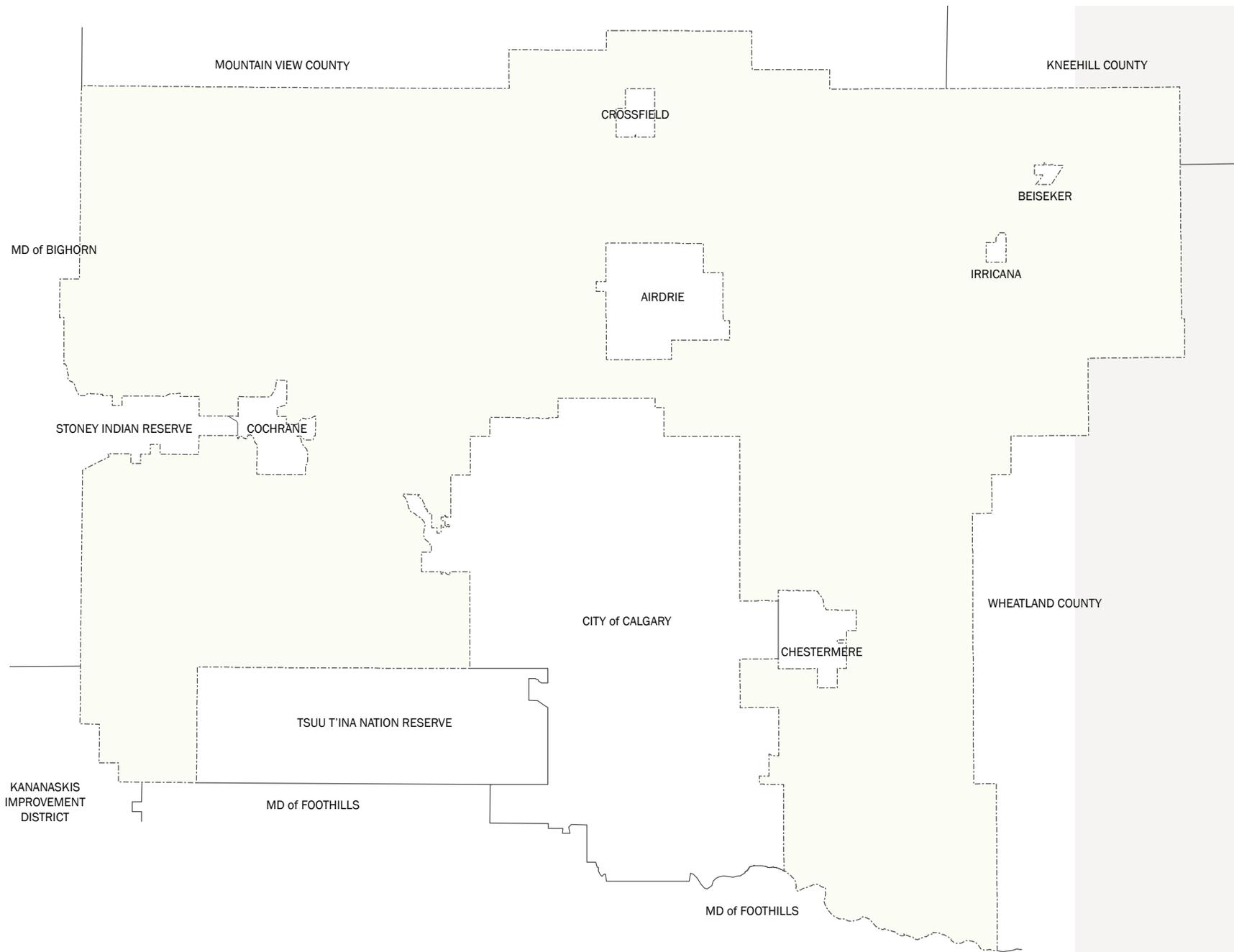
- The Land Use Framework and Alberta Land Stewardship Act; these Provincial documents provide the context and legal requirements for plans addressing growth in Alberta. The Land Use Framework maintains local planning and decision-making authority; however, in the future, County plans and decisions will have to be consistent with regional plans.
- The Province is developing the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan, which provides detailed direction for the larger region. Once adopted by the province, Rocky View will be required to align its plans with the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan.
- Plan alignment is important within County documents. Without plan alignment it is difficult to establish clear municipal direction and priorities. In 2012-13, Rocky View will be writing a new County Plan, (Municipal Development Plan as defined by the MGA), the highest level municipal plan. Once complete, other County plans (including the current Growth Management Strategy and other statutory plans) must be aligned with the County Plan.

