

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2024 | MACKENZIE COUNTY



Mackenzie County

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PART I

VISION AND CONTEXT

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

Mackenzie County's Municipal Development Plan (MDP) is a document that provides clear direction for growth and development in the County over the next 20 years. Working in tandem with the Land Use Bylaw and other statutory plans, the MDP provides a framework for the County's future and is an important decision-making tool for Council, County Administration, developers, residents, and other stakeholders. The intent of this MDP is to support well-managed and fiscally sustainable growth and development that will ensure a high quality of life for all County residents now and in the future.

The County has grown substantially over the past several years and is anticipated to grow to 26,000 people over the next 20 years. However, this growth has occurred unevenly across the County, and it is important for the MDP to set a vision for how to accommodate this growth in a fiscally sustainable manner.

To ensure the County appropriately plans for this growth, this MDP:

- Updates the vision, policies, and actions of the 2009 MDP;

- Describes the County's preferred direction with respect to growth areas, land uses, infrastructure investments, business development, and provision of County services;
- Provides a comprehensive land use policy framework that outlines where and how development and growth may take place across the County;
- Informs County bylaws, policies, and programs; and
- Helps residents and landowners understand how their land may be used now and in the future.

This MDP update revisits the goals and vision of the 2009 MDP to build upon recent successes, but also recognizes and responds to the considerable changes that have occurred since 2009. The MDP's vision, goals, and objectives were affirmed through County-wide public engagement to ensure that the vision and priorities of Mackenzie County residents and community leaders were accurately reflected.

1.2 AUTHORITY

The Municipal Development Plan is a statutory document required by the Province of Alberta as specified by the Municipal Government Act. The following section provides an overview of the legislative planning framework for Alberta, as well as provides guidance for interpreting the policies within the MDP.

1.2.1 PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The planning framework outlines the key planning documents that guide land use and development in Mackenzie County, providing context for how each document interacts and informs the others. Plans at the top of the framework, such as Intermunicipal Development Plans and the MDP, provide broad

high-level policy direction, while lower-level plans are subordinate to the plans above and must be consistent with the policies and direction of the higher-order plans. As part of the municipal planning process, the County may develop more specific Area Structure Plans (ASP) and Area Redevelopment Plans (ARP) to provide detailed direction for smaller areas within the region. These ASPs and ARPs must be consistent with the policies and land use concept of the MDP. The level of detail and specificity in policies increases the further down the plan is in Figure 1, the County's planning framework diagram.

When there is no ASP or other subordinate plan, the MDP will determine whether a subordinate plan is required to provide greater planning detail.

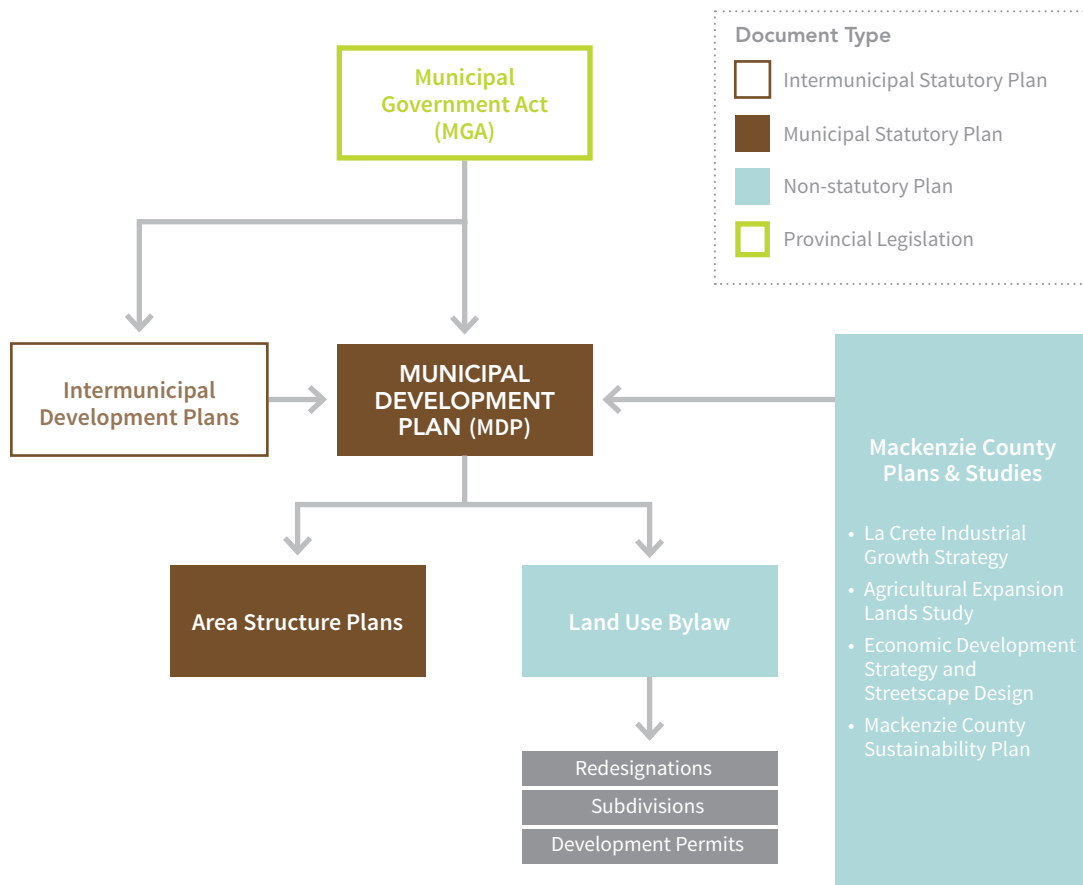


Figure 1: The Planning Framework in Mackenzie County

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT ACT

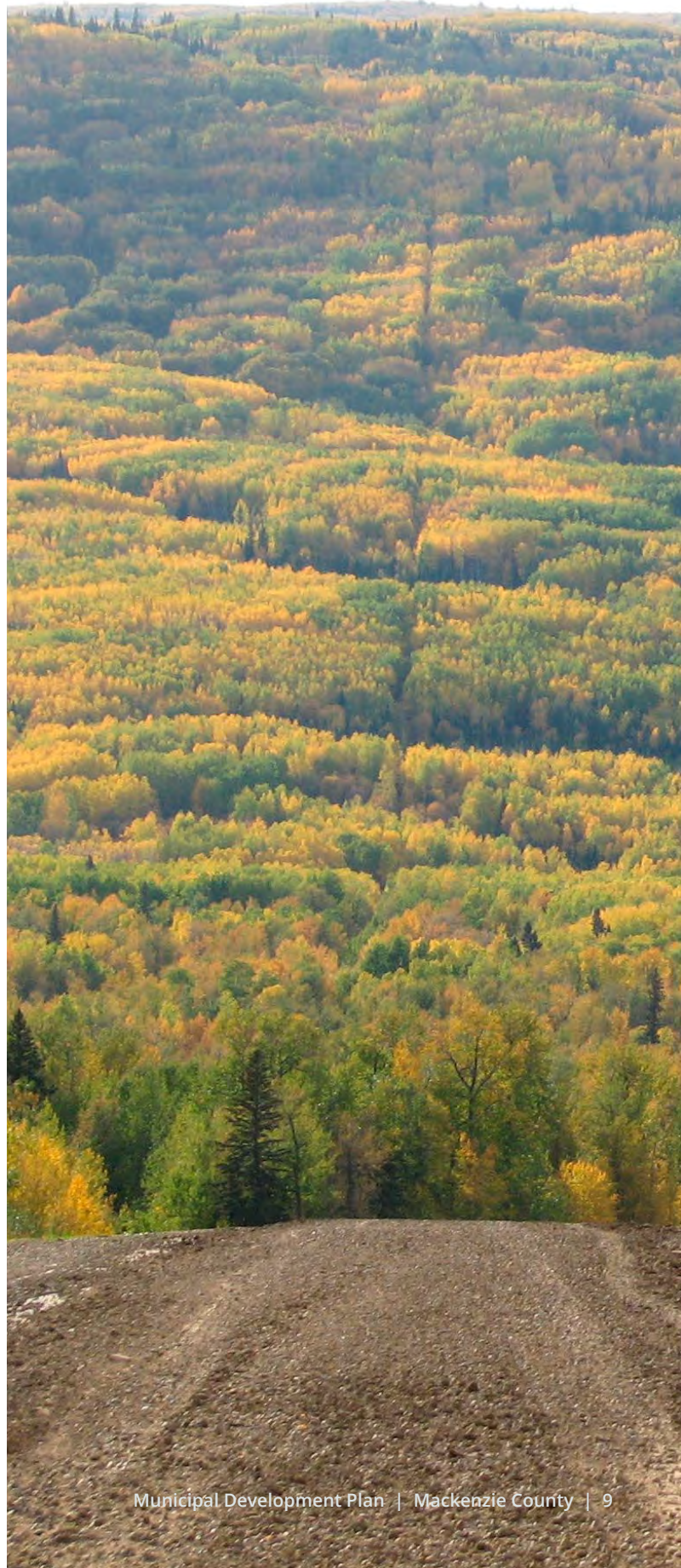
The Municipal Government Act (MGA) provides the legislative framework under which all municipalities must operate. The MGA states that the purpose of a municipality is to:

- Provide good government;
- Foster the well-being of the environment;
- Provide services, facilities, or other things that, in the opinion of Council, are necessary or desirable for all or a part of the municipality;
- Develop and maintain safe and viable communities; and
- Work collaboratively with neighbouring municipalities to plan, deliver, and fund intermunicipal services.

Part 17 of the Municipal Government Act regulates planning and development and empowers municipalities to prepare plans:

- To achieve the orderly, economical, and beneficial development, use of land and patterns of human settlement; and
- To maintain and improve the quality of the physical environment within which patterns of human settlement are situated in Alberta, without infringing on the rights of individuals for any public interest except to the extent that is necessary for the overall greater public interest.

The MGA requires all municipalities to adopt and maintain a Municipal Development Plan. This Municipal Development Plan must be consistent with all Intermunicipal Development Plans established between the municipality and the municipalities adjacent to it.



MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The MDP is the County's principal statutory plan, providing strategic growth direction and overall guidance for land use planning policy. The MDP also provides specific policy guidance for areas that do not fall within the boundaries of an area structure plan or other subordinate plan. As identified in Section 632 of the MGA, Municipal Development Plans must provide policy direction for the following key items:

- Future land use throughout the County and how it is intended to be developed;
- Coordination of land use, growth, and infrastructure with adjoining municipalities;
- Policies regarding provision of transportation systems and municipal servicing;
- Guidance on land-use compatibility and regulation near sour gas facilities;
- Policies regarding municipal and school reserve; and
- Policies respecting the protection of agricultural operations.

INTERMUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDP) provide coordinating policies to guide land use and growth management between partnering municipalities that share a border. These plans may include how the two municipalities will work together, develop joint lands, and/or co-ordinate parks, open space, recreation, transportation, water, utilities, and other municipal services across boundaries. IDPs must be approved by Council in both partnering municipalities. Mackenzie County has an approved IDP with the Town of High Level.

An alternative to an IDP is an Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework (ICF). These frameworks include how adjacent municipalities will work and communicate together on matters of interest and importance similar to an IDP. Intermunicipal Collaboration Frameworks are non-statutory agreements. Mackenzie County has ICFs in place with all adjacent municipalities.



AREA STRUCTURE PLANS

ASPs are statutory plans that are subordinate to the MDP and provide more specific growth direction and land use policy for specific areas of land in the County. ASPs contain maps, goals, and policies that set out general locations for major land uses, major roadways, utility servicing, and open space.

LAND USE BYLAW

The Land Use Bylaw is a regulatory bylaw of the County, required by the MGA, that implements the land use direction provided in the Municipal Development Plan. Every parcel of land in the County has a land use district, which specifies the permitted and discretionary uses in each district and regulates the development of land and buildings in the County.

1.2.2 PLAN INTERPRETATION

Interpretation of the MDP follows a broad hierarchy of plan outcomes, policies, terms, and definitions, as described here.

Plan Outcomes and Policies

The MDP's vision, goals, and outcomes will be achieved through the application of the policies and objectives of each policy section. Policies provide guidance to decisionmakers and the public about how the County should grow and develop, while objectives are the targets for individual policy sections that achieve the County's vision and guiding principles.

Policy Terms

The following key terms outline how policies should be interpreted and implemented by the County.

Shall: The MDP is intended to guide development through an understanding that flexibility is required. However, certain policies related to human safety, fiscal responsibility, legal obligations, and other factors are mandatory. In these contexts, the term 'shall' is used to indicate actions that must be complied with, without discretion, by administration and developers.

Should: Where policy is not mandatory but still relates to a strongly preferred course of action, the less restrictive term 'should' is used.

May: This term is used in policies that are discretionary in nature, meaning that the policy could be enforced by the County dependent on the circumstances of the proposal in question.



1.3 PLANNING PROCESS

The MDP's land use policies guide development throughout the County and identify growth areas for new residential, commercial, agricultural, and industrial development. These growth areas, presented as the MDP's Growth Concept, provide a planning framework that balances fiscally sustainable development with providing a high quality of life and diverse range of residential and economic opportunities for County residents.

County-wide policies within the MDP provide high level direction on County services and operations regardless of land use. They are intended to improve County services, enhance quality of life, and strengthen community identity.

Implementation of the MDP will occur through several mechanisms and processes, including:

- Ongoing administration of the development review process and periodically reviewing and amending area structure plans and the land use bylaw;

- Carrying out next steps required to implement the vision, goals, and objectives of the MDP; and
- Collaborating with neighbouring municipalities on planning and development matters.

The MDP will be monitored and regularly reviewed based on a series of performance measures to ensure development is being effectively guided. The responsibility for this implementation, monitoring, and review of the MDP rests with County Council, committees of Council, and administration.

The update of the MDP involved engagement with the public as well as stakeholders. The project team conducted on-line and in-person engagement to determine the vision, pillars, and guiding principles along with receiving feedback on the draft document. Feedback was incorporated into the document prior to first and second readings.

1.4 HOW TO USE THE MDP

The Mackenzie County Municipal Development Plan consist of three parts:

Part I – Vision and Context provides the overall introduction, vision, and context for the County. It provides the introduction and current background of Mackenzie County, and the future vision over the next 20 years.

Part II – Policies contain the economic, agricultural and land use policies of the MDP. These policies describe how the County will achieve the vision as set out in part 1.

Part III – Implementation contains policies and directions for how to interpret and implement part 2 of the MDP. This section also describes the monitoring component of the MDP; monitoring is necessary to determine the effectiveness of the policies and to determine if the vision is being achieved.

