

# SHAPING WHITECOURT

Town of Whitecourt Municipal Development Plan





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Plan Purpose .....	1
1.2	Regional Context .....	1
1.3	Historic Growth and Urban Form.....	4
1.4	Existing Land Use .....	5
1.5	Development Constraints .....	8
1.6	Population Growth.....	10
1.7	'Imagine WHITECOURT'- the 2008 MDP.....	12
<b>2</b>	<b>Process, Principles and Vision.....</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1	Planning Process.....	13
2.2	Strengths, Themes and Guiding Principles.....	15
2.3	Vision .....	16
<b>3</b>	<b>Future Land Use Concept and General Development Strategy .....</b>	<b>17</b>
3.1	Land Use and Development Goals.....	18
3.2	Land Use and Development Policies .....	18
<b>4</b>	<b>Environmental Stewardship .....</b>	<b>22</b>
4.1	Environmental Goals.....	22
4.2	Environmental Policies .....	23
<b>5</b>	<b>Residential .....</b>	<b>25</b>
5.1	Residential Goals .....	26
5.2	General Residential Policies.....	26
5.3	Future Residential Neighbourhoods .....	28
5.4	Mature Residential Neighbourhoods .....	30
<b>6</b>	<b>Downtown.....</b>	<b>31</b>
6.1	Downtown Goals.....	31
6.2	General Downtown Policies .....	32
6.3	Downtown Core Policy Area .....	33
6.4	Downtown Commercial Mixed Use Policy Area.....	35
<b>7</b>	<b>Commercial .....</b>	<b>37</b>

7.1	Commercial Goals .....	37
7.2	General Commercial Policies.....	38
7.3	Neighbourhood Commercial.....	39
7.4	Highway Commercial.....	40
7.5	Hilltop Commercial.....	41
<b>8</b>	<b>Industrial .....</b>	<b>42</b>
8.1	Industrial Goals .....	42
8.2	General Industrial Policies.....	43
<b>9</b>	<b>Parks, Open Space and Recreation .....</b>	<b>45</b>
9.1	Parks, Open Space and Recreation Goals.....	45
9.2	Parks, Open Space and Recreation Policies.....	46
<b>10</b>	<b>Transportation.....</b>	<b>49</b>
10.1	Transportation Goals.....	49
10.2	Transportation Policies .....	50
<b>11</b>	<b>Utilities .....</b>	<b>53</b>
11.1	Water Supply .....	53
11.2	Waste Water Treatment.....	53
11.3	Stormwater Drainage.....	54
11.4	Solid Waste Disposal .....	54
11.5	Utility Goals.....	54
11.6	Utility Policies .....	54
<b>12</b>	<b>Intermunicipal Planning.....</b>	<b>56</b>
12.1	Intermunicipal Planning Goals .....	56
12.2	Intermunicipal Planning Policies .....	57
<b>13</b>	<b>Monitoring, Review &amp; Implementation .....</b>	<b>58</b>
13.1	Monitoring.....	58
13.2	Review.....	58
13.3	Implementation .....	58



## LIST OF MAPS

<b>Map 1 – Regional Context</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Map 2 – Development Constraints</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Map 3 – Future Development Concept</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Map 4 – Parks, Open Space and Recreation</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Map 5 - Transportation Network</b>	<b>51</b>

- Amendment 1505-1: September 25, 2017 – Amended to add Section 6.2.8 and 6.2.9 as follows:
- 6.2.8 As the downtown core is considered a vital part of our community, Whitecourt shall provide public parking for those uses whose public requirements are temporary in nature (i.e. restaurants, retail establishments, etc.). These uses shall be specified in a Downtown Parking District Overlay and shall be required to provide their own on-site employee parking.
  - 6.2.9 Whitecourt shall review downtown parking on a regular basis (3-5 years) to ensure that adequate parking is provided.
- and Section 10.2.8 be deleted and replaced with the following:
- 10.2.8 To avoid a shortage of parking spaces, especially within Downtown, Whitecourt shall require the minimum number of parking stalls as outlined in the Land Use Bylaw. On-site employee parking shall still be required for those uses listed in the Downtown Parking District Overlay as exempt from the provision of public parking. Where there are extenuating circumstances, Whitecourt may reduce the number of stalls required but may also require money in place of those stalls not provided.
- Amendment 1505-3: May 25, 2021 – Amended as follows:
- 6.2.7 be deleted in its entirety.
- That Section 6.2.8 be deleted and replaced with:
- 6.2.8 The downtown core is considered a vital part of our community, in order to invigorate this area there shall be no minimum parking requirements. Businesses and property owners have an interest in ensuring their parking needs are met and shall be allowed to make their own decisions as to the amount of on-site parking to provide based on their operations and needs.
- That Section 6.2.9 be deleted and replaced with:
- 6.2.9 Whitecourt shall support the use of shared parking facilities and shared parking agreements between downtown businesses and property owners.
- That Section 7.2.5 be deleted and replaced with:
- 7.2.5 Adequate parking and loading facilities shall be provided for all commercial establishments according to the requirements of the Land Use Bylaw, with the exception of those located in the downtown core area who shall be responsible for determining their own parking requirements and addressing their own off-street parking needs.
- 10.2.8 be deleted in its entirety.
- Amendment 1505-4: November 28, 2022 – Amended as follows:
- That Map 3 of Municipal Development Plan No. 1505 be amended by changing the future land use designation of approximately 2 hectares along 48 Avenue from Highway Commercial, with an Environmental Constraints Overlay, to Industrial, with an Environmental Constraints Overlay.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PLAN PURPOSE

The purpose of this Plan, Whitecourt's Municipal Development Plan (MDP), is to provide clear direction for Council and Administration to guide future growth and development of Whitecourt while providing a suitable planning framework to accommodate a population of 20,000 within the current municipal boundary.

The MDP also informs residents and developers of the comprehensive land use and growth strategy for the future development of the community; provides a foundation for the preparation of more detailed plans; and is intended to be used in conjunction with Whitecourt's Land Use Bylaw as a means to implement the vision, principles, goals and policies of this Plan.

This Plan provides the following content:

- Background information on Whitecourt's location and historic growth patterns;
- Description of the Town's future vision and the principles upon which the vision is built;
- Whitecourt's future land use concept, and the goals and policies designed to guide residential, commercial and industrial development; parks, recreation and open space; and, transportation and utilities;
- Maps indicating the appropriate direction of such development;
- Guidance on the location of sour gas facilities and municipal reserves; and
- Description of the monitoring, review and implementation of the Plan.

The Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Municipal Government Act and replaces the previous MDP, Bylaw 1428, which was adopted in November 2008.

## 1.2 REGIONAL CONTEXT

Whitecourt is located in the northwest portion of Central Alberta at the confluence of the Athabasca and McLeod Rivers (Map 1). Whitecourt is nestled within a rolling topography that transitions from a vast boreal forest to the north and west to an agricultural area to the south and the east.

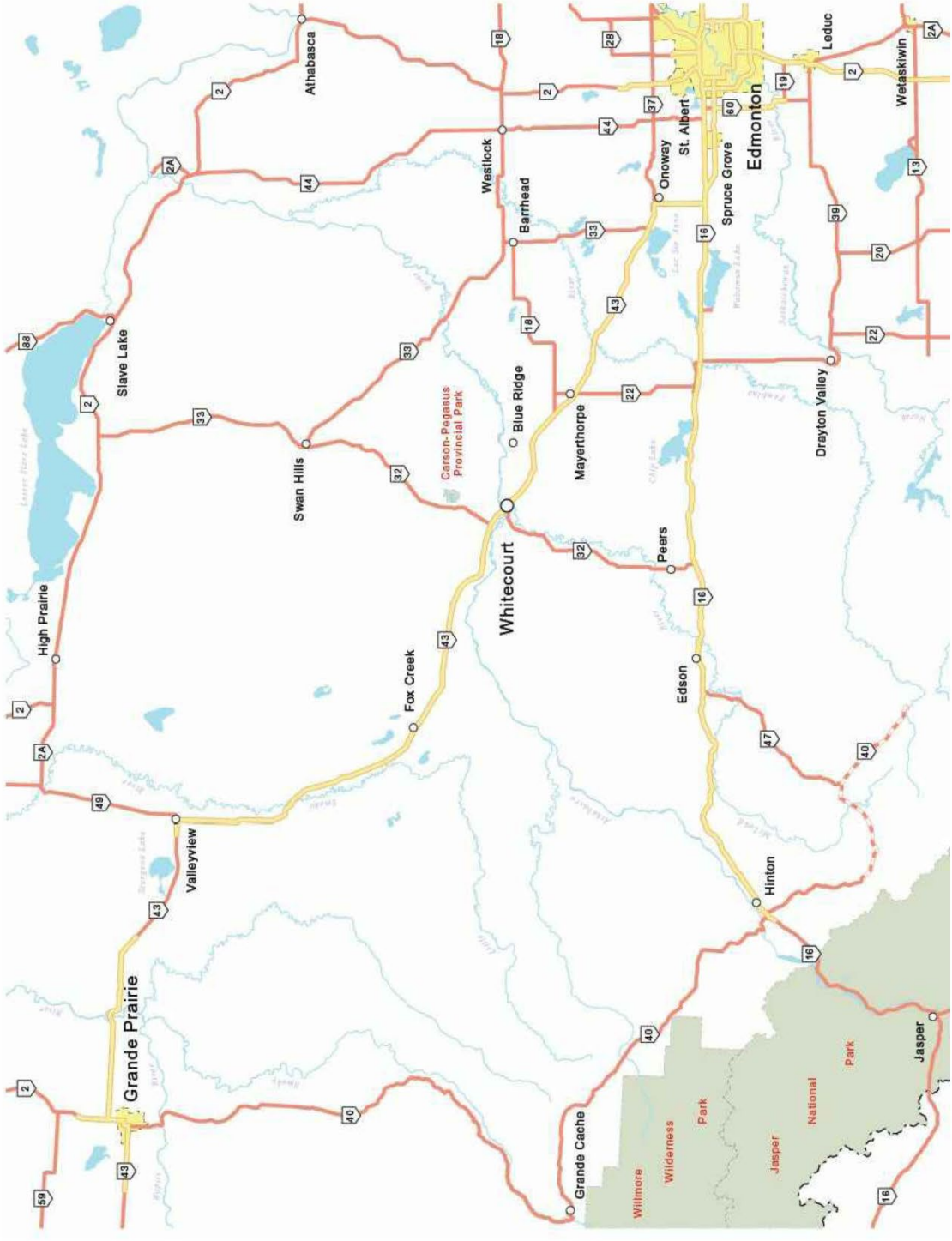
Whitecourt is located on Highway 43, which is the primary link from central Alberta to northwest Alberta. Highway 43 is an important component of the CANAMEX Corridor – a north-south transcontinental route stretching from Alaska to Mexico – and experiences high traffic volumes serving northeastern British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and

Alaska. Highway 43 is intersected by Highway 32 between the Athabasca and McLeod Rivers. Highway 32 provides a direct link to the Yellowhead Highway, which is a west/east transcontinental route stretching from Manitoba to British Columbia. The Canadian National (CN) operates a rail line linking Whitecourt to the northwest and Edmonton to the southeast.

Whitecourt is the largest urban service centre between Edmonton and Grande Prairie, has a population of 10,574 (2013 Municipal Census), and encompasses a land area of 28.5km<sup>2</sup>. within Woodlands County. Whitecourt provides services to the nearby urban communities of Fox Creek, Swan Hills, Mayerthorpe, Barrhead, and Edson. The forestry, petroleum, and tourism industries drive the regional economy.

The lands within Whitecourt's immediate surroundings accommodate a diversity of land uses within a varied natural landscape. Mixed agricultural and forested areas are located to the east, south and west of Whitecourt's boundaries, while the lands to the north of the Athabasca River are forested. Country residential developments are located to the southeast, south, and southwest. A gravel extraction operation and Whitecourt's municipal airport are located to the west of Whitecourt, and will continue to operate for the foreseeable future. The Athabasca and McLeod Rivers run through Whitecourt and carve a river valley and escarpment system that defines the region.





Not to scale  
Bylaw 1428

## 1.3

# HISTORIC GROWTH AND URBAN FORM

Whitecourt's history and settlement pattern has centered on the Athabasca and McLeod Rivers. The area was mainly occupied by indigenous people until the Hudson's Bay Company established a trading post near the confluence of the two rivers in 1890. The unincorporated community was renamed Whitecourt in 1910 for postal service purposes.

In the early 20th Century, Whitecourt grew as a result of the development of the community's first large-scale sawmill/planer operation and the extension of rail service. These two events firmly established the area currently occupied by Downtown as the heart of the community.

The local forestry industry formed the economic base of the community until the middle of the 20th Century. Since then, Whitecourt's growth has been fuelled by a diverse local economy consisting of forestry, oil and gas, and tourism.

Alberta's first major oil and gas boom reached Whitecourt in 1951 resulting in an increase in population that necessitated an eastward expansion of the community. Whitecourt's participation in the boom was formalized in 1954 when the Windfall gas field was discovered. Meanwhile, the opening of the Highway 43 extension from Whitecourt to Valleyview in 1955 established a shorter route between Edmonton and northwest Alberta. The opening of the highway greatly benefited the local tourism industry.

