



Town of Whitecourt

ENVISION WHITECOURT

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Schedule "A"
Bylaw 1576
July 2024

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INTRODUCTION



1.1 PLAN PURPOSE

The purpose of Whitecourt's Municipal Development Plan (MDP) is to provide clear direction for Council and Administration to guide future growth and development of the Town while providing a suitable planning framework to accommodate future residents within the current municipal boundary. These policies are expected to influence growth and development over the next 30–50 years, and to ensure adequate land supply for the next 50 years.

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 the Town'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;
- The Town's future land use concept;
- The goals and policies designed to guide residential, downtown, commercial and industrial development; parks, recreation and open space; and, transportation and utilities;
- Maps indicating the appropriate approach for such development;
- The Town's goals and policies related to intermunicipal planning;
- 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 1505, which was adopted in September 2015.

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). The town 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 the town to the northwest and Edmonton to the southeast.

Whitecourt is the largest urban service centre between Edmonton and Grande Prairie, has a population of 9,927 (2021 Federal Census), and encompasses a land area of approximately 31 km². Whitecourt provides services to the nearby communities of Woodlands County, Fox Creek, Swan Hills, Mayerthorpe, Barrhead, and Edson. The forestry, petroleum, and tourism industries drive the regional economy.

The lands within the town'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 the town'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 the town, and will continue to operate for the foreseeable future. The Athabasca and McLeod Rivers run through the town and carve a river valley and escarpment system that defines the region.

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, the town 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, the town'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. The town'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 the town'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, the town'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.

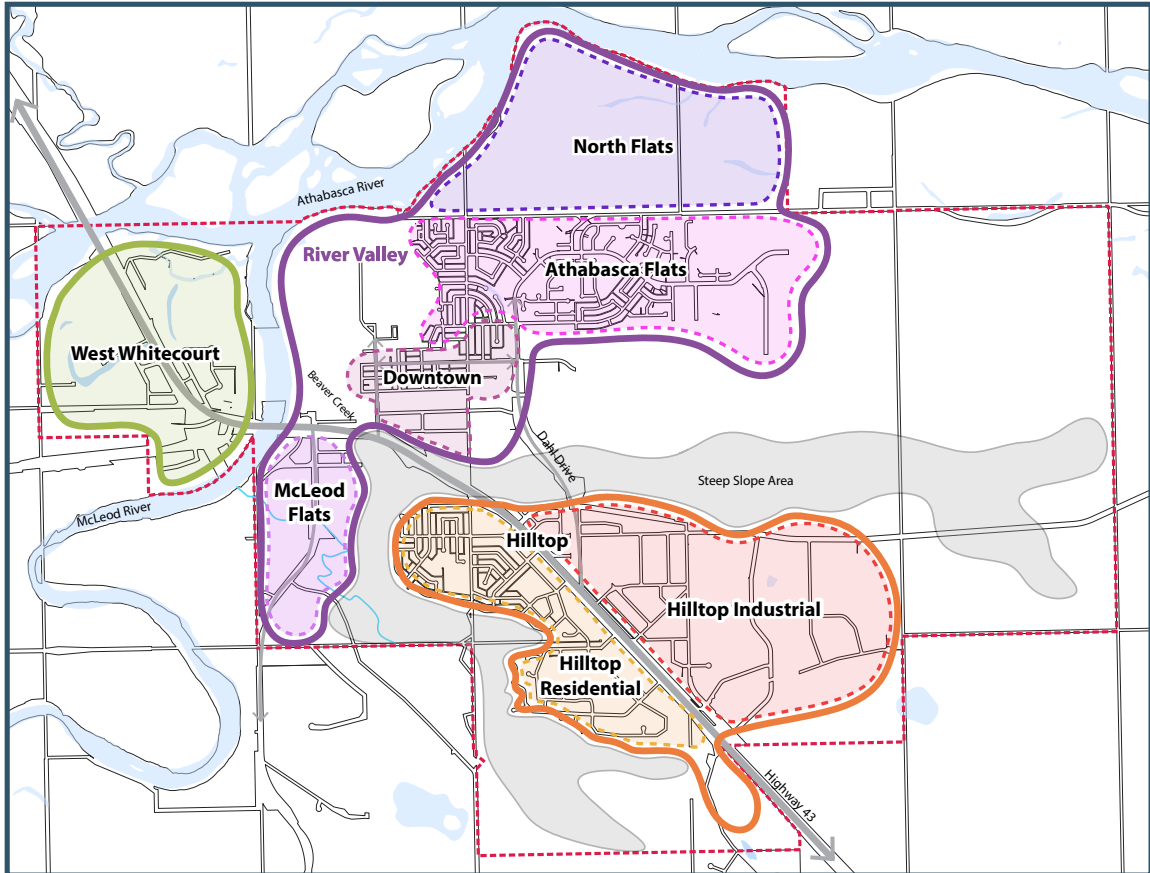
A downturn in the oil and gas industry in the early to mid-1980s resulted in a period of marginal growth for the town. This period was short-lived, however, as general growth in the Canadian economy and Whitecourt's active role in Alberta's major forestry boom of the late 1980s brought significant growth 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 the town 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 the town. 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, the town's industrial areas began filling out and the Valley Centre Mall was developed west of 51 Street to meet growing demands for services.

Recession from the oil and gas downturn continued into the mid 1990's, however, fluctuations in both the oil and gas and forestry industry succeeded in balancing each other to maintain a healthy economy in the town.

1.4 EXISTING LAND USE

Map of Existing Land Use



The town'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. The River Valley area includes the Downtown, Athabasca Flats, North Flats and McLeod Flats areas; and
- The Hilltop, located on the escarpment on either side of Highway 43.

West Whitecourt

West Whitecourt is west of the McLeod River. It contains 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 muskegs and undeveloped.

The River Valley

The River Valley area is located on the east side of the McLeod River and directly south of the Athabasca River. It includes four sub-areas: Downtown, Athabasca Flats, McLeod Flats and North Flats.

Downtown is predominantly commercial but does include residential areas and various institutional uses. Over the past 20 years, Downtown has experienced redevelopment and has expanded both southward and eastward. Two key features of the town's economy, Millar Western's Pulp Mill and Canfor's Sawmill, are located in the western portion of Downtown. As a result, the growth of other land 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.

Lands to the south of highway 43 and east of McLeod River 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;
- Land in the McLeod Flats area, east of the McLeod River and South of Riverside Road and 46th Avenue
- East of Athabasca Flats, and
- On either side of the CN rail line in Athabasca Flats with the exception of the Walmart Power Centre developed immediately north of CN and east of Dahl Drive.

The Hilltop

The Hilltop area is located south of the River Valley where the elevation rises and creates an escarpment. This area includes three sections : Hilltop Industrial, Hilltop Residential and Hilltop Commercial.

The Hilltop Commercial section borders both sides of Highway 43 and is Whitecourt's largest highway commercial strip.

Lands northeast of the highway are known as Hilltop Industrial in which the majority of the town'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 residential neighbourhoods have been largely built out.

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 the town has developed over the years (Map 2). These features will continue to play a major role in future development and affect the town'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 include the CN rail line, the Town's wastewater treatment plant, former landfill, gas wells, power lines, and pipelines.

Flood Risk Areas

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 the town 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 as a physical barrier between West Whitecourt and the balance of Whitecourt. Second, the rivers pose a flood risk. In 2021, A revised flood Hazard Identification Study was completed by Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development Department. This study provides up-to-date flood hazard mapping that delineates the extent of inundation for 10, 50 and 100-year ice jam and open water flood events. It breaks down the flood hazard areas into Flood Way and Flood Fringe Zones within the

study area.

River Valley Escarpment

The River Valley and the Hilltop are physically divided by a steep 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.

Beaver Creek Ravine System

The Beaver Creek Ravine System forms the southwestern boundary of the Hilltop and serves as an important ecosystem. 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 provide the town with an irreplaceable natural feature, which should be preserved for passive recreation amenities such as hiking trails.

Muskeg Areas

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

Infrastructure and Utilities

Rail Lines

A Canadian National (CN) rail line, known as the Sangudo Subdivision, runs parallel to 50 Avenue through the town. 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 the town'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 the town due to the opportunities it creates for industry.

Wastewater Treatment Plant

The Town's wastewater treatment plant is located in the North Flats Area, 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.

Oil and Gas Wells

Although the Town is located within a major gas field, there are not currently any active gas wells. There are two abandoned wells and another six wells are RecCertified. Both of the abandoned wells and three of the RecCertified wells were sour gas. Currently, the gas wells do not pose a major constraint to development. However, a 5m setback is required for abandoned wells, and a 100m setback is required for active wells when urban development is introduced adjacent to these facilities.

Oil and Gas Pipelines

In addition to the natural gas pipelines, which serve the vast majority of properties in the town, there are approximately 35 km of petroleum pipelines. These pipelines pass through the community and carry a variety of products. 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.

1.6 POPULATION AND GROWTH

When the town was incorporated as a village in 1959 the population was below 1,000 people. The next two decades saw Alberta's first major oil and gas boom along with the completion of Highway 43. This caused the Town's population to increase 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, the town's population experienced marginal growth, but this period was short-lived. By the late 1980s, the town benefited from the improvement of the Canadian economy and was in the midst of a major forestry boom. This resulted in the development of new fibreboard, pulp, and newsprint mills. This brought over 2,000 new residents to the community over a 10-year period. The town grew from 5,737 in 1986 to 7,783 in 1996 (Table 1).

Since 1996, the town has grown at a relatively steady rate as a result of its diversified economy, location, and emergence as a regional service centre; reaching a population of 10,204 in 2016. The current population according to the 2021 Federal Census is 9,927. The 2021 federal census results confirm the Town's first period of population decline since 1951. This decline can be attributed to outmigration related to the oil and gas downturn and potential impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Province of Alberta's 'Budget 2023 Economic Outlook' forecasts increased activity in the oil and gas sector as a result of solid energy prices and strong cash flows from 2022 to support drilling, production, and investment. This improved outlook for the oil and gas sector is expected to result in a stabilization of jobs and return of population in the town over the medium term. Alberta's positive investment climate and abundant natural resources are also paving the way for advances in clean technology projects.

