

# MACKENZIE COUNTY MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2021 | 1ST READING VERSION



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## **LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

Mackenzie County is located on Treaty 8 land, which is the traditional territory of the Beaver, Cree and Dene and the unceded territory of the Métis.

# **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 2021 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 over the last 12 years. 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.

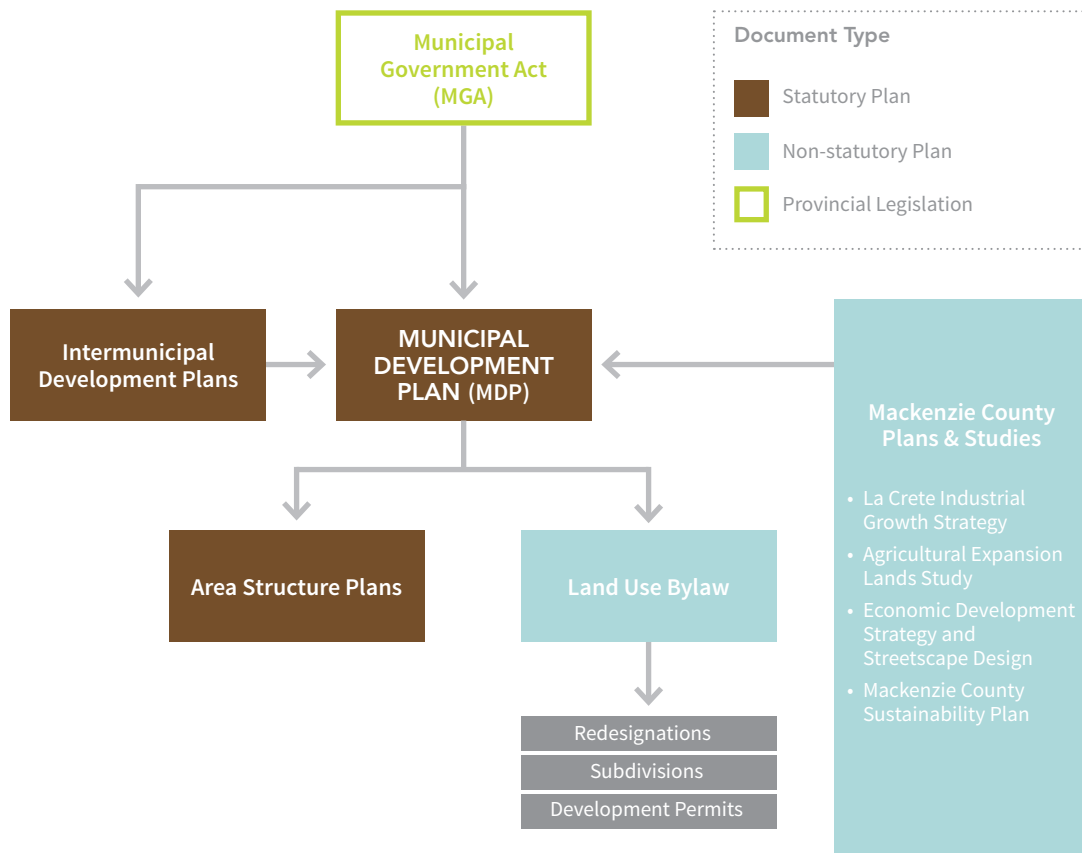


Figure 1: The Planning Framework in Mackenzie County

## MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT ACT

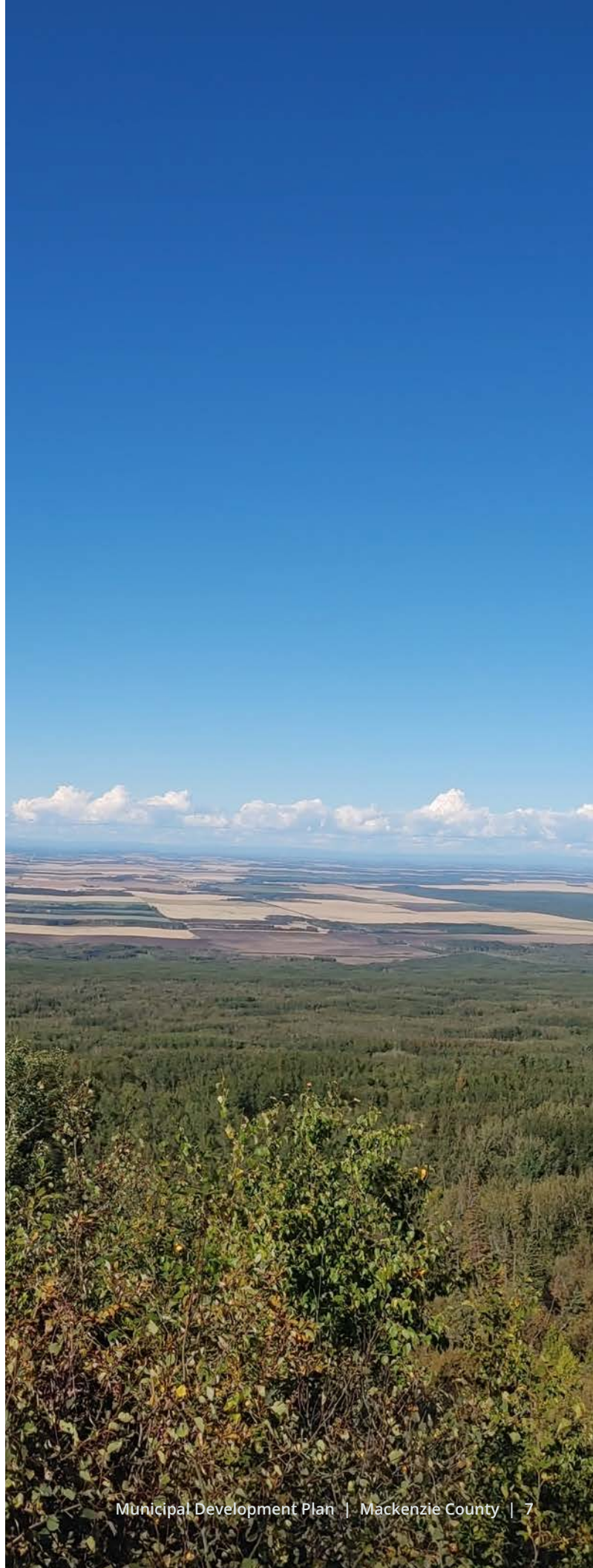
The Municipal Government Act (MGA) provides the legislative framework under which all municipalities must operate. The MGA states that the purpose of a municipality is to:

- 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.



## INTER-MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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

## 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.





## 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, developers, Council, and any other authority involved in land use development approvals.

**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.

#### Definitions

Throughout the MDP's policies defined terms are italicized and their definitions can be found in Part 3.

## 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 and Land Use Bylaw involved engagement with the public as well as stakeholders. The project team conducted on-line engagement to determine the vision, pillars, and guiding principles. Additional engagement was held virtually and in person in 2021 to receive feedback on the ideas and on the draft document. Feedback was incorporated into the document prior to first reading.