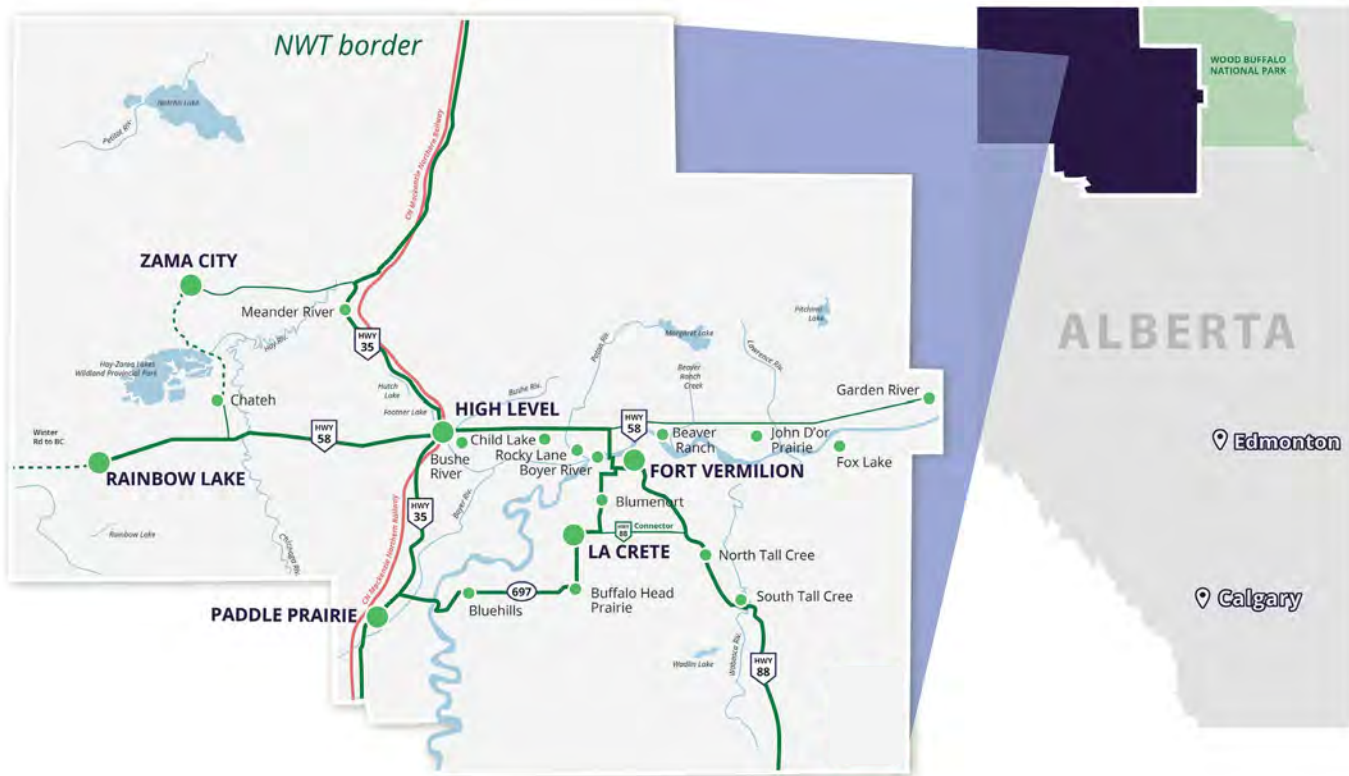
1.5 HISTORY AND CONTEXT

Mackenzie County is blessed with a variety of dramatic landscapes consisting of vast mixed wood and boreal forest to the north and west, and hills to the south and east. The Caribou Mountains, Cameron Hills, and Buffalo Head Hills are all part of Mackenzie County and provide Crown Land access to some of the last unspoiled natural beauty in Alberta. Rich agricultural lands are located north of the Peace River and in the south and eastern portions of the County, and many lakes and rivers, including the mighty Peace River, braid their way throughout the County.

Through a ministerial order the Mackenzie County area was included within Improvement District No. 23 in 1968 and managed by the Province of Alberta. In 1994 the Province created The Municipal District of Mackenzie No. 23 effective January 1, 1995. In 1999, the Municipal District became a specialized

municipality to recognize the complexities of such a large municipal area. Finally, in 2007 the name was changed from the Municipal District to Mackenzie County.

With a deep history, the County today is built on a solid economic foundation balanced between the agriculture, forestry, oil, gas, and energy industries. Emerging light machining and secondary manufacturing industries also promise to provide future employment and economic growth throughout the County. With strong population growth and emerging opportunities across all sectors, the future of Mackenzie County is bright.



1.6 COMMUNITIES BUILT ON HISTORY AND HERITAGE

Mackenzie County has been an incorporated, locally managed municipality since 1995, but the County's history extends much further into the past. Each community in the County has a distinct story to tell and brings unique flavour and perspective to the region. Importantly, the County will only be able to realize its greatest potential if a culture of understanding and cooperation can be fostered between all of these communities. As such, the MDP seeks to establish a clear baseline understanding of each community's distinct needs and desires. These

needs and interests should be further articulated and clarified through local area planning where appropriate, but regardless are imperative for both County and broader societal success. Figure 2 illustrates the historical population back to the 1991 federal census year and the absolute and percentage change from the previous census.

FEDERAL CENSUS YEAR	POPULATION	NET CHANGE	PERCENT CHANGE
1991	7,260	N/A	N/A
1996	7,980	720	9.9%
2001	8,829	849	10.6%
2006	10,002	1,173	13.3%
2011	10,927	925	9.2%
2016	11,171	244	2.2%
2021	12,804	1,633	14.6%

Figure 2: Historical Population Source: Statistics Canada Census Data





Fort Vermilion

The Hamlet of Fort Vermilion was founded in 1788 as a post for the North West Company, and has a history intrinsically tied to the Mighty Peace River. While the Beaver, Dene, Cree, and Métis have a long history of inhabiting the area, the onset of the fur trade in the late 1700's saw traditional ways of life shift to accommodate the new, burgeoning fur trade industry. As one of Alberta's oldest communities, Fort Vermilion has a wealth of historic buildings and artifacts that make it one of the most unique places in the province.

For most of its history, riverboats were the primary means of access to Fort Vermilion, remaining a vital transportation link until the final commercial riverboat ran in 1952. In 1974 the bridge across the Peace River was opened, creating a permanent and reliable link between Fort Vermilion and the rest of the region across the river. While from this time forward the river played a less integral role in the local economy of Fort Vermilion, it continues to shape and affect the community. Recent flooding events in 2018 and 2020 profoundly influenced the community, and while residents have been forced to overcome significant adversity, the future of Fort Vermilion remains as bright as ever. Recent funding announcements from the Provincial government have ensured the community is able to appropriately respond to the continued threat of floods from the Peace River, and with a new community plan in the works, Fort Vermilion is ready to face a new tomorrow.

La Crete

The Hamlet of La Crete is a Mennonite community that has its origins in the 1930s. Surrounded by some of the County's most productive agricultural lands, La Crete is the economic and commercial heart of the region south-east of the Peace River. As the fastest growing community in the County, La Crete has an important role to play as industrial, commercial, and agricultural opportunities continue to come to the community. Despite this growth, at its heart La Crete remains a friendly, family-oriented community with a strong sense of pride in its heritage.



Zama City

Located almost 150 kilometres northwest from the Town of High Level, the Hamlet of Zama City was founded in the late 1960's as a hub for the developing energy industry. The area is also home to the Hay-Zama Wood Bison Herd, which can be seen in and around the area and hamlet on a regular basis. Zama City is home to Alberta's most northern library, multiple recreation opportunities, and a vast wilderness to explore. Zamanites embrace living in a smaller community where everyone knows their neighbours. Zama's transient worker populations during busy times of the year dwarf the full-time population of roughly 100. Moving forward it will be important to explore economic opportunities outside of the oil, gas, and energy industries including increased tourism as the County continues to grow.

Indigenous Communities

There are four First Nations communities across multiple Reserves that are located in the Mackenzie County area. These Nations are the Beaver First Nation, Tallcree First Nation, Little Red River Cree Nation, and the Dene Tha First Nation. The Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement is also located within the Mackenzie County area.

These communities include approximately 9,000 people that also use the amenities and services in Mackenzie County and support local development and expansion.



1.7 RECENT EVENTS SHAPING THE COUNTY

Several significant events have occurred that have shifted the way growth and development has happened throughout the County. The economic impacts to the oil, gas, and energy industries in late 2014 and 2015, the Caribou Range Planning affecting new oil, gas, energy, mining and tourism projects, the 2018 and 2020 overland floods, and 2019 Chuckegg Creek and 2023 Long Lake wildfires have all had profound impacts on the entire municipality but have also impacted different parts of Mackenzie County separately.

Oil, Gas, & Energy Economic Impact

The moratorium / lack of regulations on new land sales, leases and permits in species at risk areas since 2012 and the decline of the global oil and gas industry's market prices in late 2014 and through 2015 have led to an economic situation where one of the County's core industries has been forced to significantly streamline and optimize operations in order to remain viable. As a result of these prolonged conditions, projections in the 2009 MDP about Zama City's future growth have not been realized. The changing energy landscape creates a new opportunity for the County to explore economic growth in other natural resource-based economies such as earth metal extraction and in brine-hosted mineral development. New alternative energy sources are increasing the demand for earth metals such as lithium.

At the same time, the existing oil and gas industry remains important to the County's overall economic future. The risk of losing further economic activity due to the moratorium / lack of regulations cannot be overstated. The County will continue to be a strong advocate for lifting the moratorium and ensuring the oil and gas industry remains well-positioned for continued success over the timeline of this plan.

Species at Risk Planning

Woodland caribou in Alberta are designated as Threatened under Alberta's Wildlife Act. Four boreal caribou ranges are either wholly or partially located within Mackenzie County. The Province is in the process of creating a woodland caribou range plan to address the conservation of the species. In response to the species at risk planning the Province has currently implemented an interim restriction on provincial leases, including the sale of mineral rights, tourism, mining and energy leases within all caribou ranges in Alberta. This restriction primarily affects new oil and gas production in the County, but also affects leases both new and old, and across many use types, from energy to recreation. Because of this, the caribou range plan will affect other important economic industries in the County such as the forestry and tourism industries moving forward. The Province established the Bistcho Lake Sub-Regional Task Force to develop recommendations for this



sub-regional area. The task force consists of local stakeholders including government officials, industry representatives and interest groups.

2018 and 2020 Ice Jam Floods

The Peace River is a tremendous asset for the County, providing residents with clean drinking water, a stunning recreational amenity, and a storied history of exploration and adventure. However, life on the mighty Peace also comes with risk, and riverside communities throughout the County experienced these risks firsthand when the 2018 and 2020 ice jam floods hit. The impacts of these floods have been profound, with over 50 percent of Fort Vermilion residents evacuated during the 2020 floods, and the historic settlement of Buttertown almost completely inundated. As a result of changing environmental conditions, shifting policy for park management in Wood Buffalo National Park, and a revised framework for provincial and national disaster relief funding, the County must now critically reflect on the future of its riverfront communities. This MDP provides an opportunity to broadly implement high-level policy that empowers responsible development near the Peace River and enables local area planning to provide clear direction for future growth in these locations. While many difficult decisions and conversations must be had on

this path to recovery, this plan ensures that a more resilient community will continue to develop into the future.

2019 Chuckegg Creek and Jackpot Creek, and 2023 Long Lake, Beach Road, and Basset Wildfires

The risk of wildfires throughout the County is high, as the entire municipality is surrounded by extensive natural boreal forests. While FireSmart measures have been employed in the past to protect the County's communities, the 2019 Chuckegg Creek and Jackpot Creek wildfires and 2023 Long Lake, Beach Road, and Basset wildfires have exposed just how vulnerable the County truly is to this form of disaster. Many lessons have been learned from the 2019 and 2023 fires, and this MDP incorporates new best practices and emerging approaches to fire risk management into municipal policy in order to keep residents safe from future wildfire risk without being overly burdensome and prescriptive.



1.8 OPPORTUNITY

With the County's northern and natural contexts, deep history, proud heritage, and emerging responses to a range of significant events that have impacted the municipality, there are a broad range of opportunities that can be acted on through the implementation of the MDP. With a rapidly growing population and local economy there exist substantial opportunities for agricultural expansion and recreation into Crown Land and emerging secondary industrial operations to support this growth. Flood recovery funding from senior levels of government also provide opportunities to rethink how Mackenzie County's riverfront communities look and feel today and will continue to grow into tomorrow. Finally, there exist many opportunities to partner and collaborate with local and regional neighbours to build meaningful relationships and find mutual benefit for all.

Agricultural Expansion

Mackenzie County's agriculture industry is some of the northernmost in Canada, and due to its plentiful sunlight throughout the summer months, boasts some of the highest quality crops anywhere in the country. As the successes of existing farms and agricultural innovations in new, emerging high-demand crops place ever increasing demand on the existing opened farmland in the County, there exists a need to explore opportunities to expand the lands available to agriculture themselves.

The County has already undertaken considerable work identifying priority areas to responsibly open up new Crown Land in an environmentally conscious

manner. This work should be leveraged in a coordinated way to ensure the Province is aware of the economic, social, and environmental opportunities that are just waiting to be seized upon by expanding Mackenzie County's agricultural areas.

Agricultural expansion goes beyond increasing arable land within the County. Where recent forest fires have razed substantial amounts of previously forested Crown Land, there now exists opportunities to potentially open up these lands through grazing leases or reserves. Such an approach would serve as a FireSmart measure helping protect the County while also increasing agricultural productivity and utility of burnt Crown Lands, while also helping support Canada's food security.

Beyond traditional agricultural uses, the opportunity to increase value-added agricultural processing and local food production should also be explored. These types of agricultural uses have different land requirements and may be found within agricultural, industrial and commercial areas.

Industrial and Corridor Development

Part and parcel with the continued expansion of the agricultural sector in Mackenzie County is the growth of its industrial sector. With a range of agricultural, forestry, aggregate mining, and oil and gas industries existing throughout the County, the continued success of these sectors begets investment in both up and downstream operations to support them.



Regional Economic Development Initiative (REDI) has been working on promoting the development of the region's existing corridors and promoting new transportation corridors. A large opportunity exists in the development of a multi-modal transportation system within the northwest Alberta economic region. Better transportation connectivity will help get products to market quicker and lead to increased investment and growth in the region. There is potential to connect these new multi-modal links to port facilities in Alaska, Prince Rupert, and Churchill.

It is important to provide a framework for industrial development that leverages recent investments in critical servicing infrastructure throughout the County.

Population Growth

Mackenzie County has been blessed with a population growth rate that is one of the highest in the country, driving knock-on growth effects in the education, healthcare, development, and other industries. The growth rate is not evenly distributed throughout the County. Areas that benefit from growth must be provided a development framework that is simultaneously responsive to the intense pressures that can come with rapid population expansion while sensitive to the social and cultural needs of those who call these locales home.

Above and beyond being ready for growth and prepared to accommodate it, there must also be consideration given to ensuring those who are moving to the County or who are growing up here

are provided plentiful opportunities to live, learn, and stay long-term. Expanding post-secondary educational options, further diversifying the job market, and more broadly creating the conditions that will make those in Mackenzie County choose to stay long-term are all important for capturing the maximum potential of the County's high growth rate.

Flood Recovery

While massively impactful to those communities that directly experienced the floods in April 2020 and previous years, the recently announced Provincial recovery funding has the opportunity to profoundly shape the County's response in a way that could yield tremendous social, economic, and cultural benefits for generations to come. The MDP must make sure it works in tandem with ongoing planning work in flood-affected areas to enable a long-term solution to flooding that makes a better, stronger, and safer Mackenzie County for all.



2 VISION

The MDP's vision statement and goals are built around the core values of Mackenzie County residents and guide the overall direction of the Plan. The vision outlines the ideal future for Mackenzie County while the goals provide themes for policy objectives that implement the priorities of the community. Developed through public and stakeholder engagement, the vision, goals, and objectives together inform the Plan's policies and framework for growth.

2.1 VISION

This vision provides the inspiration to support implementation of the MDP. Mackenzie County is unified by a community spirit that makes the County a desirable place to live and to raise a family. The vision for Mackenzie County is:

- A community that celebrates its unique cultural history;
- An inclusive place where people live, work and visit supporting a diverse local economy through all stages of life;

- An innovative and prosperous community located in a beautiful natural environment that is valued and protected for its recreational and economic opportunities; and
- A resilient forward-thinking community that remains nimble and adaptable to a changing environment.

2.2 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

There are five core goals/focus areas that this MDP uses to guide its policy and the development trajectory for Mackenzie County over the next 20 years. These goals are Agriculture, Growing Communities, Building Regional Partnerships, Responding to a Changing Environment, and Economic Expansion. These goals provide the framework for the MDP, acting as the main chapters of the document.

Agriculture

The Agriculture goal is predicated on four key pillars that will ensure the County's farming community is provided the tools not only to continue over the next 20 years, but to expand and thrive. These pillars are:

- Intentional Expansion
- Utilizing Irrigation & Proper Water Management
- Supporting Diversification
- Protecting the Right to Farm

Growing Communities

As Mackenzie County continues to grow it is critically important that the MDP respond accordingly, in a manner that supports all residents throughout Mackenzie County, and all communities both small and large. This goal focuses on four key pillars:

- Enabling Housing Options
- Responsible Expansion
- New Approach to Country Residential
- Allocating Growth in Appropriate Locations

Building Regional Partnerships

Look at a municipality's ability to build partnerships and collaboration and you will find its ability to succeed. This is more true in the remote and northern context of Mackenzie County, and as such building new partnerships and expanding those that already exist is critically important for the County's long-term economic success. Five key pillars work to achieve this goal:

- Building Relationships within the County
- Building Relationships with Intermunicipal Partners for a strong region, including in the Northwest Territories
- Building Relationship with Indigenous communities
- Building Relationships with Non-Profits
- Building Relationships with Government of Alberta ministries

Responding to a Changing Environment

Natural disasters and a shifting climate present significant challenges but also intriguing new opportunities for economic growth, revitalization, and expansion. Ensuring the County continues to grow responsibly in light of these challenges is of critical importance over the next 20 years, and the responses to these challenges are highlighted in these three key pillars:

- Fire Safety
- Flood Safety
- Seizing Environmental Economic Opportunities

Economic Expansion

As the County's economy continues to grow, the MDP must chart a clear path forward that provides the necessary framework to enable long-term success. The key pillars that will support sustained economic expansion are:

- Clear Framework for Industrial Growth
- Prioritizing Access to Markets and Transportation Corridor Expansion
- Access to Resources
- Creating a Self-Sustaining Economic Environment
- Facilitating Industrial Use on Crown Land
- Supporting Oil and Gas & Emerging Sectors
- Pursuing Critical Infrastructure Opportunities



PART II POLICIES

3 EXPANDING THE ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY



Mackenzie County residents are industrious and hard-working. Over the past several generations the County's communities have enjoyed the benefits of their labour, experiencing sustained economic growth alongside its expanding population. However, as the global economy continues to shift and the lasting impacts of the 2019 global pandemic continue to be felt, there is a necessity to reflect on the economic successes of the past and plan appropriately for lasting opportunity into the future.