Increased spending in alternate energy industry (i.e. Hydrogen, geothermal) and Carbon Sequestration and Capture Hubs could see direct and/or spin-off related growth in the Whitecourt area. The best practice is to plan for this potential growth in order to properly respond if it is realized.

The following table illustrates the Town’s historical population growth since 1961.

Year	Population	Change over Period	Average Annual Growth	Average People per Year
1961	1,054	53.4%	8.9%	73
1966	2,279	116.2%	16.7%	245
1971	3,202	40.5%	7.0%	185
1976	3,878	21.1%	3.9%	135
1981	5,585	44.0%	7.6%	341
1986	5,737	2.7%	0.5%	30
1991	6,938	20.9%	3.9%	240
1996	7,783	12.2%	2.3%	169
2001	8,334	7.1%	1.4%	110
2006	8,971	7.6%	1.5%	127
2011	9,605	7.1%	1.4%	127
2016	10,209	6.2%	1.2%	120
2021	9,927	-2.8%	-0.6%	-56

In 2022 the Town completed a Comprehensive Growth Study. Many of the ‘Growth Principles’ are incorporated into various policies of this Municipal Development Plan. These principles include guidance for future growth, urban form, density, environmental stewardship, fiscal sustainability, and infrastructure planning.

The Growth Study provides three scenarios for projected population growth. The base scenario projects a 2070 population of 12,772 (compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 0.45%). The medium scenario projects a population of 15,448 (CAGR of 0.84%), and the high scenario projects a population of 19,488 (CAGR of 1.34%). Best practice is for a municipality to plan for it’s best growth scenario to properly respond to growth if it is realized. The recommendation from the Growth Study is for Whitecourt to plan for its future populations based on a 1.34% CAGR, which aligns best with the Town’s historical growth.

Growth is expected to continue to be driven by economic factors, primarily related to forestry and oil and gas. Irrespective of the high or low growth scenarios, there is sufficient land within the community to accommodate growth for the next 25 years.

1.7 PREVIOUS MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Imagine Whitecourt the 2008 MDP

This plan guided a significant amount of development within the Town. Residential development in particular grew faster than expected and put pressures on the availability of residential land. Some of the primary policies of this plan 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 Town's 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.

From these goals the Vitalization Plan was adopted in 2013. Public consultation helped guide design standards for the downtown and the highway corridor.

Shaping Whitecourt the 2015 MDP

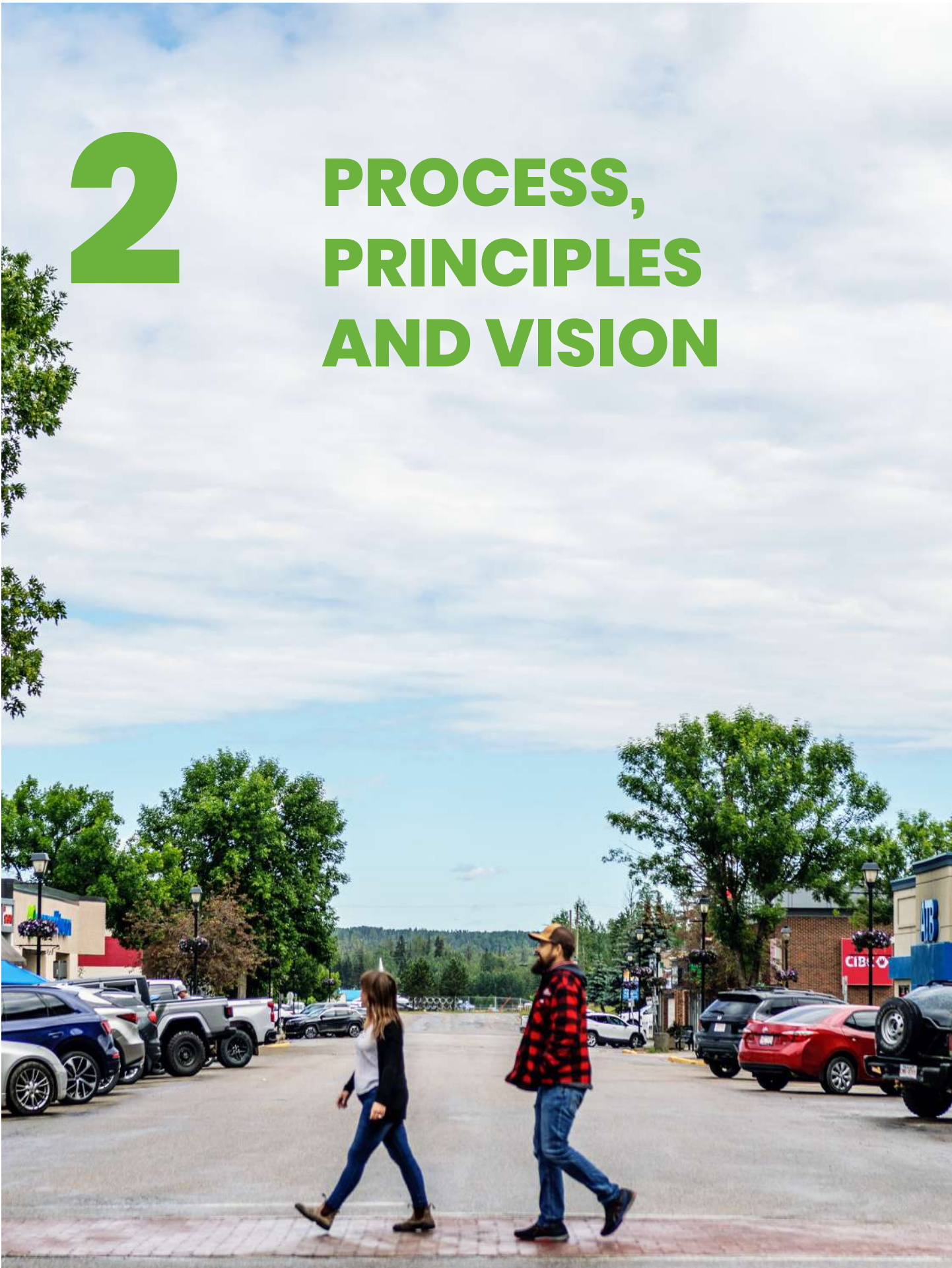
This plan weathered a changing global landscape with downturns in the oil and gas industry and the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of the main goals of this plan included:

- Encouraging infill development that complements existing development;
- A downtown that is vibrant and contains a mixture of uses and public amenities;
- Opportunities for future commercial and industrial land to be located south of the rail line and on both sides of future 33 Street alignment;
- The potential for a new commercial corridor in the Athabasca Flats area, immediately north of the rail line, to provide a transition between the residential neighbourhoods and the industrial areas;
- Maintain a 20 year supply of residential, commercial and industrial land with growth and development that is coordinated, and logical.

These goals resulted in the annexation of land north of Flats Road, and detailed engineering designs for a revitalized public realm downtown and landscaping plans along Highway 43. A comprehensive Growth Study was also completed for the community.

2

PROCESS, PRINCIPLES AND VISION



2.1 PLANNING PROCESS

The development of this Plan has been guided by community values. This process combined technical analysis and experiential knowledge to develop a long-range vision, land use concept, and policies. The Envision Whitecourt process has been grounded in gathering feedback from stakeholders that included members of the Town's Council and Administration, residents, community groups and civil society members, representatives from business and the development industry, and external representatives with an interest or expertise in planning and development matters.

This collaborative process was designed to incorporate existing policy, and current trends, to develop a practical strategy for future growth. The Envision Whitecourt process involved the community working together to collaborate on a shared vision for the Town.

Between September 2022 and December 2023 various opportunities were provided for the public and other stakeholders to make suggestions and provide feedback about the MDP, highlights include:

- An Advisory Committee was established to provide advice to the Town's project team. The Advisory Committee consisted of a diverse representation of council members, the business community, non-profit organizations, and citizens at large. This group workshopped the issues throughout the project and provided discerning feedback. A total of four (4) Advisory Committee meetings were held.
- Three online surveys were conducted. These provided the opportunity for citizens to identify key issues and opportunities, and review the direction established in the Plan.
- Three open houses were held. These allowed for conversation and interactive connection between the project team and the general public. These were important for identifying overall priorities. The following is an overview of each Open House:
 - Open House #1: Project launch, stakeholder educations, identification of issues and opportunities;
 - Open House #2: Share the draft MDP and LUB for feedback, seek stakeholder input on the draft policy framework;
 - Open House #3: Final review prior to the Public Hearing.
- Key updates and advertisements were posted on the Project Website and the Town's social media pages.
- A formal media release was published in local web and paper news media to help

inform citizens and landowners about potential input opportunities throughout the project timeline.

- A Public Hearing was held on June 24, 2024 to provide all stakeholders with a final opportunity to comment on the draft MDP prior to Council review and adoption.

2.2 VISION, GUIDING PRINCIPLES, AND CONTINUING

GOALS

Through community engagement and the plan review process, the following vision and guiding principles were established to help guide future development in the Town.

Vision

Whitecourt is an active and inclusive community with a blend of rural and urban living and countless outdoor leisure opportunities. Defined by our broad vision for a sustainable future, Whitecourt supports the numerous dedicated volunteers and local groups that enrich the quality of life for residents. The Town promotes tourism and economic development, to continually strive for a vibrant, pro-business climate and enhanced lifestyle opportunities. It provides affordable housing options, maintains environmental integrity, and embraces arts and culture. Our community works towards being safe, clean, and attractive while celebrating our history and looking to the future.