The impact of growth brought by the oil and gas boom and the completion of Highway 43 resulted in a spike in Whitecourt's population. This population growth triggered the incorporation of Whitecourt as a Village in 1959, as a New Town in 1961, and as a Town in 1971.

Strength in the oil and gas industry continued until the early 1980s. By that time, Whitecourt's growth resulted in: residential expansion to the northeast of Downtown; highway commercial and industrial expansion across the McLeod River in West Whitecourt; and residential, highway commercial, and service industrial expansion above the escarpment in the Hilltop.

A downturn in the oil and gas industry in the early to mid-1980s resulted in a period of marginal growth for Whitecourt. This period was short-lived, however, as general growth in the Canadian economy and Whitecourt's active role in Alberta's major forestry boom of the late 1980s brought significant growth to the community.

The forestry boom brought the development of three new mills to the area, including: Blue Ridge Lumber's fibreboard mill east of Whitecourt near Blue Ridge; Millar Western's pulp mill in Whitecourt alongside its existing sawmill and planer mill; and Alberta Newsprint Corporation's newsprint mill northwest of Whitecourt. The in-migration of workers and an increased need for housing resulted in the expansion of residential areas north of Downtown to Flats Road and in the southern portion of Hilltop Residential. In addition, Whitecourt's industrial areas began filling out and the Valley Centre Mall was developed west of 51 Street to meet growing demands for services.

Due to the diverse economy and the overall strength of its industries, Whitecourt has experienced steady growth since 1996. In recent years, both the oil and gas and the lumber

industries have seen growth and minor downturns. The fluctuations in these industries have succeeded in balancing each other to maintain a healthy economy in Whitecourt.

Current growth has brought significant new developments to Whitecourt. New commercial uses have established within and adjacent to Downtown. New industrial development will expand Hilltop Industrial in an easterly direction, expand into undeveloped portions of West Whitecourt, and provide new industrial opportunities in the River Valley along the CN rail line. Infill residential development has occurred in both the Hilltop and the River Valley, while demand for new residential development has resulted in an eastward expansion of Athabasca Flats and additional subdivisions within Hilltop Residential.

New industrial development will expand Hilltop Industrial in an easterly direction into undeveloped portions of West Whitecourt and provide new industrial opportunities in the River Valley along the CN rail line.

## 1.4 EXISTING LAND USE

Whitecourt's development pattern has evolved from a small, compact area at the junction of the Athabasca and McLeod Rivers to a community comprised of three distinct areas:

- West Whitecourt, located on either side of Highway 43 between the Athabasca and McLeod Rivers;
- The River Valley, located east of the McLeod River, south of the Athabasca River, and below the river valley escarpment; and
- The Hilltop, located on the escarpment on either side of Highway 43.

### West Whitecourt

West Whitecourt is developed with highway commercial uses adjacent to Highway 43, three industrial parks, railway marshalling yards, the Westview manufactured home park, and a campground. The northern portion of West Whitecourt is forested wetlands and undeveloped.

### The River Valley

The River Valley is east adjacent to West Whitecourt and directly south of the Athabasca River. It includes three sub-areas – Downtown, Athabasca Flats, and McLeod Flats.

Downtown is predominantly commercial but does include residential nodes and various institutional uses. Over the past 15 years, Downtown has experienced redevelopment and has expanded both southward and eastward. A key feature of the Town's economy, Millar Western's pulp and lumber mill, is located in the western portion of Downtown and so the growth of other lands uses is significantly limited in this direction.

Lands to the north and east of Downtown are known as Athabasca Flats. This sub-area is primarily residential in nature and includes a number of the Town's more recent residential

developments, as well as the River Valley Estates manufactured home park. The lands identified in the Athabasca Flats Area Structure Plan (ASP) have largely been developed, but the lands to the east outlined in the Athabasca Flats East ASP, are only beginning to be developed. Athabasca Flats also includes Rotary Park which is a key recreational facility in Whitecourt.

Lands to the west and southwest of Downtown are known as McLeod Flats. This sub-area includes highway commercial development along Highway 43, the Riverside manufactured home park adjacent to the McLeod River, and a campground located at the foot of the river valley escarpment.

Undeveloped portions of the River Valley include;

- Lands in the southern and eastern portions of Downtown;
- South of Highway 43 and east of the McLeod River in McLeod Flats;
- East of Downtown and Athabasca Flats, and
- On either side of the CN rail line in Athabasca Flats.

These undeveloped lands are largely wooded with some areas that are vacant or under agricultural use.





## The Hilltop

The Hilltop is south of the River Valley and includes three sub-areas: Hilltop Industrial, Hilltop Residential and Hilltop Commercial. Hilltop Industrial is to the east of Highway 43, Hilltop Residential is to the west and Hilltop Commercial is Whitecourt's largest highway commercial strip on either side of Highway 43.

Lands northeast of the highway are known as Hilltop Industrial in which the majority of Whitecourt's industrial businesses are located. Hilltop Industrial also includes the Hillpark and Evergreen manufactured home parks.

Lands southwest of the highway are known as Hilltop Residential. Hilltop Residential also includes Centennial Park along the Beaver Creek ravine system and the Forest Interpretive Centre and a campground. The neighbourhoods have been largely built out. The site of St. Joseph School, which is relocating to the east side of the Athabasca Flats, presents an opportunity for further mixed-use residential development in the Hilltop neighbourhood.

Undeveloped portions of the Hilltop include lands in the vicinity of the Forest Interpretive Centre and campground, and east of the Hilltop Industrial. These undeveloped lands remain in a natural and treed state.



## 1.5

# DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS

### Natural Features

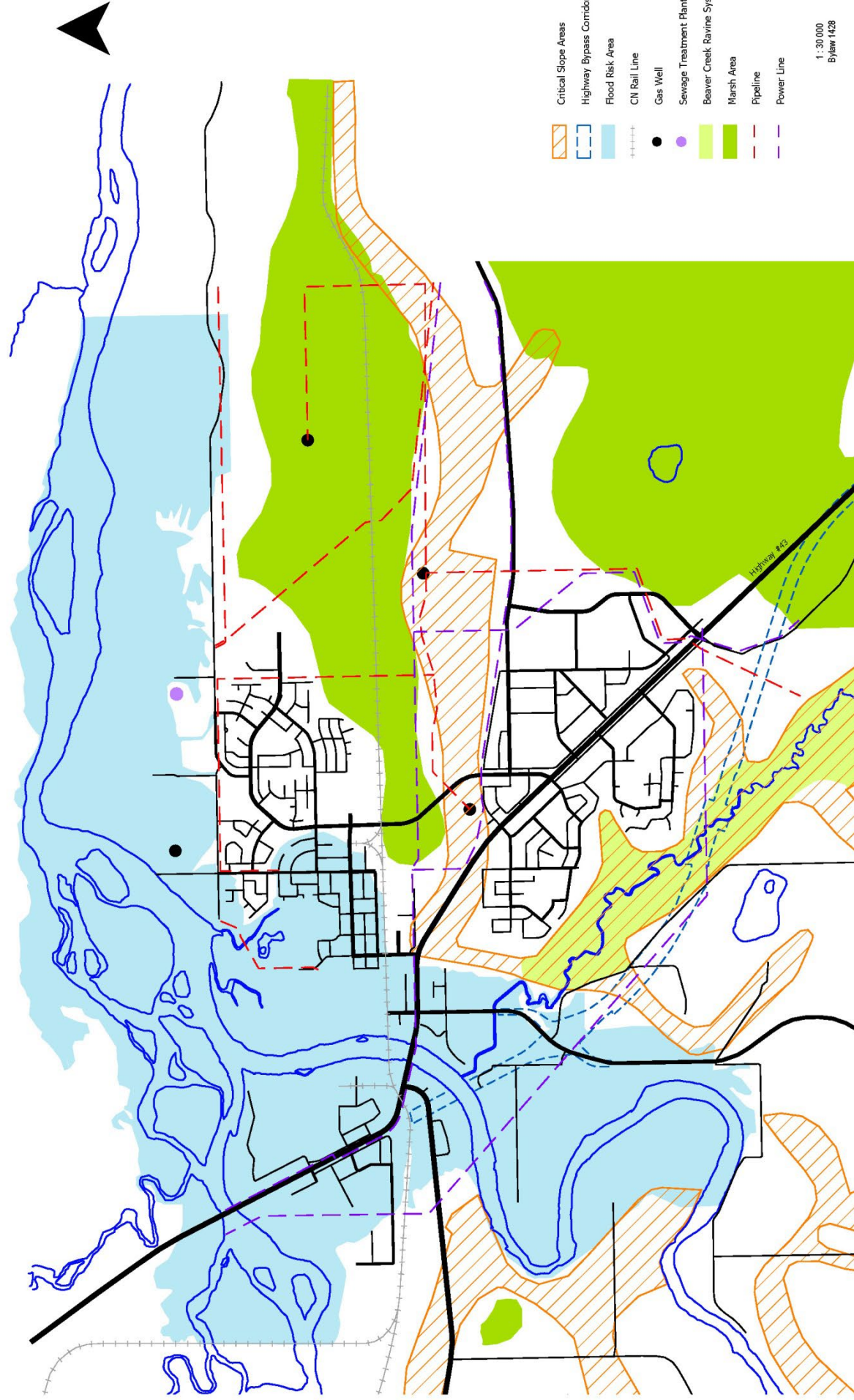
Various natural and human-made features have affected the way Whitecourt has developed over the years (Map 2). These features will continue to play a major role in future development and affect Whitecourt's urban form. Natural development constraints include the Athabasca and McLeod Rivers, the river valley escarpment, the Beaver Creek Ravine System, and muskeg areas, while human-made features includes the CN rail line, Whitecourt's wastewater treatment plant, gas wells, power lines, and pipelines.

The Athabasca and McLeod Rivers have played an important historic role in the development of Whitecourt. The rivers created the valley in which much of Whitecourt is situated and had played a major role in the preindustrial days of the logging industry. The constraints associated with the rivers are twofold. First, the McLeod River acts a physical barrier between West Whitecourt and the balance of Whitecourt. Second, the rivers pose a flood risk. In 2015, in partnership with Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, the Town of Whitecourt is undertaking a Flood Plain Study to provide direction for future development adjacent to the river valley and potential flood hazard areas.

The River Valley and the Hilltop are physically divided by a steep river valley escarpment. The escarpment contains various slopes and watercourses that cut into the Hilltop. While it is apparent that some slopes are not stable, it is important to note that geotechnical studies have not been undertaken on all slopes to determine their susceptibility to slumping.

The Beaver Creek Ravine System forms the southwestern boundary of the Hilltop and serves as an important winter eco-system for animals. The ravine system has limited potential for urban development or active recreation amenities due to its topographic features. However, the ravine system's topography and vegetation provides Whitecourt with an irreplaceable natural feature, which should be preserved for passive recreation amenities such as hiking trails.

Two muskeg areas are located within Whitecourt's boundaries. The first is situated at the toe of the river valley escarpment along the CN rail line from roughly 47 Street to Whitecourt's eastern limits. The second is situated in the southeast corner of Whitecourt on the Hilltop. These muskeg areas are a function of adverse soil composition combined with poor drainage or a high water table. While development of muskeg areas is possible, special construction considerations are required.



- Critical Slope Areas
- Highway Bypass Corridor
- Flood Risk Area
- CM Rail Line
- Gas Well
- Sewage Treatment Plant
- Beaver Creek Ravine System
- Marsh Area
- Pipeline
- Power Line

1 : 30 000  
Bylaw 1428



## Infrastructure and Utilities

A Canadian National (CN) rail line, known as the Sangudo Subdivision, runs parallel to 50 Avenue through Whitecourt. A large marshalling yard is situated in West Whitecourt while a former marshalling yard adjacent to Downtown is now used for crew changes. A CN rail siding is located in Whitecourt's east end, which serves a gravel extraction operation. The rail line is a significant constraint to development, especially in the vicinity of Downtown, but also benefits Whitecourt due to the opportunities it creates for industry.

Whitecourt's wastewater treatment plant is located northeast of the Flats Road/Leedy Drive intersection and adjacent to the Graham Acres Recreation Area. A 300m setback is required from the treatment plant for urban development. An odour study outlining measures to mitigate the odour issues relating to the wastewater treatment plant was published in January 2014, which proposed a landscaped green buffer zone to be put in place by the developers of new residential developments. This green buffer would be in addition to the required 300m buffer between development and the wastewater treatment plant and the sludge storage lagoon.

Considering Whitecourt is located within a major gas field, three gas wells are located within Whitecourt's municipal boundary. The wells produce sour natural gas (<1% hydrogen sulphide) that is transported by pipeline to a gas processing plant east of Whitecourt. Currently, the gas wells do not pose a major constraint to development. However, a 100m setback may be required when urban development is introduced adjacent to these facilities.

In addition to the natural gas pipelines, which serve the vast majority of properties in Whitecourt, there are approximately 35km of petroleum pipelines. These pipelines pass through the community and carry a variety of products from local wells to local consumers. The operators of these facilities require setbacks for different types of development activities for both maintenance and safety reasons. As part of the ASP process, pipeline operators must be consulted in relation to any development near pipelines, and their permission is required for any future development adjacent to the pipeline right-of-way.

## 1.6 POPULATION GROWTH

Whitecourt's population had yet to exceed 1,000 people prior to its incorporation as a Village in 1959. During the time of Alberta's first major oil and gas boom and the completion of Highway 43, Whitecourt's population increased from 1,054 in 1961 to 5,585 in 1981 (Table 1 – Whitecourt's Population History, 1961 - 2006).