## 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 polices and to determine if the vision is being achieved.

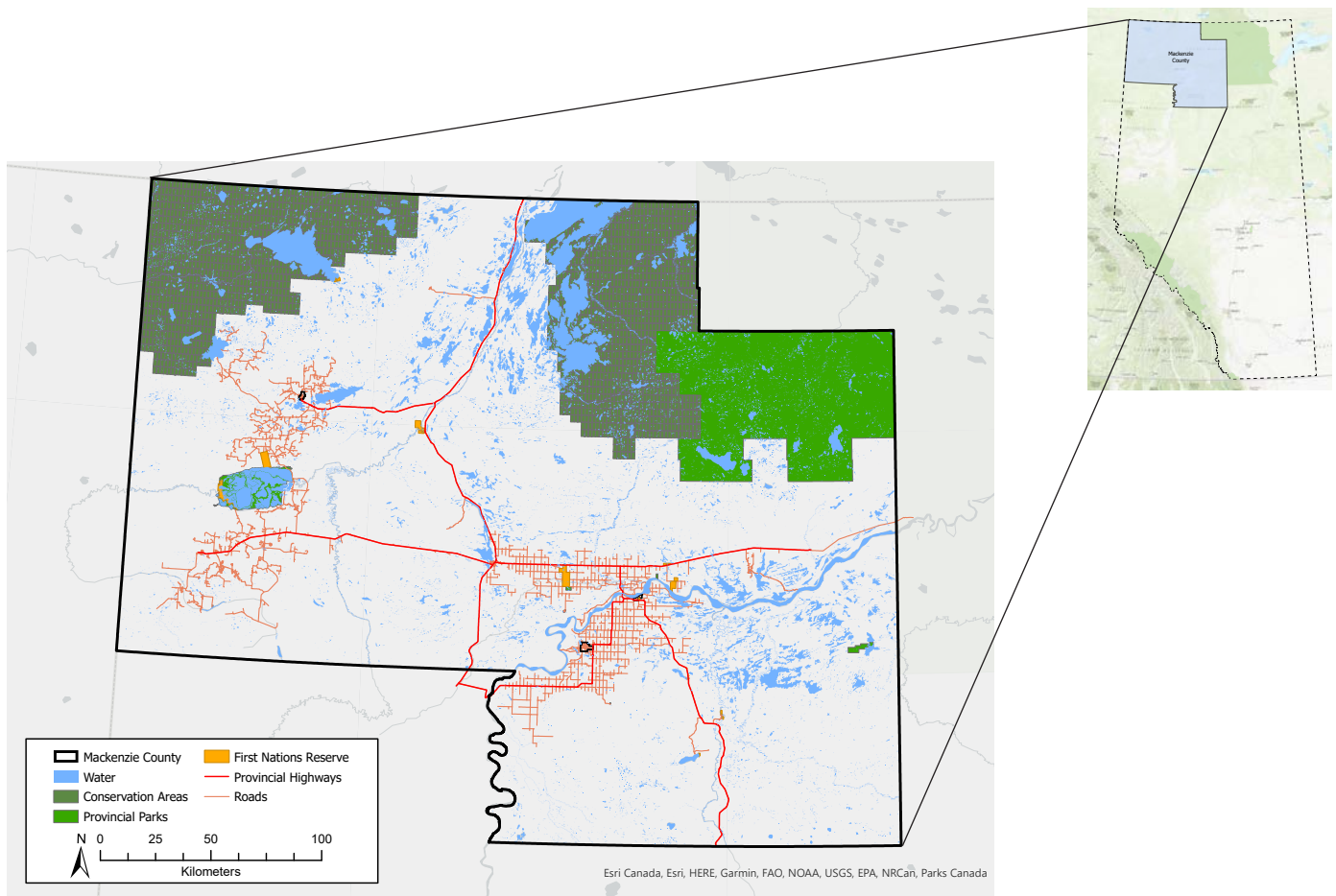
# 1.5 HISTORY AND CONTEXT

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 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.

All the lands in Mackenzie County are part of Treaty 8, the agreement signed on June 21, 1899, between the Indigenous peoples of North America and Queen of England. Human settlement in Mackenzie County has existed since time immemorial, with the Beaver First Nation, Tallcree First Nation, Little Red River

Cree Nation, and Dene Tha First Nation all calling the region home. Western settlement in Mackenzie County began in the late 1700s, with Fort Vermilion laying claim to being one of the oldest communities in Alberta.

With a deep history, the County today is built on a solid economic foundation balanced between the agriculture, oil and gas, and forestry industries. Emerging light machining and secondary manufacturing industries also promise to provide future employment and economic growth throughout the County. While recent events have had profound impacts on the broader regional economy, 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 2021 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. Statistics Canada's estimated population of Mackenzie County as of July 1, 2020 is 11,766 people.

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%

Figure 2: Historical Population Source: Statistics Canada





## **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 and the Cree 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

The Hamlet of Zama was named after the Dene Tha' Chief Zamba, and this community is the oil centre of the north. Located almost 150 kilometres by road from the Town of High Level, Zama may be remote and small, but residents take pride in its active community spirit. Located in the heart of one of Alberta's largest known oil and gas fields, this community exists because of this industry. Residents are all involved somehow or another in the oil and gas profession, and the community can play host to transient populations during boom times that dwarf its full-time population of roughly 100.

## 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.

These Nations include approximately 9000 people that also use the amenities and services in Mackenzie County and support local development and expansion.

## 1.7 RECENT EVENTS SHAPING THE COUNTY

Since the previous MDP was approved in 2009, several significant events have occurred that have shifted the way growth and development has happened throughout the County. The economic impacts to the oil and gas industries in late 2014 and 2015, the Caribou Range Planning affecting new oil and gas development, the 2018 and 2020 overland floods, and 2019 Chuckegg Creek wildfire have all had profound impacts on the entire municipality but have also impacted different parts of Mackenzie separately.

### **Oil and Gas Economic Impact**

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. As the regional hub for oil and gas operations, Zama City has been most profoundly impacted by changes to this sector, and new considerations for what this hamlet's future looks like in the face of broad industry change must be contemplated by this new MDP to ensure the County remains competitive and fiscally responsible in fulfilling its obligations to residents and taxpayers.

### **Woodland Caribou Range Plan**

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 this work the Province has currently implemented an interim restriction on the sale of mineral rights within all caribou ranges in Alberta. This restriction primarily affects new oil and gas production in the County, however the caribou range plan will affect other important economic industries in the County such as the forestry industry moving forward.

### **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. The 2021 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 Wildfire**

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 wildfire exposed just how vulnerable the County truly is to this form of disaster. Many lessons have been learned from the 2019 fires, and the 2021 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 2021 MDP. With a rapidly growing population and local economy there exist substantial opportunities for agricultural expansion 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, as Indigenous relations become increasingly critical and important in this time of national reconciliation, there exist many opportunities to partner, collaborate with, and learn from the region's Indigenous residents to build meaningful relationships and find mutual benefit for all.

### Agricultural Expansion

Mackenzie County's agriculture industry is some of the northernmost in the country, and due to its plentiful sunlight throughout the summer months, boasts some of the highest quality crops anywhere in Canada. As the successes of existing farms as well as 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.

### Industrial 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. Ensuring the work Mackenzie County has already done to coordinate ongoing industrial development is carefully considered and incorporated in the 2021 MDP is as important as providing 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. While the growth rate is not evenly distributed throughout the County, areas that benefit from this 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 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 2021 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.

## **Indigenous Relations**

As reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous peoples continues to become more prevalent in our society, it is necessary for the County to reflect on its relations with neighbouring First Nations communities. As a remote, northern part of Canada, the residents of Mackenzie County and north-western Alberta's First Nations share many of the same challenges and opportunities and working together in a spirit of broader reconciliation and collaboration has the potential to be not just mutually beneficial from an economic standpoint, but also enriching for all who call these lands home.



# 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 in support of the implementation of the Municipal Development Plan and is unified by a community spirit that makes Mackenzie County a desirable place to live and to raise a family.

Mackenzie County with a unique history of Indigenous communities, early western settlement, and Mennonite heritage is:

- an innovative and prosperous community located in a beautiful natural environment that is valued and protected for its recreational and economic opportunities;
- an inclusive place where people live, work and visit supporting a diverse local economy through all stages of life; 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 the 2021 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 three 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
- Supporting Diversification
- Protecting the Right to Farm

## **Growing Communities**

As Mackenzie County continues to grow at one of the fastest rates in Canada, it is critically important that the MDP respond accordingly, in a manner that supports all residents throughout Mackenzie, 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 Location

## **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. Three key pillars work to achieve this goal:

- Building Relationships within the County
- Building Relationships with Intermunicipal Partners for a strong region
- Building Relationship with Indigenous communities

## **Responding to a Changing Environment**

Natural disasters and a changing 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
- Pursuing Critical Infrastructure Opportunities
- Supporting Emerging Sectors



# 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 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 exists 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, and providing employment lands for expanding and new businesses. Coordinating these endeavours is an important task for the County so that the greatest economic impact is felt from every municipal decision.

### Objectives

Identify emerging economic sectors and lay a groundwork for attracting them to Mackenzie County and supporting their development.

Leverage and support existing hubs of economic development and diversification in the County.

### Policies

- a) The County will need to update the County Economic Development Strategy to reflect the economic realities of 2021 and balance a need for caution amidst global uncertainty with a clear plan for the economic future of Mackenzie County.
- b) The County should conduct an "Ease of Doing Business" check as part of developing the new Economic Development Strategy that identifies common barriers and challenges to expanding or diversifying faced by Mackenzie County businesses. The findings of this check should become priority action items for the County to address.

- c) As part of the Economic Development Strategy update the County should prioritize its existing hubs of economic activity, development, 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 government changes in senior levels of government to ensure that the County best positions its economic prerogatives to benefit from potential economic development funding streams.
- f) The County will work closely with regional partners on major infrastructure projects that will increase the economic competitiveness of the entire 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 investigate opportunities or partner with other agencies to create a seed-funding program that offers micro loans or grants to residents with new business ideas, in order to support the development of entrepreneurs in the County.

## 3.2 EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

With a range of agricultural, forestry, aggregate mining, 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 2021 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 smart employment growth.