Guiding Principles

Economic Prosperity

- Promote Downtown as the Business and Commercial centre of the community and encourage its development as a vibrant mixed use area;
- Create economic development opportunities for Industrial, Commercial, Small, and Local Business;
- Appreciate and promote growth within forestry, oil and gas, tourism, the goods and services sector, while also seeking to diversify and attract new industries;
- Working with entrepreneurs for creative and innovative solutions to support business development.

Social Well-being

- Support the development of locally relevant affordable housing options. All members of the community should have access to homes in proximity to

employment, commercial activity, public transit, and public amenities;

- Promote high quality design, and development that complements the existing urban fabric, and builds on the Town's history and surroundings.
- Provide recreation and cultural opportunities to the community for all stages of life.

Environmental Stewardship

- Provide an interconnected system of parks, recreation areas and public open spaces to meet the needs of residents;
- Protect the integrity of natural areas and provide opportunities to integrate these areas into future urban development; and
- Provide opportunities for citizens to make meaningful and environmentally sensitive connections to the Athabasca and McLeod Rivers.

Infrastructure Provision

- Ensure appropriate and economic extension of municipal infrastructure and utilities to meet the water, sanitary, and storm water requirements of existing and future developments; and
- Develop an integrated network of multimodal transportation options that are convenient and appealing.

Governance

- Provide leadership that allows opportunities for public consultation in decision making, celebrates volunteerism and promotes a sense of community identity and pride.
- Decision making shall ensure short and long term sustainability of the community.

Continuing Goals

Numerous public consultation and vision exercises were undertaken at the beginning of the review process. Throughout the community, the same priorities came up again and again. Many of these areas were noted as strengths that should continue to be prioritized. With clear direction for key themes, the following goals were developed to reflect the feedback received. These goals are based specifically on what we heard at public consultation and are not an exhaustive list of goals.

Allocate sufficient land to accommodate population growth to the next 30-50 years

- Designate sufficient land for future residential, commercial, institutional, recreational and industrial development.
- Proactively support future servicing (water, sanitary, and stormwater infrastructure) needed to accommodate growth.
- Continue to practice strong fiscal management to ensure Whitecourt remains an economically vibrant town.

Create conditions for attracting industrial development

- Identify lands appropriate for future industrial development
- Prioritize the provision of servicing capacity (water, sewer, telecommunications, etc.) for industrial development.
- Continue to promote Whitecourt as a key location of choice for a diverse mix of industries.

Downtown Vitalization

- Continue to implement the design concept established in the 'Vitalization Plan' (2013).
- Prioritize vehicle and pedestrian access to Festival Park through the Downtown Core.
- Continue to relax off-street parking minimums in the Downtown Core to promote development and walkability downtown.

Affordable Housing

- Continue to support affordable housing by allowing for greater diversity of housing, such as duplexes, multi-unit housing, apartments and secondary suites throughout the town.

Connection to Nature

- Improve key pedestrian connections to the Athabasca and McLeod Rivers, Beaver Creek, and other natural areas.
- Develop amenities and gathering places along the riverfront.
- Continue to preserve Whitecourt's natural areas and recognize their potential as a source of tourism, recreation and community pride.

3

FUTURE LAND USE CONCEPT



3.1 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 the Town, which are both consistent with the principles and vision of this Plan.

The land use framework maintains the Town's historic pattern of development and urban form. Residential uses are generally anticipated within the Athabasca Flats area and within the Downtown. Commercial uses are envisioned within and adjacent to Downtown, along Highway 43, and within existing and future neighbourhood commercial nodes.

Industrial uses are expected within the Hilltop Industrial, as well as along the rail line at the extension of 33 Street in the Athabasca Flats area. Although this land is designated for future industrial development, the location of some future industrial areas may pose challenges for immediate market uptake including highwater table, and access to highways. Historically, industrial development has been an important driver of growth within the Town.

Open space, natural areas and parks will be focused in the river valley escarpment, river edges and Beaver Creek Ravine System.

The Future Land Use Concept:

- 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 realign the downtown boundary to the east to allow for new medium to high density mixed-use residential and commercial developments;
- Encourages commercial development oriented toward servicing the traveling public to locate along Highway 43 in the areas identified as Highway Commercial;
- Identifies West Whitecourt as an area for predominantly Heavy Industrial development, and the Hilltop Industrial area for predominantly Service Industrial development.
- Identifies potential location and criteria for neighbourhood commercial nodes within existing and future residential areas;
- 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;

- Identifies opportunities for future industrial development in the east portion of Athabasca Flats, north and south of the rail line at the future extension of 33 Street;
- Acknowledge that lands to the east and west, outside of current Town boundaries may be required to support growth over the fifty year time horizon;
- Identifies Special Project Areas which may require special considerations to ensure that the highest and best uses of land are achieved. Future uses should be compatible with existing land use districts, natural features and the future land use concepts for the area. If the opportunity for redevelopment is presented, flexible and creative adherence to Town requirements may be sought;
- Establishes a network of interconnected open spaces and improves pedestrian and bike connections from residential areas to key community destinations, natural areas, and amenities within the town; and
- Supports existing and enhanced recreational opportunities in the newly annexed North Flats area that is sensitive to the flood risks, taking advantage of the existing natural features of the area and creates a stronger connection to the Athabasca River.

3.2 LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- To achieve growth and development that is coordinated, follows a logical sequence, and enhances the Town.
- To maintain a 50-year supply of residential, commercial and industrial land.
- To involve the community in the planning process.

3.3 LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

3.3.1 Future development in the Town shall generally conform with the Future Land Use Concept as illustrated on Map 3, which shall serve as a guide when considering development proposals.

3.3.2 Future growth should be driven by strengthening the existing industry sectors such as forestry, petroleum, tourism and goods and services. An adequate and flexible land supply will facilitate non-residential growth and allow for adaptation to changing economic trends and diversification opportunities.

3.3.3 Future growth should be directed to areas where infrastructure and services already

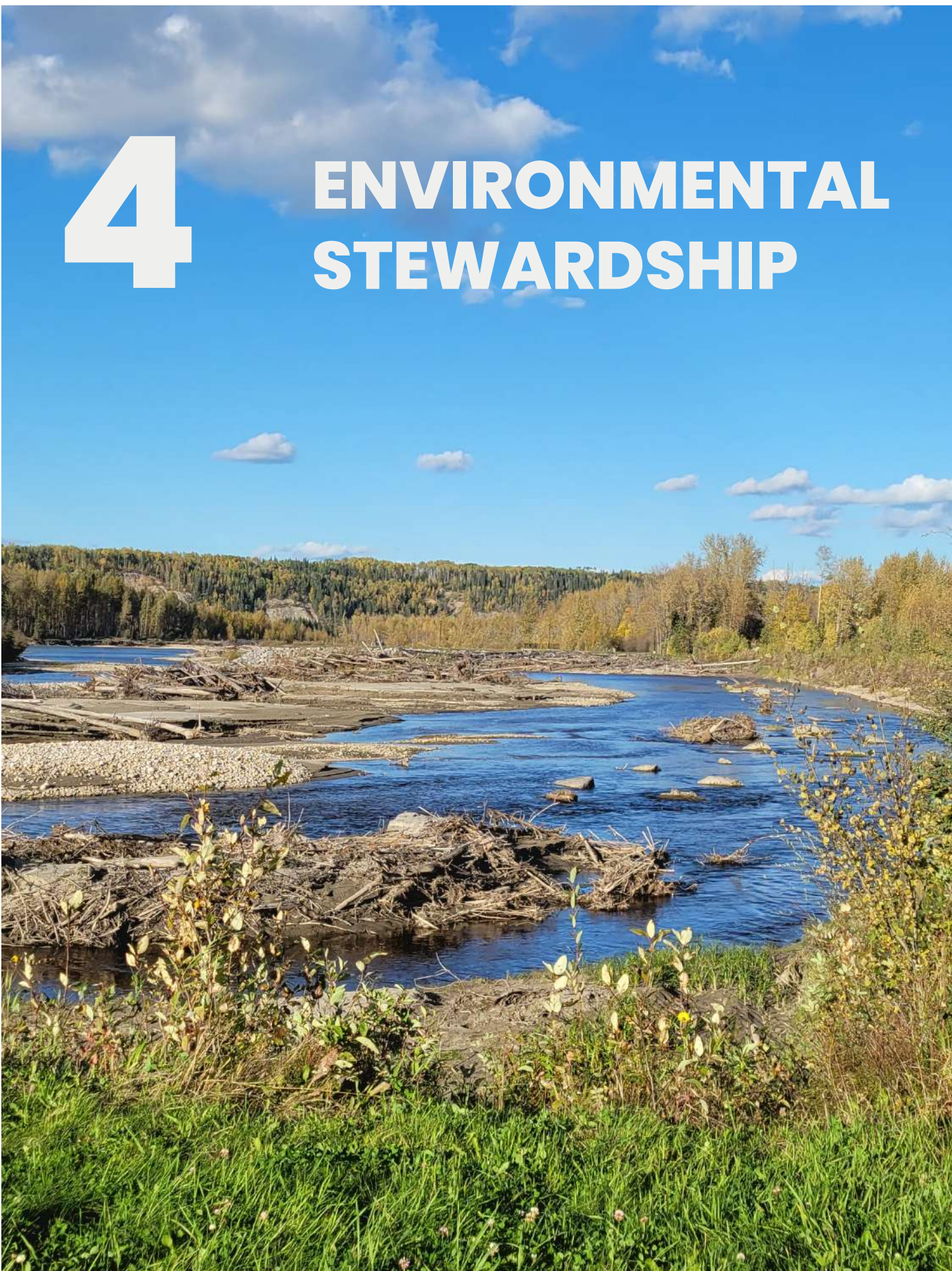
exist, or can be economically expanded to minimize the expansion of the town's ecological footprint.