With the downturn in the oil and gas industry in the early 1980s, Whitecourt's population experienced marginal growth, but this period was short-lived. By the late 1980s, Whitecourt benefited in the improvement of the Canadian economy and was in the midst of a major forestry boom, coinciding with the development of new fibreboard, pulp, and newsprint mills. This brought over 2,000 new residents to the community over a 10-year period. Whitecourt grew from 5,737 in 1986 to 7,783 in 1996 (Table 1).

Since 1996, Whitecourt has grown at a steady rate as a result of its diversified economy, location, and emergence as a regional service centre. The current population according to the 2013 Municipal census is 10,574.



Whitecourt's population history shows that steady-to-rapid growth is very much a part of its history. Based upon the population growth between 1996 and 2013, Whitecourt's compound annual growth rate has been 1.82% over this 17-year period. At this rate, the population of Whitecourt will exceed 16,000 by 2036, growing by approximately 5,436 people.

This projection presumes the consistent growth of Whitecourt's existing industries over the medium term future. Increased growth levels, relating to future development of resource discoveries in the region, must also be considered when projecting future population and land use requirements.

*Table 1.7.1: Population History 1961-2013*

Year	Population	Net Change	Percent Change
1961	1,054	n/a	n/a
1966	2,279	+ 1,225	116%
1971	3,202	+ 923	41%
1976	3,878	+ 676	21%
1981	5,585	+ 1,707	44%
1986	5,727	+ 152	3%
1991	6,938	+ 1,201	21%
1996	7,783	+ 845	12%
2001	8,334	+ 551	7%
2006	8,971	+ 637	8%
2011	9,605	+634	7%
2013*	10,574	+969	10%

*\*2013 statistics based upon Municipal census. All other historic population statistics are from the Federal census data.*

## 1.7

### ‘IMAGINE WHITECOURT’- THE 2008 MDP

The previous MDP for Whitecourt, titled Imagine Whitecourt, was ratified in 2008. Some of the primary policies of Imagine Whitecourt included:

- Supporting the Downtown core as the commercial heart of the Town and vibrant mixed use community;
- Improved urban design standards;
- Establishment of an extensive network of recreational areas and protection of the Towns natural areas;
- Requirement of a greater variety of housing types;
- Facilitate greater public consultation and participation in decision making on future development of the Town.

In addition to the 2008 MDP, the Town also adopted a Vitalization Plan in 2013, which outlines a clear vision for future development of the highway corridor and the Downtown core.

Imagine Whitecourt has guided a significant amount of development within the Town over the past seven years; however the current development trends require the Town to revisit some of its policies relating to its long term growth. Residential development in particular has seen faster than expected growth, and this has in turn put pressure on the availability of land identified for residential purposes.

This updated MDP is not intended to act as a complete overhaul of Imagine Whitecourt, but to fine tune the vision for the future growth of the community.

## 2 PROCESS, PRINCIPLES AND VISION

### 2.1 PLANNING PROCESS

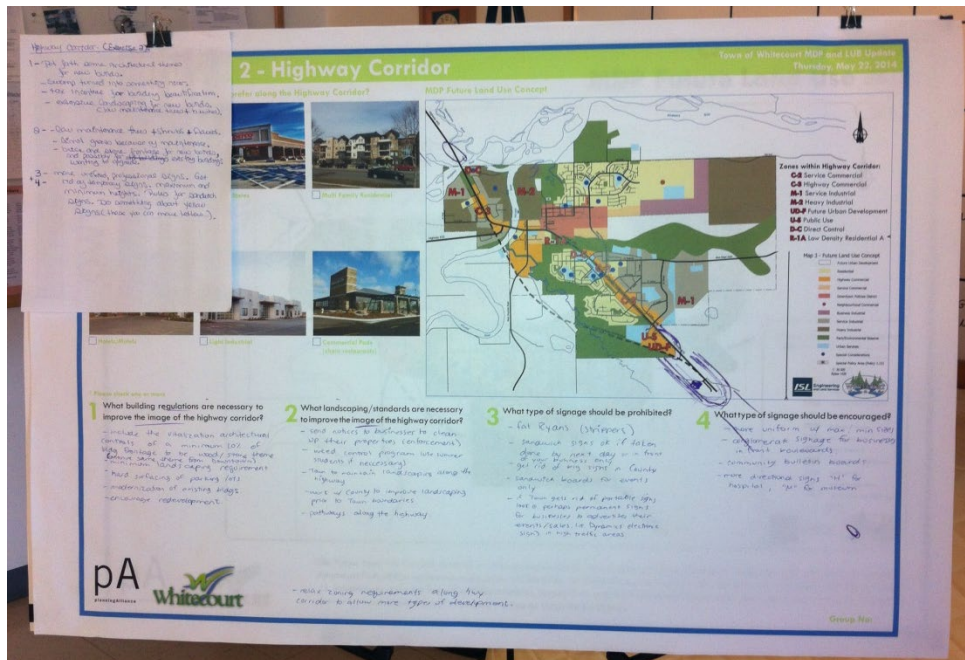
The development of this Plan has been guided by the Shaping Whitecourt plan review process. This process has combined technical analysis and experiential knowledge to develop a long range land use concept, vision and policies for this Plan. The Shaping Whitecourt process has been grounded in gathering feedback from stakeholders that included members of Whitecourt's Council and Administration, residents, the development industry, business groups, the Chamber of Commerce and external representatives with an interest in the development of the Town.

This collaborative process was designed to acknowledge existing policy, recognize current trends, and develop a practical and logical strategy for future growth. The Shaping Whitecourt process involved the entire community as people worked together to collaborate on a shared vision for Whitecourt.

Whitecourt's Council and Administration sponsored the Shaping Whitecourt process between March 2014 and March 2015, and provided opportunities for the public and other stakeholders to make suggestions and provide feedback about the MDP, including:

- A Stakeholder Review Committee (SRC) was established for this project to provide advice to the Town's project team and the consultant team. The SRC included a total of ten members with diverse representation such as council members, citizens at large and local business representatives. Throughout the project a total of six SRC meetings were held.
- Key interviews with Whitecourt's Administration in March, 2014;
- Advertisements in local newspapers and on Whitecourt's website requesting public input in March 2014;
- Questionnaires were published on the Town's website between March and May of 2014 to gather public feedback on key issues related to the existing the MDP and the Land Use Bylaw;
- A multi-stakeholder workshop was held in May 2014, which included key stakeholders from across the community addressing issues within the Town. This was followed by a public open house which provided an opportunity to the entire community to provide their input;

- A second public open house was held in October 2014 to present the first draft of the MDP and the Land Use Bylaw;
- A third public open house was held in January 2014 to provide additional opportunities for public input;
- Public Hearing advertisements were placed in local newspapers on June 9 and 17, 2015; and
- A Public Hearing was held on June 22, 2015 to provide all stakeholders with a final opportunity to comment on the draft MDP prior to Council review and adoption.



## 2.2 STRENGTHS, THEMES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Shaping Whitecourt plan review process identified community strengths, major themes for future development, and guiding principles for Whitecourt.

Six community strengths emerged as a result of the process:

- Whitecourt is a close-knit community;
- Whitecourt is proud of its history;
- Whitecourt is at the heart of a regional population and economic centre;
- Whitecourt encourages active participation and community involvement in decision making;
- Whitecourt is proud of its cultural, natural, and recreation amenities; and
- Whitecourt celebrates its volunteers.

Three major themes were identified in this process:

- Economic prosperity;
- Social well-being; and
- Environmental stewardship.

Participants in the Shaping Whitecourt plan review process overwhelmingly described that Whitecourt provides a rich quality of life. Participants also identified that they like Whitecourt's size and value the services and amenities it currently provides. Participants clearly stated that they wanted their high quality of life to be maintained and the provision of new commercial services and amenities to meet their needs in the future. Whitecourt's greatest challenge will be to balance the benefits and costs of growth while still providing a high quality of life.

If Whitecourt is going to succeed in creating a high quality of life in the future then development must recognize the six community strengths, the three major themes and the following nine principles, which were identified in the Shaping Whitecourt plan review process:

- Whitecourt supports Downtown as the Business and Commercial centre of the community and encourages its development as a vibrant mixed use area;
- Whitecourt promotes high quality design, seeks development that is integrated within the existing urban fabric, and encourages development that builds on Whitecourt's identity;

- Whitecourt’s residents can find adequate, affordable accommodation in proximity to employment, commercial and retail activities, and public amenities;
- Whitecourt recognizes the importance of the forestry industries, the oil and gas sector, the goods and services supply sector, and the tourism industry and seeks to grow these industries and attract new industries;
- Whitecourt provides an interconnected system of parks, recreation areas and public open spaces to meet the needs of residents;
- Whitecourt’s Council and Administration provide leadership that allows opportunities for public consultation in decision making, celebrates volunteerism and promotes a sense of community identity and pride;
- Whitecourt’s residents can travel throughout the community using a variety of convenient modes of transport;
- Whitecourt’s servicing system is based on the economical and efficient extension of municipal infrastructure and utilities; and
- Whitecourt protects the integrity of natural areas and provides opportunities to integrate these areas into future urban development.

These principles are the standards and values which reflect the character of the community as identified in the Imagine Whitecourt and Shaping Whitecourt plan review process. They will provide a consistent set of principles for every decision made by Council and Administration, and serve as a foundation for the vision, goals and policies of the MDP.

## 2.3

### VISION

Any plan for future land use and development must be based on a vision of the future. This particular vision is intended to inspire and to articulate the future of Whitecourt.

Whitecourt is a socially diverse, culturally rich, environmentally sound and fiscally sustainable community that:

- Provides a high quality of life to its citizens;
- Provides a variety of economic development opportunities to its businesses;
- Provides unique tourism and recreational opportunities to its residents and visitors;
- Protects environmental assets, natural features and open spaces in the region;
- Provides locally relevant affordable housing options;
- Engages all citizens effectively in the Town building process;
- Provides competitive as well as sustainable hard and soft infrastructure services;
- Celebrates cultural diversity of its citizens.



# 3 FUTURE LAND USE CONCEPT AND GENERAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Future Land Use Concept, (Map 3), and the subsequent policies of this Plan establish a land use framework for future development in Whitecourt, which are both consistent with the principles and vision of this Plan.

The land use framework maintains Whitecourt's historic pattern of development and urban form. Future residential uses are generally focused in Athabasca Flats and within the Downtown. Future commercial uses are concentrated within and adjacent to Downtown, and along Highway 43. Future Industrial use areas are located in the Hilltop Industrial area. The MDP also recognizes that the future industrial growth may happen beyond the existing Town boundaries in the northwest and southeast direction. Open space, natural areas and parks will be focused in the river valley escarpment, the river edges, and the Beaver Creek Ravine System.

The future land use concept also:

- Recognizes the integrity of mature neighbourhoods and encourages infill development that complements existing development;
- Encourages the development of a Downtown that is vibrant and contains a mixture of uses and public amenities;
- Recognizes a need to expand the downtown boundary in the east and southeast direction to allow for new mixed-use residential and commercial developments;
- Proposes a new Urban Village in the Hilltop residential area to act as a new community focal point for the Hilltop community;
- Identifies a number of potential neighbourhood commercial nodes within existing and future residential areas;
- Provides opportunities for future service commercial and business industrial uses within the Town boundary to be located south of the rail line and on both sides of future 33 Street alignment.
- Recognizes the potential for a new commercial corridor in the Athabasca Flats area, immediately north of the rail line, to provide a transition between the future residential neighbourhoods and the future business industrial areas; and