### **Policies**

- a) The County should endeavour to prepare a comprehensive Industrial Growth Strategy encompassing the entire County.
- b) A comprehensive Industrial Growth Strategy should include recommendations for short, medium, and long-term investments in infrastructure throughout the County that will support the greatest degree of economic growth.
- c) The Industrial Growth Strategy should include a detailed review of the County's existing businesses and industries and seek to identify the challenges and opportunities facing each, so that the County can appropriately plan to pre-emptively address these concerns.
- d) 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 employment lands.
- e) Where municipal infrastructure may not be able to service potential future employment growth the County should develop a business case, supported by the Industrial Growth Strategy, that can be used to advocate to senior levels of government for support funding those projects.
- f) 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.
- g) 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.
- h) 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.

## 3.3 TOURISM

Mackenzie County enjoys some of the best access to nature in all of Alberta, with pristine boreal forest and waterbodies found throughout. 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 potential that to date has not been fully leveraged.

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 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 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.

### Policies

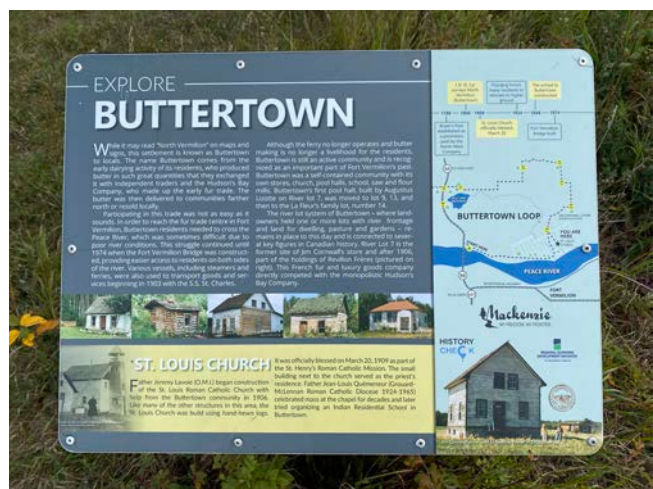
- a) Mackenzie County will prepare a comprehensive Tourism Strategy, identifying core areas of focus the County should support to foster a growing tourism industry.
- b) As a component of the Tourism Strategy a separate Natural Area Tourism and Recreation Plan should also be prepared, identifying priority areas for investment in natural area enjoyment and recreation.







- c) The County should identify the development of natural areas and recreational amenities pursuant to the Natural Area Tourism and Recreation Plan as priority projects for tourism grant applications to senior levels of government.
- d) The County will work closely with local tourism stakeholders and stakeholders from across northwestern Alberta when developing the Tourism Strategy to ensure it is aligned with and supports existing initiatives in the area.
- e) Where hubs of tourism potential are identified in the Tourism Strategy, 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 following development of the Tourism Strategy to ensure that new and existing tourism businesses do not face unnecessary regulatory barriers to the success of their business.
- g) The County should include the core recommendations from the Tourism Strategy in the Economic Development Strategy update.



# 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 to does the pulse of Mackenzie County, from seeding to harvest.

Providing strong supports 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. Mackenzie County's agriculture industry is some of the northernmost in the country, and due to its plentiful sunlight throughout the summer months, boasts some of the highest quality crops anywhere in Canada. As the successes of existing farms as well as 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.

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. 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 that are just waiting to be seized upon 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, 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. Figure 3 illustrates prioritized lands in yellow.
- b) The County should clearly develop as part of an Agricultural Lands Expansion Strategy the 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 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.
- e) The County will actively advocate to the Provincial government to prioritize the conversion of the lands identified in the Agricultural Lands Expansion Strategy.



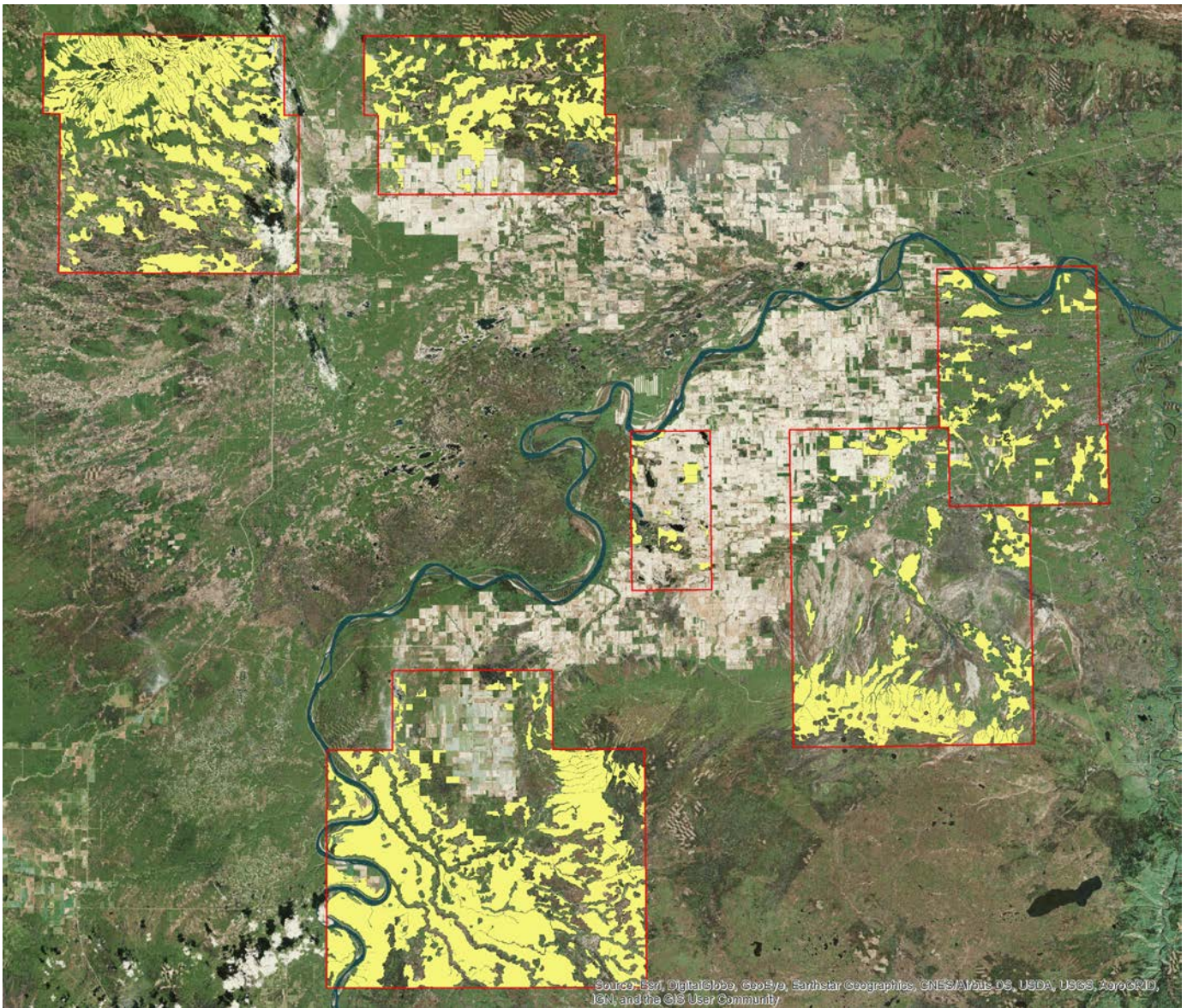


Figure 3: Potential Future Agricultural Lands

## 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 around how and where development should occur, particularly when close by to existing agricultural lands, is required.

### Objectives

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

### 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 confined feeding lots, seed cleaning, 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) Poor agricultural lands should be identified for increased country residential development.



## 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).



# 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 can continue to grow, as well as support for the continued investment of 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 preserves agricultural land and natural areas.

### Objectives

- Accommodate growth and development that is orderly, meets County guidelines and standards, and enhances Mackenzie County.
- Maintain the rural character of the County.
- 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
  - 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 Inter-municipal 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.



## 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 the appropriate use of Crown Lands.
- Facilitate public access to Crown Land areas where deemed suitable, desirable, and economically feasible.

#### Policies

- a) Mackenzie County shall support the use of Crown Lands for renewable and non-renewable resource development, limited grazing, conservation, and recreational use.
- b) Mackenzie County shall 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 encourage 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.
- e) The County shall be engaged in the provincial Land Use Framework and encourage development of the Lower Peace Regional Plan and subdivision plans.

