Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaw

Review 2016 / 2017

Turn Talk into Action and Join the Conversation

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Please note all information contained in this document is intended for general informational purposes only. Please contact the Planning and Development Department if you have any questions about subdivision or development of your land.

YOUR VISION

YOUR PLAN
**WHAT EXACTLY IS A MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (MDP)?**

A Municipal Development Plan (MDP) is a long-term planning document that sets goals, identifies objectives and establishes policies that all come together to help guide future land use and development in the community.

**WHAT EXACTLY IS A LAND USE BYLAW (LUB)?**

The Land Use Bylaw (LUB) is the regulatory document which outlines specific rules and regulations for the development of land and buildings within the different districts of the County. Every property in the County is zoned under a specific land use district.

**HOW ARE THE MDP AND THE LUB CONNECTED?**

The MDP is the overarching policy document which forms the big picture concept for the development of the County into the future, and the LUB is the implementation tool for the MDP. The LUB deals with the day to day regulations under different zoning districts. Therefore, the LUB will be developed at a later stage in the process.

One example of the big picture development concepts within the MDP is the goal for agriculture: “To support a healthy and viable agricultural industry as an essential part of the County’s economy.” Further to this, one of the three objectives in the MDP for agriculture is to “minimize conflicts between non-agricultural uses and existing agricultural operations.” From here, the MDP implements policies such as Policy 3.4, which restricts the size and number of subdivisions that can be carried out on a quarter section to protect agricultural land.

One example of the day to day regulations in the LUB is the establishment of setbacks for buildings from property lines and roads.

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**A message from the Reeve, Paula Law:**

On behalf of the elected officials of Lacombe County Council, I am pleased to introduce the Lacombe Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and Land Use Bylaw (LUB) Review. Although the current MDP and LUB have been instrumental in the success of Lacombe County strengthening our agricultural community, protecting our beautiful natural environment and fostering economic development to diversify the County’s economic base, it has been almost a decade since their adoption in 2007. Lacombe County has always been at the forefront of change. To ensure its continued success Council is asking you, the residents of the County, to get involved. Your involvement is key in setting out a clear and shared vision for the future development of the County that will ensure we have an attractive, competitive and sustainable place to live for the next decade. Please join us in creating this vision!  

Some readers may be asking themselves “what exactly is an MDP/LUB and how does it impact me?” and “why should I be involved in the review?”. This booklet is intended to provide a clear understanding of the MDP and LUB, as well as their upcoming review process.
WHY IS LACOMBE COUNTY REVIEWING THE MDP AND LUB?

In order to be effective, the MDP and LUB need to be relevant and up-to-date; Lacombe County’s current Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaw were adopted back in 2007. While amendments have been made to both these documents since then, it will soon have been a decade since they were both comprehensively reviewed. Additionally, the current MDP identifies suitable areas for multi-lot development which need to be supported by more detailed plans; however most of the areas that were identified in 2007 now have completed plans. These plans that have been developed are currently guiding growth in the County based on the policies of the current MDP. Essentially, the County wants to ensure that its residents are still supportive of the growth strategy and policies that were implemented almost a decade ago, as well as to ensure that the MDP reflects the increase in public consciousness with regard to environmental management.

WHAT IS EVERYONE’S ROLE IN THE REVIEW?

This review is your opportunity to speak up about what you think future development should look like in the County. County staff’s role is to facilitate the discussion, and County Council’s role is to hear your vision and concerns.

HOW WILL THE PUBLIC BE ENGAGED THROUGHOUT THIS REVIEW?

Community engagement is one of the most important aspects of any MDP. There aren’t too many sources of input better than the residents who live in the community!

In-Person

To facilitate a strong and informed update of the County’s MDP and LUB, input will be gathered throughout a number of community engagement events. Lacombe County is inviting you to attend the first in a series of interactive public meetings in your community during February and March of 2016. Additional meetings will be held in June and November of 2016 to further review proposed policy options.

Online

Unable to attend the meetings? Join the conversation online at www.MDP.lacombecounty.com and sign up to the mailing list. There will also be online surveys for you to provide your input throughout the review of the plans.

News Releases

We will keep you informed throughout the review process with newspaper ads and radio announcements.