As Mackenzie County continues to grow, it will be imperative that the County provides room for existing successful businesses to grow while at the same time supporting continued diversification.

Steps have been taken to develop new industries adjacent to the County's core agriculture, forestry, and gas sectors, while the opportunities associated with approaching tourism from a regional level are only beginning to be explored.

Seizing on these opportunities and emerging trends will help Mackenzie County continue to provide opportunity for all who are willing to work for it well into the future.

3.1 ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

The world is changing faster than ever before, and nowhere is this truer than in our economy. Global perspectives on Mackenzie County's core industries have altered considerably over the past decade, but for the next 20 years it is certain that these sectors will continue to be the major economic drivers of the region. There is substantial opportunity to further diversify the local economy both within these industries and outside of them.

Policies in this MDP speak to many of these opportunities, including agricultural expansion, building the tourism industry, pursuing opportunities to gain access to resources, and providing land for expanding and new businesses. Coordinating these endeavours is an important task for the County so the greatest economic impact is felt from municipal decisions.

Objectives

- Identify emerging economic sectors and provide a foundation that attracts them to Mackenzie County and support their development.
- Leverage and support existing hubs of economic development and diversification in the County.
- Support increased access to resources.
- Remove land moratoriums and restrictive land policies in conjunction with the Provincial government.
- Leverage partnerships with organizations such as the Regional Economic Development Initiative (REDI), Invest Alberta, and Mackenzie Applied Research Association (MARA).

Policies

- a) The County should update the County Economic Development Strategy to align with the Province's diversification goals as well as their own and formulate a clear framework for stimulating and providing economic initiatives.
- b) The County should conduct an "Ease of Doing Business" check as part of developing the new Economic Development Strategy that identifies

barriers and challenges faced by Mackenzie County businesses. The findings of this check should become County priority action items.

- c) As part of the Economic Development Strategy update, the County should prioritize existing hubs of economic activity and diversification, such as the Mackenzie Applied Research Association.
- d) New and emerging technologies and industries not contemplated by County plans and policies should be interpreted in the most favourable lens possible within the existing planning framework.
- e) The County should regularly reassess its economic priorities following senior level of government changes to ensure the County best positions its economic prerogatives to benefit from economic development funding streams.
- f) The County will work closely with regional partners on infrastructure projects that increase the economic competitiveness of the region.
- g) New and emerging forms of agriculture, particularly those that take advantage of the County's high crop quality and long summer days, should be embraced by the County.
- h) The County should support agencies operating seed-funding programs offering microloans or grants to residents with new business ideas, supporting entrepreneurs in the County.
- i) Support the acquisition and development of Crown Land where it may be utilized for economic activities, including tourism and recreation.
- j) Ensure land supply can accommodate new and emerging commercial and industrial industries.
- k) Identify and support the development of tourism and recreation opportunities.
- l) Identify and support the development of rail-ready business, especially where new rail-adjacent lands are available.

3.2 EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

With a range of agricultural, forestry, aggregate mining, tourism and oil and gas industries throughout the County, the continued success of these sectors begets investment in both up and downstream operations to support them. Ensuring the work Mackenzie County has already done to coordinate ongoing industrial development is carefully considered and incorporated in the MDP is as important as providing a framework for industrial development that leverages recent investments in critical servicing infrastructure throughout the County.

Already Mackenzie County has developed an industrial growth strategy for La Crete, and sustained advocacy efforts by the County to senior levels of government have resulted in business-supporting investments in natural gas infrastructure that will benefit the County and County residents for decades to come. By committing to creating a municipal environment that recognizes the need to maintain the County's enviable quality of life while supporting industry, Mackenzie County will continue to achieve sustained business growth.

Objectives

- Build on the successes of the La Crete Industrial Growth Strategy and expand it into a County-wide framework for industrial growth.
- Ensure appropriate lands are provided to meet the growing needs of an ever-changing and growing local economy.
- Foster a municipal government that supports intentional employment growth.

Policies

- a) The County should endeavour to prepare a comprehensive Industrial Growth Strategy encompassing the entire County in partnership with REDI Northwest Alberta.
- b) Following completion of the Industrial Growth Strategy the County should revisit and revise the MDP and local area plans to ensure that appropriate lands are provided to meet the County's projected need for different types of businesses.
- c) Where municipal infrastructure may not be able to service potential future employment growth in an area of the County, a business case from the developer should be used to advocate to senior levels of government for support in funding projects that create sizable employment growth.
- d) Mackenzie County should investigate opportunities to develop a streamlined or expedited approvals process for development applications that are well-aligned with the findings of the Industrial Growth Strategy and other relevant municipal policy.
- e) The County should develop a policy that prioritizes spending municipal funds within Mackenzie County to the greatest extent possible so that money spent in the County stays in the County, thereby supporting the local economy to the greatest extent possible.
- f) The County should investigate opportunities to provide economic development training to members of Council and employees of the County so that decision-making is well-informed from an economic growth and opportunities perspective.
- g) Increased utilization and growth of businesses in the County's existing industrial areas are encouraged.
- h) New and year-round tourism opportunities are encouraged to support the expansion of employment growth.

3.3 TOURISM

Mackenzie County enjoys some of the best, most accessible access to Crown Land and nature in all of Alberta. With pristine boreal forest and waterbodies found throughout, there are few better places to recreate in. At the same time, a deep-rooted Indigenous presence and some of the earliest western settlement in the province has provided Mackenzie County with substantial cultural heritage. This combination of nature, unique cultures, and long and storied histories sets the stage for tourism and economic potential that to date has not been fully leveraged. Supporting this growth will help expand the County's economy.

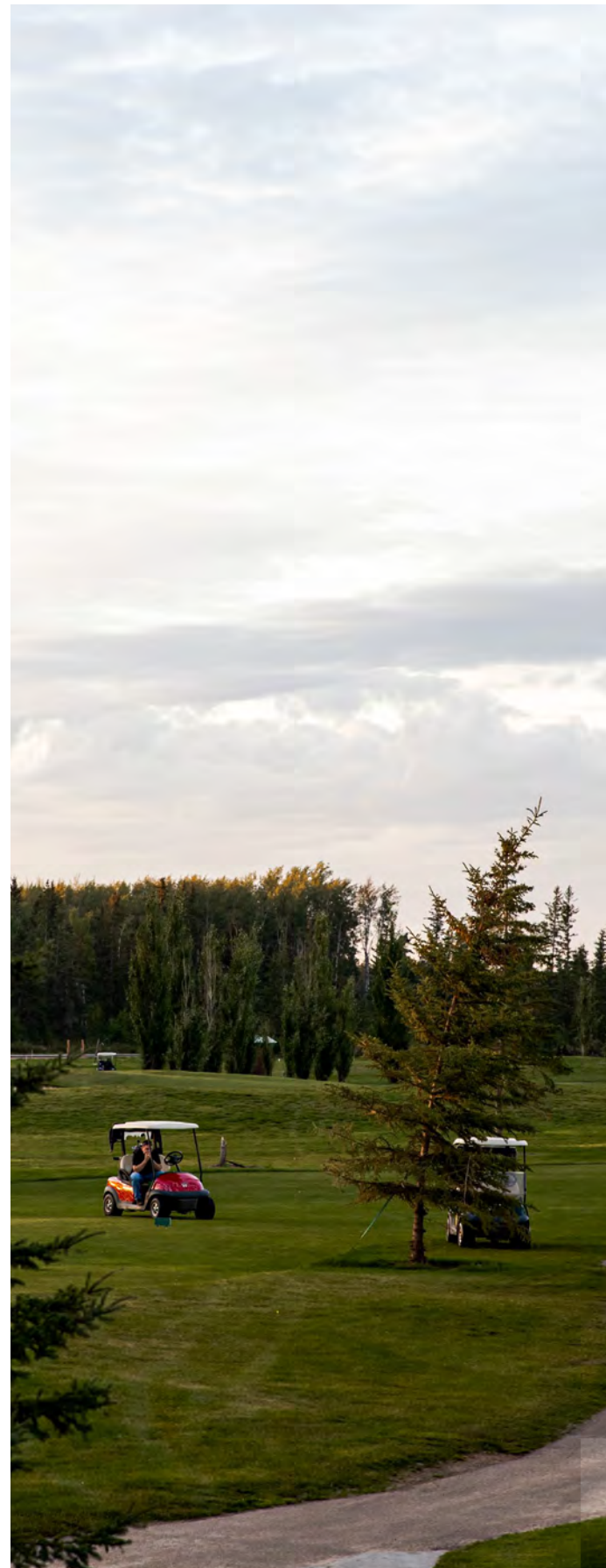
As Mackenzie County continues to grow there is the potential to lay the groundwork for a successful tourism industry that builds on the assets it is already blessed with. Identifying and recognizing the potential of these assets is imperative, as is ensuring the County is working collaboratively with regional partners such as the Mackenzie Frontier Tourism Association (MFTA) to support this form of economic growth in a coordinated way across northwestern Alberta. With a clear sense of where this industry could go, the County can then appropriately allocate funds and apply for funding that will help spur on tourism in Mackenzie to new heights.

Objectives

- Foster Mackenzie County's burgeoning tourism industry and support its growth into a new pillar of the County's economic portfolio.
- Identify along with the MFTA, key tourism and visitor experience focus areas for investment, protection, and promotion throughout the County.
- Ensure the growing tourism sector is appropriately considered and supported in the County's broader strategy for economic development in collaboration with the Regional Economic Development Initiative.

Policies

- a) Mackenzie County should prepare an overarching regional tourism plan in collaboration with MFTA, identifying core areas of focus the County should support to foster a growing tourism industry.



- b) The Regional Tourism Plan should highlight the need for supporting site readiness, shovel-ready projects, increasing lake access, and expanding campground capacity and options.
- c) The County should identify the development of undeveloped areas and natural features and recreational amenities as priority projects for tourism grant applications to senior levels of government.
- d) The County will work closely with local, regional and private partners from across northwestern Alberta when developing the regional tourism plan to ensure it is aligned with and supports existing initiatives in the area.
- e) Where hubs of tourism potential are identified, the County should develop policies to protect the economic potential of these sites, including targeted investment in upgrades to support tourism activities and promotion of these areas through social media channels.
- f) Local area plans for Mackenzie County's communities should be revised where appropriate to ensure that new and existing tourism businesses do not face unnecessary regulatory barriers to the success of their business.
- g) Vacation rentals should be provided through a variety of accommodations such as hotels/motels, campgrounds, bed and breakfasts, Airbnb.
- h) The identification and marketing of trails and recreational access routes is encouraged to inform residents and tourists of County recreation opportunities.



4 SUPPORTING AGRICULTURE



Agricultural and farm practices are a significant economic and cultural driver in the County. Accounting for over 50 percent of Mackenzie County's non-Crown Land, farming is tightly intertwined with the region's identity, history, sense of community, and ebbs and flows of everyday life. As the seasons change, so does the pulse of Mackenzie County, from seeding to harvest.

Providing strong support for the County's agricultural industry today and ensuring its success in the future isn't just a matter of dollars and cents – it's a means for protecting and preserving a way of life and passing on the opportunities this land has provided us to another generation. Achieving these goals requires the County to maintain a clear approach to supporting agriculture over the next 20 years, and this approach is rooted on intentional expansion of agricultural lands, strong supports for agricultural growth and diversification, and protecting agricultural land from development.

4.1 AGRICULTURAL EXPANSION

Intentional and evidence-based expansion of agriculture into newly opened up Crown Land is critical to the long-term sustainability of the region's agriculture. As the successes of existing farms as well as agricultural innovations in new, emerging high-demand crops place ever increasing demand on the opened farmland in the County, there exists a need to explore opportunities to expand the lands available to agriculture themselves.

Expansion improves economies of scale and reduces costs to all farmers in the County, while it simultaneously enables a new generation of farmers to be able to build their own life off the land. As the primary driver of the County's GDP, agricultural expansion is critically important for residents. Mackenzie County has already put considerable thought into how and where the most appropriate expansion of agricultural lands should take place. This work should be leveraged in a coordinated way to ensure the Province is aware of the economic, social, and environmental opportunities by expanding Mackenzie County's agricultural areas.

Objectives

- Expand agricultural lands in a logical way.
- Utilize resources wisely in the conversion of Crown land to Agricultural land.
- Consider broader objectives in the expansion of land, including economic goals, land fragmentation, use of agricultural lands as fire guards, and conversion of highest quality lands.

Policies

a) The County should develop a comprehensive Agricultural Lands Expansion Strategy that builds on the existing work conducted to prioritize lands for conversion of Green Area to White Area for the purposes of agriculture.

- b) As part of an Agricultural Lands Expansion Strategy, the County should clearly develop a framework for preserving lands identified as ecologically important and that should not be converted to agricultural uses.
- c) The Agricultural Lands Expansion Strategy should contemplate not just where the best lands for agricultural uses are located, but also where new agricultural activity can best support overall County growth, industry, and economic development.
- d) The Agricultural Lands Strategy should also encourage participation by the County and agricultural organizations such as Mackenzie Agriculture in Provincial agricultural matters, including through the Provincial Agriculture Task Force and other initiatives as they arise.
- e) The County will take a balanced approach to protecting the natural forests and wilderness landscapes that County residents value while strategically expanding the economic potential of the County's core industry.
- f) The County will actively advocate to the Provincial government to prioritize the conversion of the lands identified in the Agricultural Lands Expansion Strategy.
- g) The County will advocate for the expansion of grazing lands and grazing reserves from the Province.
- h) Support the growth of value added agricultural processing and urban agriculture through the Land Use Bylaw.
- i) In collaboration with industry and non-profit partners, explore ways to attract new agricultural related businesses to strengthen local food production and diversify the agricultural industry.

4.2 PROTECTING AGRICULTURAL LAND

As Mackenzie County continues to grow, incremental urbanization will occur adjacent to existing agricultural lands. Creating an environment that is staunchly supportive of the right to farm and to engage in normal farming practices is critically important to the success of all agricultural operations in Mackenzie County. At the same time, it is also important that development does not actively contribute to furthering conflict points or creating unnecessary tension. Thoughtful planning is required around how and where development should occur, particularly when close by to existing agricultural lands.

Objectives

- Reduce friction between more intensive agricultural uses and residential development.
- Protect against the fragmentation of agricultural land.
- Preserve agricultural land for agricultural uses.

Policies

- a) While Mackenzie County is an overwhelmingly rural County and has largely avoided conflicts between residential areas and agricultural areas, the County maintains a position of support for the right to farm and protection of farmers when conducting normal farming practices.
 - b) To avoid the encroachment of residential areas into agricultural land, multi-lot country residential subdivisions greater than three lots should be located within designated growth areas or areas with existing clustered residential development.
- c) Intensive agricultural uses such as Natural Resources Conservation Board regulated confined feeding operations and rendering and processing operations must not locate within 3.2km (2 miles) of the surrounding Hamlet areas.
 - d) Land uses incompatible with the operation of a confined feeding operation shall not be supported when proposed within the minimum distance of separation of the confined feeding operation.
 - e) Better Agricultural Land shall be preserved for agriculture operations.
 - i) Mackenzie County shall encourage the maintenance of the 64.8 ha (160 acre) quarter-section or river lot as the basic farm unit.
 - ii) Mackenzie County shall encourage the retention and/or development of windbreaks between agricultural parcels and shelterbelts around farmsteads.
 - f) Where lands are taken out of agricultural use, the County should petition the Province to allow the replacement of these lands with new agricultural lands released by the Province.