### 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;
  - v) they are accessible, serviced, or in serviceable locations; and
  - vi) they are not within identified natural areas.
- 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 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)** 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.
- h)** 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.
- i)** 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 the poorest agricultural land on the quarter section;
  - ii) severed from the balance or otherwise not viable to farm;
  - iii) able to accommodate on-site amenities and services;
  - 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.

- j) 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.

### 5.2.3 RURAL 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 protects the natural areas and 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 Town of High Level, or the Hamlet's of Fort Vermillion, 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) 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 located outside of an identified urban or country residential area in an approved plan.

#### 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 protection of natural areas.
- 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 areas.
- g)** The County shall support infill housing 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)** Mackenzie County shall ensure that the provision of all neighbourhood amenities and infrastructure in manufactured home parks is to the same standard as in conventional residential areas.
- i)** Mackenzie County shall work with Boreal Housing Foundation 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 shall 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 neighbours.

## 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 shall 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 shall 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, the Town of High Level, or the Town of Rainbow Lake;
  - 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) Local commercial uses should be provided in proximity to residential neighbourhoods to support the day-to-day needs of residents.
- i) Highway commercial uses should be located in areas that do not compete from the commercial uses provided within the hamlets.
- j) Commercial uses within hamlets shall be concentrated to the main streets and commercial core of the hamlets.
- k) 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, the junction of Highway 58 and Highway 88, and the industrial policy areas shown in the Hamlet and Industrial Area Structure Plans.
  - i) Mackenzie County shall support farm-based industries 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) does not conflict with adjacent non-industrial land uses in terms of appearance, emissions, noise, or traffic generation, unless suitable buffers are provided;
  - iv) the site is suitable for the proposed development in terms of soil stability, groundwater level, and drainage;
  - v) has minimal transportation and servicing requirements;
  - vi) the tax yield is sufficient to pay the extra municipal costs of services; and
  - vii) 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)** Industrial uses that create nuisances such as noise, vibration, dust and odour should be located outside of hamlet boundaries and away from residential development to mitigate the impacts of such nuisances.
- e)** 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.
- f)** 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.
- g)** 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.
- h)** 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.

- i) Proposals to develop industrial sites immediately adjacent to the Town of High Level shall be approved only in accordance with the Town of High Level and Mackenzie County Inter-Municipal Development Plan.
- j) The County shall ensure an adequate inventory of industrial sites of various lot sizes and type to meet the needs of business and industry.
- k) The County shall encourage value-added manufacturing and the diversification of industrial uses.
- l) Heavy industrial uses involving dangerous goods shall be located in areas where impacts to commercial and residential uses can be mitigated.
- m) Light industrial uses that are contained wholly within a building may be located adjacent to existing and planned residential development.
- n) Outdoor storage shall be appropriately screened or buffered from adjacent roads, highways, and non-industrial land uses.

### 5.2.7 MIXED 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 and street.
- b) Promote a mix of commercial and light industrial development at higher intensities.

- c) Heavy industrial uses 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) The County should work with current land owners to determine mitigation measures that may be implemented to decrease future risk of flooding to properties.
- c) A comprehensive land use plan should be developed for the area identified as Special Planning Area to determine appropriate future development.
- d) The County should explore opportunities to expand the open space network along the river and River road.

## 5.3 NATURAL AREAS

Mackenzie County is located entirely within the Boreal Forest Natural Region and consists of a variety of watercourses including river valleys, lakes and streams, forested areas, and unique landforms. The preservation of natural areas provides a benefit to the residents of Mackenzie County and to the ecological functions that natural areas provide such as water regeneration areas and wildlife corridors. Much of the tourism draw to Mackenzie County is a result of the pristine natural environment that exists in Mackenzie County. The protection of areas also helps the County maintain climate resilience. The policies in this section address environmental sustainability and the conservation of natural environments.

### Objectives

- Outline the requirements for the planning and development of land within or adjacent to natural areas.
- Identify, protect, and enhance natural areas, areas susceptible to flooding, and other significant erosion prone areas.
- Protect wildlife, waterfowl staging areas, lakes, river shore-lands, valley slopes, unique topographic features, and vegetative types which may be considered environmentally sensitive.
- Recognize the Peace River as an important natural feature.
- Maintain public accessibility to lakes and major rivers through the use of reserves at the time of subdivision.
- 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 areas, 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 areas 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) Mackenzie County shall require the protection and conservation of natural areas 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.
- c) The Peace River shall be preserved as a natural area, wildlife corridor and habitat and may include low intensity recreation uses.
- d) Mackenzie County may consult with the public, any applicable organizations and government agencies which may have an interest in the natural environment when identifying natural areas.
- e) Mackenzie County may prohibit developments which may result in a contamination of groundwater quality, natural areas, or any other feature which is determined to be environmentally significant by the County. This includes such uses as sand and gravel extraction, CFOs, and major industrial uses. The development of sand and gravel extraction operations may be

permitted subject to the site being reclaimed to the satisfaction of the County and Alberta Environment and meeting the requirements of the Land Use Bylaw.

- f) Mackenzie County shall require environmental reserve dedication in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Government Act. Wherever possible, environmental reserves shall be linked with municipal reserves to create continuous greenways with enhanced public access. The voluntary placement of conservation easements shall be encouraged to preserve significant natural features and areas that do not qualify as environmental reserve under the provisions of the Municipal Government Act.
- g) An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) may be required for any proposed development at the cost of the developer. The EIA shall include, but not be limited to the following: a description of the proposed development, a description of the biophysical environment, the prediction of effects of the proposed development on the biophysical

environment, a description of the criteria used to predict the effects, and measures to mitigate negative effects.

- h) In keeping with Alberta's "Water for Life" strategy, Mackenzie County shall work with provincial agencies and neighbouring municipalities to protect watersheds and maintain the water quality of surface and groundwater systems.
- i) Mackenzie County shall manage the land surrounding lakes to preserve the quality and quantity of water to support the needs of fish and wildlife. These needs will take priority over some agricultural uses and recreational demand. Wadlin Lake, Hutch Lake and Machesis Lake are regarded as recreational lakes and shall be managed to maximize the recreational value of the lake. Residential development will be subject to any other statutory plan and floodplain policies.



## 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. The policies in this section are intended to support the creation 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 seasons 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.

### 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) Mackenzie County shall encourage each Hamlet to identify recreation opportunities and sites and work with the County to prepare an Open Space Master Plan.
- c) 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.
  - d) Mackenzie County shall require 10% of the gross developable area of a subdivision be dedicated for Municipal Reserves or School Reserves, or any combination of as a condition of subdivision approval to ensure that community open space requirements for neighbourhood, Hamlet, and County level facilities are provided.
  - e) Mackenzie County shall, where possible, allocate Municipal Reserve to lands adjacent to natural areas and stormwater management facilities to facilitate public access to these areas.
  - f) 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.



- g) 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.
- h) 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.
- i) Mackenzie County shall create partnerships to develop recreation opportunities throughout the County. This could include recreation centres, arenas, sports facilities, trails, etc.
- j) 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.
- k) Provide an appropriate mix of small, medium, and large parks to meet the varied needs of the County's population.
- l) Design parks to ensure visibility and safety, according to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles.
- m) Prioritize investment in recreational infrastructure based on identified population needs.
- n) Partner with adjacent municipalities in the provision of community services where mutual benefit can be achieved.
- o) Prioritize the investment in community infrastructure that will provide a multi-purpose function.
- p) When new County facilities are constructed, they shall be designed as barrier free. The County should examine existing County facilities and if feasible add barrier free access.



## 5.5 CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Mackenzie County supports a variety of recreational and cultural amenities within the multiple communities of the County and these amenities contribute to the quality of life of residents in the County. These amenities include the historic sites in Fort Vermilion, the community recreation centres, schools, and other community services. In addition, a large array of outdoor activities is 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.

### Policies

- a) Mackenzie County shall:
- 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 Indigenous communities, community groups, organizations, and individuals to promote the preservation of historic resources;
  - iii) Work with the Province for advice and information regarding existing and/or potential historic sites; and
  - iv) Identify and prepare an inventory of the historical sites found within the County.
- 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) Preserve and promote historically significant buildings and support local initiatives that promote culture and heritage.
- e) Mackenzie County may:
- i. protect 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 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. Mackenzie County's rural nature limits active transportation modes to primarily within the hamlets. 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) Mackenzie County shall prepare and maintain a Transportation Master Plan to guide future improvements and additions to the County's transportation system.
- b) Mackenzie County shall work with Provincial and Federal governments to secure funding for the maintenance and enhancement of the highway network.
- c) Mackenzie County shall refer all Area Structure Plans, Outline Plans, rezoning, subdivision and development applications that include land located within 1.6 kilometers of a highway to Alberta Transportation for comment.
- d) Mackenzie County shall, in the evaluation of subdivision and development proposals, determine if there is a need for widening and/or

upgrading of any roads adjacent to the proposal which are within the jurisdiction of Mackenzie County.