Billboard Signs

Keep an eye open for signage throughout the County indicating locations and dates for the interactive public meetings.

Social Media

Follow us on Twitter or Like us on Facebook to stay updated throughout the review!

Want to receive updates on the MDP Review? Check out www.MDP.lacombecounty.com

Have a question? We can answer it! Please contact Anita O’Driscoll, Senior Planner at 403.782.8389 or aodriscoll@lacombecounty.com

Lacombe County Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaw Review
WHY SHOULD I ATTEND A PUBLIC MEETING?

Do you have a vision for your community? Come & share it!

We want to know what issues you think are important for development in the County, and how we can all best plan for development in the future.

We will be polling the crowd on a variety of questions in order to gain a better understanding of Lacombe County residents’ values, attitudes and opinions with respect to topics such as agriculture, environment, business, industry, subdivision and development.

Below is an outline of what we will be talking about at each stage of the public meetings.

**FOUNDATIONS & DIRECTION**

- **Public Meeting No. 1**
  - Focus on identifying issues that are important for the future growth of the County
  - Craft some early ideas for updating the policies
  - Dinner will be served at the meeting

**ISSUE ANALYSIS & GROWTH STRATEGY**

- **Public Meeting No. 2**
  - Discuss and determine growth strategy options
  - Light refreshments will be served at the meeting

- **Public Meeting No. 3**
  - A full draft of the updated MDP & LUB will be presented for comment
  - Light refreshments will be served at the meeting
EXISTING VISION & GROWTH STRATEGY

The current vision for Lacombe County is to have “an attractive, balanced, prosperous and progressive community - building on our solid foundation.”

In order to achieve and uphold this vision, a number of principles were identified to guide the development of the growth management strategy and MDP policies for Lacombe County. These are:

- Protect Rural Landscape and Environmentally Sensitive Areas
- Positive Fiscal Impact on the County’s Tax Base
- Enhance Cooperation with Neighbouring Urban Municipalities
- Maintain and Enhance Community Appeal and Quality of Life
- Support Agricultural Viability
- Avoid Land Use Conflicts
- Enhance Economic Development Opportunities
- Increase Range of Housing Choices
- Optimize Roadway and Utility Infrastructure

The guiding principles outlined above have been achieved through the use of a nodal growth strategy. One of the key concepts of a nodal growth strategy is identifying specific areas for multi-lot developments. For example, the area around the Queen Elizabeth II (QE II) Highway and Aspelund Road intersection has been identified for industrial development. The area around the Highway 12 and the QE II Highway intersection has also been identified for commercial and industrial development. The areas around Gull Lake and Sylvan Lake have been identified for residential and recreational development. These specific areas have been identified due to their attributes and suitability for these particular types of development. In addition, they also allow for the protection of the remainder of the County for agriculture.

How is development in these areas regulated?

In order to guide development in the areas identified as part of the growth strategy, plans were developed and tailored for each specific area that outline site specific guidelines and regulations.

Are there other types of growth strategies?

There are many types of growth strategies. Some are based on land classification systems, some are economically based on demand for development, some are based on agricultural land protection, and some are environmentally based.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

How do you think the nodal growth strategy is working?

How has Lacombe County benefited from this strategy above other strategies?

Are there other counties with different growth strategies that you like?

Would you identify any other areas for development and where would that be?
PLAN AREAS

To support the MDP’s nodal growth strategy, areas suitable for specific types of development were identified through the development of Area Structure Plans (ASPs) or Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDPs) as shown on the map below (Map 1).

What is the difference between an ASP and an IDP?

Both plans provide guidance and regulation on the types of development that is suitable for an area and how that development might occur with regard to density, roads, environment, servicing, etc. However, IDPs are between two or more municipalities and are often more strategic than prescriptive. ASPs can still be developed within an IDP area; however, these plans often prescribe site specific standards and regulations for development in a designated area.

What is the purpose of a plan?

The overall objective of a plan is to guide development interests in a sustainable way which benefits the community economically and socially, while still protecting the environment. Without a plan, development can often occur in a disorganized manner where only private land interests are catered for.

How many of the areas identified in the current MDP have a plan developed?