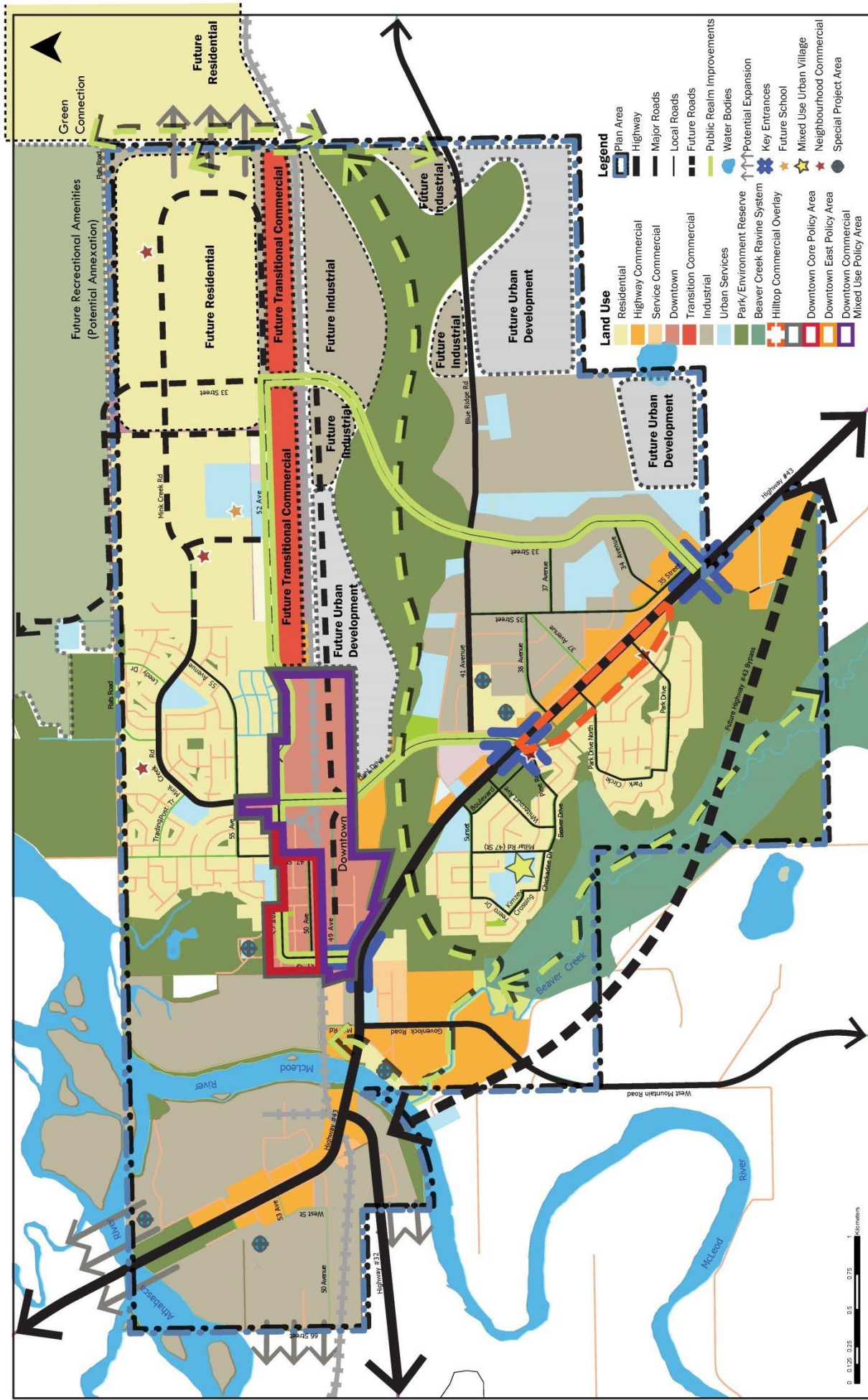
- Acknowledges that lands to the northeast of the Town's existing boundary may be suited to future recreational and low density residential growth and may be considered for potential future annexation.

### **3.1 LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

- To achieve growth and development that is coordinated, follows a logical sequence, and enhances Whitecourt.
- To maintain a 20 year supply of residential, commercial and industrial land.
- To involve the community in the planning process.

### **3.2 LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES**

- 3.2.1 Future development in Whitecourt shall generally conform with the Future Land Use Concept as illustrated on Map 3, which shall serve as a guide when considering development proposals.
- 3.2.2 Whitecourt shall plan for urban development that is fiscally, socially and environmentally sustainable based on Whitecourt's financing, infrastructure, land use, and service strategies.
- 3.2.3 All lands between the northern municipal boundary and the Athabasca River, as well as lands to northwest of the existing built municipal boundary, may be considered for future annexation in order to:
- a) Consolidate municipal open space, infrastructure and utility services;
  - b) Ensure an adequate supply of land for industrial growth;
  - c) Protect the integrity of the floodplain; and
  - d) Provide an opportunity for limited future urban development.
- 3.2.4 Whitecourt shall evaluate the need for additional residential, commercial and industrial land, on the basis of specific land use districts, and shall take this evaluation into consideration prior to reclassifying land in the Land Use Bylaw.
- 3.2.5 The Land Use Bylaw shall establish minimum standards for residential, commercial and industrial development in Whitecourt, and Whitecourt:
- a) May require developers to enter into an agreement prior to allowing residential, commercial or industrial development to ensure conformity with municipal standards and objectives;
  - b) Shall take care that land use regulations do not preclude economic development; and
  - c) Will process development applications in a timely manner.



- 3.2.6 A Future Urban Development District will be utilized where the need for development is deemed by Whitecourt to be premature, and outside the development horizon of this Plan.
- a) Land use and development in areas designated Future Urban Development shall be restricted to those uses and developments which already exist on that land, agricultural, or other uses which Whitecourt believes will not preclude future development of the subject land or adjacent lands.
- 3.2.7 Whitecourt encourages:
- a) Early dialogue with the public, development industry, and other affected stakeholders to facilitate an efficient and effective development review process; and
  - b) Inclusive planning process, which involves residents in policy development and the review of plans and applications.
- 3.2.8 The order of development staging shall give first priority to infilling of existing serviced areas followed by areas where infrastructure can be economically extended.
- 3.2.9 The Town may require the preparation of an ASP in the following circumstances:
- a) Multi-parcel residential subdivision greater than 10 parcels;
  - b) New residential neighbourhoods;
  - c) New Industrial Park and Highway Commercial developments including more than 5 parcels;
  - d) New manufactured home subdivisions.
- 3.2.10 The Town may require the preparation of an Outline Plan for small scale developments in the following circumstance:
- a) Single phased multi-parcel residential subdivision involving 5 to 10 lots. Multi-phased proposals which are linked to infrastructure developed in the initial stages shall require an ASP; and
  - b) Smaller-scale Industrial or Commercial developments involving less than 5 parcels at the discretion of the Development Authority.
- 3.2.11 An ASP or Outline Plan is required prior to development of lands designated "Special Project Area". Development on these sites shall be compatible with other uses in the area.
- 3.2.12 Whitecourt shall, as a minimum requirement, implement the requirements of the Municipal Government Act as they pertain to public consultation, and may exceed these requirements where deemed appropriate.
- 3.2.13 Infill development of any land use type should be attuned to the scale and design of the surrounding built environment to integrate the proposed developments into existing areas.
- 3.2.14 New developments shall provide all on-site and off-site servicing required by the development and the developer's payment of water and sewer facility costs through off-site levies.



## SHAPING WHITECOURT

- 3.2.15 Whitecourt may consider the preparation of architectural controls and guidelines for development of specific areas of Whitecourt to enhance the quality of development.
- 3.2.16 When deemed appropriate by Whitecourt, a municipal census shall be conducted as a means of providing an accurate population figure for land use and infrastructure planning and service delivery purposes.





# 4

# ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Pursuing a high quality of life in Whitecourt means the careful and responsible stewardship of its natural resources and environment. Whitecourt is predominately situated within a river valley, on the edge of an important forested area, and around an escarpment.

These natural areas of water, trees and steep slopes provide Whitecourt with a picturesque environment, outdoor recreation opportunities, and an ecosystem that benefits residents, visitors, and wildlife. The value of protecting these natural areas is demonstrated in existing development areas where adjacent natural forest lands, for example, have been left for aesthetic, recreation, environmental, or buffering purposes. This Plan conceptually identifies these natural areas and lands subject to natural hazards.

## 4.1

### ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS

- To identify and protect natural areas, wildlife corridors, and areas susceptible to flooding and other significant erosion prone areas.
- To outline the requirements for the planning and development of land within or adjacent to natural areas.
- To maintain a healthy urban forest and healthy soil conditions within Whitecourt.



## 4.2 ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

- 4.2.1 The location and extent of natural areas is illustrated on Map 2, Development Constraints. ASPs or subdivision applications, as Whitecourt deems appropriate, shall 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.
- 4.2.2 Whitecourt shall require the protection and conservation of natural areas by:
- a) Dedication of Environmental Reserve or Municipal Reserve;
  - b) Provision of Environmental Reserve easement and conservation easements; or
  - c) Acquisition through donations, land exchanges and/or purchases.
- 4.2.3 ASPs and Outline Plans shall integrate natural areas into the design of new neighbourhoods to form part of the linked and integrated parks and open space system, including the retention of forests, wildlife corridors, and the provision of stormwater ponds and parks to form continuous green spaces.
- 4.2.4 Whitecourt shall use the results of the Whitecourt Floodplain Study, or the results of any subsequent updated analysis updating this Study, when determining the 1:100 year flood hazard area in Whitecourt, as illustrated on Map 2. The Town may require site-specific studies, to be conducted at the developer's expense, in order to determine the detailed 1:100 year flood level.
- a) Any development of permanent enclosed structures shall be prohibited within provincially defined floodways and flood fringes.
  - b) Whitecourt may allow temporary or storage uses in the 1:100 year flood hazard area.
  - c) No new permanent developments associated with residential uses, or with institutional uses such as hospitals, nursing homes or schools where the inhabitants would be exposed to significant safety risk if involved in any emergency evacuation situation, shall be allowed in the 1:100 year flood hazard area;
  - d) Whitecourt may allow commercial or industrial uses, or institutional uses not precluded by (c), in the 1:100 year flood hazard area when:
    - i) The developer has land filled or otherwise flood-proofed the area or structure to be developed; and
    - ii) A geotechnical study regarding the subject land, at the expense of the developer, indicates to the satisfaction of the Municipality that the flood hazard has been reduced to acceptable levels by utilizing appropriate flood mitigation measures.
  - e) 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.

- 4.2.5 New development of any kind shall be prohibited on the escarpment or other critical slopes and within 20.0m of their top-of-bank or bottom-of-bank lines unless a geotechnical study at the cost of the developer indicates to the satisfaction of Whitecourt that development can be safely undertaken either on or adjacent to the escarpment or other critical slopes.
- a) Whitecourt may designate 12.0m above the top and below the bottom of the escarpment or other critical slopes as Environmental Reserve;
  - b) At Whitecourt’s discretion, development associated with a transportation system may be exempted from Policy 4.2.5;
  - c) In the context of Policy 4.2.5, the top-of-bank and bottom-of-bank lines shall be determined by Whitecourt; and
  - d) Within the 20.0m buffer area or lesser if indicated by a geotechnical study, existing vegetation should be left as is and no fill or excavation for landscaping purposes shall be allowed along the top-of-bank and bottom-of bank of the escarpment or other critical slopes.
- 4.2.6 The muskeg area, located in the central and eastern portions of Whitecourt as illustrated on Map 2, shall be maintained as a natural area, except where an ASP or Outline Plan and an accompanying geotechnical study sufficiently addresses the natural function of this ecosystem and its development constraints.
- 4.2.7 The Beaver Creek Ravine System shall be preserved as a natural area and wildlife corridor with low intensity recreation uses such as hiking trails.
- 4.2.8 Tree conservation, the preservation of mature vegetation and reforestation shall be a consideration in the review of applications for ASPs, Outline Plans, rezonings, subdivisions and development permit applications. Tree surveys may be required to support the development review process at the cost of the developer:
- a) Whitecourt will protect and increase traditional tree species, where appropriate, in order to complement existing stands.
- 4.2.9 Whitecourt should require developers to recognize “FireSmart: Protecting Your Community from Wildfire” design principles when preparing ASPs, Outline Plans, and subdivisions.

# 5 RESIDENTIAL

The distinguishing characteristic of a community that has a high quality of life are diverse residential neighbourhoods and a rich community life. To encourage this outcome Whitecourt will provide a range of housing choices for various income groups and lifestyles. Whitecourt currently provides opportunities for single detached dwellings on varying lot sizes, manufactured homes and multiple family developments ranging from duplexes to apartments.

*Table 5.1: Existing Dwellings Types (From 2011 Census Canada data)*

Type of Dwelling	Number of Dwellings	Percentage
Single Family Homes	1,940	53.5%
Manufactured Homes	710	19.6%
Duplexes	295	8.1%
Row Housing	145	4.0%
Apartments	540	14.9%

At 53.5%, single detached dwelling units remain the predominant form of housing within Whitecourt. The Imagine Whitecourt plan review process identified that stakeholders would like to see different housing types within neighbourhoods provided they are attractively designed, are located within close proximity to services, and provide both on-site and off-site amenities.

Based on the projections set out in Section 1.7, Whitecourt's existing residential land supply will be built out in approximately 28 years and include a population of 20,000 people. Additional residential areas must be planned in the long term to accommodate a population of greater than 20,000.





## 5.1

### RESIDENTIAL GOALS

- To provide for orderly and staged residential growth.
- To allow a full range of housing types in order to meet the demands of various income groups and lifestyles.
- To cater for appropriate commercial and mixed use development where it services clear local requirements.
- To promote high standards of design, safety, convenience and amenity in all residential areas.
- To encourage new neighbourhoods to have a clear and unique character.



## 5.2

### GENERAL RESIDENTIAL POLICIES

5.2.1 Whitecourt shall continue with its land banking program and may:

- a) Develop new residential areas when, in its opinion, demand warrants such action or such development is necessary to ensure prices for developed lots remain at reasonable levels;
- b) Sell land from its land bank to the private sector at fair market value in order to allow the private sector a role in the land development and housing industry;
- c) Sell or lease land from its land bank below market prices for development of affordable housing; and



- d) Purchase Crown Land or pursue other options to meet growth demand.
- 5.2.2 Whitecourt shall prioritise residential development in Hilltop Residential, Athabasca Flats, and prescribed locations within Downtown.
- 5.2.3 Whitecourt shall encourage the private sector to provide a wide range of housing options, including affordable housing, and may encourage this development through incentives, mixed use development, infill development, and secondary suites.
- 5.2.4 The Land Use Bylaw shall provide districts to accommodate a range of housing types, densities, and building heights.
- 5.2.5 Provision shall be made in the Land Use Bylaw to ensure that medium and high density residential uses:
- a) Provide adequate amenity areas that serve the specific density, location, and type of multiple family development; and
  - b) Ensure adequate off-street parking areas for the development.
- 5.2.6 Whitecourt shall ensure that:
- a) The provision of all neighbourhood amenities and infrastructure in new manufactured home parks and subdivisions is to the same standard as in conventional residential areas;
  - b) Developers and owners of manufactured home parks and subdivisions shoulder the appropriate responsibility of maintaining development infrastructure, landscaping and other requirements; and
  - c) Developers of manufactured home parks and subdivisions incorporate attractive design elements into their development plans including, but may not be limited to, orientation of homes so that they are not all parallel to one another, incorporation of features such as landscaping, parks, trails, community centres, and provision of other elements to improve aesthetics and the living environment.
- 5.2.7 Whitecourt shall negotiate for affordable housing units or money-in-lieu contributions through the ASP and Direct Control District approval processes.