- e) Mackenzie County shall not approve a subdivision or issue a development permit unless the lot has access to a maintained public road. Legal access to a lot by easement alone is unacceptable.
- f) Mackenzie County shall encourage the incorporation of pedestrian and bicycle paths designed as integral parts of municipal parks and neighbourhoods.
- g) The County shall explore opportunities to increase active modes within the hamlets.
- h) 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;
- i) Mackenzie County shall cooperate with adjacent municipalities and interested government agencies regarding protecting the railway, airport, road network and other transportation facilities.
- j) 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.

#### **Airport**







- k) Mackenzie County shall support the expansion and increased usage of the airports and aerodromes.
- l) 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.

### 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) Mackenzie County shall maintain and implement a comprehensive long-term plan to upgrade and expand its water supply and sewage treatment systems and establish budget priorities.
- 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 shall emphasize the location of these in common corridors wherever possible.
- c) Mackenzie County requires that all lots of a proposed subdivision 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. In this context, the County shall recommend against the approval of any proposed subdivision for which connection of the new lots to municipal water and sewage systems is not intended, yet where, in the County's opinion, such connection is desirable and feasible.
- d) Mackenzie County shall provide additional water points and water fill stations in strategic locations.
- e) Mackenzie County shall support water conservation measures which may reduce or eliminate water utilities expansion requirements.

- f) Mackenzie County encourages work to identify groundwater recharge areas. Land developers may be required to identify recharge 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 groundwater recharge areas.
- g) Mackenzie County encourages all well users to register their use of groundwater under the Water Act.
- h) Mackenzie County shall ensure that parcel sizes are able to accommodate on-site services such as water distribution and sewage collection where necessary.
- i) Mackenzie County shall discourage drainage schemes that may increase the intensity of runoff.
- j) Mackenzie County shall not approve any multi-lot development which depends on a private water system unless it meets the full standards of regulatory agencies, and no contingent liability falls 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.
- k) Mackenzie County shall consider the use of low pressure sewer systems in low density developments as a cost-effective alternative to gravity lines.
- l) 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.
- m) Mackenzie County intends to maintain its commitment to the disposal of solid waste through the regional sanitary landfill system.
- n) Mackenzie County should ensure that solid waste disposal sites are located and developed in a manner that shall minimize any impacts on surrounding land uses.
- o) Mackenzie County shall support the recycling and composting of waste where appropriate and financially feasible.
- p) Mackenzie County shall maintain the integrity of pipelines and utility corridors, and create shared corridors where possible, while planning for growth and development.
- q) Large utility structures, such as cellular towers, microwave towers, radio towers, wind turbines or similar infrastructure, shall be located in non-residential areas. Small cellular towers that do not extend beyond the height of a principal structure may be located in residential areas.
- r) Mackenzie County shall apply 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).
- s) 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.



# 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 on 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 resilience within at risk local communities.

### Policies

- a) The County shall create a resilience plan that addresses the potential hazards, probability of occurrence and mitigative action over the life of this plan.
- b) Consider natural features as green infrastructure, recognizing the economic, social, and environmental benefits that they provide to the Town.
- 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 provided 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) With the exception of lands within the Hamlet of Fort Vermilion, no permanent development shall be permitted on lands that are contained within a 1:100 year flood plain or otherwise known to be flood-prone. A certificate from a qualified professional engineer will be required by the County to confirm that the development has been properly flood proofed. For those areas where 1:100 year flood mapping does not currently exist, the County shall require a qualified professional to confirm the 1:100 year flood level of the affected river, stream, or lakeshore.
- g) 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.
- h) 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.
- i) 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.
- j) 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.

## 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) The County will adapt existing development and infrastructure in accordance with FireSmart principles to reduce the risk of future wildfire hazards.
  - b) The County should prepare a county-wide and inter-municipal fire protection plan.
  - c) Multi-lot residential development should be discouraged in areas of high wildfire risk.
  - d) Approvals of proposals within or adjacent to high and moderate wildfire risk areas may include conditions that require the implementation of FireSmart principles and fire prevention measures.
- e) Mackenzie County shall require developers to 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 natural 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) Mackenzie County shall require the following as conditions for 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. Strategic partnerships can lead to greater advocacy about the benefits of living, working, and recreating in Mackenzie County.

One of those strong relationships is with the Town of High Level. The Mackenzie County – Town of High Level Inter-Municipal Development Plan recognizes that inter-municipal 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.
- To encourage the preparation of Inter-Municipal Development Plans and joint agreements between Mackenzie County and adjacent municipalities or other stakeholders to provide infrastructure services.
- The range of facilities and services available to residents through partnerships with adjacent neighbours and other levels of government is expanded.

## **Policies**

- a) County administration shall communicate and co-ordinate on a regular basis with adjacent administrations to recognize and address matters of mutual interest.
- b) Mackenzie County shall have regard for regional planning by reviewing the policies of the Province of Alberta, the Provincial Land-use Framework, approved inter-municipal development plans or joint inter-municipal agreements when considering Municipal Development Plan amendments, Land Use Bylaw amendments or other development proposals.
- c) Mackenzie County, when deemed necessary, shall work with adjacent municipalities to prepare new inter-municipal 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 Inter-Municipal Development Plan and are located within the area shown in Figure 4, shall be directed by the policies of the Inter-Municipal Development Plan.
- e) Mackenzie County shall refer the following development proposals to adjacent municipalities:
  - i) matters of future annexation;
  - ii) the adoption or amendment to an inter-municipal development plan, or this Municipal Development Plan;
  - iii) a proposed Land Use Bylaw, proposed amendments to the Land Use Bylaw;
  - iv) a proposed Area Structure Plan within one kilometre of a shared boundary; and
  - v) any referral as set out in an inter-municipal development plan.
- f) Mackenzie County shall use its authority to prohibit development near existing and proposed sewer lagoons and waste handling facilities in order to protect the public investment in these facilities.
- g) Mackenzie County shall examine the means of sharing the costs of development for infrastructure and services with adjacent municipalities.
- h) The County should negotiate and finalize consultation protocol agreements with all Indigenous and Métis communities within and adjacent to its borders to better define relationships with these communities and identify mutual items of interest.
- i) The County may require that a traditional land use or land study be conducted as part of the creation of new Area Structure Plans or Outline Plans.
- j) The County will help foster a relationship of mutual respect with the Métis community and will work toward a heightened engagement with Métis people in municipal decision-making and service delivery processes.