All areas that were identified in the current MDP have had a plan developed with the exception of the Chain Lakes Area and the Rural Policy Areas. To view all of the County’s plans please visit our website, www.lacombecounty.com.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Are you aware of the different Area Structure Plans and Intermunicipal Development Plans in the County?

Do you think we need more areas identified for plans?

How successful do you think the existing plans have been in achieving their goals?
AGRICULTURE

One of the most important principles of the MDP is the protection of agricultural land to support agricultural viability. One way to achieve this goal is to avoid land use conflicts and the fragmentation of land. Consequently, the MDP sets out policies which govern the ability to subdivide land. There are currently three principle policies that guide and regulate subdivision of land in the County: first parcel out subdivisions, fragmented parcel subdivisions, and agricultural subdivisions.

First Parcel Out Subdivision

A landowner can subdivide out a maximum of four (4) acres from an unsubdivided quarter section, provided the following conditions are met:

- there has been a habitable residence on site for a minimum of five (5) years,
- there is legal and physical access to the site, and
- the loss of agricultural land is minimized.

Rather than taking the four (4) acre parcel around the residential site, a landowner may also subdivide it out elsewhere on the same quarter section provided a suitable building site is located within the proposed parcel.

A larger parcel above four (4) acres may be considered if the County is satisfied that a larger parcel is necessary to accommodate residential improvements, such as a shelterbelt, outbuildings or a driveway, or is considered reasonable based on the site's geographical features.

Fragmented Parcel Subdivision

A landowner may be eligible to subdivide out a portion of land that is cut off from the balance of the quarter by a natural or man-made feature. Under the current MDP, a natural or man-made feature includes a highway or county road, a railway, or a permanent and naturally occurring body of water, lake, river, stream or watercourse. A number of other criteria also have to be met in order to qualify for a fragmented parcel, including legal and physical access to the fragmented parcel and the proven inability to access the remainder, making it unusable within the balance of the quarter.

Agricultural Subdivision

A landowner may be able to subdivide out a minimum ten (10) acre parcel of land from an unsubdivided quarter section for a specified or intensive agricultural operation, such as a greenhouse. A business plan may be required to support an application for an agricultural subdivision.

Confined Feeding Operations (CFOs)

The approval of CFOs falls under the jurisdiction of the Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB), however municipalities do have an input in the NRCB approval. Currently, no new CFOs are permitted less than 1.6 kilometre (1 mile) from the boundary of an urban centre, an area developed or designated for multi-lot residential use, or an area used for recreation.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Would you like to subdivide your land?

Does the current subdivision policy positively or negatively impact you?

How can the current subdivision policy be improved?

How can CFOs be supported while reducing conflict within the changing County economy?
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

According to the last census, Lacombe County’s population is not growing within the rural areas. However, there is still demand for multi-lot residential development around the County’s lakes. Other than lake demand, the next highest demand for housing is with regard to estate planning for the farming population.

**What is multi-lot residential development?**

Multi-lot residential development consists of an urban-type subdivision with multiple houses. Lands are required to be rezoned to a suitable residential district when there is a residential subdivision of this type.

The current MDP identifies a number of areas that are suitable for multi-lot residential development, as shown on the map to the right (Map 2).

**What are the policies on multi-lot residential development?**

The current MDP policies focus on and promote clustered type development. This type of residential development focuses on reducing the amount of land used for lots by clustering them, therefore preserving larger areas of natural open space. This creates higher densities in rural areas but also protects more land.

**THINGS TO CONSIDER**

Do you think the existing areas identified for multi-lot residential development are sufficient? Should the County identify more?

Where do you think multi-lot residential development should be located?

How do you feel about multi-lot subdivision design?
HAMLETS & URBAN DEVELOPMENT

The current MDP provides policies with regard to the growth of hamlets within the County’s jurisdiction. The MDP identifies the Hamlet of Mirror and Hamlet of Morningside as growth hamlets, with the possibility of the Hamlet of Tees also being identified for growth. The MDP, however, does not have policies with urban centres within its boundaries, other than to cooperate with these municipalities.

What are the current MDP policies for hamlets?