- 3.3.4** New residential and commercial growth shall be directed away and adequately buffered from heavy industrial uses.
- 3.3.5** Future development should remain physically and functionally centred around downtown. Downtown shall remain the economic and social core of the town.
- 3.3.6** Future development should respect environmental features such as muskegs, floodplains, steep slopes and hydrology. Where possible, environmentally significant and natural areas will be integrated and protected in future development.
- 3.3.7** The Town shall plan for urban development that is fiscally, socially and environmentally sustainable based on the Town's financing, infrastructure, land use, and service strategies.
- 3.3.8** The Town should 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.
- 3.3.9** The Land Use Bylaw shall maintain minimum standards for residential, commercial and industrial development in the Town, and the Town:
 - 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.** Should take care that land use regulations do not preclude economic development; and
 - c.** Will process development applications in a timely manner.
- 3.3.10** A Future Urban Development District in the Land Use Bylaw will be utilized where the need for development is deemed by the Town to be premature, and outside the development horizon of this Plan.
- 3.3.11** Land use and development in Future Urban Development areas shall be restricted to those uses and developments which already exist on that land, agricultural, or other uses which the Town believes will not preclude future development of the subject land or adjacent lands.
- 3.3.12** The Town 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.

- 3.3.13** The order of development staging shall give first priority to infilling of existing serviced areas followed by areas where infrastructure can be economically extended.
- 3.3.14** 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 Service Commercial, Highway Commercial or Industrial developments including more than 5 parcels;
 - d. New manufactured home subdivisions.
- 3.3.15** 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.
- 3.3.16** An ASP or Outline Plan is required prior to redevelopment of lands designated "Special Project Area". Development on these sites shall be compatible with other uses in the area.
- 3.3.17** The Town 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.
- 3.3.18** 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.
- 3.3.19** New developments shall provide all on-site and off-site servicing required by the development, including contributions for infrastructure required for new developments through the payment of off-site levies.
- 3.3.20** The Town may consider the preparation of architectural controls and guidelines for development of specific areas of the Town to enhance the quality of development.
- 3.3.21** When deemed appropriate by the Town, a municipal census may be conducted as a means of providing an accurate population figure for service delivery purposes, land use and infrastructure planning.

4

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP





Environmental Stewardship

Pursuing a high quality of life in Whitecourt means the careful and responsible stewardship of natural resources and the environment. The Town is predominantly 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 the Town with a picturesque environment, outdoor recreation opportunities, and an ecosystem that benefits residents, visitors, and wildlife. The natural forest lands have been preserved for aesthetic, recreation, environmental, or buffering purposes. They provide valuable natural amenity to the adjacent built areas. This Plan conceptually identifies these natural areas and lands with steep slopes.

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 within the Town in alignment with FireSmart guidelines

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 the Town 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** Future development shall respect environmental features such as muskegs wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes and hydrology. Where possible, environmentally significant and natural areas will be integrated and protected in future development.
- 4.2.3** The Town should require the protection and conservation of natural areas by:
- a. Dedication of Environmental Reserve or Municipal Reserve;
 - b. Provision of Environmental Reserve easement and discretionary easements; or
 - c. Acquisition through donations, land exchanges and/or purchases.
- 4.2.4** The Town may consider taking land offered by a land owner under a conservation easement agreement, at the discretion of the Development Authority, if the land is to protect an important wildlife habitat or ecosystem. It is preferred that the donor select a non-profit, or not-for-profit organization to be the dominant tenement of the easement agreement.
- 4.2.5** At the discretion of the Development Authority a conservation easement may be used to conserve significant environmental areas as per provincial legislation.
- 4.2.6** Environmental Reserve (ER), Environmental Reserve Easement (ERE), Conservation Reserve (CR), and Conservation Reserve Easement (CRE) dedication shall be in accordance with the MGA.
- 4.2.7** 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.

4.2.8 The Town may require development to comply with the direction established in the most recent Whitecourt Floodplain Study or any subsequent legislation, 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. All development shall be flood-proofed by design or located a minimum of 0.5m above the 1:100-year flood level.
- b. Development within the floodway is prohibited, with the exception of temporary or storage uses.
- c. The Town may allow development in the 1:100 year flood fringe area when the developer has land filled or otherwise flood-proofed the area or a raised structure is developed to the satisfaction of the development authority.
- d. 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.

4.2.9 New development of any kind shall be prohibited on the escarpment 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 the Town that development can be safely undertaken either on or adjacent to the escarpment or other critical slopes greater than 15%.

- a. The Town may designate 12.0m above the top and below the bottom of the escarpment or other critical slopes as Environmental Reserve;
- b. At the Town's discretion, development associated with a transportation system may be exempted from Policy 4.2.9;
- c. In the context of Policy 4.2.9, the top-of-bank and bottom-of-bank lines shall be determined by a professional engineer or legal land surveyor to the satisfaction of the Town
- 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.

4.2.10 The muskeg area, located in the central and eastern portions of The Town as illustrated on Map 2, should be maintained as a natural area, except where an ASP or Outline Plan and an accompanying geotechnical study and Biophysical Study sufficiently addresses the natural function of this ecosystem and its development constraints.

4.2.11 The Beaver Creek Ravine System should be preserved as a natural area and wildlife

corridor with low intensity recreation uses such as hiking trails.

- 4.2.12** 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.
- 4.2.13** The Town will endeavour to protect and increase native species, where appropriate.
- 4.2.14** The Town may require developers to recognize “FireSmart: Protecting Your Community from Wildfire” design principles when preparing ASPs, Outline Plans, and subdivisions.
- a. The Town will encourage the planting of fire resistant vegetation;
 - b. The Town will encourage development that minimizes the wildland-urban interface;
 - c. All new development should be encouraged to be setback from forested areas a minimum of ten meters (10m);
 - d. All new developments should be encouraged to establish and maintain adequate clearance from hazardous wildland fuels as per FireSmart recommended guidelines and as specified by the Development Authority.

5

RESIDENTIAL





Residential

A rich community life provides homes for all citizens. Diverse incomes and lifestyles should be accommodated in the housing supply. To encourage this outcome the Town will encourage a range of housing choices for various income groups, living situations and lifestyles. The Town currently provides opportunities for single detached dwellings on varying lot sizes, manufactured homes and multiple family developments ranging from duplexes to apartments.

5.1 BACKGROUND

Table 5.1: Existing Dwelling Types (From 2021 Census Canada data)

Type of Dwelling	Number of Dwellings	Percentage
Single Family Homes	1,965	54.8%
Manufactured Homes	510	14.2%
Semi-detached Homes	305	8.5%
Row Housing	135	3.8%
Apartments	665	18.6%

At 54.8%, single detached dwelling units remain the predominant form of housing within the town. Based on the projections set out in Section 1.6, the Town’s residential land supply will meet the Town’s needs over a 25-year time horizon, under the High growth scenario. In the 40-year time horizon under the High growth scenario, the town will have land requirements beyond the existing boundary. Map 3 identifies lands envisioned to accommodate future residential growth in the northeast portion of the Town, south of Township Road 600 and north of the CN Rail Line.

The following two key themes were identified by residents and stakeholders during the Envision Whitecourt plan review process:

- Barriers should be reduced to increase the types and sizes of dwelling units to increase the range of options available; and
- Increased accessibility to services is required in existing and future residential areas to ensure the daily needs of the town’s residents can be met within proximity to where they live.

5.2 RESIDENTIAL GOALS

- To provide for orderly 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 local requirements.
- To promote high standards of design, safety, convenience, and amenity in all residential areas.
- To encourage new neighbourhoods to have a unique character.

5.3 GENERAL RESIDENTIAL POLICIES

- 5.3.1 The Town shall ensure that an adequate land inventory is maintained.
- 5.3.2 The Town may prioritize residential development in Hilltop Residential, Athabasca Flats, and Downtown.
- 5.3.3 The Town 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.
- 5.3.4 A range of adequate and safe housing choices should be encouraged in all existing and future growth areas of the town with proximity to commercial and retail opportunities, employment, and public amenities; and
- 5.3.5 The Town should 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.
- 5.3.6 Provision shall be made in the Land Use Bylaw to require 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. Provide adequate off-street parking areas for the development.
- 5.3.7 The Town should ensure:
 - 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 not be limited to, landscaping, parks, playgrounds, trails, community centres, and provision of other elements to improve aesthetics and the living environment.
- 5.3.8 The Town may negotiate for affordable housing units through the ASP and Direct Control District approval processes.
- 5.3.9 The Town should encourage initiatives to develop supportive housing near local community services and amenities and not on the edge of neighbourhoods.
- 5.3.10 The Town should support innovative housing forms such as co-housing and re-

adaptive use of buildings or retrofits as an alternative to temporary housing arrangements.

- 5.3.11 The Town may continue to develop policies that align with the CMHC housing spectrum in order to apply for Federal and Provincial flow through funding that can be offered to the community as incentive programs to increase the variety and affordability of dwelling options.
- 5.3.12 Residential areas should provide for a distributed mix of housing types, including single-detached, small-scale housing forms (single-detached, semi-detached, duplexes, townhomes), hidden density (garden suites, and secondary suites), modular/manufactured homes and low to mid-rise multi-unit development, as well as a range of unit sizes. This housing diversity will provide market dwelling units at a range of price points to accommodate various income levels, and shall be implemented through opportunities in the Land Use Bylaw that allow for a range of lot sizes and building types.