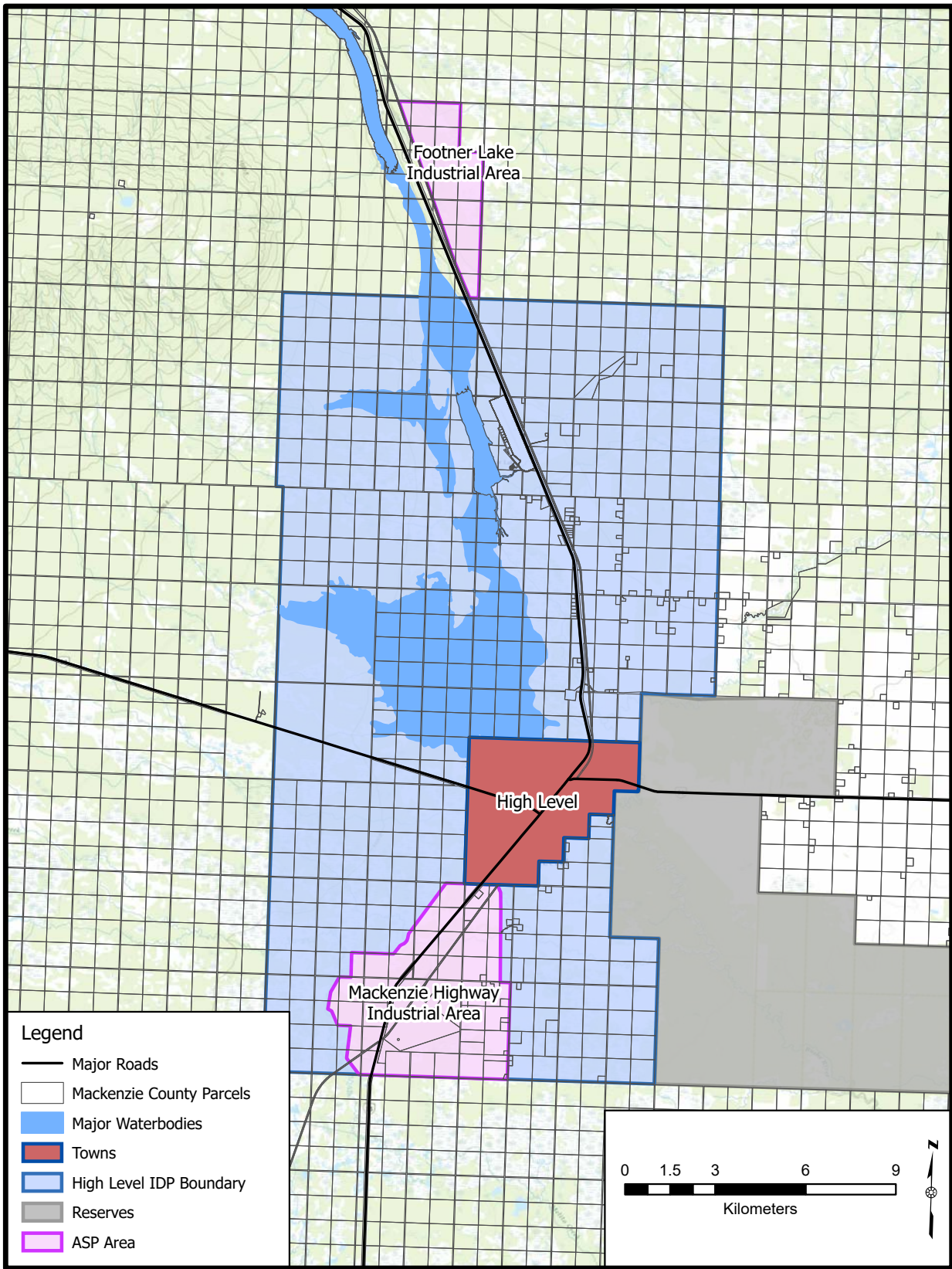


Figure 4: High Level Intermunicipal Development Plan Boundary

# **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.
- b) Administration should bring a report to Council every two years monitoring the effectiveness of the MDP policies. This may include:
  - i. Land absorption for industrial, commercial, residential, and agricultural areas;
  - ii. Residential housing diversity index;
  - iii. Hectares of agricultural land lost;
  - iv. A review of best practices and new development trends; and
  - v. Communication and consultation with stakeholders.

# 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, sustaining, 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.

**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 regional 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 Areas** are uninterrupted and undisturbed landscapes that have not been impacted by human development.

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

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

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

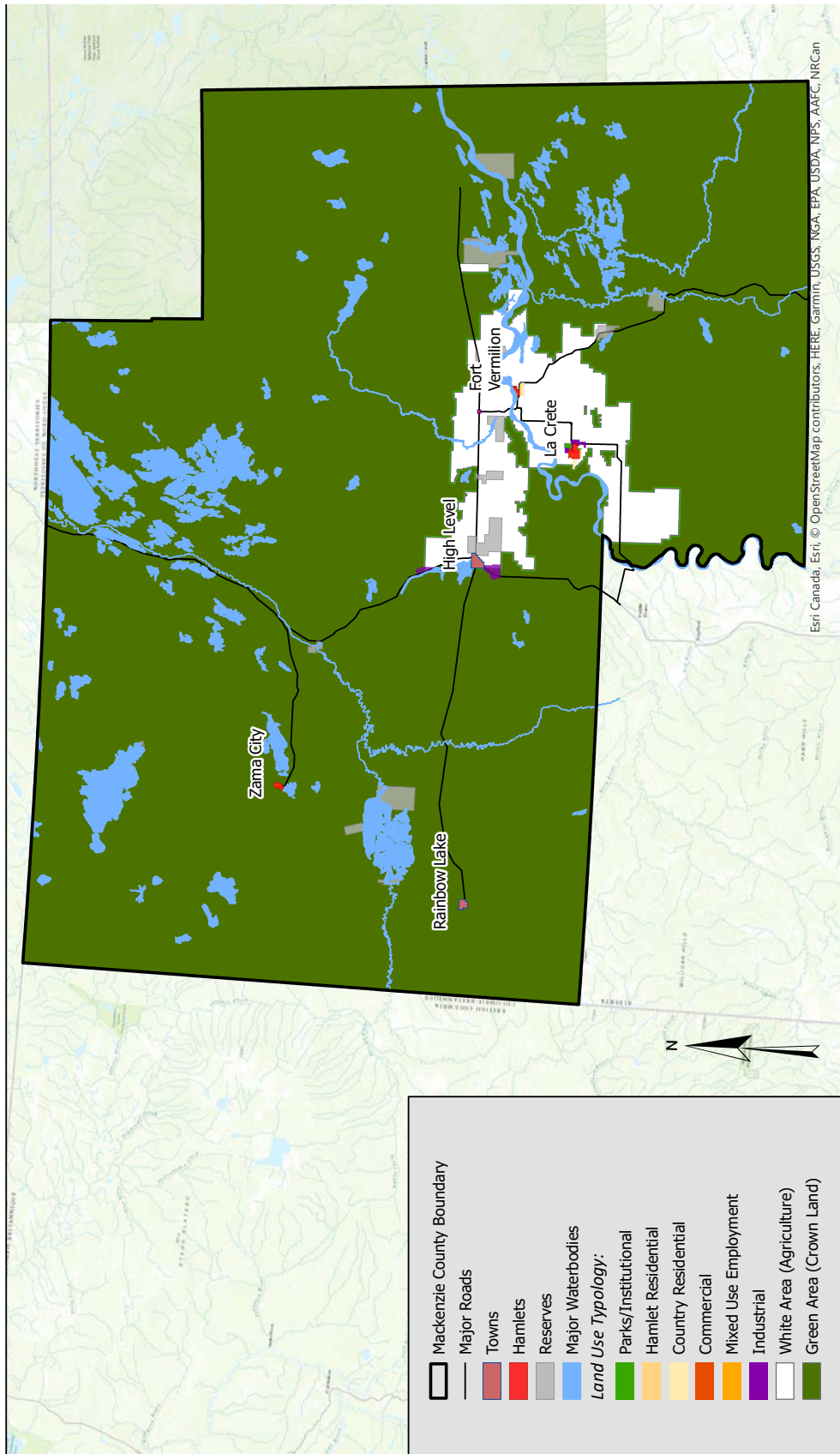
**Un-Subdivided Quarter Section** is a titled area of:

1. 64.7 hectares (160 acres) more or less; or
2. 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.

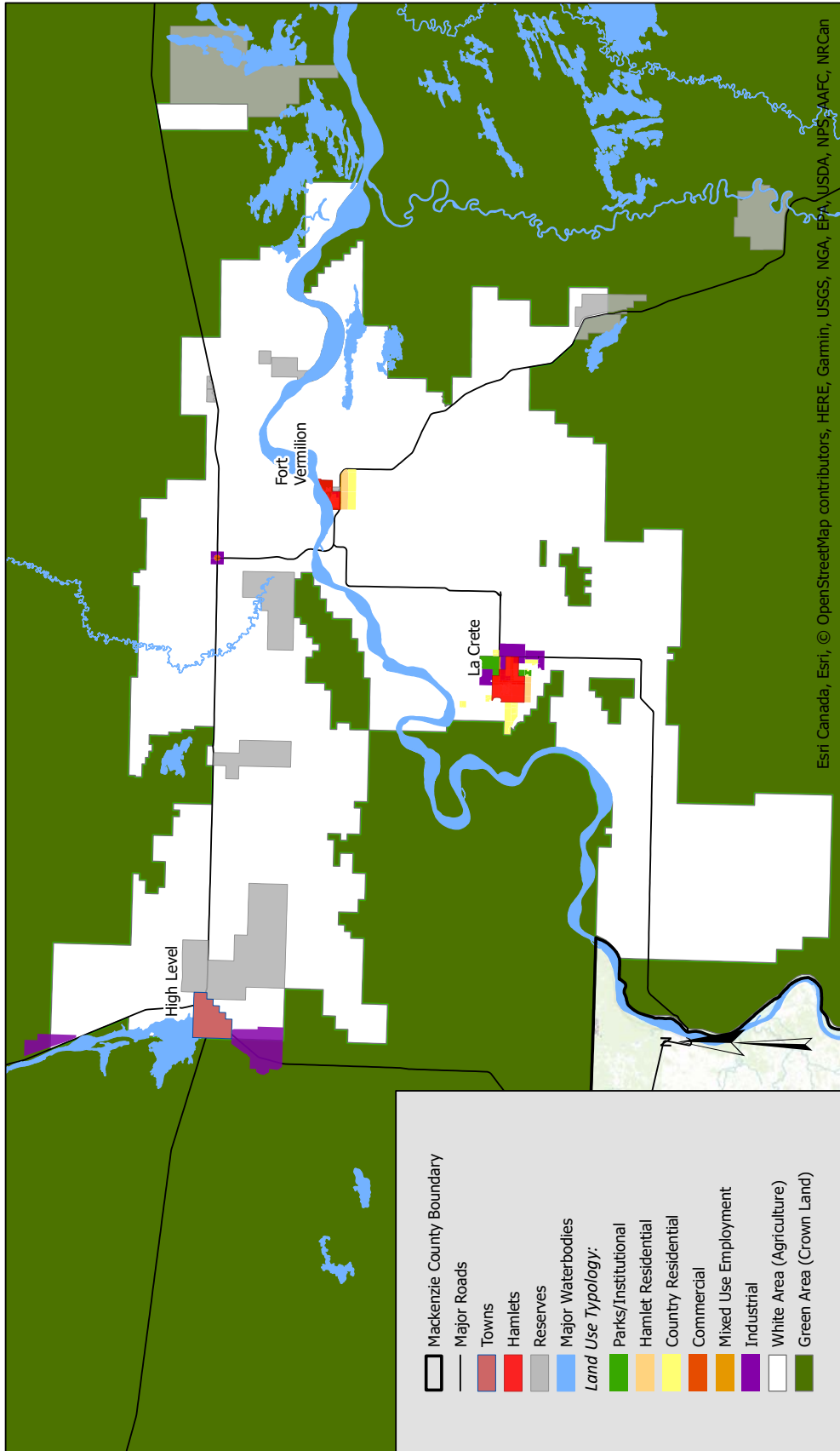
**Value-Added Agriculture** is the processing of primary agricultural products and services into secondary products to increase overall product value