Both the Hamlet of Mirror and the Hamlet of Morningside are permitted to expand outside their current boundaries if this growth is supported by regional/municipal water and wastewater servicing, as well as an Area Structure Plan adopted by Lacombe County Council to guide that growth. All other hamlets, however, are only permitted development/redevelopment of existing sites as long as they can be supported by onsite water and wastewater services.

What are the current MDP policies for urban areas outside of Lacombe County’s jurisdiction?

The County has strong working relationships with other municipalities within its boundaries. This is evident by the County’s contributions towards community services, as well as the completion of Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDPs) and joint economic agreements with those adjacent municipalities. These IDPs ensure that municipal development within the fringes of urban areas and municipal borders are compatible and supported by existing uses.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Do you agree with the development strategy for the County’s hamlets?

What other kinds of policies do you think the County should develop to support it urban neighbours and its hamlets?

What are your thoughts on how the County cooperates with other urban municipalities?
Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) is the governing body in Alberta that regulates the environment. While AEP is the main regulator, the County also has some tools to ensure that land uses do not negatively impact the County’s environmental resources. The following are the main environmental protection policies in the current MDP.

**Environmental Setbacks**

A 30 metre (98 feet) setback restriction from the top of the bank of water bodies or water courses is applied to all new buildings. This setback is not applied on residential lots that were created prior to the current MDP being adopted.

**Environmental Reserve**

Environmental reserves are taken to protect areas that are identified as environmentally sensitive by AEP, the County, or an approved study. When allowed for by legislation, the County will take a 30 metre (98 feet) environmental reserve along all water bodies or water courses.

**Environmental Reserve Easement**

Where environmental reserve is required to protect an environmental feature, the County may apply an environmental reserve easement as an alternative if public access is not required. The main difference is an environmental reserve is owned by the County and is publicly accessible. In the case of an environmental reserve easement, the landowner retains ownership and there is no public access.

**Conservation Easement**

The County encourages conservation easements. If you own land you wish to see protected for the future, you can voluntarily place a conservation easement on a specific area(s) that will be protected from development.

**Hazardous Lands/Flood Plains**

Throughout the County there are lands that are prone to erosion, subsidence (may be referred to as slumping) and flooding. As these lands are unsuitable for development, current MDP policies outline that no development will be permitted in a 1:100 year floodplain or other hazardous lands unless a qualified engineer has approved as such.

**THINGS TO CONSIDER**

- Do you think that the existing environmental protection policies are sufficient?
- How can the policies be improved?
- Is there other areas of the environment that the MDP should include?
- What parts of Lacombe County would you like to see protected?
Lacombe County has a long tradition of financially supporting its urban neighbours with the development and operation of recreational and community service facilities, in addition to supporting facilities in the County. The County believes these services are the cornerstones of a healthy, vibrant and successful community. The County also requires municipal reserves and amenities as part of the multi-lot development process to provide recreational opportunities for the public.

What is a Reserve?

Municipal Reserve (MR) land is intended to provide recreational areas such as parks, lakeshore water access and undeveloped green space for the use and enjoyment of local residents and the general public. MR may also provide other functions, such as linking wildlife corridors and acting as buffers between differing land uses.

Recreational Amenities

All new multi-lot residential developments are required to provide both trails and a public amenity on County reserve land as part of the development. All multi-lot industrial and commercial developments have to provide, at minimum, a trail system for the employees of the parks and the general public.

Types of amenities may include:
- Recreation facilities like sports fields, play structures, and skating rinks,
- Associated facilities like parking lots and washrooms,
- Public trails,
- Natural green spaces, and
- Winter storage of boat docks and boat lifts.

The County also has policies to ensure that land along the lakes and waterways are not privatized by requiring municipal reserve to be taken along them.

How does the County provide schools, health care facilities and emergency services?

While the County does not provide its own health, education, or emergency services, it does work with other municipalities and government agencies to ensure that an adequate level of these services is provided to its residents. Additionally, it employs a number of Community Peace Officers to enforce traffic laws, County bylaws, as well as assist the RCMP and Lacombe Police Service. Lacombe County also operates the Mirror Volunteer Fire Department and partners with the urban centres within the County to provide fire protection services.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Lacombe County has a unique situation due to the Queen Elizabeth II (QE II) Highway Corridor being located in the middle of the County. Along this corridor there are two major urban centres: the City of Lacombe and the Town of Blackfalds. As such, this area is very attractive to industrial and commercial developers. Diversifying the economy is an important aspect of economic development. As such the development potential along the QE II has been harnessed to foster a healthy and diverse economic base in the County. The County further supports economic diversity by allowing for business within rural areas. This is allowed for in the current MDP through the home based business policy and the isolated industrial development policy.