## 5.3 FUTURE RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBOURHOODS

- 5.3.1 Whitecourt may require the preparation of ASPs or Outline Plans for areas designated for future residential development to ensure the integration of neighbourhood commercial sites, amenities, infrastructure, services and open spaces and the provision of a variety of housing types, densities and lot sizes to meet the demand for a range of household types and incomes.



- 5.3.2 Developers should use current best practices when preparing ASPs or Outline Plans to ensure that development improves the economy, the community and the environment. Whitecourt should ensure that the design of neighbourhoods includes:

- a) A minimum of 20 dwelling units per net residential hectare (7.5 dwelling units per net residential acre);
- b) A minimum combined 25% of units be provided for medium and high density residential uses resulting in a maximum 75% of units provided for low density residential uses;
- c) Distinguishable boundaries, recognizable entrances, and one or more neighbourhood focal points to give neighbourhoods distinct identities;
- d) A neighbourhood node that provides goods and services to meet the daily needs of neighbourhood residents;
- e) A mixture of compatible land uses near neighbourhood nodes;
- f) Varying housing styles and front yard setbacks to generate visual diversity;

- g) The provision of deeper lots on major collector roads to allow greater housing setback in order to reduce visual and noise intrusion;
- h) Provide a variety of park types and sizes to meet the neighbourhood's needs;
- i) 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;
- j) Providing an internal trail system linking residential uses with parks, institutional uses, and commercial uses and connecting to Whitecourt's trail system;
- k) Maximizing setbacks from intersections to increase privacy, improve vehicular visibility and make intersections safer and more attractive;
- l) The efficient use of infrastructure;
- m) Preservation and integration of open space and natural areas.

### 5.3.3 Whitecourt shall require:

- a) Sidewalks on both sides of all residential roads, except on arterial roads or where mitigating circumstances exist, at the subdivision stage;
- b) Developers to produce architectural guidelines for new developments
- c) That new residential developments have attractive entrance features; and
- d) That all new electrical transmission lines, telecommunications lines, and television cables be placed underground in all subdivisions.

### 5.3.4 Whitecourt shall require Municipal Reserve and/or School Reserve in the form of land (as opposed to money-in-lieu) in all residential subdivisions except where Whitecourt deems there to be extenuating circumstances, such as a subdivision's proximity to natural areas and/or where the development is part of an infill project. The following shall be required of new Municipal/School Reserve dedications:

- a) In accordance with the Act, a minimum of 10% of developable land shall be dedicated as Municipal Reserve and/or School Reserve;
- b) The location of the Municipal Reserve shall improve connectivity of residential areas to surrounding open spaces and natural features; and
- c) The minimum width of any Municipal Reserve Parcel shall not be less than 10.0m.

## 5.4 MATURE RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBOURHOODS

5.4.1 Whitecourt shall support infill housing on underutilized sites provided:

- a) The development is attuned to the height, mass, scale and appearance of existing adjacent housing;
- b) The development is compatible with adjacent lotting;
- c) Infrastructure capacity is not compromised;
- d) Whitecourt provides opportunity for public input; and
- e) Higher density housing forms are located at the periphery of residential neighbourhoods along collector and arterial roadways as well as public open spaces.

5.4.2 Whitecourt shall require that a series of adjacent dwellings be of alternating design styles and/or building massing.

5.4.3 When determining whether a site proposed for medium or high density residential uses is suitable for such use, Whitecourt shall use the following criteria as a guide:

- a) Medium and high density residential uses should be located within prescribed areas of Downtown, at the periphery of existing neighbourhoods, within neighbourhood focal points, adjacent to arterial or 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;
- b) Medium and high density residential uses should be planned in a manner which will ensure a consistent transition of housing types and densities; and
- c) Medium and high density residential uses should be attuned to the height, mass, scale, and appearance of existing adjacent housing and other lands uses.

5.4.4 Medium and high density may also be considered at interior neighbourhood locations provided appropriate massing transition and/or landscaped buffer is provided to the satisfaction of the Development Authority. Additional residential density for medium and high density developments may be provided if a developer provides on-site amenities and off-site improvements in accordance with the regulations of the Land Use Bylaw and to the satisfaction of Whitecourt.

5.4.5 Whitecourt recognizes the need for integration of subdivision planning, site utilization and building design to achieve the benefits of zero lot line development, and encourages developers to discuss their plans for mixed-use and higher density housing developments with Municipal Administration prior to applying for parcel subdivision.

# 6 DOWNTOWN

Historically, Whitecourt's Downtown has been the commercial focal point and civic heart of the community due to its concentration of commercial activity, offices, and government buildings, and its significant role in unifying a community that is physically divided into three distinct areas. In order to address the current market demand and development pressures, this Plan proposes to expand the official boundary of the downtown area towards the eastern direction as identified in Figure 6.2.1.

The 2013 Downtown Vitalization Plan outlines a clear vision for future development of the downtown core and is a key tool in guiding future mixed-use commercial and residential development.

Ongoing emphasis on the importance of a strong and viable Downtown and the availability of undeveloped lands adjacent to Downtown has enabled Whitecourt to accommodate new commercial trends. This has occurred as a logical expansion of Downtown as opposed to introducing new commercial nodes elsewhere in the community. As Whitecourt continues to grow, the demand for 'big box' retail and power centres will also increase. Therefore, Whitecourt will continue to encourage new major commercial developments within its downtown boundary to be located south of the CN Rail line.

In addition, the area located immediately east of the traditional downtown core provides a unique opportunity to accommodate higher density mixed use residential developments in walkable distance to the main street commercial areas of the downtown.

## 6.1 DOWNTOWN GOALS

- To provide suitable and appropriately located areas for commercial activities while preserving the strength and viability of Downtown.
- To emphasize the Downtown area, identified in figure 6.2.1, as the principal retail and service centre in Whitecourt, and to establish policies that ensure lands designated for highway commercial, neighbourhood commercial or service commercial uses do not develop in such a way that they detract from Downtown's commercial prominence.
- To focus commercial activity in the Downtown area and to increase the attractiveness of this area for shoppers.
- To encourage a vibrant Downtown built on a mixture of commercial, institutional, higher density residential, and recreation uses that are linked by a pedestrian oriented transportation system.
- To expand the boundary of the downtown to address the market demand.

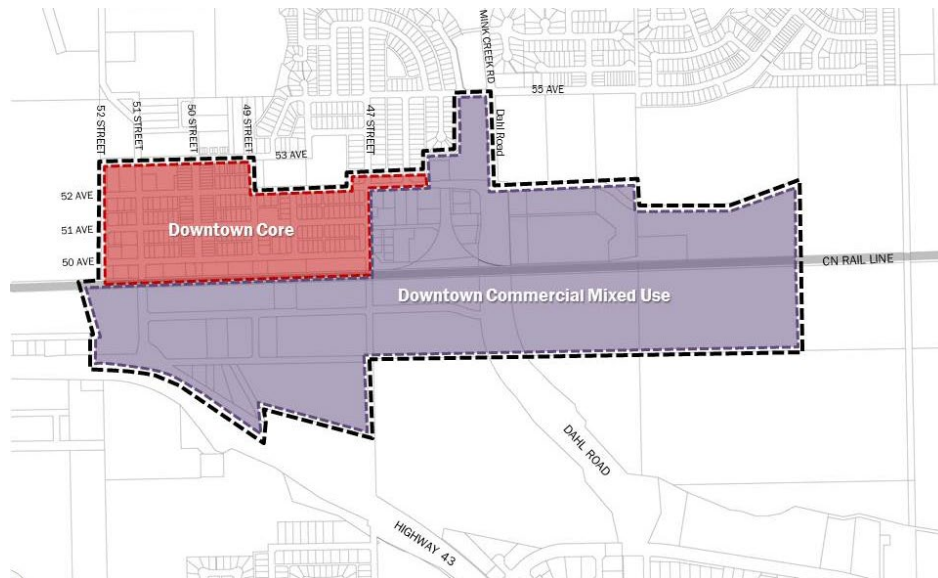


## 6.2 GENERAL DOWNTOWN POLICIES

6.2.1 The future development within the downtown area shall be in accordance with the policy framework established under the following sub-policy categories also identified in figure 6.2.1:

- a) Downtown Core; and
- b) Downtown Commercial Mixed Use.

Figure 6.2.1 – Downtown Sub-Policy Areas



6.2.2 Whitecourt shall consider the potential impacts on Downtown in rendering decisions on land use applications that propose retail and service commercial development anywhere within Whitecourt in an effort to ensure Downtown remains Whitecourt’s retail and service focal point.

6.2.3 The following general policies shall apply to the Downtown area:

- a) Whitecourt shall maintain its office and encourage other levels of government to maintain their offices within Downtown in order to attract people to the area;
- b) Whitecourt shall encourage office facilities to locate at higher densities within the Downtown;
- c) Whitecourt shall encourage the development of medium and high density housing in the designated areas within the Downtown in order to generate a larger market for Downtown activities;
- d) Whitecourt shall encourage the development of street-level commercial uses within the Downtown;
- e) Whitecourt shall ensure, where appropriate, that all applications for development in the Downtown are consistent with the vision set out in the Downtown Vitalization Plan; and

- f) Whitecourt shall continue to provide appropriate landscaping, street furniture, and street lighting improvements on municipally owned land.
- 6.2.4 Whitecourt shall attempt to establish several small municipal parking lots located in a manner that provides good vehicular circulation and convenient pedestrian access to Downtown amenities when establishing additional parking in Downtown.
- 6.2.5 Whitecourt may pave municipal parking lots Downtown to make their use more attractive on a year-round basis and should use directional signs, lighting and landscaping.



- 6.2.6 Whitecourt may consider development applications that involve shared parking facilities or off-site parking agreements/arrangements, which may be subject to a site specific parking impact assessment completed by a qualified engineer.
- 6.2.7 *Deleted Bylaw No. 1505-3 May 25, 2021.*
- 6.2.8 The downtown core is considered a vital part of our community, in order to invigorate this area there shall be no minimum parking requirements. Businesses and property owners have an interest in ensuring their parking needs are met and shall be allowed to make their own decisions as to the amount of on-site parking to provide based on their operations and needs.  
BL 1505-1: September 27, 2017 BL 1505-3 May 25, 2021
- 6.2.9 Whitecourt shall support the use of shared parking facilities and shared parking agreements between downtown businesses and property owners.  
BL 1505-1: September 27, 2017 BL 1505-3 May 25, 2021

## 6.3 DOWNTOWN CORE POLICY AREA

- 6.3.1 Mixed-use low to medium rise commercial buildings should be promoted in this Policy Area. Typical building types may include:
  - a) Professional office buildings with retail uses at ground level;
  - b) Residential buildings with retail uses at the ground floor level; and

- c) Stand-alone commercial buildings.

6.3.2 Future buildings in this Policy Area shall conform to the following height limits:

- a) Main Street (50 Street between 50 Avenue and 53 Avenue; and 50 Avenue between 49 Street and 51 Street): The typical building height in this area should be low rise (maximum two (2) storeys) to enhance the small-town main street characteristic. Greater building heights (maximum five (5) storeys) may be permitted at street junctions.
- b) In the remaining area, mixed-use buildings up to four storeys may be considered appropriate in this area.

6.3.3 Residential uses at the ground floor level should generally be discouraged. Stand-alone residential buildings without any retail component should generally be discouraged in this sub-Policy Area.



6.3.4 Zero lot line developments should be allowed in this Policy Area. In case of narrow sidewalks, an appropriate continuous building setback may be required to attain a minimum 3.0m wide public sidewalk (including pedestrian and landscaped zones).

6.3.5 Infill and redevelopment projects in the downtown core should reflect the built form character and design principals in the Vitalization Plan:

6.3.6 New building facades in the Downtown Core area shall be encouraged to use materials such as wood and stone to establish a unique image of the Downtown. Corner buildings should provide special architectural treatment along both frontages

6.3.7 Whitecourt should undertake a number of public realm improvement initiatives identified in the Vitalization Plan in a phased manner. The Town should encourage land owners to undertake complementary landscaping or building upgrades in conjunction with the ongoing public realm improvement projects.