5.4 FUTURE RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBOURHOODS

- 5.4.1 The Town 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.
- 5.4.2 Future residential development on greenfield sites shall be located in general conformance with Map 3: Future Land Use Concept.
- 5.4.3 Developers should use current best practices when preparing ASPs or Outline Plans to ensure that development improves the economy, the community and the environment. The Town should encourage 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, landscaping and street furniture to give neighbourhoods distinct identities;
 - d. Neighbourhood Commercial sites should follow the criteria outlined in this Section as well as Section 8.3;
 - e. Varying building massing and front yard setbacks, housing designs and styles to generate visual diversity.
 - f. The provision of deeper lots on major collector roads to allow greater housing

setback in order to reduce visual and noise intrusion;

- g.** Larger setbacks at intersections to increase privacy, improve vehicular visibility achieving the result of safer intersections for both pedestrians and vehicle traffic;
- h.** A variety of park types and sizes to meet the neighbourhood's needs;
- i.** As many lots as possible adjacent to and within reasonable walking distance of schools, open spaces, public transit, and other amenities to permit simple access from residences to neighbourhood amenities;
- j.** An internal trail system linking residential uses with parks, institutional uses, and commercial uses and connecting to the Town's trail system;
- k.** Preservation and integration of open space and natural areas; and
- l.** The efficient use and integration of existing infrastructure (such as water, sanitary and storm servicing) which anticipates future needs and municipal growth.

5.4.4 The Town may require:

- a.** Developers to establish architectural guidelines for new developments;
- b.** That new residential developments have attractive entrance features; and

5.4.5 The Town should ensure:

- a.** Sidewalks on both sides of all residential roads, unless otherwise authorized by the Town, at the subdivision stage;
- b.** That all new electrical transmission lines and telecommunications lines be placed underground in all subdivisions.

5.4.6 The Town shall require Municipal Reserve and/or School Reserve in the form of land (as opposed to money-in-lieu) in all residential subdivisions. The following shall be required of new Municipal/School Reserve dedications:

- a.** In accordance with the MGA, a minimum of 10% of developable land shall be dedicated as Municipal Reserve, School Reserve and/or Municipal 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.

5.5 EXISTING RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBOURHOODS

- 5.5.1 The Town should 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; and
 - d. Higher density housing forms are located at the periphery of residential neighbourhoods along collector and arterial roadways or public open spaces.
- 5.5.2 When determining whether a site proposed for medium- or high-density residential uses is suitable for such use, the Town may use the following criteria as a guide:
- a. Locate medium and high-density residential uses within prescribed areas of Downtown, at the periphery of existing neighbourhoods, adjacent to neighbourhood commercial sites, 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
 - c. Medium- and high-density residential uses to complement the height, mass, scale, and appearance of existing adjacent housing and other land uses.
- 5.5.3 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 the Town.
- 5.5.4 The Town recognizes the need for integration of subdivision planning, site utilization and building design to achieve the benefits of sustainable 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





Downtown

Historically, the town'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. Downtown plays a significant role in unifying a community that is physically divided into three distinct areas- the River Valley, West Whitecourt and the Hilltop. In order to address the current market demand and development pressures, this Plan proposes to realign the official boundary of the downtown area towards the eastern direction as identified in Figure 7.2.1.

The 2013 Town of Whitecourt 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. A key theme identified by residents and stakeholders during the Envision Whitecourt plan review process was the need to continue to support and enhance the Town's downtown character.

Ongoing emphasis on the importance of a strong and viable Downtown and the availability of undeveloped lands adjacent to Downtown has enabled the Town 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.

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.

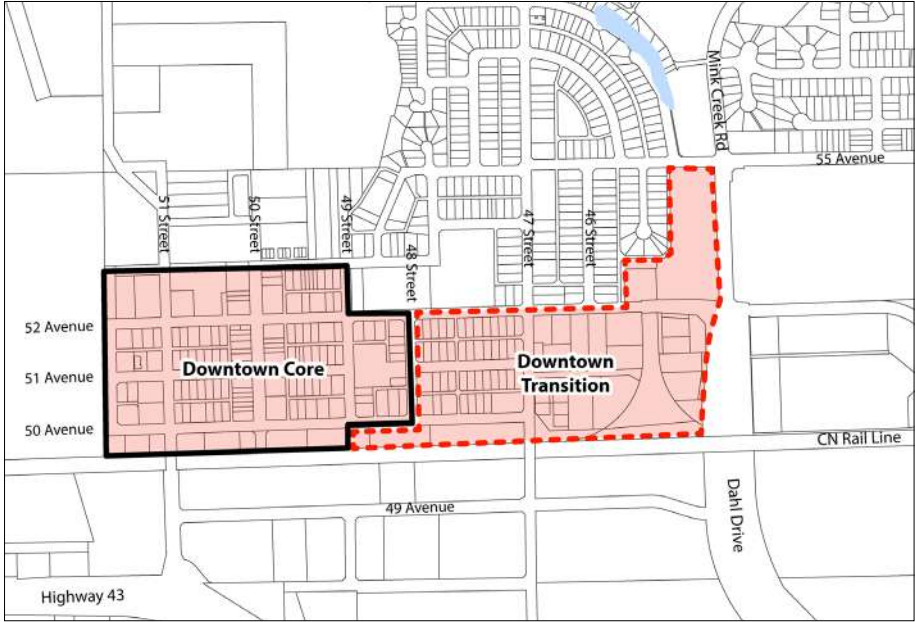
6.1 DOWNTOWN GOALS

- To provide suitable and appropriately located areas for commercial activities while preserving the strength and viability of Downtown.
- To emphasize the Downtown as the principal retail and service centre in Whitecourt, and 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 market demand.

6.2 GENERAL DOWNTOWN POLICIES

6.2.1 The future development within the downtown area should be in accordance with the policy framework established under the following sub-policy categories also identified in figure 7.2.1:

- a. Downtown Core; and
- b. Downtown Transition.



- 6.2.2** The Town should consider the potential impacts on Downtown in rendering decisions on land use applications that propose retail and service commercial development anywhere within the town in an effort to ensure Downtown remains the town's retail and service focal point.
- 6.2.3** The following general policies apply to the Downtown area. The Town should ensure:
- a.** Its office remains Downtown and encourage other levels of government to maintain their offices within Downtown in order to attract people to the area;
 - b.** Encourage office facilities to locate at higher densities within the Downtown;
 - c.** 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.** Encourage the development of street-level commercial uses within the Downtown;
 - e.** Encourage secondary suites and apartments on upper levels of buildings where separate ground level entrances can be accommodated.
 - f.** Require, that all applications for development in the Downtown are consistent with the vision set out in the Vitalization Plan; and
 - g.** Continue to provide appropriate landscaping, street furniture, and street lighting improvements on municipally owned land.
- 6.2.4** Whitecourt may 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 support the use of shared parking facilities or shared parking agreements/arrangements between downtown businesses and property owners.
- 6.2.7** Surface parking areas should generally be located behind buildings and screened appropriately from the public roadway using a variety of landscaping methods.

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 should 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** 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.
- 6.3.5** 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).
- 6.3.6** Infill and redevelopment projects in the Downtown Core should reflect the built form character and design principles in the Vitalization Plan.
- 6.3.7** New building facades in the Downtown Core area shall 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.
- 6.3.8** The Town should undertake a number of public realm improvement initiatives identified in the Vitalization Plan in a phased manner to improve walkability and overall appeal for businesses and residents. The Town should encourage landowners to undertake complementary landscaping or building upgrades in conjunction with the ongoing public realm improvement projects.

- 6.3.9 Small professional offices and retail commercial uses may be allowed in existing residential structures or new buildings specifically designed to fit into the sub-district.
- 6.3.10 Existing single-family dwellings are 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.
- 6.3.11 The Town 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 toward the public street and parking areas behind the building or screened from public view.

6.4 DOWNTOWN TRANSITION POLICY AREA

- 6.4.1 The primary purpose of the Downtown Transition District is to allow medium to high density residential alongside commercial developments which provide an appropriate transition of density and land use to the Downtown district.
- 6.4.2 Existing low density residential lands within this policy area are intended to gradually transition from single detached residential form to a mixture of density consisting of both residential and commercial uses.
- 6.4.3 Pedestrian access and connectivity within the district, and in connection to Downtown, will be a priority in all future development within this area.
- 6.4.4 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.
- 6.4.5 The internal vehicular and pedestrian circulation within this Policy Area should provide strong east-west connectivity.
- 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 minimized.
- 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 High density residential development shall be permitted provided the development is compatible with adjacent commercial uses.
- 6.4.9 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.

7

COMMERCIAL





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 'big box' retail and power centres. Over the last two decades these commercial forms have changed 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 heavy volume of traffic on Highway 43, demand for highway commercial development has always been strong, particularly in the Hilltop. Much of this traffic is regional, which means aesthetics along Highway 43 (as well as the future highway bypass, to be located at Govenlock Road and Highway 32) are important to the Town's image. The highway corridor should be attractive and inviting to encourage travellers to stop in the community.

Participants in the Envision 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 the town's emergence as a major regional centre for goods and services by attracting new businesses.
- To ensure that the town's commercial areas are attractive to tourists, and regional and local consumers.
- To provide commercial opportunities that meet the needs of all Whitecourt and area shoppers.
- To recognize the Hilltop and West Whitecourt, as major highway commercial nodes within the Town.

7.2 GENERAL COMMERCIAL POLICIES

- 7.2.1 The Town should actively encourage regional-scale commercial activity in order to increase its position as a regional retail and service centre.
- 7.2.2 The Town 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 Improvement Areas or Area Redevelopment Plans.
- 7.2.3 The Land Use Bylaw should 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 should be designed to permit the efficient flow of traffic on commercial sites with on-site parking. 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.
- 7.2.5 Whenever a new major commercial development is proposed, the Town may require:
- a. An ASP, Area Redevelopment Plan, or Outline Plan to guide the development or redevelopment of the applicable area;
 - b. Design features to make parking areas more noticeable, driver-friendly and incorporate CPTED principles.
 - c. That the number of vehicle access points to the site be limited to only those necessary to minimize interruptions to the street and conflicts with pedestrians;
 - d. That circulation routes requiring wider widths and turning radii (such as fire lanes, service areas) be combined with major drive aisles;

- e. Continuous circulation throughout the site which avoids dead end driveways and turnaround spaces.
- 7.2.6 When a new major commercial development is proposed, the Town will encourage shared driveways.
- 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 Future neighbourhood commercial development shall be located in general conformance with Map 3: Future Land Use Concept; however, other sites may also be considered. Preferred locations for neighbourhood commercial sites may include:
- a. Sites located at the periphery of the neighbourhood; Corner site locations;
 - b. Sites designated within proposed ASPs or Outline Plans for new residential areas.
- 7.3.2 The Town should 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, the Town should 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.

