

# *Municipal Development Plan*

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The Town of  
**Swan Hills**



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## **PART ONE: BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

### **SECTION 1.1: BACKGROUND**

1. The Municipal Government Act states that municipalities with a population of 3,500 or less may prepare and adopt a municipal development plan (MDP).
2. The overall purpose of the Swan Hills Municipal Development Plan (MDP) is to guide future growth and development to ensure that it is sustainable, orderly, appropriate, complementary, efficient, and that it enhances the quality of life for the citizens of Swan Hills.
3. The MDP is primarily a policy document that can be utilized as a framework which both public and private sector decision making can occur. As a policy document it is, for the most part, general in nature and long range in its outlook. The MDP provides the means whereby Council can evaluate immediate situations or proposals in the context of a long range plan for Swan Hills.

### **SECTION 1.2: GOALS AND POLICIES**

1. The goals and policies of the MDP apply to land within the Town boundary, and are intended to:
  - a) Identify major current and potential constraints, issues and opportunities respecting development in the community;
  - b) Be consistent with Provincial Land Use Policy;
  - c) Identify how the Town can move towards achieving its goals; and
  - d) Guide the orderly and systematic physical growth of the community.

## PART TWO: SETTING THE STAGE FOR GROWTH

### SECTION 2.1: DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

#### Development Opportunities & Constraints





**SECTION 2.2: GOALS**

1. To ensure the orderly, complementary, contiguous, and efficient development of the physical environment within Swan Hills.
2. To identify future growth needs and directions for Swan Hills and identify mechanisms which ensure that there is sufficient developable land within the municipality.

**SECTION 2.3: POLICIES**

1. Development and subdivision proposals that do not comply with the goals and policies of this plan will be evaluated on their merits. The Town may consider amending this plan to accommodate proposals it deems acceptable.
2. A high level of quality and aesthetic appeal will be encouraged in all development and redevelopment.
3. The Town may require the preparation of an area structure plan (ASP) or other non-statutory plan, acceptable to Council, before subdivision and/or development of any large tract of land is permitted to proceed.
4. The Town may require the preparation of an area redevelopment plan (ARP) or other non-statutory plan, acceptable to Council, before the subdivision and/or redevelopment of any large tract of land is permitted to proceed.
5. All adopted statutory plans shall adhere to this plan.
6. The Land Use Bylaw and all non-statutory plans and policies adopted by Council should be consistent with this plan.
7. The Town should give consideration to the following matters when reviewing proposed developments and/or amendments to the Land Use Bylaw.
  - a) Goals and policies of this and other applicable statutory and non-statutory plans and/or policies adopted by Council;
  - b) Views of the public;
  - c) Physical characteristics of the subject and adjacent land;
  - d) Use of other land in the vicinity;
  - e) Availability of and possible impact on public and private utilities;
  - f) Access to and possible impact on transportation systems;
  - g) Overall design; and
  - h) Any other matters which, in the opinion of Council, are relevant.
8. Higher utilization of existing infrastructure is encouraged through the appropriate infill development.
9. The Town will endeavour to maintain an adequate supply of serviceable land.
10. The Town may assume a role in land development, including acquisition, servicing and subdivision, in order to ensure an adequate supply of land.
11. New development and re-development will be required to pay its fair share of expanding existing or creating new public facilities and services (water, sewer, stormwater, roads and other community facilities).

## **PART THREE: RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **SECTION 3.1: GOALS**

1. A mixture of residential densities and tenure will be encouraged in all neighbourhoods so that a variety of housing is available.
2. High quality housing design, layout, site amenities and development will be promoted for all new residential housing projects.
3. Housing affordability will be encouraged to support the needs of first time home buyers, singles, lone-parents, seniors and persons with disabilities.
4. Encourage infill development by allowing smaller lots and higher densities.
5. Provide for separation and buffering of residential neighbourhoods from incompatible land uses.