- 6.3.8 Small professional offices and retail commercial uses shall be allowed in existing residential structures or new buildings specifically designed to fit into the sub-district.
- 6.3.9 Existing single family dwellings shall be allowed to remain but the rebuilding or major reconstruction of any existing single family dwellings shall not be allowed. The development of new single family dwellings shall not be allowed.
- 6.3.10 Whitecourt may encourage the development of major retail stores in this Policy Area as long as they are designed in an urban format with buildings oriented towards the public street and parking areas behind the building or screened from public view.
- 6.3.11 Whitecourt should develop a vision for public realm improvements for key main streets within the downtown to improve their walkability and overall appeal for businesses and residents.
- 6.3.12 Whitecourt should consider development proposals that may incorporate shared parking mechanisms including shared accesses in order to enable project feasibility.
- 6.3.13 The Land Use Bylaw shall be amended to include new land use districts to address the policy vision for this sub-area. The new land use districts should address the special characteristics of the following two character areas within this Policy Area:
- a) Main Street (50 Street between 50 Avenue and 53 Avenue; and 51 Avenue between 49 Street and 51 Street); and
  - b) The remaining area.



## 6.4 DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL MIXED USE POLICY AREA

- 6.4.1 Development within the southwest portion of this Policy Area shall be in accordance with the adopted ASP. A new ASP will be required for lands outside the boundary of the South Common ASP.
- 6.4.2 New buildings located adjacent to 51 Street and Dahl Drive should provide special architectural features and contribute towards this key entrance corridor into the Town.

- 6.4.3 The internal vehicular and pedestrian circulation within this Policy Area should provide strong east-west connectivity.
- 6.4.4 Any buildings with residential uses such as hotels and apartments along the CN Rail line should provide appropriate setbacks and include noise attenuation solutions to the satisfaction of CN Rail. The Town should refer all development permit applications to CN Rail for their review and comments.
- 6.4.5 High density residential development shall be permitted provided the development is compatible with adjacent commercial uses.
- 6.4.6 Large format commercial developments should be encouraged to include a variety of architectural features, building materials and incorporate higher quality public realm in their site designs. Blank walls in public view should be minimised.
- 6.4.7 Surface parking areas should generally be located behind buildings and screened appropriately from the public roadway using a variety of landscaping methods.
- 6.4.8 The maximum building heights within this Policy Area shall not be greater than five (5) storeys.





# 7 COMMERCIAL

With economic diversification and population growth over the years, Whitecourt has emerged as a regional service centre that provides a range of commercial forms including new trends such as ‘big box’ retail and power centres. Since the turn of the 21st Century, these new commercial forms have signaled change to Whitecourt’s commercial landscape. Typically, such developments in other communities have been located in areas removed from their downtown cores, however, this is not the case in Whitecourt.

Due to the high level of traffic on Highway 43, Whitecourt has continually experienced a high demand for highway commercial development along this corridor, especially in the Hilltop. Considering the high level of regional traffic along this route, aesthetics along Highway 43 as well as the future highway bypass, (Govenlock Road and Highway 32) are important to Whitecourt’s image. Whitecourt will therefore encourage a high level of landscaping and design along these routes.

Participants in the Shaping Whitecourt plan review process have identified that neighbourhood commercial development is needed within existing neighbourhoods to meet the daily needs of residents without having to travel Downtown. This desire is largely based on the distance between Hilltop Residential and Downtown and the eastward expansion of residential development in Athabasca Flats.

## 7.1 COMMERCIAL GOALS

- To increase Whitecourt’s emergence as a major regional centre for goods and services by attempting to attract new businesses.
- To ensure that Whitecourt’s commercial areas are attractive to tourist, regional, and local costumers.
- To provide commercial opportunities that meets the needs of all Whitecourt shoppers.
- To recognize West Whitecourt, McLeod Flats, and the Hilltop as major highway commercial nodes within Whitecourt.
- To undertake a study to determine the effect of a bypass on the existing highway commercial areas in Whitecourt should it be constructed and to improve the aesthetics along both the existing highway corridor and the future bypass.

## 7.2 GENERAL COMMERCIAL POLICIES

- 7.2.1 Whitecourt shall actively encourage regional-scale commercial activity in order to increase its position as a regional retail and service centre.
- 7.2.2 Whitecourt may offer support in terms of organization and funding to assist private sector groups, to undertake programs designed to encourage additional local shopping including the establishment of Business Revitalization Zones or Area Redevelopment Plans.
- 7.2.3 The Land Use Bylaw shall provide districts to accommodate a range of commercial uses, the location of those uses, and site dimensions.
- 7.2.4 Vehicular access, egress and on-site circulation shall be designed to permit the efficient flow of traffic on commercial sites with on-site parking and sites used exclusively for parking.
- 7.2.5 Adequate parking and loading facilities shall be provided for all commercial establishments according to the requirements of the Land Use Bylaw, with the exception of those located in the downtown core area who shall be responsible for determining their own parking requirements and addressing their own off-street parking needs.
- BL1505-3 May 25, 2021
- 7.2.6 Whenever a new major commercial development is proposed, Whitecourt may require:
- a) An ASP, Area Redevelopment Plan, or Outline Plan to guide the development or redevelopment of the applicable area;
  - b) A Business Activity Impact Assessment to demonstrate the need for such a development and assess its effect on the Downtown Policies Area if the development proposes commercial land uses typically found Downtown; and
  - c) Similar design features to make parking areas more noticeable and driver-friendly.
- 7.2.7 Commercial establishments may be considered in service industrial areas, provided that:
- a) The uses are appropriate and relevant to the service industrial areas;
  - b) They show that they can coexist with surrounding industrial uses; and
  - c) They demonstrate, to the satisfaction of Whitecourt, that there are no viable alternative locations within Whitecourt.

## 7.3 NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMERCIAL

- 7.3.1 Whitecourt shall encourage home occupations in residential areas where they do not significantly disturb or increase vehicular and/or pedestrian traffic; unduly interfere with amenities; and materially interfere with or affect the use, enjoyment, and value of residential properties.
- 7.3.2 Whitecourt shall actively encourage neighbourhood commercial development in new residential areas and may require the designation of future neighbourhood commercial sites within proposed ASPs or Outline Plans for new residential areas.
- 7.3.3 At the development approval stage, Whitecourt shall pay special attention to the scale, design, and colour of neighbourhood commercial uses in an effort to maximize the compatibility of neighbourhood commercial uses with adjacent residential uses, and may require the provision of a visual buffers, such as landscaping, fences, berms, or any combination of these things, between neighbourhood commercial uses and adjacent residential uses.
- 7.3.4 Redevelopment of existing residential sites to neighbourhood commercial uses should be considered at strategic locations in the Hilltop neighbourhood in general accordance with Map 3 – Future Development Concept. Preferred locations for neighbourhood commercial sites may include:
- a) Sites located at the periphery of the neighbourhood; and
  - b) Corner site locations.
- 7.3.5 In addition to neighbourhood commercial uses, a mixed use urban village should be considered in the Hilltop neighbourhood at the site of St. Josephs High School. A mixed use urban village should consist of a mixture of medium density residential and commercial uses, and act as a central node for the overall Hilltop residential community.



## 7.4 HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL

- 7.4.1 Prior to the Province's commitment and construction to develop the Highway 43 bypass, Whitecourt shall undertake a Highway 43 Corridor Study for the existing highway, the future bypass, and Govenlock Road to assess improvements, aesthetics, and other opportunities when the bypass is constructed.
- 7.4.2 The primary use for land adjacent to Highway 43 through Whitecourt shall continue to be highway commercial uses that cater mainly to highway traffic. Whitecourt may allow the development of a limited number of other commercial uses, as defined in the Land Use Bylaw ,that are oriented to serving tourists or the traveling public or restricted to small retail outlets.
- 7.4.3 The maximum retail space allowed for any one establishment in highway commercial areas shall be as defined by the Land Use Bylaw, and in deciding whether or not to approve any retail development along Highway 43, Whitecourt shall consider whether, in conjunction with other such establishments, the proposed development has the effect of creating a mall-like complex and, if it deems this to be the case, Whitecourt may refuse the development.
- 7.4.4 Professional offices and services including health as well as community facilities shall be directed towards the Downtown Core Policy Area.
- 7.4.5 All signage along the Highway 43 corridor shall be to the satisfaction of Alberta Transportation and in accordance with the Land Use Bylaw. Multiple Freestanding Signs within each parcel shall provide consistency in design, colours and construction methods.
- 7.4.6 Whitecourt shall continue to limit accesses to Highway 43.



## 7.5 HILLTOP COMMERCIAL

- 7.5.1 In the Hilltop Commercial Area Overlay, increased retail space shall be allowed as defined by the Land Use Bylaw. In addition to tourists and the travelling public, the large residential populations directly adjacent to this area warrant a broader range of commercial uses that cater to daily convenience needs.
- 7.5.2 Development in Hilltop Commercial should be mindful of the adjacent residential population. Pedestrian access and connectivity to commercial areas and amenities shall be maximized through the provision of sidewalk networks and the alignment of trails at the ASP, Outline Plan, or subdivision stage.



# 8

# INDUSTRIAL

Industrial development and related businesses have aided Whitecourt to grow and diversify its economy. In order to ensure that industrial development can flourish, while at the same time being safe and compatible with existing development, care must be taken when allocating industrial uses.

Millar Western's pulp and lumber mills, located in the western portion of Downtown comprises Whitecourt's large heavy industrial node. The balance of Whitecourt's existing heavy industrial development is located in the southern portion of West Whitecourt in close proximity to rail service.

The remaining majority of Whitecourt's industrial sector consists of two service industrial nodes. The largest node is located in Hilltop Industrial and is fully serviced. The node is adjacent to a highway commercial strip and contains a wide variety of activities mainly related to the oil and gas and transportation industries as well as some related service commercial businesses. The Hillpark and Evergreen manufactured home parks are located within this service industrial node.

The second service industrial node is located in West Whitecourt. This node has municipal services to a slightly lesser standard compared to that of the other service industrial node due to its location within the 1:100 year floodplain. The Westview manufactured home park, a highway commercial strip, and heavy industrial uses coexist within this service industrial node.

Whitecourt offers many advantages to attract new industrial developments. These advantages include Whitecourt's excellent transportation linkages, a good water supply, relatively close electrical power generation sources, and proximity to the Swan Hills Treatment Centre, which processes hazardous and other forms of waste.

## 8.1

## INDUSTRIAL GOALS

- To maintain a good supply of available land in suitable locations for industrial development.
- To emphasize the forestry sector as a key component of Whitecourt's economy and to facilitate its continued growth and diversification within the community.
- To support Whitecourt's role as the centre for oil and gas exploration and development in the surrounding fields.
- To encourage oil and gas company offices and businesses that supply goods and services to the oil and gas sector to locate in Whitecourt.
- To promote and diversify Whitecourt's economy by emphasizing tourism, manufacturing, transportation, and the supply of industrial goods and services.

- To further Whitecourt's position as a major regional centre for the supply of industrial goods and services.
- To maintain the integrity of industrial nodes by limiting non-industrial activities in this area to those which are compatible with industrial uses.
- To allocate lands for further service industrial development and the introduction of business industrial development.
- To reserve lands for future heavy industrial development to accommodate new major industries within Whitecourt.
- To ensure all industrial areas in Whitecourt are viable and as attractive as feasible.

## 8.2 GENERAL INDUSTRIAL POLICIES

8.2.1 Whitecourt shall continue to promote economic development through Council and its economic development affiliations.

8.2.2 The Land Use Bylaw shall provide land use districts to accommodate a range of industrial uses, the location of those uses, and site dimensions.

8.2.3 Whitecourt shall ensure:

- a) Industrial areas have simple and direct access to truck routes, highways, and the rail line where necessary;
- b) Industrial land is generally located in large, homogenous areas in such a manner that a variety of types and sizes of industries can be accommodated;
- c) Adequate separation distances and transition between industrial and nonindustrial uses are maintained, and may require the preparation of a Risk Assessment at the cost of the developer, when allowing an industrial use or determining the siting of a potentially noxious industry that may pose potential environmental contamination or safety and risk management issues; and
- d) Residential areas are buffered from industrial areas by landscaping or by land uses which are compatible with residential and industrial areas.

8.2.4 Whitecourt shall require the preparation of ASPs or Outline Plans for areas designated for future industrial development to ensure the integration of amenities, infrastructure, services and the provision of a variety of lot sizes to meet the demand for industrial developments of differing intensities and potential nuisances.

8.2.5 Development of future industrial areas shall be in accordance with the Town's industrial land strategy and reflect the direct in the Industrial Land Inventory Study.

- 8.2.6 For new developments in areas in which both commercial and industrial uses are allowed, Whitecourt shall establish landscaping or design requirements, or both, above those which would normally be required.
- 8.2.7 Pursuant to the Intermunicipal Development Plan between Whitecourt and Woodlands County, rural industrial uses should be encouraged to locate in Woodlands County rather than in Whitecourt.

### **Business Industrial**

- 8.2.8 Business Industrial uses shall be developed on the periphery of industrial areas or abutting arterial or major collector roadways within industrial areas.

### **Service Industrial**

- 8.2.9 Whitecourt shall maintain the service industrial nature of Hilltop Industrial and will restrict non-industrial uses in this area to only those that can readily coexist with industrial activities.
- 8.2.10 The areas located in the southeast of the Town, adjacent to Blue Ridge Road as identified in Map 3, shall be reserved for future expansion of service industrial uses. Lands in this area identified as UDF may in time be considered for industrial expansion.
- 8.2.11 Service industrial areas shall provide a variety of lot sizes in order to attract a wide range of businesses and industries to the Town.

### **Heavy Industrial**

- 8.2.12 West Whitecourt is reserved for industrial operations, which may have some nuisance affects, but these do not extend beyond West Whitecourt.
- 8.2.13 Existing industrial areas such as West Whitecourt and McLeod Flats, located along the northwest boundary of the Town are reserved for heavy industrial development as identified in Map 3 – Future Development Concept.