7.4 HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL

- 7.4.1 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.
- 7.4.2 The primary use for land adjacent to Highway 43 through Whitecourt should continue to be highway commercial uses that cater mainly to highway traffic. The Town may allow the development of a limited number of other uses, as defined in the Land Use Bylaw, that are oriented to serving tourists or the travelling public or restricted to small retail outlets.

- 7.4.3 Businesses located along the Highway 43 corridor shall be subject to a higher aesthetic standard in accordance with the Vitalization Plan and as defined by the Land Use Bylaw.
- 7.4.4 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, the Town 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, the Town may refuse the development.
- 7.4.5 Professional offices and services including health as well as community facilities are not intended to be located in Highway Commercial areas, and should be directed towards the Downtown Core Policy Area.
- 7.4.6 All signage along the Highway 43 corridor shall be to the satisfaction of Alberta Transportation and in accordance with the Land Use Bylaw.
- 7.4.7 The Town shall continue to limit accesses to Highway 43.

7.5 MIXED USE COMMERCIAL

- 7.5.1 Mixed-use commercial development shall be located in general conformance with Map 3: Future Land Use Concept.
- 7.5.2 The primary purpose of the Mixed-use Commercial district will be to provide a wide variety of retail and service oriented commercial outlets, which require larger tracts of land either to accommodate the scale of retail, or to provide area for storage or display of goods. Commercial development will be catered toward meeting the daily needs of Whitecourt residents and residents from surrounding communities.
- 7.5.3 High density residential development should be permitted provided the development is compatible with adjacent commercial uses.
- 7.5.4 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.
- 7.5.5 Surface parking areas should generally be located behind buildings and screened appropriately from the public roadway using a variety of landscaping methods
- 7.5.6 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 minimized.

- 7.5.7** New buildings located adjacent to 51 Street and Dahl Drive should have enhanced architectural and landscaping features to contribute towards these key intersection corridors of the community.
- 7.5.8** All future development should provide consideration for pedestrian access (including pedestrian comfort and safety) in addition to vehicle access and parking. Pedestrian access and connectivity within the district, and in connection to Downtown, will be a priority for all future development within this area.
- 7.5.9** Greater pedestrian accessibility will be required for service commercial zones adjacent to medium to high density residential in order to promote the viability of meeting daily needs without a vehicle.

8

INDUSTRIAL





Industrial

Industrial development and related businesses are a core component of Whitecourt's ability to grow and diversify its economy. In order to ensure that industrial development can flourish, while being safe and compatible with existing development, care must be taken when allocating industrial uses.

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

The remaining majority of the town's industrial sector is split between two service industrial nodes. The largest node is the Hilltop Industrial and is fully serviced. This 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, which includes a combination of service and heavy industrial uses. 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 the town's excellent transportation linkages including both rail and highway, 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 the Town's economy and to facilitate its continued growth and diversification within the community.
- To support the town'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 the town's economy by emphasizing tourism, manufacturing, transportation, and the supply of industrial goods and services.
- To further the town'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 (as indicated in Map 3) and the introduction of business industrial development.
- To reserve lands in the north of West Whitecourt for future heavy industrial development to accommodate new major industries within the town.
- To ensure all industrial areas in the town are viable, attractive and feasible.
- To be on the leading edge of industrial innovation by providing flexibility and creative solutions to new developments/areas/businesses/ industries.
- To ensure adequate servicing capacity is available for future industrial development.

8.2 GENERAL INDUSTRIAL POLICIES

- 8.2.1 The Town shall continue to promote economic development through Council and its economic development affiliations.
- 8.2.2 The Town should ensure:
- a. Industrial areas have simple and direct access to truck routes, highways, and the rail line where feasible;

- 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 non-industrial uses are maintained. This 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.
- 8.2.3** The Town should 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.
- 8.2.4** Future Industrial development should be located in general conformance with Map 3: Future Land Use Concept
- 8.2.5** For new developments in areas in which both commercial and industrial uses are allowed, the Town shall establish landscaping or design requirements, or both, above those which would normally be required.
- 8.2.6** Business Industrial uses should be developed on the periphery of industrial areas or abutting arterial or major collector roadways within industrial areas.
- 8.2.7** Whitecourt should maintain the service industrial nature of Hilltop Industrial and will restrict non-industrial uses in the area to only those that can readily coexist with industrial activities.
- 8.2.8** Heavy industrial uses will be maintained in West Whitecourt. These uses may have nuisance effects which require separation from other uses.

9

PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION





Parks, Open Space and Recreation

People in Whitecourt value the green space in the community. The importance of trails, parks, open space areas and connection to the rivers came up repeatedly in the Envision Whitecourt plan review process. Implementation of the Sports Field Master Plan and the expansion of the town's trail system continues to increase the liveability of the town's neighbourhoods.

The trail system, the Allan & Jean Millar Centre, the Forest Interpretive Centre, the Whitecourt Golf and Country Club, Centennial Park and Festival Park are a few of the cultural and recreation amenities that were recognized as important pieces of the town's identity in the Envision Whitecourt plan review process. The value placed on these amenities indicates that the Town has made a commitment to an active lifestyle and a high quality of life for its residents. In maintaining this commitment, the Town will continue to draw in visitors, shoppers, residents, and businesses.

Throughout the Envision Whitecourt plan review process, residents and stakeholders emphasized the need to continue to improve two key aspects: the connectivity of the multi-purpose trail system and connections to the McLeod and Athabasca rivers. These themes have been reflected as part of the following goals and policies.

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 the town.
- Continue to promote art, culture, and events facilities within the Town.
- To continue expanding the multi-purpose trail system throughout the community with a focus on connecting and looping the trails while creating connections to the Hilltop, River Valley, recreation facilities, schools, parks and other amenity areas.
- To incorporate passive recreation opportunities into stormwater management facilities whenever possible.
- To improve and create new connections to the Athabasca and McLeod Rivers, and promote recreational opportunities while being sensitive to safety and flood risks.

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 Sports Field Master Plan, as amended or updated from time to time, should also be used as the basis for open space and recreation planning in the town.

9.2.2 The Town shall:

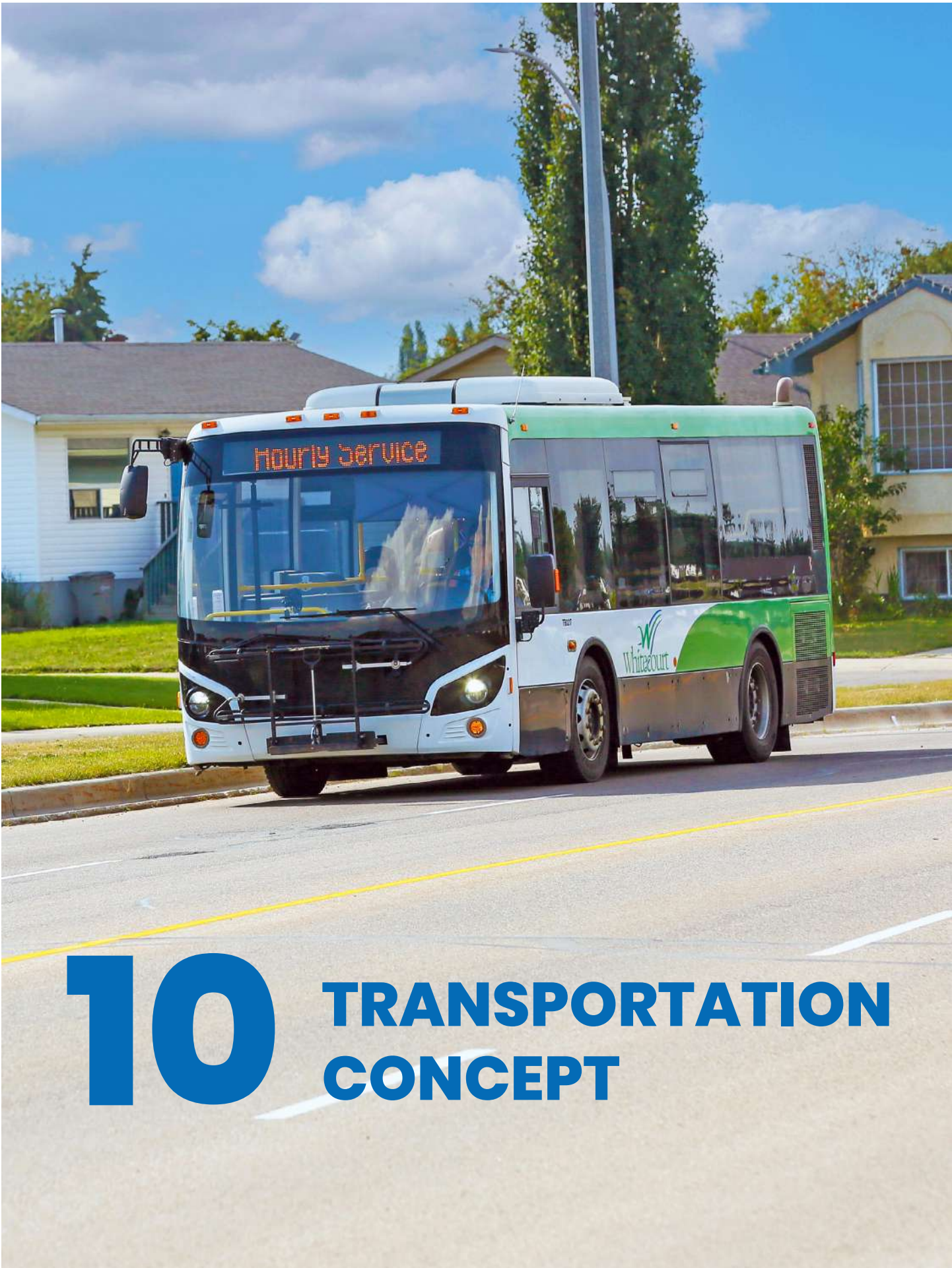
- a. Require sufficient land be dedicated for Municipal Reserves, School Reserves, or any combination of both, up to statutory maximums, to ensure that community requirements for neighbourhood, district, and municipal level open spaces are provided;
- b. Where possible, allocate Municipal Reserve to 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 The Town should endeavour to maintain its policy regarding the agreements with the local school districts for the joint use of facilities and shall use its ability under the Municipal Government Act to 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 the Town, 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 the Town 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** The Town should ensure:
- a. Adequate parking provision for major recreation facilities and other community amenities to accommodate residents of and visitors to the town; 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** The Town should 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;
 - b. An appropriate mix of small and large neighbourhood parks shall be provided to meet the varied needs of the town's population;
 - c. Small neighbourhood parks are designed 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 (CPTED) 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** The existing multi-purpose trail system may continue to be expanded in accordance with Map 4: Open Space and Trails Concept at the time of development and shall be integrated into any future ASPs or Subdivision applications applicable to the area.
- 9.2.8** Existing and future connections to the Athabasca and McLeod Rivers should be developed/enhanced in accordance with Map 4, and shall be integrated into any future ASP or Subdivision applications applicable to the area. The Town shall consider how existing and future park spaces can create and strengthen connections with the rivers.