### **SECTION 3.2: POLICIES**

1. Map 1 identifies potential future residential areas.
2. Although detached housing will be the dominant housing type, the Town supports the provision of a wide range of housing types in order to meet all of its housing needs.
3. Higher density housing is encouraged to develop small clusters with good access to major roads.
4. The Town supports increased home ownership of its citizens.
5. Innovative residential designs are encouraged. The external design and finish of all residential buildings should be of high quality and reflect or complement existing development in the vicinity.

## **PART FOUR: COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **SECTION 4.1: GOALS**

1. To promote and encourage the provision of a full range of goods and services for the citizens of Swan Hills.
2. To minimize potential conflicts between commercial and non-commercial land uses.
3. To encourage aesthetically pleasing commercial development.

### **SECTION 4.2: POLICIES**

1. Map 1 identifies potential and future commercial areas.
2. The Town will encourage infill and redevelopment of the Town Centre District.
3. The Town will encourage the highway commercial development along Highways 32 and 33 within the Town boundaries.
4. The Town will work closely with Alberta Transportation to insure that any future access or activity adjacent to Highways 32 and 33 is constructed to Alberta Transportation's standards.
5. The Town supports the concept of encouraging wide array of options for commercial development within the Town.
6. The external design and finish of all commercial developments should be of high quality and reflect or complement existing development in the vicinity.
7. Home based businesses will be allowed as permitted uses in all residential districts provided they are secondary to the residential use and do not detract from the amenities of the surrounding residential neighbourhood. Specific standards and requirements will be governed by the Land Use Bylaw.

## **PART FIVE: INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **SECTION 5.1: GOALS**

1. To accommodate a broad range of industrial development.
2. To minimize potential conflicts between industrial and non-industrial land uses.

### **SECTION 5.2: POLICIES**

1. Map 1 identifies potential future industrial areas.
2. The Town will encourage industrial development by maintaining a large land base for industry and promoting its availability to prospective users.
3. The Town will seek to minimize potential negative externalities associated with industrial developments.
4. Where negative externalities associated with an industrial use cannot be reduced to an acceptable level, the Town will strive to assist in the relocation of the industrial use to a more suitable location within the Town.
5. The Town may require an independent environmental impact assessment (EIA) to be completed before permitting an industrial use that may potentially cause environmental or health problems.



## **PART SIX: RECREATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **SECTION 6.1: GOALS**

1. To preserve and enhance the community facilities in the Town of Swan Hills.
2. To increase the effectiveness and to ensure the adequacy of open spaces.
3. To encourage the development of trails within the Town.

### **SECTION 6.2: POLICIES**

1. As part of the subdivision process, municipal reserve shall be provided where required in accordance with an Area Structure Plan or conceptual scheme. If the reserve land is not required within a current phases but will be required in future phases, the reserve lands shall be deferred to the remnant parcel where the reserve lands are required in accordance with the Municipal Government Act.
2. Money in place of municipal reserve or deferral of reserve by caveat shall be required where a subdivision area does not have a detailed Area Structure Plan or conceptual scheme in place in accordance with the Municipal Government Act.
3. Future subdivision designs should incorporate pedestrian linkages between residential, recreational and institutional uses.

## PART SEVEN: TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES

### SECTION 7.1: GOALS

1. To identify short and long term transportation needs of both the Town and the surrounding region and strive to ensure that these needs are adequately met in a manner that is compatible with existing and future development.
2. To support the adequate, safe, and efficient provision of municipal and private utilities.
3. To ensure municipal services are provided in a timely and efficient manner.