Commercial and Industrial Parks

The majority of the County’s industrial and commercial development occurs in clustered developments and designated industrial and commercial parks. These areas were identified to ensure each development was designed with high quality standards. The Aspelund Industrial area, Wild Rose Commercial Park, and Iron Rail Business Park are all great examples of commercial and industrial parks in the County.

Home Based Businesses

Under current MDP policies there exists an array of businesses that are permitted in the Agricultural District, subject to restrictions such as the number of employees and the requirement to have a residence on site. This allows for the farming community to supplement their income and provide services within rural areas outside of urban centres.

Isolated Industrial Development

While the main policy in the MDP ensures that non-farming businesses in the Agricultural District are small in nature, the isolated industrial development policy does allow for large scale industrial businesses outside of areas designated for industrial development, but still within a plan area. This provides an exception where it is considered that industrial type development will not have a negative impact.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Do you agree with the existing economic development strategy?

What are your thoughts on home based businesses?

What are your thoughts on isolated industrial developments?

Do you feel we have enough industrial and commercial development areas, or where would you like to see more?
Development and the provision of adequate transportation and utilities go hand in hand. The County has endeavoured to ensure that multi-lot developments do not have a negative impact on existing infrastructure and utilities in the County.

Why is development located in some areas and not others?

The County tries to make the most efficient use of the existing road system. This is accomplished by directing developments that have a substantial traffic impact to locations adjacent to roads that have been designed to accommodate such traffic volumes. A great example of this is the Aspelund Industrial area adjacent to the Queen Elizabeth II Highway and Aspelund Road. Additionally, major industrial and commercial developments are located near major urban centres so that there is a possibility in the future to connect to regional water and wastewater services.

What requirements do multi-lot developments have to meet?

All multi-lot developments are responsible for completing traffic impact assessments, stormwater management reports and groundwater evaluation studies. The recommendations provided in these reports then have to be implemented by the developers of those subdivisions. For example, a developer would have to upgrade and pave roads to accommodate additional traffic and build stormwater facilities so as not to flood surrounding landowners.

The County also requires all new multi-lot developments, when they have lots under a certain size, to have communal water and wastewater facilities. This reduces potential negative impacts on our natural resources.

How does the County ensure roads and utilities are sustainable in the future?

The County has a Standards Manual which outlines the specific design requirements for roads, utilities and amenities. All developers are required to build infrastructure to these standards to ensure long term viability.

The County has a lot of gravel pits, how does it stop gravel trucks from negatively impacting the roads?

The County ensures that haul routes are set in place for all approved operators in the County which lessens the negative impact on the road system. Gravel operators are also required to pay an aggregate levy as a contribution towards road system maintenance and upgrading.
Lacombe County is inviting you to attend an interactive public meeting in your community during the month of February or March 2016 to facilitate updating the County’s Municipal Development Plan (MDP). This plan will guide how the County will grow and develop over the next 10 years, and will influence the policies that further regulate development under the County’s Land Use Bylaw (LUB).

We want to find out what you think the important issues for future development are and how we can best plan for the next 10 years. This is your opportunity to shape the policies that will influence you and future development in the County.

There will be subsequent meetings held in June and November 2016 to further review the proposed policy options.

Want to RSVP?
Please contact the Planning Department at 403.782.8389 or planning@lacombecounty.com

We will be in your community on...

- **Bentley Community Hall**
  - RSVP by Monday, February 8th

- **Gilby Hall**
  - RSVP by Monday, February 8th

- **Lacombe Memorial Centre**
  - RSVP by Monday, February 22nd

- **Haynes Hall**
  - RSVP by Monday, February 22nd

- **Mirror Hall**
  - RSVP by Monday, February 22nd

RSVP’s Required
All meetings 6-9 pm
Dinner Provided