- 9.2.9** Open spaces and outdoor recreation amenities should incorporate design features that facilitate their use throughout the year.
- 9.2.10** The Whitecourt Community Services Department should be given the opportunity to provide input on Area Structure Plans / Outline Plans or during the planning stages of subdivision development.
- 9.2.11** Development agreements and related documents should clearly state the landscape requirements that shall be met by the developer.
- 9.2.12** Appropriate measures must be taken to ensure funding is available to complete neighbourhood park amenities.



10 TRANSPORTATION CONCEPT



Transportation Concept

The town's transportation system is an integral part of land use planning. Its design plays an important role in shaping the community's urban environment. The foundation of the town's road system is the two highways that link the community to the wider world. Highway 43 is the most travelled road in Whitecourt. 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 as an arterial road within the town connecting the Hilltop and West Whitecourt. The second highway, Highway 32, links the town to the Yellowhead Highway – a high load corridor and transcontinental trade route between Edmonton and Prince Rupert. Dahl Drive provides a second important link between the Hilltop and River Valley.

The town'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 the town and oil and gas facilities near Fox Creek to the transcontinental rail system in Edmonton. The town'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 the town. A major oil pipeline, two major sweet gas lines, one of which supplies gas service to the town, and three raw natural gas pipelines traverse the town. 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

- Continue to support equality through accessible and comfortable transit access.
- To provide an efficient and effective transportation network for the movement of people and goods in the town.
- To ensure that Highway 43 retains its viability as a route for through traffic.
- To promote circulation through Downtown to access popular destinations such as Festival Park with the intention of increasing vehicle and pedestrian traffic through Downtown.
- 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 and welcoming roadside environment, in particular along Highway 43, the future bypass, Govenlock Road, and Highway 32.
- To recognize and plan for a highway bypass around the town.
- 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 5, “Transportation Concept” shall act as a general guide for the development of future collector and arterial roads in the town. Road classifications indicate intended future use, not current as-built status. This helps to identify future use.
- 10.2.2** The Town shall protect transportation corridors, undertake necessary studies and develop a Transportation Master Plan.
- 10.2.3** In addition to the policies contained in this Plan, the specifications contained in the Town of Whitecourt Municipal Design Standards, as amended from time to time, shall apply to all road and related infrastructure design and construction in the town.
- 10.2.4** Until future circumstances entail a change in policy, the Town shall encourage Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors to upgrade Highway 43 in its existing alignment through Whitecourt instead of rerouting the highway around the community.

10.2.5 The Town should ensure:

- a.** Any new development located adjacent to Highway 43, the future bypass, or Govenlock Road, are to have 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; this may be required for development along Highway 32; 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, Whitecourt adopts similar criteria for all municipally owned land and developments.

10.2.6 The Town should:

- 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.

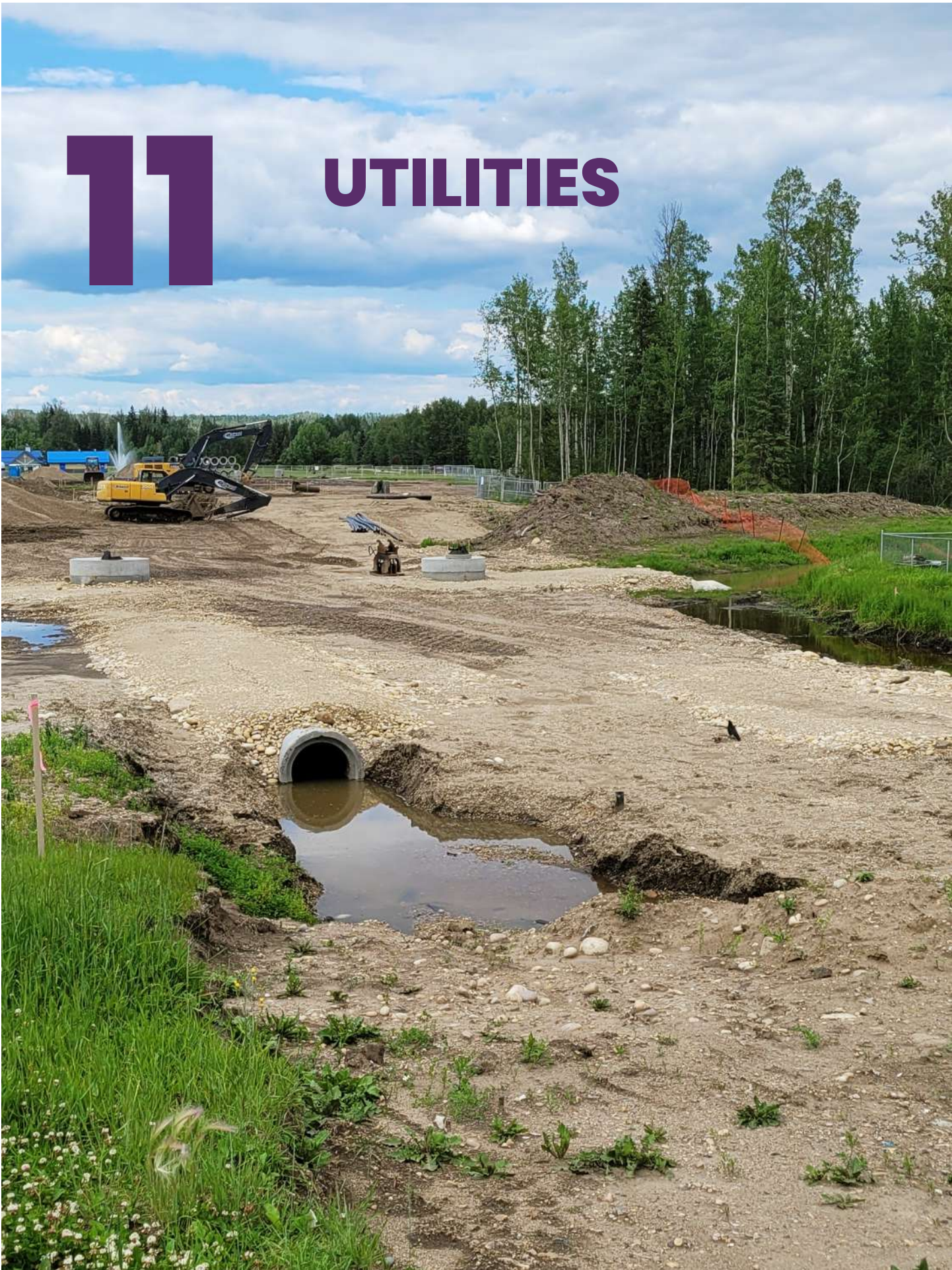
10.2.7 As part of an agreement associated with the granting of a development permit, the Town may require that the developer pay for all or a portion of any public roadway or pedestrian/bicycle trail system in excess of the requirement for the proposed development. Where such extra improvements are required,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

10.2.8 The Town should encourage CN to, whenever possible, use the marshalling yard in West Whitecourt instead of the former marshalling yard within Downtown.

10.2.9 Appropriate wayfinding features should be provided at key junctions to route vehicle and pedestrian traffic through Downtown. Popular access routes to Festival Park should be prioritized for wayfinding features.

11

UTILITIES





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 Study (2014) and the Stormwater Management Review (2007). Updated utility studies will be incorporated into the Municipal Development Plan in an economic and efficient manner.

11.1 WATER SUPPLY

The Town 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 the town 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 Study (2014) acts as an overall modeling assessment for existing and proposed developments in the town. This report reviews the current state of the distribution system and identifies possible future servicing.

Supply and treatment systems 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 the town 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.

In 2022, The Town of Whitecourt also undertook a water system upgrade to provide a dedicated feed line to the Hilltop Reservoir and separate the pressure zones between the Hilltop and the Valley.

11.2 WASTEWATER TREATMENT

The Town's sewage treatment plant was built in 1977, expanded in 1999, and currently consists of a lagoon in the North Flats area. and presently has a capacity of 6,000 m³/day, which will support a population of approximately 14,000.