### SECTION 7.2: POLICIES

1. The Town will endeavour to protect Highways 32 and 33 from uses and development that may be detrimental to the flow and safety of traffic.
2. The Town shall establish standards and specifications for the future development of roads. These shall include the width of future roads, required right-of-way, methods of construction, placement of signage and sidewalks, lighting, landscaping requirements and intersection treatments.
3. The Town may establish bylaws concerning off-site levies in accordance with the provisions of the *Municipal Government Act* to finance the provision of off-site road and utility upgrades.
4. New development shall be required to be serviced by all municipal utilities to a standard satisfactory to the Town. The Town may accept industrial and commercial development on large parcels of land not serviced by municipal utilities.
5. Prior to subdivision approval, the developer shall be required to provide detailed engineering plans to describe how the water, sanitary and storm water servicing will be fulfilled.
6. Utility rights-of-way and public utility lots shall be provided at the time of subdivision.
7. The use of road right-of-way for storm water conveyance must be designed to accommodate a 1:100 year storm and not adversely affect traffic. Should the road right-of-way not be able to accommodate the 1:100 storm, on-site storm water ponds will be required. Storm water storage or retention is not allowed within road right-of-ways.

**PART EIGHT: ENVIRONMENT AND AGRICULTURE****SECTION 8.1: GOALS**

1. To ensure that a healthy environment be maintained in all aspects of future planning and development.
2. To encourage any development in the Town to minimize its impact on the air, water and soil quality of the area.
3. To conserve and protect water resources.
4. To encourage the reclamation of contaminated sites.
5. To ensure sustainability measures are encouraged in all future planning and operational decisions.
6. To allow for specific agricultural uses in appropriate locations within the Town.

**SECTION 8.2: POLICIES**

1. Council shall ensure sustainability is a primary objective of any new development or redevelopment projects within the Town. Sustainability, being the means to integrate the social, economic and environmental activities in ways that will enable the community to meet the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
2. Council shall work with developers to ensure that negative environmental impacts on the Town are minimized with proposed subdivision and development proposals.
3. The conservation of resources (i.e. water, energy) should be encouraged in all existing, new and renovated developments.
4. Council or the Development Officer may request an Environmental Audit or Assessment be performed on any site proposed for development, but particularly on all past commercial or industrial sites proposed for new development.
5. Council shall require satisfactory reclamation of environmentally contaminated sites prior to development.
6. Council shall address the impact of oil and gas facilities on the type and location of future land uses in local planning processes.
7. Ensure resource operations are located appropriately and take place in a manner that maintains environmental quality of adjacent areas and prevents permanent damage to the landscape or loss of other environmental features.
8. The Town may require developments to install water conservation devices or to recycle water used in the development.
9. Areas designated as “UR” – Urban Reserve District in the Land Use Bylaw may include equestrian centres, extensive agriculture, greenhouse or plant nurseries. Such developments shall be sited and developed with consideration of adjacent and surrounding land uses, in an attempt to minimize conflict.
10. Confined feeding operations shall not be located within the Town of Swan Hills.

**PART NINE: ENVIRONMENTAL RESERVES, OPEN SPACES AND FIRESMART POLICIES****SECTION 9.1: GOALS**

1. Legislating FireSmart requirements for structural materials, infrastructure and vegetation management within the municipality.
2. To protect and preserve, whenever possible, existing natural areas.
3. To ensure that development does not unduly impact the natural environment.
4. To ensure that the natural environment does not jeopardize the health, safety, and quality of life of the citizens of Swan Hills.
5. To provide open space that is functional and effective in satisfying the needs of residents and visitors to the community.