4.3 AGRICULTURAL DIVERSIFICATION

While one of the oldest industries in the world, agriculture has modernized at a rapid pace over the past several decades. As the rate of change and impacts of technological innovation continue to increase, Mackenzie County is well-positioned to benefit from the opportunities for agricultural diversification that can arise from this changing landscape.

The County already has a distinct edge in trialling new best practices and emerging ideas at the Mackenzie Applied Research Association (MARA) site. The County should continue to actively advocate for recognition of and investment in agricultural applied research.

At the same time, farms themselves are becoming more diversified and vertically integrated than ever before. Agricultural operators seeking to incorporate on-farm diversified uses onto their property should be encouraged, with the County developing a clear roadmap for how and where these businesses can locate when they get to be too big for the farm.

Objectives

- Build upon existing initiatives to support innovation and research in the agricultural sector.
- Support diversified agricultural practices.

Policies

- a) Mackenzie County will prepare an Agricultural Diversification Strategy that is co-created with industry partners, local stakeholders, adjacent municipalities, and MARA.
- b) This Agricultural Diversification Strategy should prioritize provincial and federal funding opportunities, including research grants, for development and investment in northern agricultural research.
- c) The Agricultural Diversification Strategy should explore new economic opportunities related to local production, packaging, and marketing to get products direct to market and derive greater value from the local agricultural economy.
- d) The County should investigate opportunities to brand itself as a “Centre for Excellence in Northern Climate Agriculture,” and seek to partner with post-secondary academic institutions that are thought leaders in the agricultural industry.
- e) Encourage value-added agricultural industries and services to develop in proximity to complementary agricultural producers.
- f) Identify existing initiatives and emerging opportunities that would benefit from additional research, funding, and direction.
- g) The County will develop policy that permits subdivision for diversified, higher intensity, and/or higher yield agricultural operation that requires less land than an agricultural unit of land (quarter section).
- h) The development of agriculture beyond growing field crops is encouraged, such as confined feeding operations, peat farming, and fruit/vegetable greenhouses.

5 GROWING OUR COMMUNITIES



Continued economic prosperity in Mackenzie County requires growing our communities in a strategic and efficient manner. This includes a shared vision between stakeholders outlining the types of new communities desired, how existing communities grow, as well as support for the continued investment in infrastructure and amenities to create a high quality of life. Attractive communities attract new residents and new jobs to the area. The following general policies ensure the County achieves this shared vision.

Policies

- a) Future development in Mackenzie County shall conform to the land use areas illustrated on Map 1, County Land Use.
- b) Mackenzie County encourages early dialogue with the public, development industry, and other affected stakeholders regarding municipal process and policy to ensure mutual understanding and to support shared goals and objectives.
- c) The Land Use Bylaw shall establish standards for development in Mackenzie County and implement the policies of this Plan.

5.1 STRATEGIC GROWTH

Mackenzie County has been experiencing growth in two main growth areas – La Crete and Rural residential areas. Along with community growth comes investment in amenities and services that attracts businesses to the area. The growth of Mackenzie County requires a partnership between the County, existing residents, and developers to share in and mitigate the risks of continued growth. Priority growth areas have been identified on Maps 5 and 6. The growth areas represent areas identified through previous studies and areas that reflect a contiguous and logically serviceable growth pattern that preserve agricultural land and natural features.

Objectives

- Accommodate growth and development that is orderly, meets County guidelines and standards, and enhances Mackenzie County.
- Maintain the rural character of the County, promoting growth that reflects the values of County residents.
- Involve the community in the planning process.
- Ensure an adequate and suitable land base exists to accommodate hamlet growth.



Policies

- a) The County shall monitor growth and maintain a corresponding infrastructure plan to service future growth opportunities.
- b) The County shall prioritize investment in infrastructure to support growth in the following order:
 - i) Development shall be focused within the hamlet boundaries;
 - ii) Development shall be focused within identified and planned growth corridors and nodes on Maps 1, 5 and 6; and
 - iii) Development that is creating a new development node or is within the rural area.
- c) New development in the County should be contiguous to existing developed areas.
- d) Mackenzie County shall plan for development that contributes to its fiscal, social, and environmental well-being. The County shall monitor its growth of commercial, industrial, and residential land and adjust necessary bylaws and plans.
- e) Mackenzie County shall facilitate economic development through planning and implementation strategies developed in Intermunicipal Development Plans, joint agreements, and Area Structure Plans.
- f) Mackenzie County shall discourage the removal of Better Agricultural Land from production and protect from premature fragmentation through the orderly progression of development.

- g) The County shall prioritize infill development within existing serviced areas followed by areas where infrastructure can be economically extended. Development within hamlets shall be orderly, efficient, and contiguous.
- h) Mackenzie County may require the adoption of an Area Structure Plan, to be prepared in accordance with Section 633 of the Municipal Government Act, or the approval of a Neighbourhood Structure Plan, or an Outline Plan prior to subdivision or development. These Plans shall address the following issues to the satisfaction of the County:
 - i) conformity with this Plan, other statutory plans, and the Land Use Bylaw;
 - ii) impacts on adjacent uses and mitigation methods, such as the provision of any suitable buffers or setbacks;
 - iii) proposed land uses and population projections;
 - iv) proposed methods of water supply, stormwater management and sewage disposal;
 - v) access and internal circulation;
 - vi) allocation of municipal and environmental reserve;
 - vii) suitability of the development site in terms of soil stability, groundwater level, and drainage;
 - viii) a method by which developers pay for off-site costs; and any other matters identified by the municipality.
- i) The County will work with the Province to promote access to Crown land through lease or purchase.
- j) The County shall be engaged in the provincial Land Use Framework and encourage development of the Lower Peace Regional Plan.
- k) The County will prioritize the development of sub-regional plans that specifically address the sustainable use of Crown lands.
- l) Within rural growth nodes, multi-lot subdivisions may be permitted.



5.2 LAND USE POLICIES

The County's general land use concept (Map 1, County Land Use) illustrates the general land use intent for Mackenzie County. The general land use concept reflects the constraints and opportunities, existing development patterns, the Green and White areas and future expansion areas. The general land use patterns within the three hamlets are illustrated in Maps 2 through 4 in more detail.

5.2.1 CROWN LAND

A majority of Mackenzie County is owned by the Provincial Crown and is commonly referred to as public lands. These lands, shown in Map 1, are managed by the Province and the use of the land is also set forth by the Province. This area of Mackenzie County is commonly referred to as the Green lands. The remaining land in the County is commonly referred to as the White lands and is land primarily owned by private individuals and corporations. Mackenzie County will continue to work with the Province to advocate for the appropriate use of Crown Lands within the County.

Objectives

- Encourage expanded use of Crown Lands.
- Encourage the expansion of permitted uses on Crown Lands, including industrial use expansion.
- Facilitate public access to Crown Land areas where deemed suitable, desirable, and economically feasible for provincial funding and support.

Policies

- a) Mackenzie County will support the use of Crown Lands for renewable and non-renewable resource development, grazing, tourism, conservation, and recreational use.
- b) Mackenzie County will pursue discussions with relevant government agencies to ensure that they are fully aware of any future proposed use of Crown Lands.

- c) Mackenzie County shall consult on the preparation of an integrated resource management plan between the municipality and the Province.
- d) Land owners shall work with the Province to determine any Crown interests in water bodies prior to any development activity.

5.2.2 AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is one of the main industries in Mackenzie County and is the primary use of land within the White Area outside of the hamlet and surrounding town boundaries. The agricultural areas face continued challenges from the location of other uses in close proximity. It is important to protect the agricultural area from premature fragmentation and non-compatible uses. As the County moves forward over the next 20 years, opportunities to grow the agricultural sector and diversify within the industry will become important to creating additional jobs for the growing population.

Objectives

- Preserve Better Agricultural Land for agricultural land uses.
- Encourage the diversification and sustainable intensification of agricultural practices.
- Minimize the impact of non-agricultural uses on existing agricultural operations.

Policies

- a) The primary use of lands in the White Area, illustrated on Map 1, shall be for agricultural purposes.
- b) In addition to agricultural uses, lands in the White Area may also be developed for highway commercial uses, home-based businesses, public uses and utilities, recreational uses, resource extraction industries, and rural industrial land provided that:
 - i) the proposal is in conformance with statutory plans and the Land Use Bylaw;

- ii) they cannot logically be used for agricultural purposes;
 - iii) they do not disrupt existing agricultural operations (i.e., creation of weed problems);
 - iv) they are suitable in terms of soil stability, groundwater level, and drainage; and
 - v) they are accessible, serviced, or in serviceable locations.
- c)** Mackenzie County supports and encourages sustainable agricultural practices which reduce impacts on the natural environment. These practices include nutrient management, sustainable grazing and riparian management, integrated crop management, responsible pest management and greenhouse gas awareness.
- d)** Confined feeding operations (CFO) should be located in areas where there will be minimal conflict with existing land uses and will not conflict with future urban expansion areas and future country residential areas.
- e)** Confined feeding operations shall meet the minimum distance separation setback as set out in the *Standards and Administration Regulation, (Alta Reg 267/2001)* and shall not be located within
- i) 3.2 kilometres (km) from an adjacent municipality, hamlet, Indian Reserve, or a multi-lot country residential subdivision; and
 - ii) 1.6 km from any federal, provincial, or municipal park, water body, swamp, gully, ravine, coulee, or natural drainage course, and may not be located in an area subject to flooding.
- f)** In consultation with the NRCB, Mackenzie County shall maintain an inventory of all CFOs in the County.
- g)** CFOs should be located on land that is of poor quality for the growing of crops.
- h)** The subdivision of land for specialized or intensive agricultural operations, such as greenhouses and other horticultural businesses, may be considered if the following criteria are met:
- i) a detailed description of the operation, such as a business plan and any other information deemed necessary by the County; and
 - ii) the proposed lot is greater than 4.05 hectares (10 acres) in size.
- i)** The subdivision of land to accommodate a farmstead separation may be permitted if:
- i) the parcel contains an existing, habitable residence; and
 - ii) the proposed parcel size can accommodate a sewer system which complies with Provincial regulations.
- j)** The subdivision of an unsubdivided quarter section is discouraged under the Agriculture land use designation. The County may consider an application to subdivide a quarter section once into a maximum of three parcels of land if the new proposed parcels will be:
- i) located on poor agricultural soils and not subject to flooding or located within a Rural Growth Node as shown on Map 1. No structure should be located below the grade of the road surface;
 - ii) severed from the balance or otherwise not viable to farm;
 - iii) able to accommodate on-site amenities and services and is not below the elevation of the road;
 - iv) not interfere with existing agricultural operations both on the balance and on adjacent lands; and

- v) able to provide legal and physical access and clustered together.
- k) A farmstead separation or a vacant first parcel out of an unsubdivided quarter section may be refused if it interferes or conflicts with:
 - i) agricultural operations in the area;
 - ii) existing or future roads or utilities; or
 - iii) the logical and economic expansion of a nearby urban area.
- l) One dwelling unit is permitted per parcel in the Agriculture zone. When a parcel is located on marginal soils, additional dwellings may be permitted at the discretion of the Approving Authority in accordance with the provisions of the Land Use Bylaw.
- m) In the Agricultural area, land owners may receive Municipal Reserve credit for the dedication of road widening at time of development.

5.2.3 COUNTRY RESIDENTIAL

Mackenzie County continues to face country residential development pressure in the areas surrounding La Crete and Fort Vermilion. The policies in this section look to guide rural residential development in a manner that promotes natural features and protects Better Agricultural Land from fragmentation.

Objectives

- Recognize agriculture, its related activities, and industries as the predominant land use in the rural area.
- Recognize country residential development as a legitimate land use in the rural area, while minimizing potential conflicts with non-residential uses.
- Provide for the establishment of attractive, well-planned, and properly serviced country residential development.

- Maintain the rural character of the County and to allow for growth of the established urban areas.

Policies

- a) To reduce conflicts with hamlet growth and industrial and agricultural operations, and to minimize the cost of maintaining roads and other municipal services, country residential communities shall be located in a well-defined area, as shown on the maps within the hamlet and industrial Area Structure Plans, leaving the rest of the County primarily agricultural or crown land. These country residential areas are located in accordance with the following principles:
 - i) have poor soils (CLI Class 5), except where the use of better soils may be justified because the land is adjacent to urban areas, recreational lakes, or river valleys;
 - ii) do not limit the logical expansion of the hamlets of Fort Vermilion, La Crete or Zama City;
 - iii) located near existing or proposed recreation areas;
 - iv) have potable water supply and are adequately serviced or where municipal servicing can be provided in an efficient and economical manner;
 - v) will maintain the minimum separation distance from sour gas facilities, gas and oil wells, wastewater treatment plants, landfills, existing CFOs and existing sand and gravel extraction sites as defined by Municipal Government Act, AOPA, or any other relevant legislation; and
 - vi) do not create potential land use conflicts by locating adjacent to areas which have existing or are proposed for heavy industrial uses.

- b) Notwithstanding Zama City, Mackenzie County shall require that bareland condominium residential developments meet the same requirements and standards as conventional country residential subdivisions.
- c) Wherever possible, a landscaped or treed buffer should be provided along the boundaries of country residential lots that are located adjacent to non-residential uses.
- d) If a quarter section being subdivided contains significant areas of Better Agricultural Land, those areas must normally be left as a single large parcel, with the residential lots concentrated on the poorer soil.
- e) Mackenzie County supports home-based businesses in residential areas provided that the residential character of the home and the area is maintained.
- f) Mackenzie County shall discourage the expansion of rural country residential settlements that are not identified in an area structure plan.
- g) Any future subdivisions located adjacent to a highway shall take place in a manner that protects the integrity of the highway corridor and may require a service road, subject to the requirements of Alberta Transportation.
- h) The number and type of livestock allowed in country residential neighbourhoods shall be controlled through the Land Use Bylaw.
- i) Rural residential development should tie into municipal servicing where possible.
- j) Redesignation of an agriculture parcel greater than 4 hectares (9.9 acres) in size to a residential use should be discouraged if not located on poor agricultural land.

- k) The Land Use Bylaw will consider larger sized multi-lot development as suitable locations for hobby farms in specific areas of the municipality as a way to reduce agricultural land fragmentation.

5.2.4 HAMLET RESIDENTIAL

Hamlets should be the priority location for new residential development over the next 20 years. This development pattern would ensure protection of agricultural land and be a more efficient development pattern to service with municipal infrastructure. Hamlets should become the location where a range of housing choice is provided to a diverse demographic through well connected residential neighbourhoods. The ability for people to age in place will become important to maintaining a high quality of life for residents. Residential development that is constructed with durable, resilient materials provides for more cost-efficient homes over the life of the building.

Objectives

- To provide for orderly and staged residential growth.
- To allow a full range of housing types to meet the demands of various income groups and lifestyles.
- To promote high standards of design, safety, convenience, and amenity in all residential areas.

Policies

- a) Mackenzie County shall develop residential neighbourhoods in general accordance with the area structure plans for the hamlets of La Crete, Fort Vermilion and Zama City.
- b) All new residential development must be connected to municipal services.
- c) The County will encourage the provision of a mix of residential unit types and sizes within developments and on the same street.