The success of the County Plan is partially measured by its alignment with the Provincial Land Use Framework and, when it is completed, the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan. An important principle of the Provincial Land Use Framework is the efficient use of land as it is “a limited, non-renewable resource and so should not be wasted.” The strategy accomplishes this goal by identifying hamlets as growth areas and striving to moderate overall residential growth.

9.0 MUNICIPAL PARTNERSHIPS

Rocky View maintains an array of close intermunicipal relationships with its 15 neighbours. The municipality borders five rural municipalities, contains or borders seven urban municipalities, is adjacent to two First Nation lands and abuts the Kananaskis Improvement District. The Municipal Partners Map (Map 4) identifies our rural and urban neighbours.

Rocky View is committed to working cooperatively with its municipal and regional neighbours. The strategy helps that relationship by defining Rocky View's rural approach to growth, while providing a more definitive and predictable growth pattern. This will allow Rocky View to cooperatively partner with its neighbours to ensure beneficial relationships between all parties while working towards sustainable development for the entire region.



MAP 4 - MUNICIPAL NEIGHBOURS

DISCUSSION PAPER



ROCKY VIEW COUNTY
Cultivating Communities

SECTION IV SUMMARY

10.0 SUMMARY AND USE

Over the last 40 years Rocky View's growth rate has exceeded many of the other municipalities in the Calgary region. As a consequence, the county's percentage of the regional population has gradually increased.

Rocky View's Council has proposed a strategy to address the pressure associated with growth. It is Council's intent to stimulate discussion on the amount, location and type of growth in order to contribute to the policy development of the new County Plan. It is through the County Plan public engagement process the details of this strategy will be confirmed or modified.

The strategy proposes a rural approach to growth management by identifying the county's rural communities and supporting development that is consistent with their rural nature. The strategy suggests one way to contribute to this goal is to reverse the trend of an increasing proportionate share of the regional population from the current 3.11 per cent to 2.5 per cent.

Seven country residential areas and eight hamlets (identified in existing policy documents) are proposed as the primary county growth areas. In agricultural areas, it is recognized further information and public input on the amount of land dedicated to residential development is required to provide policy direction for the new County Plan. In order to ensure the fiscal impact of growth is sustainable and minimized, the strategy suggests growing the business assessment base is required. Finally, development must occur in an environmentally responsible manner, and a number of locational and operational recommendations are made.

10.1 Implementation

The strategy has the following short-term implications:

- a. Until the optimal tax balance is achieved between residential and business assessment, a greater emphasis should be placed on supporting business development.
- b. Residential development areas should be prioritized. Priority setting should recognize:
 - i. the overall population goal (2.5% of the regional population)
 - ii. the expressed need by some hamlets for growth in order to support and sustain commercial services
 - iii. existing planning approvals
 - iv. the loss of population in some regions of the County and the need to stabilize the population base in those areas

Priority setting:

Additional criteria necessary to provide direction on timing, sequencing and financing of specific growth areas include:

- a. required infrastructure and fiscal capacity to operate public infrastructure
- b. demonstrated market need
- c. community support
- d. housing supply

Growth monitoring

Growth predictions were based on analysis of existing regional population, past growth rates and demographic trends. The strategy suggests the county's proportionate regional population share should be 2.5 per cent. To monitor growth and anticipate demand, growth predictions should be periodically reviewed. Data analysis and presentation should include:

- a. current population
- b. growth rates
- c. growth areas
- d. assessment base
- e. lot or housing availability

Fiscal Sustainability

Underpinning growth in any form requires a fiscal plan. The strategy recognizes the cost of residential growth and proposes a strategy to address cost by increasing the business assessment base. Supporting this fiscal strategy requires:

- supporting the development of the existing regional business centres
- completing a fiscal impact model to help assess and monitor the cost of development
- determining the appropriate residential/business tax balance

RURAL GROWTH MANAGEMENT

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