**SECTION 9.2: POLICIES**

1. Where appropriate, new subdivision and development applications deemed to be in high risk or high hazard areas, shall submit a Wildfire Risk Assessment, prepared by a qualified FireSmart professional. Wildfire Risk Assessments will be the landowners's responsibility and will include an evaluation of current and proposed FireSmart hazard and recommended FireSmart mitigative measures to be completed by the developer in conjunction with subdivision construction.
2. The Town shall revise its Land Use Bylaw to implement FireSmart practices with respect to structural materials, infrastructure and vegetation management.
3. The Town may require an environmental assessment/audit to be carried out on a site that is the subject of a development proposal.
4. The Town will work with developers to ensure that developments do not have a significant negative environmental impact on the Town.
5. The Town will not permit development in areas prone to flooding.
6. The Town will utilize environmental reserve and environmental conservation easements as mechanisms to protect environmentally significant areas.
7. Through the subdivision process, the Town shall require that lands considered unsuitable for development area dedicated as environmental reserve with the provisions of the MGA.
8. When lands adjacent to water bodies or water courses are subdivided, a strip of land shall be dedicated as environmental reserve to provide a buffer and provide public access. The width of the required dedication shall be established by the Subdivision Authority.
9. Lands dedicated as environmental reserve shall remain in their natural state and/or be used as part of the public trail system where necessary to ensure a continuous integrated trail system.

## **PART TEN: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **SECTION 10.1: GOALS**

1. To further the economic vitality and sustainability of the local and area economy.
2. To develop a strong tourism sector in the local and area economy.

### **SECTION 10.2: POLICIES**

1. The Town supports, in principle, private economic development initiatives.
2. The Town may support economic development initiatives, whether on its own or in partnership with the private sector.
3. The Town supports, whenever possible, joint economic development initiatives with the Municipal District of Big Lakes and other municipalities in the region.
4. The Town encourages the development of the tourism industry in and around Swan Hills. Such development should not have adverse social, economic, or environmental impacts.
5. Tourism oriented development should benefit the citizens of Swan Hills and area by providing greater economic, recreational, and cultural opportunities.
6. The Town and/or related agency should develop and maintain a registry of local businesses and services in order to identify and then actively seek to fill gaps.

## **PART ELEVEN: INTER-MUNICIPAL COOPERATION**

### **SECTION 11.1: GOALS**

1. To undertake cooperative planning with the Municipal District of Big Lakes.
2. To coordinate land use policies for the boundary areas which are mutually beneficial to both the Town and the Municipal District.
3. To coordinate the provision of roads, facilities, and other services that serve residents of both municipalities.

### **SECTION 11.2: POLICIES**

1. The Town will continue to work cooperatively with the Municipal District of Big Lakes on issues of land use planning and the cost-effective delivery of municipal services.
2. The Town will continue to negotiate with neighbouring municipalities, First Nations and Metis Settlements for the delivery of regional services such as tourism, economic development, solid waste management, mutual aid and recreation.



**PART TWELVE: ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS****SECTION 12.1: INTERPRETATION**

1. The MDP is, for the most part, general in nature and long range in its outlook. The MDP provides the means whereby Council and Town staff can evaluate immediate situations or proposals in the context of a long range plan for Swan Hills. In this regard, the boundary between the land uses shown on Map 1 is not to be rigidly interpreted and the specific boundaries shall be determined through the designation of the Land Use Bylaw Districts.
2. Subject to Council's approval, minor variations from the policies of the MDP will not require an amendment to the MDP. More substantive changes will require an amendment to the MDP and any other affected plan.
3. The MDP contains "shall", "should", and "may" policies which are interpreted as follows:
  - a) "Shall" policies must be complied with,
  - b) "Should" policies mean compliance in principle, but is subject to the discretion of the applicable authority on a case by case basis, and
  - c) "May" policies indicate that the applicable authority determines the level of compliance that is required.

**SECTION 12.2: IMPLEMENTATION**

1. The goals and policies of the MDP will be further refined and implemented through the development, adoption, and day to day application of statutory plans (area structure plans and area redevelopment plans), non statutory plans (outline plans, design schemes, etc.) and the Land Use Bylaw.

**SECTION 12.3: AMENDMENT**

1. Amendment of the MDP must follow the appropriate procedures as outlined in the *Municipal Government Act*.
2. All statutory and non-statutory plans shall be consistent with the MDP and may require amendment to ensure their compliance with the MDP.

**SECTION 12.4: REVIEW**

1. In order to ensure that the MDP is current, the entire plan should be reviewed approximately every three years, preferably soon after the municipal election.