# 10 MAPS

# Map 1 - County Land Use

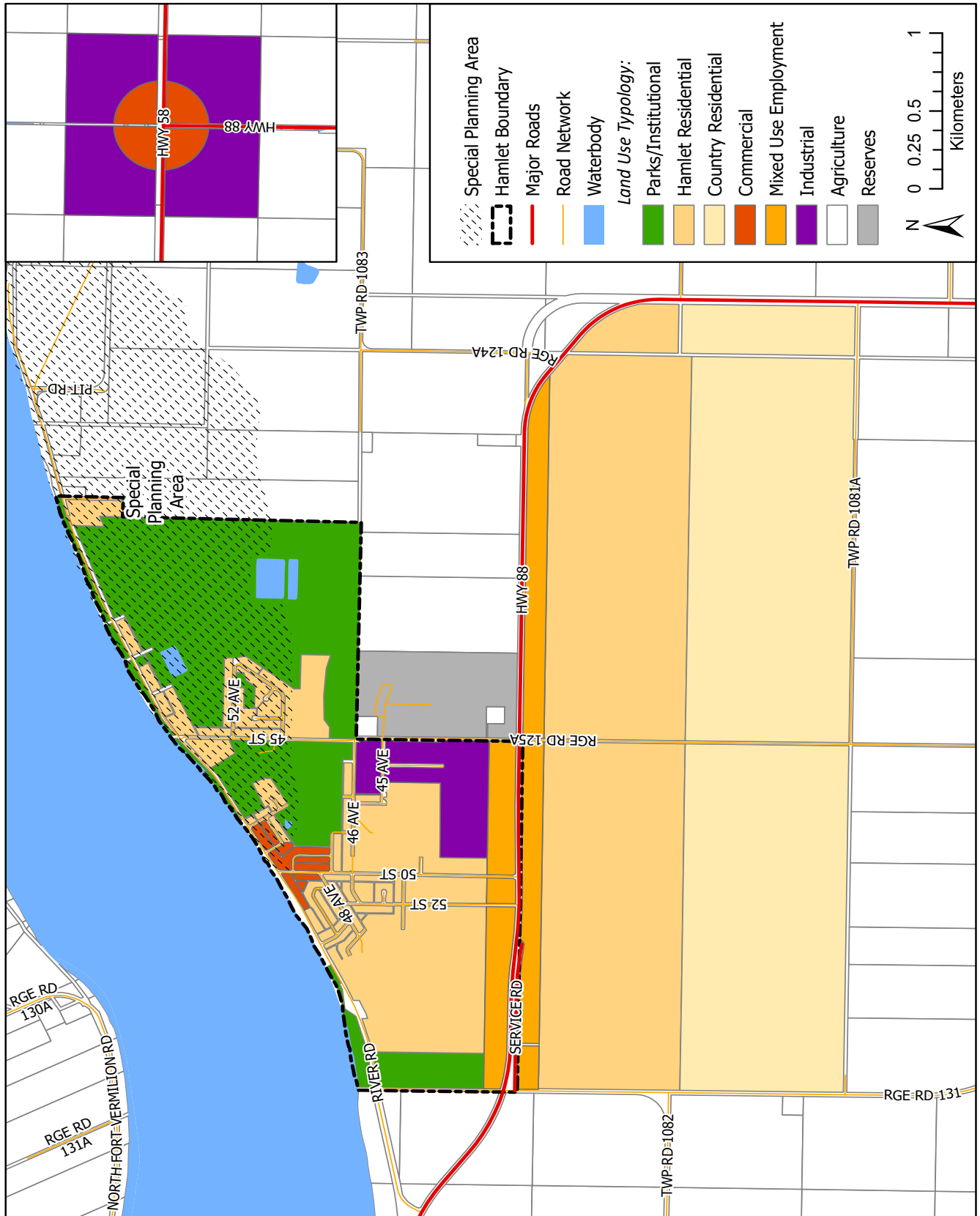




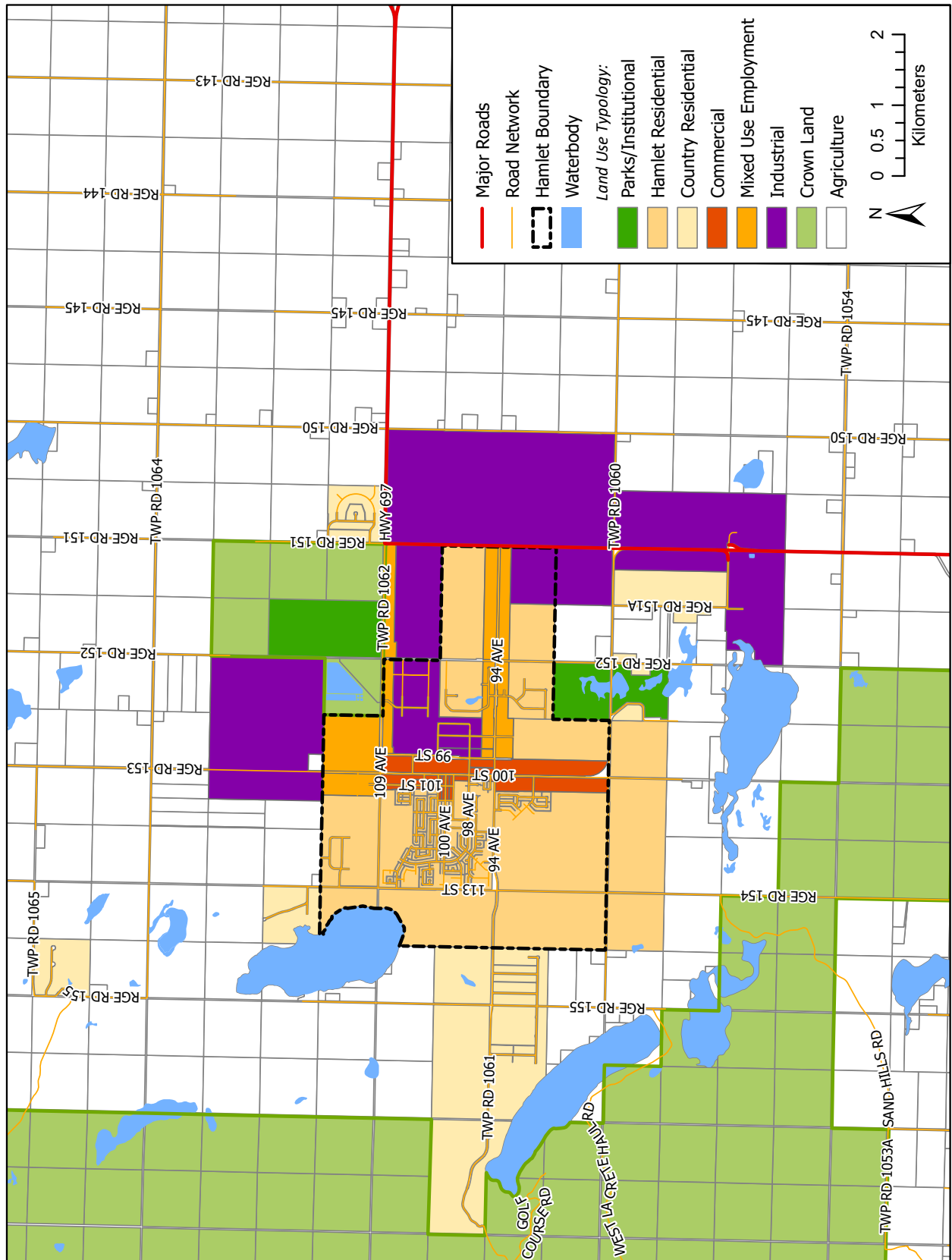


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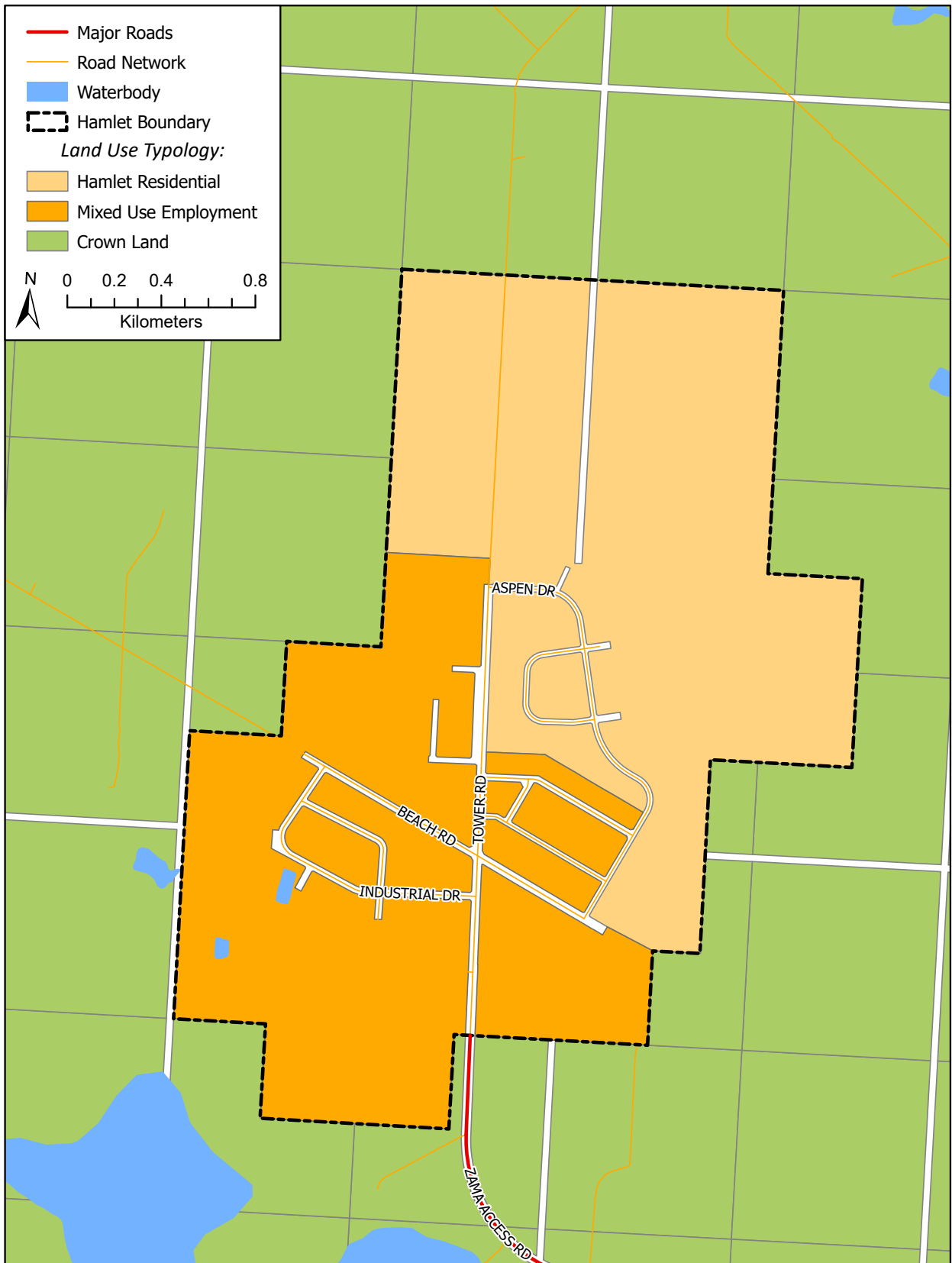