# 9 PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

Attractive parks, open space areas and recreation facilities contribute to the quality of life in Whitecourt. Implementation of the Community Master Plan (2000) and the extensive expansion of Whitecourt's trail system has increased the liveability of Whitecourt's neighbourhoods. The trail system, the Allan and Jean Millar Centre, the Forest Interpretive Centre, the Whitecourt Golf and Country Club, Rotary Park and Centennial Park are a few of the cultural and recreation amenities that were recognized as important pieces of Whitecourt's identity in the Shaping Whitecourt plan review process. The importance placed on these amenities indicates that Whitecourt has made a commitment to an active lifestyle and a high quality of life for its residents (Map 5). By continuing to maintain this commitment, Whitecourt may entice more visitors, shoppers, residents, and businesses.



## 9.1 PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION GOALS

- To maintain and improve upon the current high standard of community amenities.
- To ensure that the design and development of parks, open space and recreation areas are suited to the goals of the community.
- To provide adequate amounts of appropriately located land suitable for recreation purposes in Whitecourt.
- To promote the development of a performing arts centre facility within the Town.
- To improve and expand upon the multi-purpose trail system that connects both the Hilltop and River Valley with each other, parks, recreation facilities, schools sites and other activity and amenity areas.

- To incorporate passive recreation opportunities into stormwater management facilities whenever possible.

## **9.2 PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION POLICIES**

9.2.1 In addition to policies contained in this Plan, policies contained in the Community Master Plan and Recreational Master Plan, as amended or updated from time to time, shall also be used as the basis for open space and recreation planning in Whitecourt.

9.2.2 Whitecourt shall:

- a) Require sufficient land be dedicated for Municipal Reserves, School Reserves, or any combination of both, up to statutory maximums, to ensure that community requirements for neighbourhood, district, and municipal level open spaces are provided;
- b) Where possible, allocate Municipal Reserve to lands adjacent to preserved natural areas and stormwater management facilities in order to facilitate public access to these areas; and
- c) Not accept land as Municipal Reserve, School Reserve or any combination of both that can be dedicated as Environmental Reserve as defined by the Municipal Government Act.

9.2.3 Whitecourt shall endeavour to maintain its policy regarding the agreements with the local school districts for the joint use of facilities and may also require a portion of land in new subdivisions to be designated municipal and school reserve, or money-in-lieu of reserve where deemed appropriate.

9.2.4 Should school sites become surplus and available to Whitecourt, the surplus school sites shall be developed with appropriate uses that are compatible with and attuned to the scale and appearance of existing adjacent developments. It is anticipated that surplus school sites will be redeveloped with residential, commercial or other uses, as Whitecourt deems appropriate, as these sites are typically located in convenient proximity to major community amenities, arterial or collector roads, and recreation and commercial activities where the greater amenity and infrastructure capacity can afford to sustain higher densities.

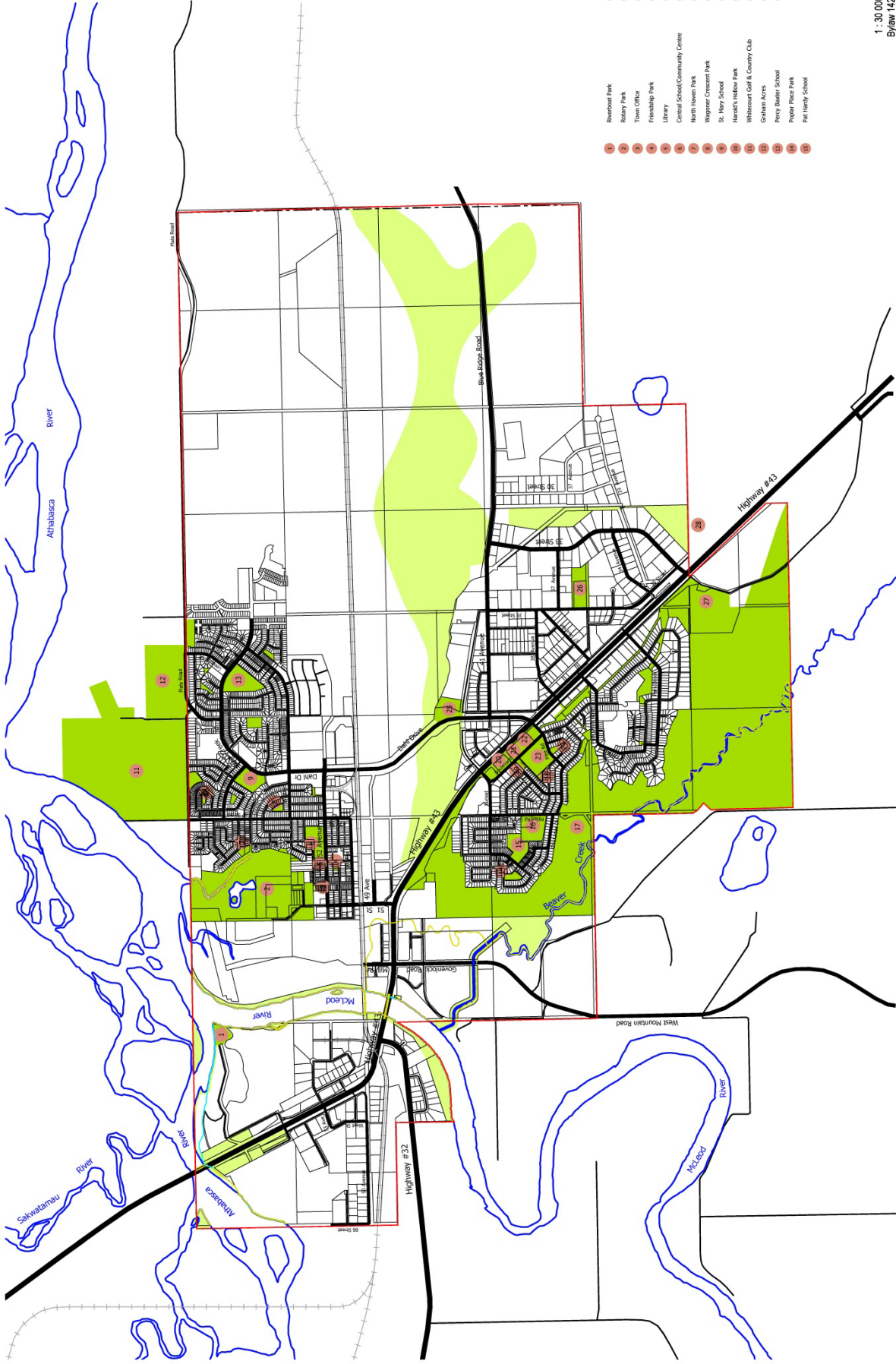
9.2.5 Whitecourt shall ensure:

- a) Adequate parking provision for major recreation facilities and other community amenities to accommodate residents of and visitors to Whitecourt; and
- b) Traffic routes to major recreation facilities be designed so that large traffic volumes on local streets are avoided wherever possible.

9.2.6 Whitecourt shall ensure:

- a) Land provided for parks should be located so that open space is easily accessible from every residence and maximizes opportunities for pedestrian access and connectivity to other amenities and uses;





- 1 Wheelock Park
- 2 Rotary Park
- 3 Town Office
- 4 Friendship Park
- 5 Library
- 6 Central School/Community Centre
- 7 North Haven Park
- 8 Wagner Crescent Park
- 9 St. Mary School
- 10 Herd's Hollow Park
- 11 Whitecourt Golf & Country Club
- 12 Graham Acres
- 13 Percy Baizer School
- 14 Poplar Place Park
- 15 Pat Henry School
- 16 St. Joseph School
- 17 Centennial Park
- 18 Lions Park
- 19 Arts & Crafts Centre
- 20 Alan and Jean Hillier Centre
- 21 Whitecourt Curling Club
- 22 Whitecourt Tennis Arena
- 23 Hilltop School
- 24 Pine Road Park
- 25 Toboggan Hill
- 26 Cemetery
- 27 Forest Interpretive Centre
- 28 Woodlands County Office
- Environmental Recreation Areas
- Environmental Reserve/Open Space

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- b) An appropriate mix of small and large neighbourhood parks shall be provided to meet the varied needs of Whitecourt's population;
- c) Small neighbourhood parks are designed so as to provide for flexibility in how they may be utilised;
- d) The design of parks provides visibility and safety according to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles; and
- e) The movement of all forms of pedestrian and bicycle traffic within and between neighbourhoods by determining the specific alignment of trails at the ASP, Outline Plan, or subdivision stage with an emphasis on adjacency to arterial roads and linkages to school sites, parks, stormwater management facilities, and other community amenities.

9.2.7 Open spaces and outdoor recreation amenities should incorporate design features that facilitate their use throughout the year.

9.2.8 The Whitecourt Community Services Department should be given the opportunity to provide input during the planning stages of subdivision development.

9.2.9 Development agreements and related documents should clearly state the landscape requirements that shall be met by the developer.

9.2.10 Appropriate measures must be taken to ensure funding is available to complete neighbourhood park amenities.



# 10 TRANSPORTATION

Whitecourt's transportation system plays an important role in shaping the community's urban environment and its design must be treated as an integral part of land use planning. The primary element in Whitecourt's road system is Highway 43 as it forms the shortest and most travelled route linking central and northwest Alberta and is part of a transcontinental trade route spanning from Mexico to Alaska. Additionally, Highway 43 serves an arterial road function within Whitecourt connecting the Hilltop and West Whitecourt with the balance of the community. As a result, land uses along the corridor serve a traveling public. Highway 32 that links Whitecourt to the Yellowhead Highway – a transcontinental trade route between Edmonton and Prince Rupert – and Dahl Drive that provides a second important link between the Hilltop and River Valley are two other arterial roads that play significant roles in Whitecourt.

Whitecourt's transportation system also includes the Canadian National's rail line that bisects the River Valley and West Whitecourt. The rail line, known as the Sangudo Subdivision, connects Whitecourt and oil and gas facilities near Fox Creek to the transcontinental rail system in Edmonton. Whitecourt's municipal airport is located west of Whitecourt within Woodlands County on the north side of Highway 32.

Whitecourt's Transportation Study (2008) examined short, medium and long term improvements to the transportation network. Ongoing studies will address infrastructure requirements and future upgrades to the transportation network. Oil and gas pipelines also transport resources to, from, and through Whitecourt. A major oil pipeline, two major sweet gas lines, one of which supplies gas service to Whitecourt, and three raw natural gas pipelines traverse Whitecourt. The facilities are limited to the River Valley with the exception of a pipeline that crosses the eastern portion of the Hilltop.

## 10.1 TRANSPORTATION GOALS

- To provide an efficient and effective transportation network for the movement of people and goods in Whitecourt.
- To ensure that Highway 43 retains its viability as a route for through traffic.
- To guarantee sufficient right-of-way provision for roads in order to allow their expansion in the future if necessary.
- To strive for an attractive roadside environment, in particular along Highway 43, the future bypass, Govenlock Road, and Highway 32.
- To recognize and plan for a highway bypass around Whitecourt.

- To recognize and plan for the extension of 33 Street from the Hilltop into the River Valley to act as a third direct link between these two areas.
- To protect a roadway alignment from the River Valley to the Athabasca River for a possible bridge to provide access to future long term development in Athabasca Heights.
- Establish a railway crossing at 33 Street.

## **10.2 TRANSPORTATION POLICIES**

10.2.1 Map 6, “Transportation Network” shall act as a general guide for the development of future collector and arterial roads in Whitecourt.

10.2.2 Whitecourt shall protect transportation corridors required to implement the Transportation Master Plan.

10.2.3 In addition to the policies contained in this Plan, the specifications contained in the Town of Whitecourt Minimum Design Standards For Local Improvements, as amended from time to time, shall normally apply to all road and related infrastructure design and construction in Whitecourt.

10.2.4 Until future circumstances entail a change in policy, Whitecourt shall encourage Alberta Transportation (AT) to upgrade Highway 43 in its existing alignment through Whitecourt instead of rerouting the highway around the community and assist AT in the design of the future bypass and interchanges along the future bypass.