- d) Secondary suites may be supported on large lots in existing residential areas if parking is accommodated on site. Garden suites may be considered where appropriate.
- e) The County will ensure that complete community design principles are incorporated in area structure plans, outline plans, and plans of subdivision including:
 - i) The designation of local commercial nodes and services where appropriate;
 - ii) The provision of complete streets that encourage different modes of travel;
 - iii) A well-connected network of local streets; and
 - iv) High quality parks, open spaces, and the preservation of natural features.
- f) Developers should use current best practices and industry standards when preparing Area Structure Plans or Outline Plans to ensure that development improves the economy, the community, and the environment. Mackenzie County should encourage that the design of neighbourhoods include:
 - i) distinguishable boundaries, recognizable entrances, and one or more neighbourhood focal points to give neighbourhoods distinct identities;
 - ii) varying housing styles and front yard setbacks to generate visual diversity;
 - iii) the provision of deeper lots on collector roads and corner lots to allow greater housing setback to reduce visual and noise intrusion;
 - iv) provide a variety of park types and sizes to meet the neighbourhoods needs;
- v) orienting as many lots as possible adjacent to and within reasonable walking distance of schools, open spaces, and other amenities to permit simple access from residences to neighbourhood amenities;
- vi) providing an internal trail system linking residential uses with adjacent development and connecting to Mackenzie County's trail system;
- vii) designing gradual curves in road alignments to reduce vehicular speeds, coincide with natural contours, and add to neighbourhood attractiveness; and
- viii) preservation and integration of open space and natural features.
- g) Infill housing is supported on underutilized sites provided:
 - i) the development is attuned to the height, mass, scale, and appearance of existing adjacent housing;
 - ii) the development is compatible with adjacent uses;
 - iii) infrastructure capacity is not compromised; and
 - iv) the County provides opportunity for public input.
- h) The provision of all public neighbourhood amenities and infrastructure in manufactured home parks is to be the same standard as in conventional residential areas.
- i) The County will work in collaboration with housing authorities and stakeholders to identify appropriate sites for affordable housing, and medium and high density housing. When determining whether a site proposed for medium or high density residential uses is suitable for such use, the County should use the following criteria as a guide:

- i) adjacent to collector roads, or in convenient proximity to community amenities, schools, recreation opportunities, and commercial areas where the greater amenity and infrastructure capacity can afford to sustain higher densities;
 - ii) dispersed throughout a neighbourhood; and,
 - iii) attuned to the height, mass, scale, and appearance of existing adjacent housing and other lands uses.
- j) Provision shall be made in the Land Use Bylaw to ensure that medium and high density residential uses provide adequate amenity areas that serve the specific density, location, and type of multiple family development.
- k) Home based businesses shall be supported provided they:
- i) meet the intent of the Land Use Bylaw; and;
 - ii) have no significant off-site effects, or those effects are reduced or managed to the satisfaction of the development authority.

5.2.5 COMMERCIAL

Commercial development within the County has primarily been located within the hamlet boundaries. Commercial areas are important to provide jobs and services to residents and visitors to the County. Over the next 20 years commercial development will continue to be primarily located within the hamlets and in the designated highway corridor areas. The following policies direct where and how commercial areas will be developed.

Objectives

- Provide suitable and appropriately located areas for urban and rural commercial activities.
- Emphasize each hamlet as principal retail and service centres in Mackenzie County.

- Minimize conflict between rural and urban commercial operations.
- Broaden the County's economic base by taking advantage of retail opportunities.
- Ensure that Mackenzie County's commercial areas are attractive to tourist, regional, and local customers.

Policies

- a) The location of commercial uses shall be limited to existing commercial areas, the junction of Highway 58 and Highway 88, and the locations shown in the area structure plans for the hamlets of La Crete, Fort Vermilion and Zama City or in the commercial land use areas shown outside the hamlets on Map 1.
- b) Mackenzie County should promote the development of a compact, viable central business district within each hamlet, as illustrated in each of the Area Structure Plans for the hamlets of La Crete, Fort Vermilion and Zama City.
 - i) Mackenzie County should consider the implementation of a hamlet design concept to give a theme to each central business district and may undertake the necessary steps to implement such a theme.
- c) Except for agricultural industries, highway commercial uses, home-based businesses, public uses and utilities, recreational uses, resource extraction industries, and rural industrial land uses, commercial uses shall not be permitted to locate on Better Agricultural Land, unless no suitable alternative location is available.
- d) All commercial developments proposed in the agricultural area shall be evaluated according to the following:
 - i) conformity with relevant statutory plans and the Land Use Bylaw;
 - ii) quality of agricultural land;

- iii) the location and impacts of the proposed development in relationship to other commercial uses in the hamlets;
 - iv) the servicing requirements of the proposal;
 - v) suitability of the site in terms of soil stability, groundwater level, and drainage; and
 - vi) provisions for access and impacts on the transportation network.
- e) Any proposed commercial development adjacent to Provincial highways shall be referred to Alberta Transportation for review and comment prior to a decision being issued by the County.
 - f) At the time of development, the developer shall pay special attention to the scale, design, and colour of commercial uses to maximize the compatibility of development with adjacent uses, and may require the provision of buffers, such as landscaping, fences, and berms.
 - g) Commercial uses catering to large vehicles shall be located outside of the main street or commercial core areas.
 - h) Corridor development should be prioritized in close proximity to hamlets in order to protect existing agricultural uses and development in close proximity to corridors.
 - i) Local commercial uses should be provided in proximity to residential neighbourhoods to support the day-to-day needs of residents.
 - j) Highway commercial uses should be located in areas that do not compete from the commercial uses provided within the hamlets.
 - k) Commercial uses within hamlets shall be concentrated to the main streets and commercial core of the hamlets.
- l) Commercial development located along a main street or within the commercial core shall be of high quality urban design that:
 - i) Contributes to a sense of place;
 - ii) Creates a pedestrian friendly environment and streetscape;
 - iii) Provides parking to the rear or side of buildings; and
 - iv) Aligns with the Streetscape Design Plan in place for the hamlets of Fort Vermilion and La Crete.

5.2.6 INDUSTRIAL

Industrial development within Mackenzie County is an important source of employment and the economy. While oil and gas are the main industry occupying industrial lands, providing industrial land for the agricultural and forestry sectors is also key to the economic stability of Mackenzie County. The following policies ensure industrial development is provided in a manner that is compatible with adjacent uses and can accommodate and attract a variety of industrial development in the future.

Objectives

- Facilitate industrial developments that support agriculture.
- Support a concentrated pattern of industrial development.
- Emphasize the forestry sector as a key component of Mackenzie County's economy and to facilitate its continued growth and diversification.
- Support Mackenzie County's role as a centre for oil and gas exploration and development in the surrounding fields.
- Promote and diversify Mackenzie County's economy by emphasizing manufacturing, transportation, and the supply of industrial goods and services.

- Minimize the negative impacts of rural industrial development.
- Ensure all industrial areas in Mackenzie County are attractive as feasible.

Policies

a) The location of urban and rural industrial uses, apart from farm-based industries and resource extraction operations, shall be limited to existing industrial areas, industrial parks, and the industrial policy areas shown in the hamlet and industrial Area Structure Plans.

- i) Farm-based industries are supported in agricultural areas which include but are not limited to livestock auction marts; concentrated livestock feed operations; grain elevators and feed mills; bulk fertilizer and/or bulk agricultural chemical distribution plants; implement dealerships; crop spraying; greenhouses; and accessory commercial operations.
- ii) Mackenzie County may support resource extraction operations in agricultural areas, which include, but are not limited to the following: cement plants, sand and gravel operations, extraction and processing of natural gas and petroleum, logging and forestry operations, and coal or mineral extraction.
- iii) Support for mineral extraction operations shall be contingent on the mitigation or minimization of the impacts upon adjacent land uses and soil, water, and farming operations.

b) Industrial development may be allowed in locations other than those described in Policy 5.2.6a provided they meet the following criteria:

- i) caters to the needs of agriculture, forestry, or natural resource extraction;
- ii) is not suited to an urban area;

- iii) nuisance impacts to adjacent parcels, such as emissions, noise and traffic generation can be mitigated;
- iv) the site is suitable for the proposed development in terms of soil stability, groundwater level, and drainage;
- v) has minimal transportation and utility servicing requirements; and
- vi) the County provides opportunity for public input.

c) Industrial parks or industrial uses shall:

- i) conform to relevant statutory plans;
- ii) minimize impacts on the surrounding agricultural activities and urban areas;
- iii) have adequate separation distances and transition between industrial and non-industrial uses;
- iv) have simple and direct access to truck routes, highways, or rail networks;
- v) are suitable to the provision of required infrastructure and services;
- vi) have sufficient on-site water storage for the fire protection purposes; and
- vii) can accommodate a variety of types and sizes of industries.

d) Through provisions in the Land Use Bylaw, the County shall ensure that adequate buffers or transitional land uses are maintained between industrial and non-industrial uses when the potential exists for significant land use conflicts regarding noise, vibration, dust, odour, environmental hazards or other safety risks.

- e) Except for home-based businesses and farm subsidiary occupations, rural industrial development shall not be permitted to locate on Better Agricultural Land, unless no suitable alternative location is available.
- f) Mackenzie County may require the preparation of a risk assessment at the cost of the developer, when considering an industrial use or determining the location of a potentially noxious industry that may pose potential environmental contamination or cause nuisance.
- g) Mackenzie County shall require that development and subdivision applications near sour gas facilities meet the standards of the *Subdivision and Development Regulation (Alberta Regulation 43/2002)* and Alberta Energy Regulator guidelines, with respect to minimum separation distances, between sour gas facilities and other land uses.
- h) An adequate inventory of industrial designated sites of various lot sizes and type should be maintained to meet the needs of business and industry.
- i) The County encourages value-added manufacturing and the diversification of industrial uses.
- j) Heavy industrial uses involving dangerous goods shall be located in areas where impacts to commercial and residential uses can be mitigated.
- k) Light industrial uses that are contained wholly within a building may be located adjacent to existing and planned residential development.
- l) Outdoor storage should be appropriately screened or buffered from adjacent roads, highways, and non-industrial land uses.

5.2.7 MIXED USE EMPLOYMENT

Along major roadway corridors there is an opportunity to attract higher density employment uses that may include a mix of commercial and industrial development. The policies in this section encourage development to be more sensitive in design to the prominent location along corridors.

Objectives

- Facilitate employment uses in a more compact form.
- Outline the requirements for improved urban design standards.

Policies

- a) Development should consist of higher quality building materials and urban design that contributes to the public realm.
- b) Promote a mix of commercial and light industrial development at higher intensities.
- c) Higher impact industrial uses, such as pulp and paper mills or aggregate distribution, should not locate along major roads.
- d) Outdoor storage shall be screened from the adjacent roadway so as to not be visible to passing motorists and pedestrians.

5.2.8 SPECIAL PLANNING AREA

A special planning area overlay exists over a portion of Fort Vermilion as illustrated on Map 2, Fort Vermilion Land Use. Lands within the special planning area are subject to flooding by the Peace River and development within this area should proceed only after thorough assessment of all flood hazard impacts.

Objectives

- Enable flood risk mitigation.
- Establish a future land use plan for the area subject to flooding and determine an appropriate density.

Policies

- a) The County and Province should explore opportunities to relocate existing development within the flood hazard area to undeveloped areas within Fort Vermilion outside of the flood hazard area.
- b) A comprehensive land use plan should be developed for the area identified as Special Planning Area to determine appropriate future development.
- c) The County should explore opportunities to expand the open space network along the river and River road.



5.3 UNDEVELOPED AREAS AND NATURAL FEATURES

The enjoyment of undeveloped areas and natural features by residents of Mackenzie County for a variety of recreation, tourism and economic development pursuits is a priority. Natural features exist throughout the County and provide a benefit to the residents of Mackenzie County through the provision of ecological functions such as water regeneration areas and wildlife corridors. Ensuring a light footprint on the landscape is an important aspect of ensuring these areas continue to provide value to residents for generations to come. The policies in this section strike to maintain this balance of recreational, tourism and economic development opportunities with sustainable environmental management practices.

Objectives

- Outline the requirements for the planning and development of land within or adjacent to natural features.
- Identify and mitigate against areas susceptible to flooding, and other significant erosion prone areas.
- Sustainably manage wildlife, waterfowl staging areas, lakes, river shore-lands, valley slopes, unique topographic features, and vegetative types which may be considered environmentally sensitive.
- Maintain public accessibility to lakes and major rivers through the use of reserves at the time of subdivision.
- Improve ease of access to Crown Land for public use and enjoyment.
- Reduce the risk of wildfire, loss of property or loss of life from wildfires.

Policies

- a) Area Structure Plans, Outline Plans, or subdivision applications, as Mackenzie County deems appropriate, shall:
 - i) confirm the location and geographic extent of any natural features, hazard lands, or historic or archaeological sites. A detailed analysis shall be undertaken by a qualified consultant with all costs borne to the developer.
 - ii) integrate natural features into the design of developments to form part of the linked and integrated parks and open space system, including the retention of forests, wildlife corridors, muskeg areas, and the provision of stormwater ponds and parks to form continuous open spaces.
- b) The conservation of natural features by dedication of Environmental Reserve and Municipal Reserve, the provision of Environmental Reserve easements and conservation easements, or by other statutory means as defined by the Municipal Government Act is encouraged.
- c) The Peace River is an important natural feature. Recreation uses such as pathways, trails, campgrounds, and river access for boats should be developed in a manner that balances development with respect for the natural function of the Peace River.
- d) Mitigation measures should be implemented to prevent the contamination of groundwater and elimination of environmentally significant areas as determined by the County.

- e) Wherever possible, continuous greenways with enhanced public access should be created.
- f) In keeping with Alberta's "Water for Life" strategy, watershed functions and surface and groundwater quality should be maintained in conjunction with development and recreation opportunities.
- g) Emergency response plans should be developed in partnership with industry where there are potential impacts to source water protection.
- h) The land surrounding lakes shall be developed in a manner that balances the quality and quantity of water to support the needs of fish and wildlife with recreation opportunities. All lakes, but especially Thurston Lake, Bistcho Lake, Margaret Lake, Pitchimi Lake, Semo Lake, Eva Lake, Rocky Island Lake, Wentzel Lake, Platapus (Johnson) Lake, Wadlin Lake, Hutch Lake and Machesis Lake are regarded as recreational lakes and shall be sustainably managed to maintain the recreational value of the above lakes for future generations.
- i) Natural features should be accessible to people through the incorporation of trails, pathways, and benches.



5.4 OPEN SPACE, RECREATION AND TRAILS

Open spaces and parks are vital to the quality of life in Mackenzie County. They provide an opportunity for passive and active recreation uses and contribute to attracting new residents, businesses, and guests to the County. Cooperation among different partners is key to allowing and promoting the use and maintenance of Crown land for recreational opportunities that will benefit all residents of the region. Continued investment in recreation opportunities will be required for the duration of this plan to promote a health lifestyle. The policies in this section are intended to support the creation and promotion of an integrated network of open spaces and parks that provide the enjoyment during all seasons.

Objectives

- Support an integrated network of open spaces, parks, and pathways within Mackenzie County.
- Promote four season use through a variety of activities and ensure the development and design of open spaces and parks allow for all people in all stages of life to enjoy.
- Support and promote the use of the vast undeveloped public open space occupying the County for recreational opportunities.

Policies

- a) Ensure that the design and development of parks, open space and recreation areas are suited to the goals of the community and within the financial limitations of the County.
- b) An open space plan should be developed for Mackenzie County and the hamlets to identify recreation opportunities and sites. The Plan may include, but not be limited to, the identification of recreation sites and the identification of all-terrain vehicle and snowmobile trail systems, or marina's and/or docks linking recreation sites and urban centres.
- c) Mackenzie County shall require 10% of the gross developable area of a subdivision be dedicated for Municipal Reserves or School Reserves or any such combination as a condition of subdivision approval to ensure that community open space requirements for neighbourhood, hamlet, and County level facilities are provided. Municipal Reserve shall be provided in the form of land unless otherwise determined by the Subdivision Authority.



- d) Where possible, Municipal Reserve should be allocated to lands adjacent to natural features and stormwater management facilities to facilitate public access to these areas.
- e) Mackenzie County shall not accept land as either Municipal Reserve or School Reserve, or any combination of both, that by virtue of its characteristics is more appropriately designated as Environmental Reserve as defined by the Municipal Government Act.
- f) Where there is no need for park space in an area that is the subject of a subdivision, cash in lieu of reserve may be required in accordance with the Act.
- g) Municipal Reserve dedication in a subdivision that borders a lake shall be configured in such a manner that approximately 20% of the lakeshore frontage forms part of the municipal reserve parcel.
- h) Partnerships should be formed to develop recreation opportunities throughout the County. This could include recreation centres, arenas, sports facilities, trails, etc.
- i) Mackenzie County shall locate parks so that open space is easily accessible from every residence and the site maximizes opportunities for pedestrian access and connectivity to other amenities and uses.
- j) Provide an appropriate mix of small, medium, and large parks to meet the varied needs of the County's population.
- k) Design parks to ensure visibility and safety, according to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles.
- l) Prioritize investment in recreational infrastructure based on identified population needs.
- m) Partner with non-profits in the provision of community and recreation services where mutual benefit can be achieved.
- n) Prioritize the investment in community infrastructure that will provide a multi-purpose function.
- o) When new County public facing facilities such as recreation centres and libraries are constructed, they should be designed as barrier free. The County should examine existing County public facing facilities and if feasible add barrier free access.
- p) Abandoned oil and gas dispositions that may be used for public recreation should be acquired for public use.
- q) Public access should be acquired and constructed to connect residents and tourists to recreational opportunities and locations as identified by Mackenzie County.
- r) Promote and include recreation opportunities as a key attraction when developing a tourism plan with the Mackenzie Frontier Tourism Association (MFTA).
- s) Working with the Province, the development of a recreational trail system including staging areas should be established on Crown Land to support off-highway vehicles, hiking, cycling, skiing, wilderness camping, snowmobiling, ice fishing, and horseback riding.
- t) Recreational development opportunities around water bodies on Crown Land should be identified and explored with the Province.