# Map 2 - Fort Vermilion Land Use



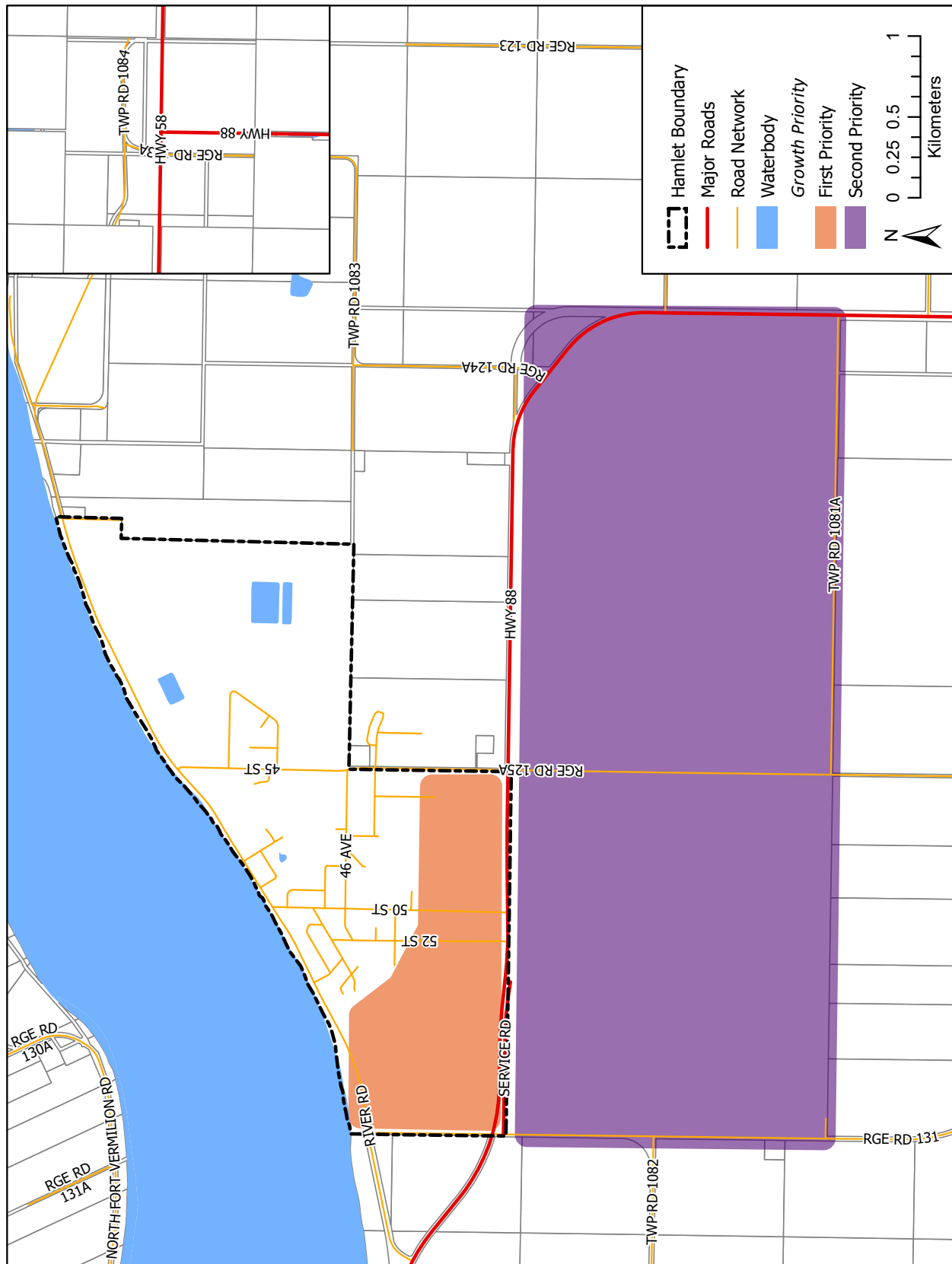
### Map 3 - La Crete Land Use



### Map 4 - Zama City Land Use



Map 5 - Fort Vermilion Priority Growth Areas



Map 6 - La Crete Priority Growth Areas