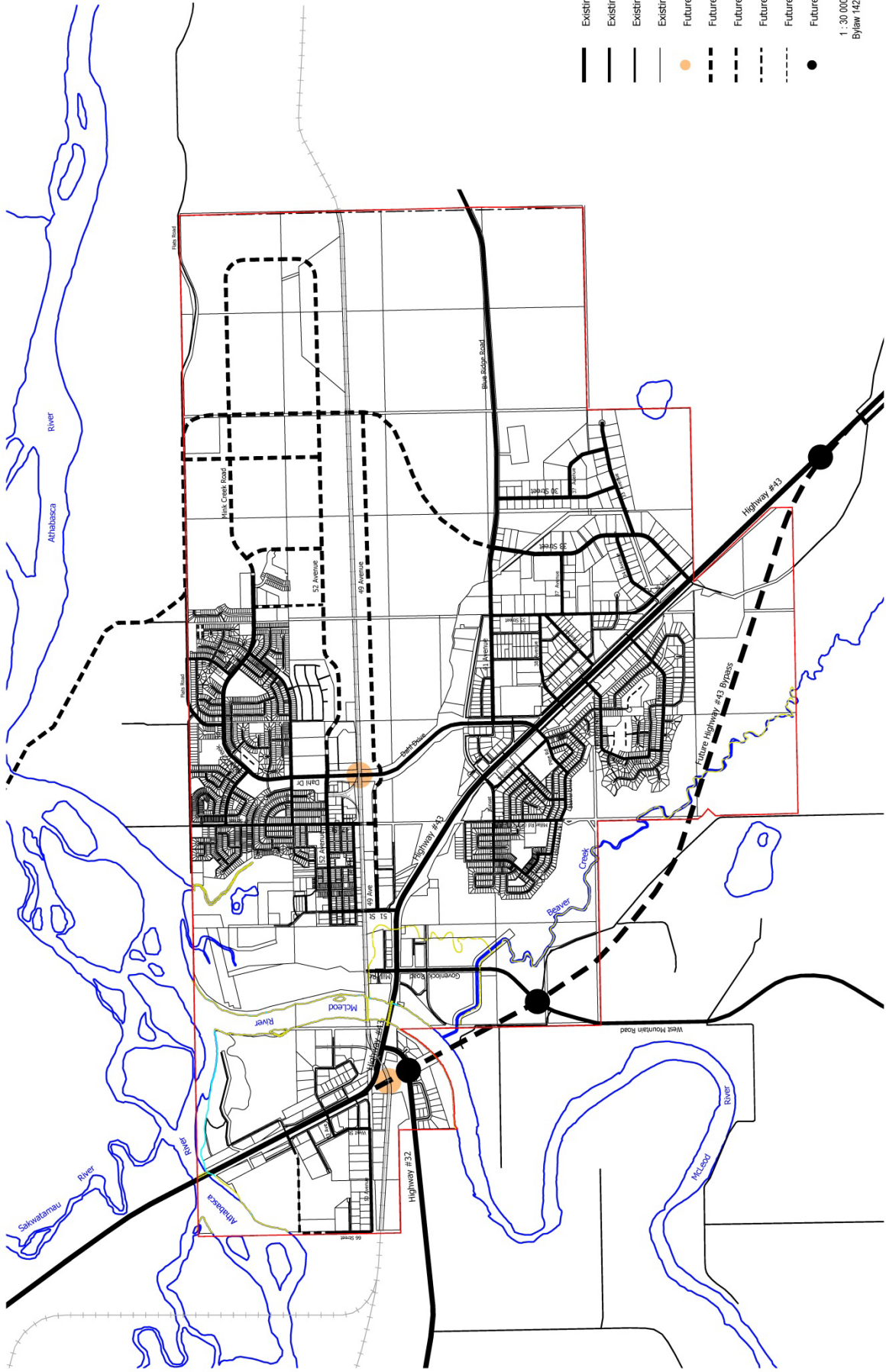
10.2.5 Whitecourt shall ensure:

- a) Any new development located adjacent to Highway 43, the future bypass, Govenlock Road, or Highway 32 may require special landscaping or that structures be of a specific design, character or appearance and be consistent with the guidance set out in Town of Whitecourt Vitalization Plan; and
- b) In areas along Highway 43, the future bypass, Govenlock Road, or Highway 32 where special landscaping or design criteria are required of private developers, that Whitecourt adopt similar criteria for all municipally owned land and developments.

10.2.6 Whitecourt shall:

- a) Encourage the incorporation of pedestrian and bicycle paths designed as integral parts of major subdivisions or residential developments;
- b) Incorporate pedestrian and bicycle paths into municipal park designs where appropriate; and
- c) Maintain and upgrade the existing pedestrian and bicycle trail linkages between the Hilltop and the River Valley, and consider the feasibility, costs and benefits of expanding the system to include additional trail linkages if feasible and if expected benefits outweigh expected costs.





- Existing Highway
- Existing Arterial Road
- Existing Collector Road
- Existing Local Road
- Future Overpass
- Future Highway Bypass
- Future Arterial Road
- Future Collector Road
- Future Local Road
- Future Interchange

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# PA SHAPING WHITECOURT

TOWN OF WHITECOURT MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN



# MAP 5 TRANSPORTATION NETWORK



10.2.7 As part of an agreement associated with the granting of a development permit, Whitecourt may require that the developer pay for all or a portion of any public roadway or pedestrian/bicycle trail system in excess of the requirement for the proposed development. Where such extra improvements are required, Whitecourt may negotiate a cost sharing agreement to cover the costs associated with the extra improvements.

10.2.8 To avoid a shortage of parking spaces, especially within Downtown, Whitecourt shall require the minimum number of parking stalls as outlined in the Land Use Bylaw. On-site employee parking shall be required for those uses listed in the Downtown Parking District Overlay as exempt from the provision of public parking. Where there are extenuating circumstances, Whitecourt may reduce the number of stalls required but may also require money in place of those stalls not provided.

BL 1505-1: September 25, 2017

10.2.9 Whitecourt shall encourage CN to, whenever possible, use the marshalling yard in West Whitecourt instead of the former marshalling yard within Downtown.

# 11 UTILITIES

Subsequent to the Municipal Servicing Study (1992), which addressed water, sanitary sewer, and stormwater drainage, various infrastructure upgrades have been implemented, and further utility studies have been undertaken, including the Water Distribution Master Plan (2000) and the Stormwater Management Review (2007).

The servicing guidelines in this Plan are based generally upon a combination of the Municipal Servicing Study (1992) and the subsequent upgrades and studies. Any new studies and updates should be incorporated into the MDP.

## 11.1 WATER SUPPLY

Whitecourt obtains its water from the McLeod River. The water treatment plant was originally built in 1980 and was upgraded in 2005. It has capacity to support significant growth of Whitecourt to the 20,000 population range. The pumping and distribution systems have been upgraded as required and have the potential to support a population level similar to that of the treatment plant. The Water Distribution Master Plan (2000) is currently being updated and the policies outlined in that update shall direct future investment in the water supply network.

Supply and treatment systems have been significantly upgraded in recent years and do not represent a constraint on growth. Further expansions can be implemented if required in the future.

Distribution facilities are in good condition and are continually being upgraded to address deficiencies as Whitecourt grows. This includes storage facilities, transmission mains, and pumping facilities. The distribution system can continue to be expanded to accommodate growth, and does not represent a significant constraint for expansion. Fire flows are generally adequate with some deficiencies in West Whitecourt.

## 11.2 WASTE WATER TREATMENT

Whitecourt's sewage treatment plant was built in 1977, expanded in 1999, and currently consists of a lagoon to the north of the Town, and presently has a capacity of 6,000 m<sup>3</sup>/day, which will support a population of approximately 14,000.

Based on population growth projections, this capacity will be reached by the year 2026, however plans are in place for an expansion of the system so as to increase capacity. Proposed upgrades include an additional storage pond of 7,600 m<sup>3</sup>, synthetic liner and an anaerobic/aerated cell. While space is available for system expansion, the plant may be relocated if odour issues cannot be addressed.

## **11.3 STORMWATER DRAINAGE**

Whitecourt's stormwater drainage system is comprised of a combination of open ditches and underground pipes. The planned future growth can be accommodated

by expanding the systems according to the Municipal Servicing Study (1992) and by developing stormwater management facilities (dry or wet ponds) wherever they are required to conform with Alberta Environment standards.

## **11.4 SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL**

Solid waste is managed by the Whitecourt Regional Solid Waste Management Authority, which operates a waste transfer station in Hilltop Industrial and a landfill 12 km east of Whitecourt near Highway 43. The landfill has sufficient capacity for the long term future.

## **11.5 UTILITY GOALS**

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

## **11.6 UTILITY POLICIES**

- 11.6.1 Whitecourt shall undertake the necessary studies to upgrade and expand its water supply and sewage treatment systems as necessary in advance of demand to ensure sufficient excess capacity to accommodate population and business growth.
- 11.6.2 As part of an agreement associated with the granting of a development permit, and to facilitate future utility service provision, Whitecourt may require that the developer pay for all or a portion of any utility improvement in excess of the requirement for the proposed development. Where such extra improvements are required, Whitecourt will negotiate a cost sharing agreement to cover the costs associated with the extra improvements.
- 11.6.3 Whitecourt requires that all lots of a proposed subdivision be connected to municipal water and sewer systems when the lots are developed except where, in Whitecourt'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, Whitecourt 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 Whitecourt's opinion, such connection is desirable and feasible.
- 11.6.4 Any costs associated with connecting the proposed development to the municipal services shall be the responsibility of the developer. The upfront servicing costs borne by the developer for oversizing of servicing mains may be recovered through a Development Levy Bylaw approved by Council and other servicing agreements.

- 11.6.5 In addition to the policies contained in this Plan, the specifications contained in the standards outlined in Minimum Design Standards for Local Improvements shall be used by all developers when installing water, sanitary sewer or stormwater drainage systems.
- 11.6.6 Whitecourt intends to maintain its commitment to the disposal of solid waste through the regional sanitary landfill system.
- 11.6.7 The Town shall promote the recycling of waste or discarded materials and will generally support the initiatives of local residents in this regard, but will not undertake a major municipal recycling program unless the monetary benefits of such a program exceed or are similar to the program's costs.
- 11.6.8 Whitecourt shall support water conservation measures which may reduce or eliminate water utilities expansion requirements.
- 11.6.9 Whitecourt shall maintain the integrity of pipelines and utility corridors while planning for growth and development.
- 11.6.10 Whitecourt shall ensure:
- a) Persons proposing subdivision on land affected by pipelines or affected by easements or rights-of-way shall, where required as a result of the subdivision design, be responsible for moving pipelines and protected facilities into utility corridors and obtaining relaxations to any easements or rights-of-way prior to the subdivision being registered; and
  - b) 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 will form part of a trail system which is integral to a residential subdivision.
- 11.6.11 When locating water and sewer mains, and when consulted by external agencies regarding oil or gas pipeline or major power transmission line routes, Whitecourt shall emphasize the location of these in common corridors wherever possible.

# 12 INTERMUNICIPAL PLANNING

A long history of cooperative planning between Whitecourt and Woodlands County is reflected in an Intermunicipal Development Plan between the two municipalities.

This document recognizes that the two municipalities have 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.

## 12.1 INTERMUNICIPAL PLANNING GOALS

- To maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Woodlands County, Provincial and Federal agencies to achieve the objective of regional cooperation.
- To facilitate intermunicipal communication and referral of planning and development applications in Whitecourt's fringe area.
- To ensure that Woodlands County is advised of and consulted on matters of urban expansion.
- To encourage the preparation of joint agreements between Whitecourt and Woodlands County or other stakeholders to provide infrastructure services.



## 12.2 INTERMUNICIPAL PLANNING POLICIES

- 12.2.1 Whitecourt shall have regard for the policies of the Province of Alberta, and the policies and land use maps contained in the Intermunicipal Development Plan between Whitecourt and the Woodlands County when considering MDP amendments, Land Use Bylaw amendments, or other development proposals for the fringe area.
- 12.2.2 Whitecourt shall implement the goals, objectives and policies of the Intermunicipal Development Plan between Whitecourt and Woodlands County.
- 12.2.3 Whitecourt, when deemed necessary, shall work with Woodlands County to prepare a new Intermunicipal Development Plan and subsequently review or update the Plan accordingly.
- 12.2.4 Whitecourt will refer the following development proposals to Woodlands County:
- c) The adoption or amendment to the Intermunicipal Development Plan, or this MDP;
  - d) Proposed Land Use Bylaw or proposed amendments to the Land Use Bylaw within the Town's fringe area, and
  - e) Proposed ASPs located within the Town's fringe area.
- 12.2.5 Whitecourt will consult with Woodlands County on matters of future annexation.
- 12.2.6 Whitecourt will examine the means of sharing the costs of development for infrastructure and services where there is mutual benefit to both Whitecourt and Woodlands County.

# 13 MONITORING, REVIEW & IMPLEMENTATION

The MDP will be used to implement Whitecourt's vision while guiding administrations on the future growth and development of Whitecourt. More detailed planning is required through subsequent stages of the planning process from preparing or amending ASPs and Outline Plans to the daily implementation of the Land Use Bylaw (LUB) and the development approval process. Conformity between the MDP, the LUB, and those intermediate planning documents between the two must be achieved.

## 13.1 MONITORING

While the MDP is intended to be a guiding document for future development, it is essential to monitor the Plan so as to ensure that it deals adequately with any significant changes in economic and social conditions within the life of this Plan. This is particularly important in a town such as Whitecourt, which is located in a region where developments related to the oil and gas industry can have a major impact on development trends within the Town. Whitecourt's Council and Administration should be prepared to consider proposed amendments to the MDP where such significant changes in economic and social conditions may occur. If amendments are required, they should be carried out through a transparent public consultation process.

## 13.2 REVIEW

Comprehensive review of the MDP should take place and be completed every five (5) years, as experience in other communities suggests that conditions generally change enough within this time span to warrant such review. In undertaking reviews, consideration should be given to collecting new baseline data by direct surveys to determine concerns and issues important to the community.

## 13.3 IMPLEMENTATION

Whitecourt's LUB reflects the contents of the MDP and complements it in providing a comprehensive system for the planning of development. To ensure Whitecourt is subdivided and developed in accordance with the vision, goals and policies of the MDP, Council may adopt an ASP or other statutory plan by bylaw in accordance with the Municipal Government Act or approve an Outline Plan or other non-statutory plan so long as the plan conforms to the MDP.