5.5 CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Mackenzie County supports a variety of recreational and cultural amenities in partnership with the hard work and dedication of non-profit and volunteer groups across the region that contribute to the quality of life of residents in the County. These amenities include the historic sites across the County, the community recreation centres, schools, libraries, museums and other community services. In addition, a large array of outdoor activities are available in Mackenzie County that draw tourists from all areas of Alberta and beyond.

Objectives

- Support the preservation of historic resources within Mackenzie County.
- Promote Mackenzie County's historic sites and recreation areas as tourist destinations.
- Continue to grow partnerships with non-profit and volunteer organizations to provide these recreational and cultural services while being efficient.

Policies

- a) Mackenzie County should:
- i) Ensure that identified and designated federal, provincial, and municipal historic resources are protected from adverse impacts associated with on-site development and adjacent land uses;
 - ii) Collaborate with communities, community groups, organizations, and individuals to promote the preservation of historic resources; and
 - iii) Work with the Province for advice and information regarding existing and/or potential historic sites.
- b) Encourage the adaptive reuse of existing heritage structures.

- c) Support and promote cultural programs and activities that create a sense of pride and local identity.
- d) Promote the preservation of historically significant buildings and support local culture and heritage initiatives.
- e) Mackenzie County should:
 - i) promote and celebrate areas which have been identified as having significant historic or recreation potential.
 - ii) prepare or amend management plans for historic or recreational areas; and
 - iii) prepare economic or partnership development plans to help ensure the long term viability of historic sites and recreation areas.





5.6 MOBILITY AND SERVICING

5.6.1 TRANSPORTATION

Mackenzie County's roads, railways and airports are integral to how people move within and to and from the region. The rural road network in Mackenzie County mostly utilizes the Provincial Highway network. Highways 35, 58, 88 and 697 link Fort Vermilion, La Crete and Zama City to the Towns of Rainbow Lake and High Level and to the Northwest Territories and the rest of Alberta. The intent of the policies in this section is to provide for the efficient movement of people and goods.

Objectives

- Provide an efficient and effective transportation network for the movement of people and goods in Mackenzie County.
- Guarantee sufficient right-of-way provision for roads to allow their expansion in the future, if necessary.
- Strive for an attractive roadside environment.
- Increase active transportation modes over time within hamlets.

Policies

a) The County should prepare and maintain a Transportation Master Plan guiding future improvements and additions to the County's transportation system, including along potential national economic corridors.

- b) A Rural Road Transportation Plan should be prepared as part of the Transportation Master Plan in order to support proper corridor planning.
- c) The County should work with Provincial and Federal governments to secure funding for highway network maintenance and enhancement, including a bridge at Tompkins Landing or other appropriate Peace River crossing location.
- d) All Area Structure Plans, Outline Plans, rezoning, subdivision and development applications that include land located within 1.6 kilometers of a highway shall be referred to Alberta Transportation for comment.
- e) In the evaluation of subdivision and development proposals, the need for widening and/or upgrading of any roads adjacent to the proposal shall be determined at the time of development application. All road upgrades are to be included as part of the development.
- f) All rural roads should have a 30 metre road right-of-way.
- g) A subdivision or development permit should not be approved unless the lot has access to a maintained public road. Access through an easement is not preferred.

- h) The incorporation of pedestrian and bicycle paths designed as integral parts of municipal parks and neighbourhoods is encouraged.
- i) Opportunities to increase active modes within the hamlets should be explored.
- j) Where a subdivision or development is proposed within 100m of a railway line, the County may require the developer to build berms and/or fences to separate residences from railway lines.
- k) Cooperation should occur with adjacent municipalities and interested government agencies regarding the protection of railway, airport, road network and other transportation corridors.
- l) Area structure plans and outline plans should provide the minimum building setback and buffering from active rail lines in accordance with best practices and the land use bylaw.
- m) The expansion and increased usage of the airports and aerodromes is supported.
- n) The following land uses may develop adjacent to an airport if the use does not adversely affect the airport operation:
 - i) General agricultural operations;
 - ii) Recreational land uses; and
 - iii) Airport industrial lands.
- o) Potential new rail and highway corridors should be identified and protected from non-compatible development.
- p) The rural road network should be developed while considering future access requirements.

5.6.2 UTILITIES

Utilities, such as waste, water, and power, are essential to support businesses and residents in Mackenzie County. Utilities should be well planned and integrated with future growth areas, as well as consider the impacts of a changing climate and economy. The intent of the policies in this section is to provide quality, safe, and efficient utilities to serve the needs of Mackenzie County.

Objectives

- Ensure the efficient and effective provision of water supply, sewage treatment, stormwater run-off control, and sanitary waste disposal facilities to County residents.
- Responsibly maintain and upgrade existing utility systems as budgets allow.

Policies

- a) A comprehensive long-term plan to upgrade and expand water supply and sewage treatment systems in alignment with budget priorities should be established.
- b) When locating water and sewer mains, and when consulted by external agencies regarding oil or gas pipeline or major power transmission line routes, the County should emphasize the location of these in common corridors wherever possible.
- c) All lots of a proposed subdivision are required to be connected to municipal water and sewer systems when the lots are developed except where, in the County's opinion, the proposed subdivision is far enough away from existing trunk mains that extension of the mains is not economically feasible. Where connection of new lots to municipal water and sewage systems is not intended, yet in the County's opinion, such connection is desirable and feasible, the proposed development may be refused.

- d) Additional water connection points and water fill stations should be provided in strategic locations.
- e) Water conservation measures which may reduce or eliminate water utilities expansion requirements are supported.
- f) Land developers should identify wetland areas as part of their subdivision applications. Mackenzie County may negotiate conservation easements or require Municipal or Environmental Reserve and/or Environmental Reserve Easements covering wetland areas.
- g) Parcel sizes must be able to accommodate on-site services such as water distribution and sewage collection where necessary.
- h) Drainage schemes that may increase the intensity of runoff are discouraged.
- i) Any multi-lot development which depends on a private water system must meet the full standards of regulatory agencies, and no contingent liability shall fall upon the municipality.
 - i) Any private water system serving multiple lots must be capable of supporting itself financially through the contributions of the landowners who benefit from it and must be set up on a proper legal basis.
 - ii) Any private water system must be owned and operated by an organization which has the legal right to levy charges on its customers.
- j) The use of low pressure sewer systems in low density developments may be considered as a cost-effective alternative to gravity lines.
- k) When a lot containing an existing house is to be subdivided from a larger parcel, the County will require all new and existing lots as part of the subdivision application to comply with servicing standards in place at the time of subdivision.
- l) Solid waste disposal sites are to be located and developed in a manner that shall minimize any impacts on surrounding land uses.
- m) Recycling and composting of waste where appropriate and financially feasible is encouraged.
- n) The integrity of pipelines and utility corridors shall be maintained, and shared corridors created where possible, while planning for growth and development.
- o) Large utility structures, such as cellular towers, microwave towers, radio towers, wind turbines or similar infrastructure, shall be located in non-residential areas, with Crown Land preferred. Small cellular towers that do not extend beyond the height of a principal structure may be located in residential areas.
- p) Guidelines with respect to minimum separation distances between sour gas facilities and other land uses through the subdivision and development process as determined by the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) shall be applied.
- q) Pipeline easements or rights-of-way in a proposed subdivision shall only be accepted as Municipal Reserve if it can be shown that the easements or rights-of-way shall form part of a trail system which is integral to a residential subdivision.
- r) Large, land intensive electrical generating facilities should not be located on agricultural lands.





6 RESPONDING TO A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

6.1 SAFE & RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

The ability of municipalities to respond to external factors is becoming more important to ensure safe and resilient communities. External factors directly affecting Mackenzie County include a changing climate and natural hazards, changes in the energy sector and changes in technology. The County has very little control over these external factors but can prepare resilience plans, construct new infrastructure, and adjust operationally to help mitigate negative impacts from these external forces. The following policies guide the County in how to adapt and respond to a changing environment and remain resilient.

Objectives

- Establish natural hazard, economic and technological resiliency to ensure safe communities.
- Mitigate against a changing environment through the design of County infrastructure and County operational practices.

- Identify and support environmental resilience within at risk local communities.

Policies

- a) A resilience plan that addresses the potential hazards, probability of occurrence and mitigative action over the life of this plan should be developed for the County.
- b) Consider natural features such as green infrastructure, recognizing the economic, social, and environmental benefits that they provide to the community.
- c) Encourage developers to retain existing wetlands rather than providing compensation to the Province.
- d) Naturalize stormwater management facilities wherever possible to enhance their ecological value and recreational benefits.

- e) Increase the use of native, low-maintenance, and low-water species in the design and maintenance of parks.
- f) Encourage durable building materials and energy efficiency in building design.
- g) The County shall promote natural hazard awareness and solutions to mitigate against those hazards where appropriate.
- h) Infrastructure plans should consider the long term financial impacts to the County.
- i) Work with federal and provincial governments and external partners to ensure environmental and economic sustainability are considered in decisions affecting the County.
- j) Work with other levels of government to secure sustainable sources of municipal funding for both the capital and operational needs of the County.
- k) Accommodate growth through the optimization and use of existing infrastructure and services. New infrastructure should be provided and managed in an affordable and cost-effective manner over the long-term life cycle of the asset.

6.2 FLOOD HAZARD RESILIENCY

Due to recent flood events that have impacted the County's communities, in particular Fort Vermilion, a rational and responsible approach to land use management is required. To protect the residents of the County, their homes, and their livelihoods, additional policy is included to provide clear direction for land use and structural setbacks in accordance with Provincial flood hazard mapping.

Objectives

- Establish safe setback areas that respond to recent flood events and Provincial Flood Hazard Maps.
- Identify and promote, where appropriate, limited and low-impact recreational amenities within flood hazard areas.
- Support the relocation of flood impacted residents within Fort Vermilion.

Policies

- a) Incorporate updated Provincial hazard area mapping into County planning processes as it becomes available.
- b) Provide appropriate direction and development restrictions within the Land Use Bylaw that recognize the Floodway and Flood Fringe areas, as determined by the latest Province of Alberta Flood Hazard mapping.
- c) No development shall take place within the floodway or flood fringe, with the following exceptions:
 - i) Essential roads and bridges that must cross the flood risk area;
 - ii) Flood or erosion protection measures or devices;
 - iii) Pathways that are constructed level with the existing natural grades;
 - iv) Recreation facilities, provided there are no buildings, structures, or other obstructions to flow within the floodway; and
 - v) Essential utility infrastructure that is required to be located in the flood risk area for operational reasons.
- d) Update existing ARPs and ASPs to conform to the new flood mitigation policies within the MDP and the Land Use Bylaw.

- e) Proposed development within the floodway or flood fringe areas should provide a flood hazard risk study, including hazard mapping where appropriate and prepared by a qualified professional. The study should:
 - i) Identify areas at a flood risk of 1:100 or greater, and those having a lesser flood risk between 1:100 and 1:1000
 - ii) Demonstrate that there is sufficient developable area for the proposal after excluding flood way and flood fringe areas.
 - iii) Provide recommendations on locating more vulnerable developments towards lower flood risk areas (greater than 1:500, where possible) and on implementing other measures that would limit flood risk.
- f) Mackenzie County shall consider the use of flood hazard lands for such uses as recreational, agricultural, or similar such uses not requiring permanent structures, providing the developer:
 - i) submits a geotechnical study regarding the subject land;
 - ii) uses appropriate flood-proofing techniques as described in the Canada-Alberta Flood Damage Reduction Program;
 - iii) indicates to the satisfaction of the County that the flood hazard has been mitigated; and
 - iv) notwithstanding the above policies, development associated with substances of a chemical, hazardous, or toxic nature, which would be an unacceptable threat to public safety if damaged as a result of flooding, shall not be permitted to locate in the 1:100 year flood hazard area.
- g) Mackenzie County shall maintain appropriate development setbacks from lake shores, river valley breaks, an escarpment or other critical slopes as identified by Alberta Environment and Parks and/or geotechnical studies provided by the developer, to the satisfaction of the County that development can be safely undertaken.
- h) Mackenzie County should, as a condition of subdivision approval, require an environmental reserve or environmental reserve easement from the high water mark of waterbodies and/or the top of bank of watercourses to protect development from flooding and waterbodies from source water protection.
- i) The County shall monitor flood activity over time with the latest information from the Province of Alberta, and amend all relevant policies within the MDP, ARPs, and ASPs, as well as the Land Use Bylaw, in order to comply with Provincial regulations and ensure that County residents are provided with clear land use and development direction as well as protected from future impacts of flood events.
- j) The use of shelterbelts and treed buffers is promoted in low lying areas to mitigate against the risk of flooding.
- k) All rural lots should be developed in a manner that creates positive surface water drainage, to avoid flooding of structures.

6.3 FIRE HAZARD RESILIENCY

Mackenzie County's location in the boreal forest makes the County susceptible to wildfire hazards annually. In the County this risk includes forest fires and grassland fires. Wildfires can impact human health, wildlife habitat, infrastructure, and buildings. To protect the residents of the County, the policies included in this section are to help prevent and mitigate the impacts of wildfires when they occur.

Objectives

- Protect communities against wildfire hazards.
- Identify and promote FireSmart principles across the County.

Policies

- a) Existing development and infrastructure should be adapted in accordance with FireSmart principles to reduce the risk of future wildfire hazards.
- b) The County should prepare a county-wide and intermunicipal fire protection plan.
- c) Agricultural lands may be used as a fire protection measure in higher risk areas and next to development.
- d) The use of grazing leases as an approach to implementing FireSmart mitigation strategies should be encouraged.
- e) Developers must recognize FireSmart: Protecting Your Community from Wildfire design principles when preparing Area Structure Plans, Outline Plans, and subdivisions, and minimize the potential for wildfire damage through:
 - i) the provision of recreational facilities along the outer perimeter of the community so that the developed portions may be separated from undeveloped areas;
 - ii) the provision of a fire guard which will serve as a buffer between communities and the surrounding natural area; and
 - iii) the development of trails between developments and surrounding forested lands which may be used in an emergency for fire prevention purposes.
- f) The following may be required as conditions of approval for residential development which is too remote to be adequately protected by existing fire fighting services:
 - i) the provision of adequate water supplies for fire fighting purposes;
 - ii) the use of fire resistant building methods;
 - iii) the installation of spark arresters on all chimneys; and
 - iv) the provision of an emergency access to developments to help prevent property damage and the potential for loss of life.



7 BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Building strong relationships with neighbouring First Nations, Métis communities and adjacent municipalities can contribute to collaborative planning and economic outcomes that are mutually beneficial to all. The development of strong partnerships with local associations and non-profit organizations such as agricultural societies, the Mackenzie Frontier Tourist Association, the Regional Economic Development Initiative and the Mackenzie Applied Research Association are also important to create a singular voice when targeting strategic directives. Strategic partnerships can lead to greater advocacy about the benefits of living, working, and playing in Mackenzie County.

The Mackenzie County – Town of High Level Intermunicipal Development Plan recognizes that intermunicipal cooperation is necessary to attract private investment, enhance economic activity and ensure that land for new development is viable and sustainable. Each municipality has a mutual interest in planning and development proposals near their shared boundaries and ensures that each have an interdependent role in rendering decisions for such proposals. The policies in this section provide

direction on cooperative efforts between municipalities and other jurisdictions to achieve mutual objectives that benefit the residents and businesses in Mackenzie County.

Objectives

- Maintain mutually beneficial relationships with adjacent municipalities, First Nations, or other stakeholders to achieve the objective of regional cooperation and regional planning.
- Facilitate intermunicipal communication and referral of planning and development applications.
- Encourage the preparation of Intermunicipal Development Plans and joint agreements between Mackenzie County and adjacent municipalities or other stakeholders to provide infrastructure services.
- Expand the range of facilities and services available to residents through partnerships with adjacent neighbours and other levels of government.

Policies

- a) Communication and co-ordination should occur on a regular basis with adjacent administrations to recognize and address matters of mutual interest.
- b) Development applications shall have regard for regional planning policies of the Province of Alberta, the Provincial Land-use Framework, approved intermunicipal development plans or joint intermunicipal agreements when considering Municipal Development Plan amendments, Land Use Bylaw amendments or other development proposals.
- c) Mackenzie County, when deemed necessary, should work with adjacent municipalities to prepare new intermunicipal development plans or joint intermunicipal agreements and subsequently review or update the Plan or agreements accordingly.
- d) Planning and development applications that are subject to the Mackenzie County – Town of High Level Intermunicipal Development Plan and are located within the area shown in Figure 3, shall be directed by the policies of the Intermunicipal Development Plan.
- e) The following development proposals shall be referred to adjacent municipalities:
 - i) matters of future annexation;
 - ii) the adoption or amendment to an intermunicipal development plan, or this Municipal Development Plan;
 - iii) a proposed Land Use Bylaw, proposed amendments to the Land Use Bylaw; and
 - iv) any referral as set out in an intermunicipal development plan.
- f) Development that would impede the operation of existing and proposed sewer lagoons and waste handling facilities should be refused in order to protect the public investment in these facilities.
- g) The cost sharing of infrastructure for development should be explored with adjacent municipalities where it can provide an economic, social or environmental benefit.
- h) Mutual notification frameworks should be developed with adjacent communities and neighbours to identify if, when and how notification should be provided when development is proposed in proximity of jurisdictional boundaries.
- i) Partnerships should be maintained and celebrated with non-profit community groups and new partnerships should be explored to further services provided in the community.

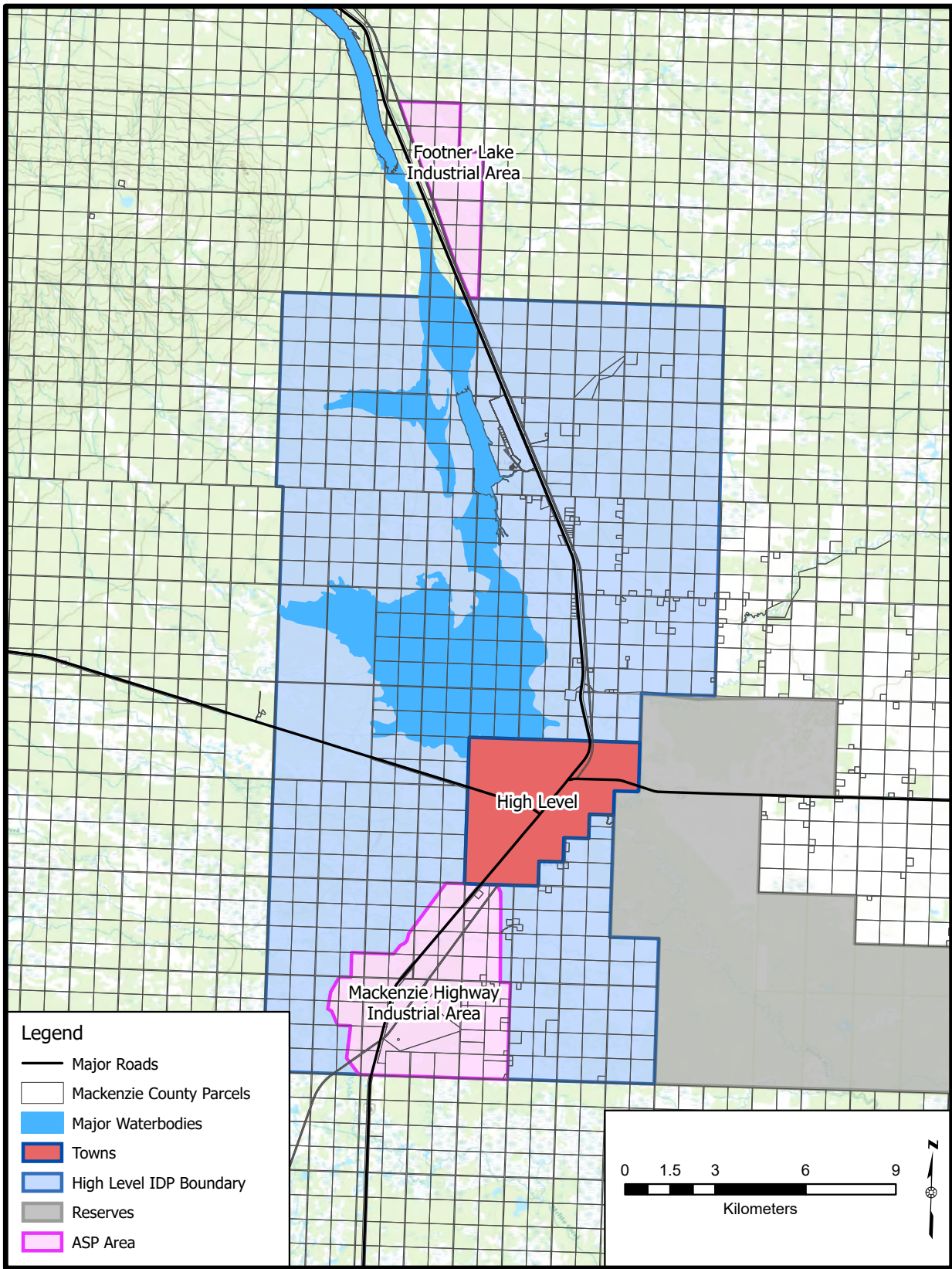


Figure 3: High Level Intermunicipal Development Plan Boundary

PART III

IMPLEMENTATION

8 IMPLEMENTATION

8.1 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The Municipal Development Plan (MDP) is a dynamic document that guides strategic decisions about the future growth and development of Mackenzie County. As such, when priorities and conditions change in the County, the MDP should be kept current and up to date through amendments to the plan and implementation of its policies.

Policies

- a) The County through their budget process will determine the timing of investment required to implement the MDP's policies.
- b) All statutory plans adopted by the County shall be consistent with the Municipal Development Plan.
- c) The policies of the MDP shall be implemented through the adoption of an Area Structure Plan or other statutory plan, an outline plan or other non-statutory plan and through the Land Use Bylaw.
- d) The policies of the MDP should be considered comprehensively and a single policy is not intended to take priority over another in the implementation of this plan.
- e) Area Structure Plans may be initiated by the County or by a private landowner and shall follow the appropriate procedures as outlined in the Municipal Government Act.
- f) If amendments are required, they shall be carried out through a transparent public consultation process.

8.2 MONITORING AND REVIEW

On-going monitoring is necessary to ensure the policies within the MDP are achieving the County's strategic outcomes. A comprehensive review of the MDP should occur every ten years with a targeted review of select policies occurring every five years. The policies below are intended to help keep the MDP current and able to address land use policy issues that arise as Mackenzie County moves forward with this plan.

Policies

- a) A comprehensive review of the Municipal Development Plan shall be undertaken every five years to consider administrative updates, emerging trends, implementation progress, and policy gaps.

9 GLOSSARY

9.1 GLOSSARY

Active Transportation Modes includes walking and cycling, as well as other forms of human powered transportation, including rollerblading, longboarding, skateboarding, jogging, among others.

Barrier Free is the design of buildings and public spaces that remove or mitigate physical accessibility barriers for persons with vision, hearing, communication, mobility, or cognition challenges.

Better Agricultural Land are those lands that are designated as Class 1, 2, 3 or 4 by the Canadian Land Inventory Soil Capability for Agriculture and may be confirmed through site inspections and/or independent soils analysis.

Complete Streets are streets that are designed to enable safe access for pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and transit.

Confined Feeding Operation means fenced or enclosed land or buildings where livestock are confined for the purpose of growing, finishing, or breeding by means other than grazing, and any other building or structure directly related to that purpose but does not include residences, livestock seasonal feeding and bedding sites, equestrian stables, auction markets, race tracks, or exhibition grounds.

Farmstead Separation is the subdivision of a secondary farm residence from the larger quarter section and principal farm residence.

Growth Nodes are locations identified on Map 1 where the subdivision of agricultural land into smaller lots for residential and non-residential uses may be permitted at the discretion of the County.

Gross Developable Area (GDA) is defined, for the purpose of this Plan, as the total area of the parcel of land less the land required for environmental reserve and/or environmental reserve easement.

Land Use Framework is the planning approach being undertaken by the Province to establish an eventual regional plan for the Lower Peace Region.

Minimum Distance of Separation is the provincially regulated setback established between a confined feeding operation and the neighbouring residence that is in existence at the time the application is submitted, and is intended to minimize the impacts of odour. Minimum distance of separation is measured from the outside walls of neighbouring residences to the point closest to the confined feeding operation's manure storage facilities or manure collection areas.

Natural Features are unmodified landscapes that may include environmentally significant areas such as rivers, waterbodies, hills, cliffs, mountains that have not been impacted by human development.

Resources refers to the abundance of natural resources surrounding Mackenzie County, including but not limited to forests, oil and gas reserves, natural beauty with tourism potential, and more. Accessing these resources is important to the long-term economic success of the County, and requires increased government funding, transportation corridors, and Crown Land access.

Secondary Suite is a second dwelling unit contained within a single-detached or duplex or garage.

Statutory Plan is a plan adopted by a municipality under Division 4 of the Municipal Government Act.

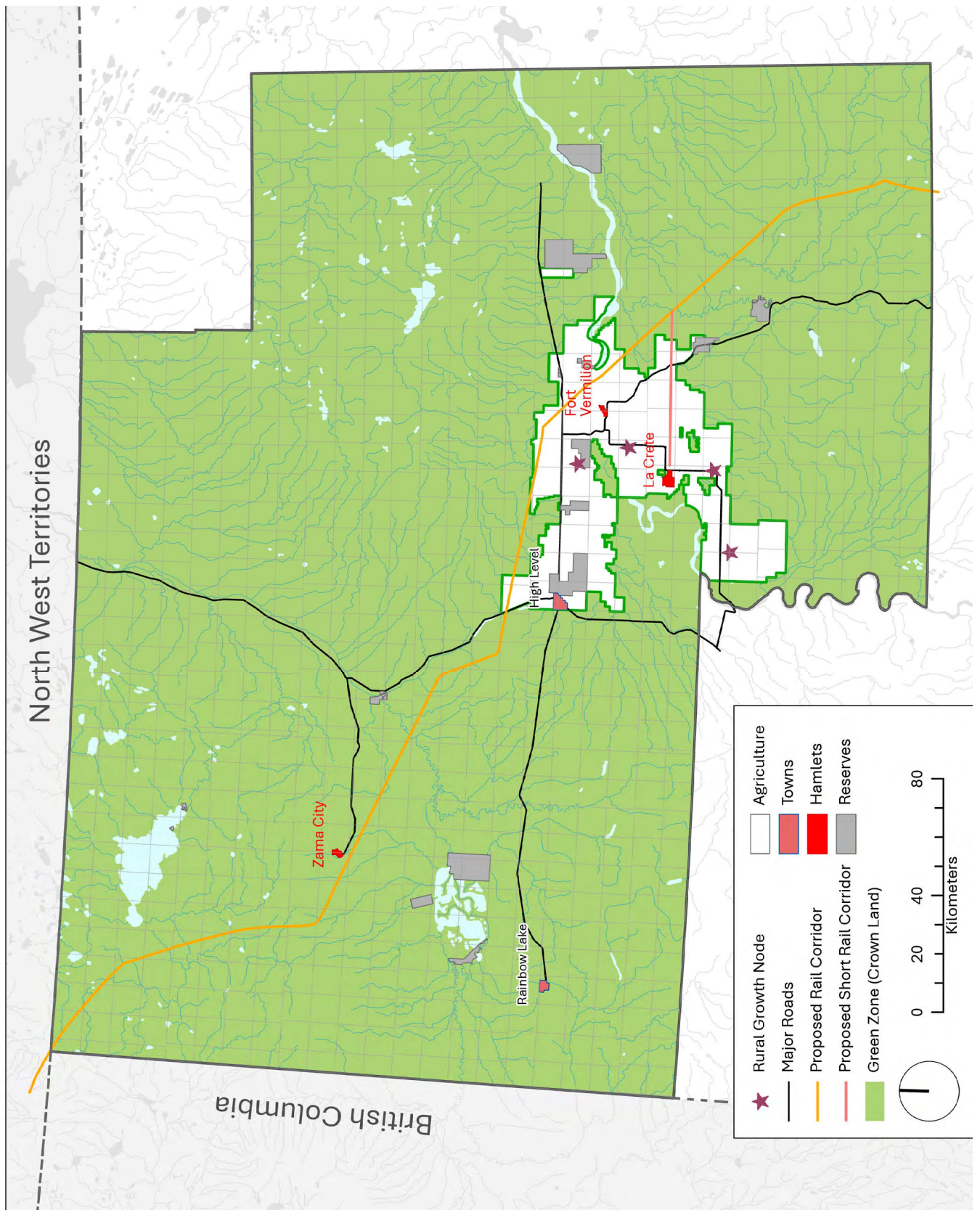
Un-Subdivided Quarter Section is a titled area of:

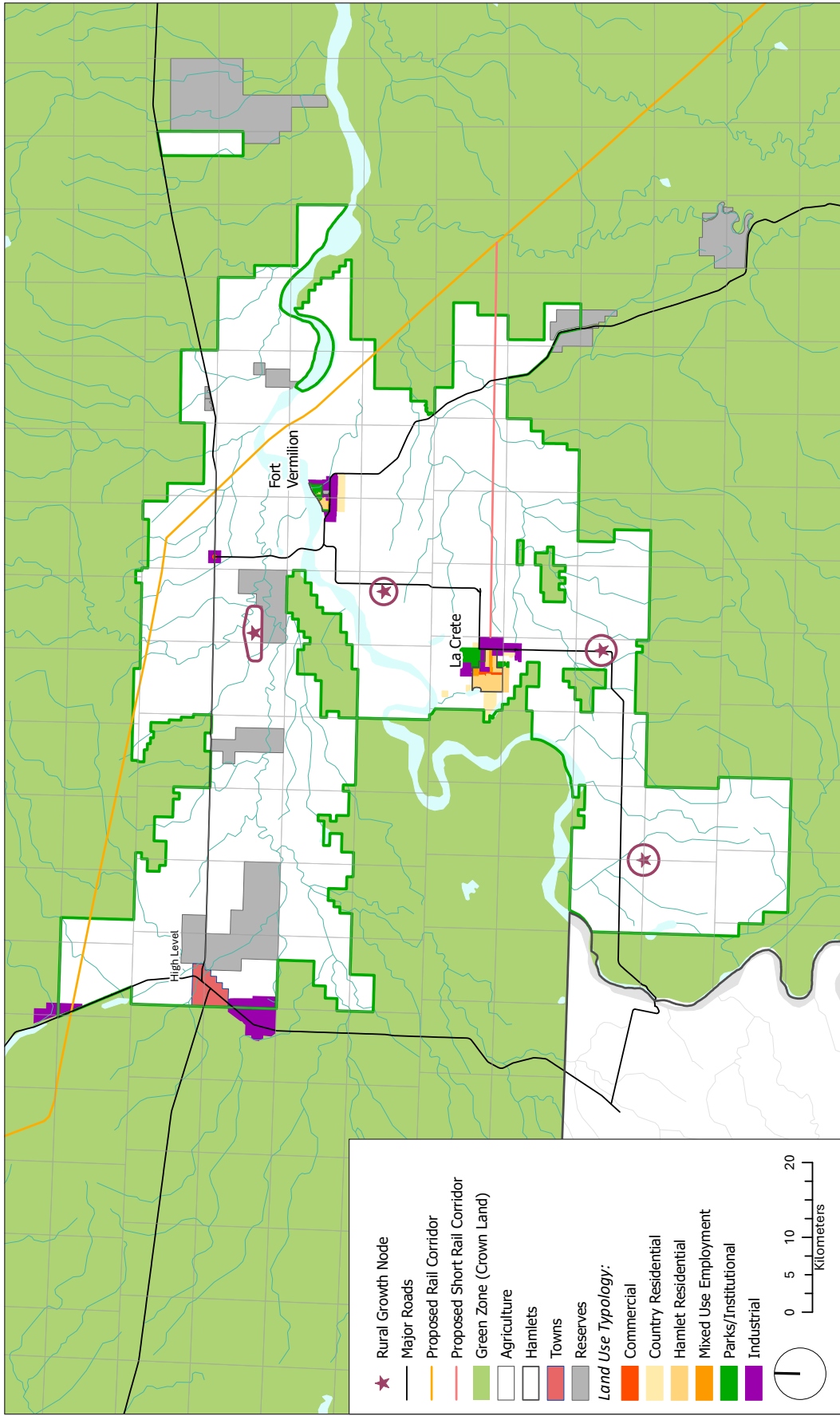
1. 64.7 hectares (160 acres) more or less;
2. Lake lot, river lot or settlement lot that has not been subdivided except for public use; or
3. A gore strip greater than 32.38 hectares (80 acres) in size, that has not been subdivided, excluding subdivisions for boundary adjustments, road widening, and public uses such as a school site, community hall, and rights of way of roads, railroads, and canals.

Value-Added Agriculture is the processing of agricultural products and services into secondary products to increase overall product value.

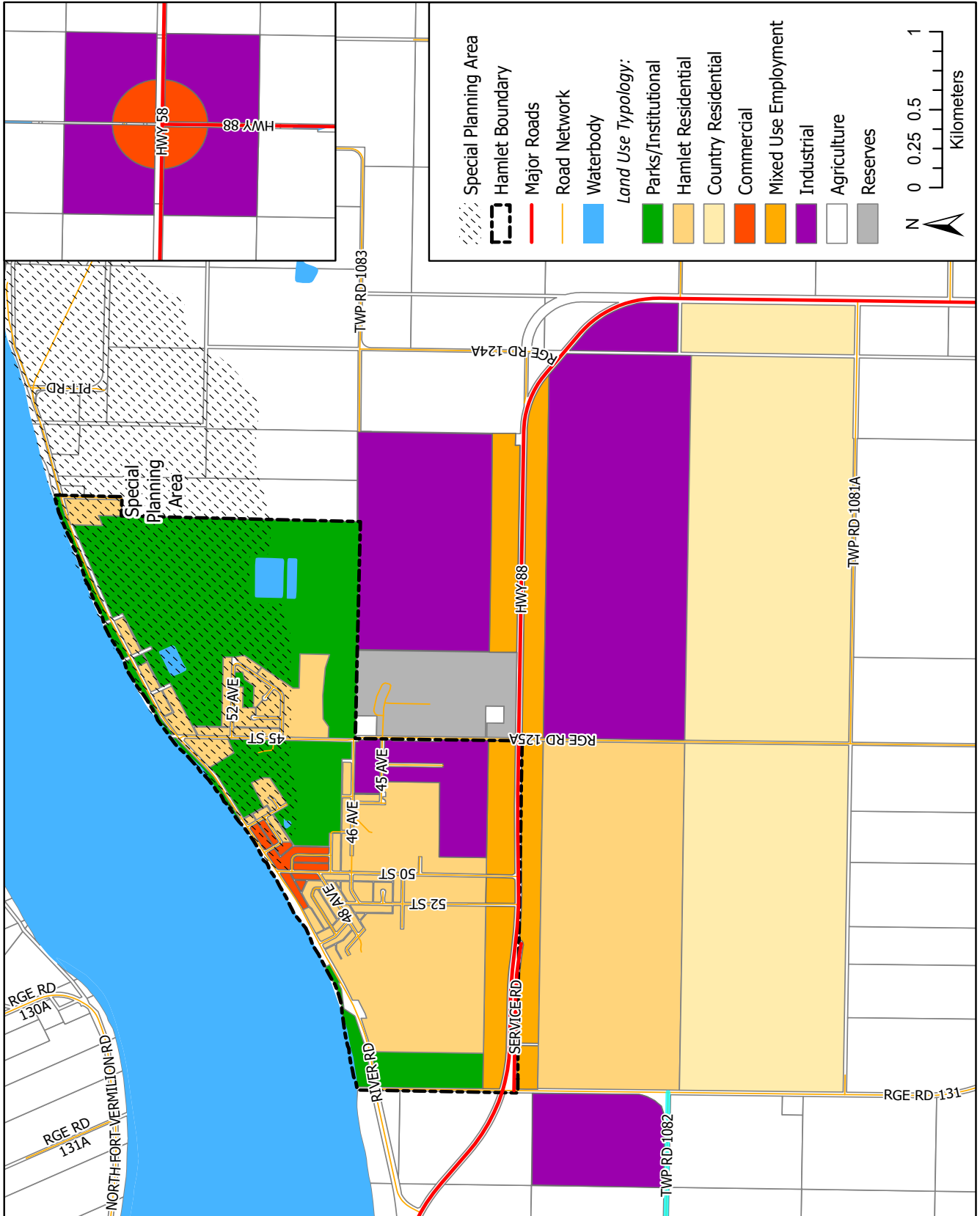
10 MAPS

Map 1 - County Land Use

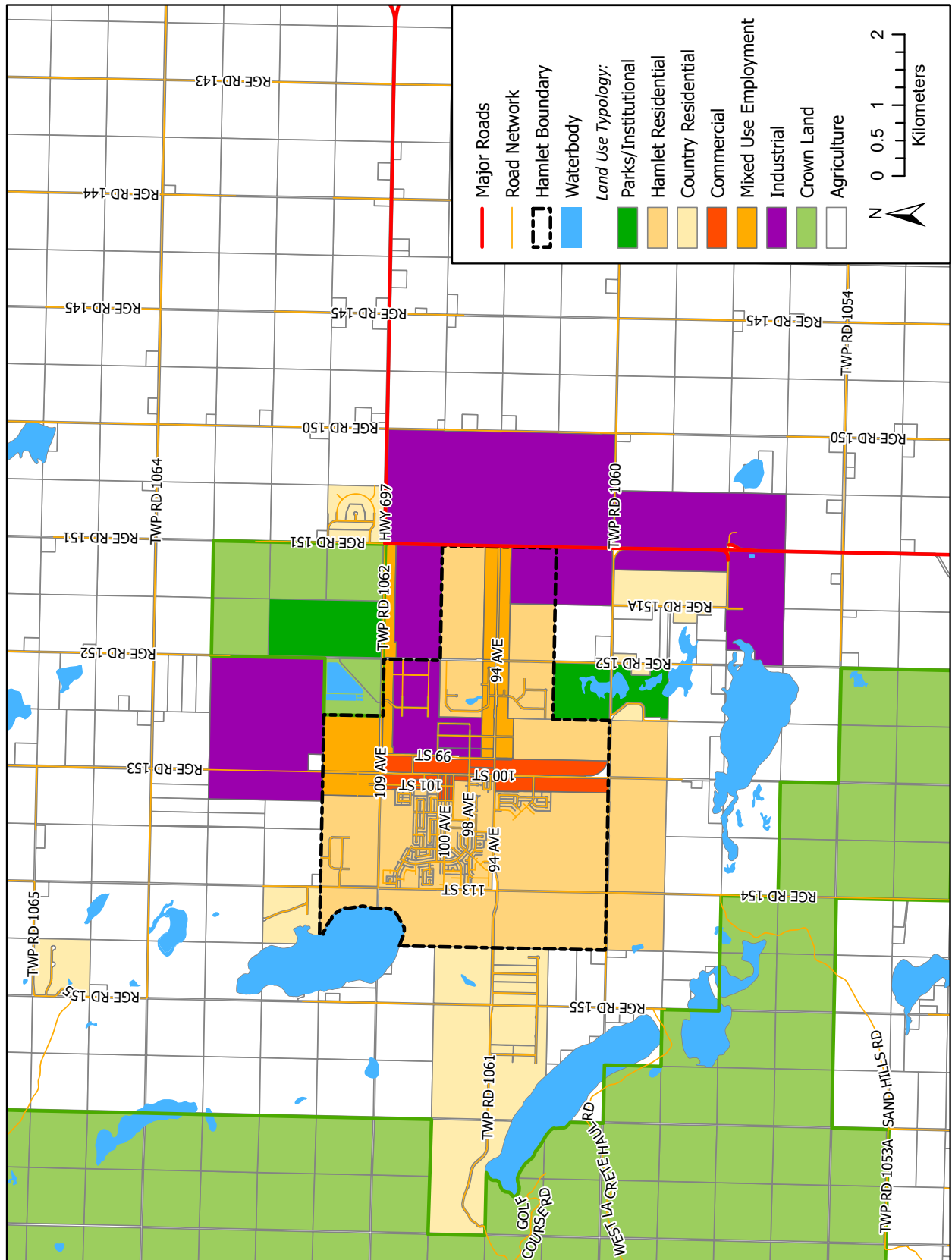




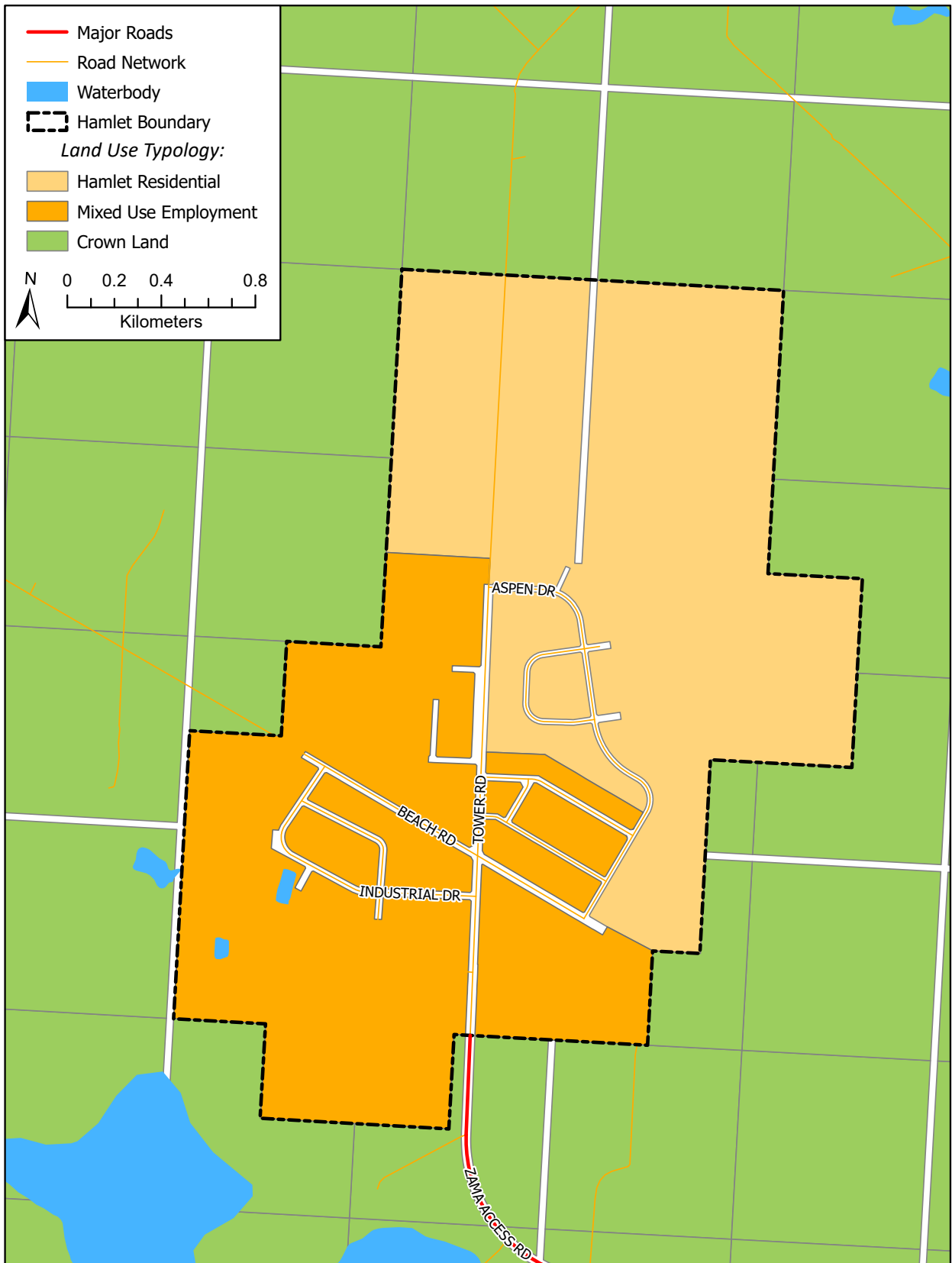
Map 2 - Fort Vermilion Proposed Future Land Use



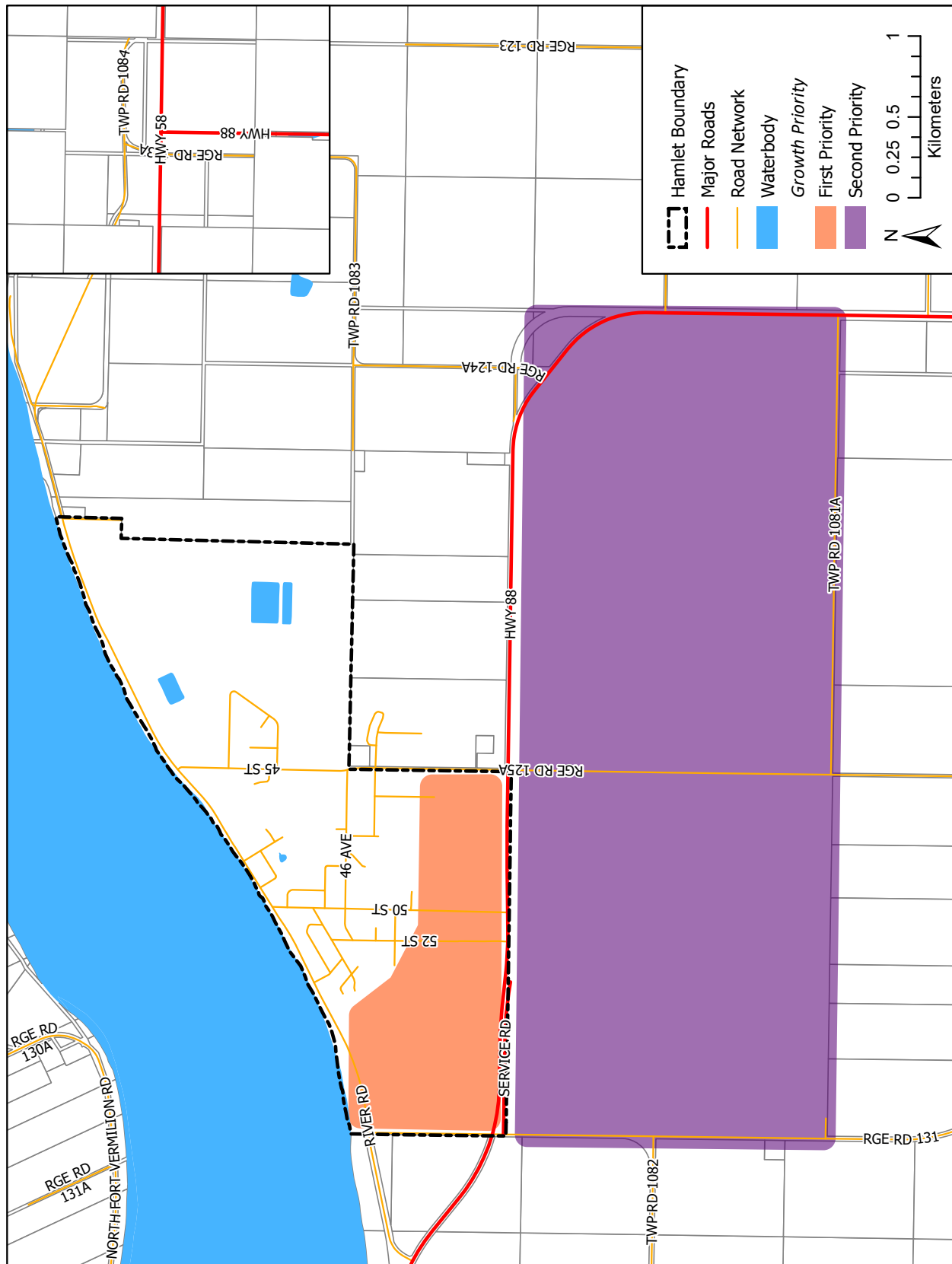
Map 3 - La Crete Proposed Future Land Use



Map 4 - Zama City Proposed Future Land Use



Map 5 - Fort Vermilion Priority Growth Areas



APPENDIX A

Appendix Map 1 - Potential Economic Corridors