At the time of writing of this document, a Wastewater Treatment Plant study was underway. This study will provide recommendations for upgrades and improvements to the wastewater treatment plant in accordance with best practices. Options for implementation will be reviewed to ensure the future capacity of the community can be met in the most fiscally sustainable manner.

11.3 STORMWATER DRAINAGE

The Town's stormwater drainage system consists of a combination of open ditches and underground pipes. The planned future growth can be accommodated by expanding the systems 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 the town 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 provide sufficient capacity to support growth and expansion in the Town.
- To responsibly maintain and upgrade existing utility systems as budgets allow.

11.6 UTILITY POLICIES

- 11.6.1** The Town shall maintain current and up to date studies and master plans to upgrade and expand its water, sanitary , and stormwater management systems as necessary to support development 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, the Town 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 oversizing improvements are required, Whitecourt may negotiate a cost sharing agreement to cover the costs associated with the oversizing requirements. The agreement must provide for the reimbursement and interest for the oversizing in accordance with the MGA.
- 11.6.3** The Town requires that all lots of a proposed subdivision be connected to municipal water and sewer systems when the lots are developed except where, in Town's opinion, the proposed subdivision is far enough away from existing trunk mains that extension of the mains is not economically feasible. In this context, the Town 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 Town'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 Agreement 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 are to be used by all developers when installing water, sanitary sewer or stormwater drainage systems.
- 11.6.6** The Town intends to maintain its commitment to the disposal of solid waste through the regional sanitary landfill system.
- 11.6.7** The Town should 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** The Town may support water conservation measures which could reduce or eliminate water utilities expansion requirements.
- 11.6.9** The Town will endeavor to maintain the integrity of pipelines and utility corridors while planning for growth and development.
- 11.6.10** The Town should 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 may be considered for trail systems, where applicable, in proposed subdivisions.
- 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, the Town should emphasize the location of these in common corridors wherever possible.



12 INTERMUNICIPAL PLANNING



Intermunicipal Planning

A long history of cooperative planning between the Town 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 has 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 the town'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 The Town and Woodlands County or other stakeholders to provide infrastructure services.

12.2 INTERMUNICIPAL PLANNING POLICIES

- 12.2.1** The Town 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 The Town and the Woodlands County when considering MDP amendments, Land Use Bylaw amendments, or other development proposals for the fringe area.
- 12.2.2** The Town shall implement the goals, objectives and policies of the Intermunicipal Development Plan between the Town and Woodlands County.
- 12.2.3** The Town, 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** The Town will refer the following development proposals to Woodlands County:
- a. The adoption or amendment to the Intermunicipal Development Plan, or this MDP;
 - b. Proposed Land Use Bylaw or proposed amendments to the Land Use Bylaw within the Town's fringe area, and
 - c. Proposed ASPs located within the Town's fringe area.
- 12.2.5** The Town will consult with Woodlands County on matters of future annexation.
- 12.2.6** The Town will examine the means of sharing the costs of development for infrastructure and services where there is mutual benefit to both the Town and Woodlands County.

13

MONITORING & REVIEW



The MDP will be used to implement the Town's vision while guiding Administration on the future growth and development of the town. 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 IDP, the MDP, the LUB, and those related planning documents 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 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 region where changes related to the oil and gas industry can have a rapid impact on development trends within the Town. Whitecourt's Council and Administration should be prepared to consider proposed amendments to the MDP when 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

The Town's LUB reflects the contents of the MDP and complements it in providing a comprehensive system for the planning of development. To ensure the town 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.

14 DEFINITIONS



Advisory Committee means the group of Town Council Members and members at large organized by the MDP project team whose mandate is to provide advice and feedback to the project team regarding issues, opportunities and priorities. At each stage of this project, the Advisory Committee met with the project team to provide ongoing direction and to review progress and drafts.

Affordable Housing includes housing provided by the private, public, or not-for-profit sectors. Housing is considered to be affordable when a household spends less than 30% of its pre-tax income on adequate shelter.

Architectural Guidelines are a set of recommendations which outline how to apply specific design features and principles to achieve a desired appearance.

Area Structure Plan (ASP) means a current plan adopted by Council as an area structure plan pursuant to the MGA.

Annexation means the provincially legislated process in which a municipality changes or expands its jurisdictional boundaries.

'Big box' retail refers to a physically large retail establishment, usually part of a chain of stores.

Buffer means an open green space or undisturbed natural area; row of trees, shrubs, earth berm, or fencing to provide visual or physical separation and/or noise attenuation between lots or a public roadway.

Building includes anything constructed or placed on, in, over or under land but does not include a highway or public roadway or a bridge forming part of a highway or public roadway.

Commercial Use means the use of land or a building for the operation of a business, either wholesale or retail. Commercial Use does not include home-based businesses, industrial operations, or other commercial land uses that are defined separately within this Bylaw.

Connectivity means the directness and density of links and connections in a network, for example, a pathway or road system.

Conservation refers to the activity of protecting from degradation the essential biological, physical and chemical characteristics of the natural environment.

Cost Sharing means the sharing of costs for an agreed upon mutually beneficial project or development funded by two or more municipalities.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a framework for manipulating the built environment to create safer neighbourhoods and deter crime. CPTED principles can be applied to the design of buildings, landscaping and other outdoor environments to discourage crime.

Development refers to any of the following:

- an excavation or stockpile and the creation of either of them;
- a building or an addition to or a replacement or repair of a building and the construction or placing in, on, over or under land; or
- a change of the use of land or a building or an act done in relation to land or a building that results in or is likely to result in a change in the use of land or building, or a change in the intensity of use of land or a building or any act done in relation to land or a building that results in or is likely to result in a change in the intensity of use of the land or building.

Development Permit means a document issued by the Development Authority or by Council in the case of a decision under a Direct Control District; authorizing a development issued pursuant to this bylaw.

Industrial Park means the grouping of diverse industries that benefit mutually by exchanging waste heat, light or by products with their neighbours. This concept incorporates the following principles to create targeted business synergies within a sustainable, environmentally friendly industrial park:

- Targeted economic development strategy that seeks to attract similar businesses or industry grouping to fill product or service niches;
- By-product synergy whereby businesses cycle materials and energy, increasing efficiency and reducing environmental impact; and
- Networking around services is designed so that businesses share services, such as marketing, transportation, research, and monitoring services wherever possible.

Environmental Reserve means the land designated as an environmental reserve by a subdivision authority or a municipality in accordance with the MGA.

Economic Development refers to creating a positive environment from which local businesses can succeed and grow and attract new enterprise to the community.

FireSmart refers to the provincial program for the implementation of both prevention and mitigation measures to reduce wildfire threat to Albertans.

Fiscal Sustainability refers to the ability of the Town to sustain its current spending, tax and other policies in the long run without threatening the well being of the Town's future economic vitality.

Floodway means the channel of a watercourse and the adjacent areas where the majority of floodwaters will flow and where flow velocities and depths are potentially destructive to development. This is normally kept free of encumbrances to allow the free flow of water during a flood.

Flood Fringe means the portion of the flood hazard area outside of the floodway. This area is generally subject to shallower and slower flows than in the floodway.

Future Land Use Concept is a depiction of the existing and future land use pattern in Whitecourt.

Geotechnical Study means an assessment or estimation of the earth's subsurface and the quality and/or quantity of environmental mitigation measures that would be necessary for development to occur.

Goal refers to an idealized end towards which planned action is directed and which provides an indication of what is to be achieved.

Highway means a provincial highway under the Highways Development and Protection Act.

Heritage means the history, culture and historical resources of an area and its residents.

Infill Development means the development within unused or underutilized lands within the municipal boundary, typically in urban areas.

Infrastructure refers to systems and facilities (e.g. roads, water and wastewater treatment and distribution networks, power lines, telephone and cable systems) that service development.

Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP) refers to the statutory document which serves as a means of coordination between neighbouring municipalities for managing the lands on their border. The Town of Whitecourt has an IDP with Woodlands County.

Land Use Bylaw (LUB) refers to the statutory document which identifies the regulated land use, or zone, for each parcel within a municipality.

Manufactured Home Parks refers to an area dedicated to manufactured homes.

Money-in-lieu means the payment made to the Town as an alternative to the dedication of land for public purposes.

Municipal Government Act (MGA) refers to provincial legislation that gives municipalities the authority for municipal planning, subdivision and development control. The MGA allows municipalities to adopt plans and a land use bylaw and make planning decisions to achieve the beneficial use of land without infringing on the rights of individuals except to the extent necessary for the greater public interest. The purpose of the MGA is to provide policy direction that ensures good government, services and facilities for municipalities and safe and viable communities.

Municipal Reserve refers to land owned by the Town which is typically dedicated to parks and open space or other public amenities.

Open Space means passive and structured leisure and recreation areas that enhance the aesthetic quality and conserve the environment of the community. Open space includes parks, recreation and tourism nodes, as well as natural areas.

Objective refers to directional statements that are usually phrased in measurable terms for given time frames.

Outline Plan means a detailed planning document that guides the development and conceptual layout for a specific area.

Park refers to a development of public land specifically designed or reserved for the general public for active or passive recreational use and includes all natural and manmade landscaping, facilities, playing fields, buildings and other structures that are consistent with the general purposes of public parkland, whether or not such recreational facilities are publicly operated or operated by other organizations pursuant to arrangements with the public authority owning the park.

Redevelopment means the change or growth in land use on previously developed land in existing urban areas.

Reserve Land means environmental reserve, municipal reserve, community services reserve, school reserve or municipal and school reserve.

River Valley Escarpment refers to the steep slope that separates two relatively level areas having different elevations.

School Reserve refers to lands set aside for use by public school authorities for school facilities.

Subdivision refers to the dividing of a single parcel of land into two or more parcels, each of which is then given a separate title.

Town Council means the Council of the Town of Whitecourt.

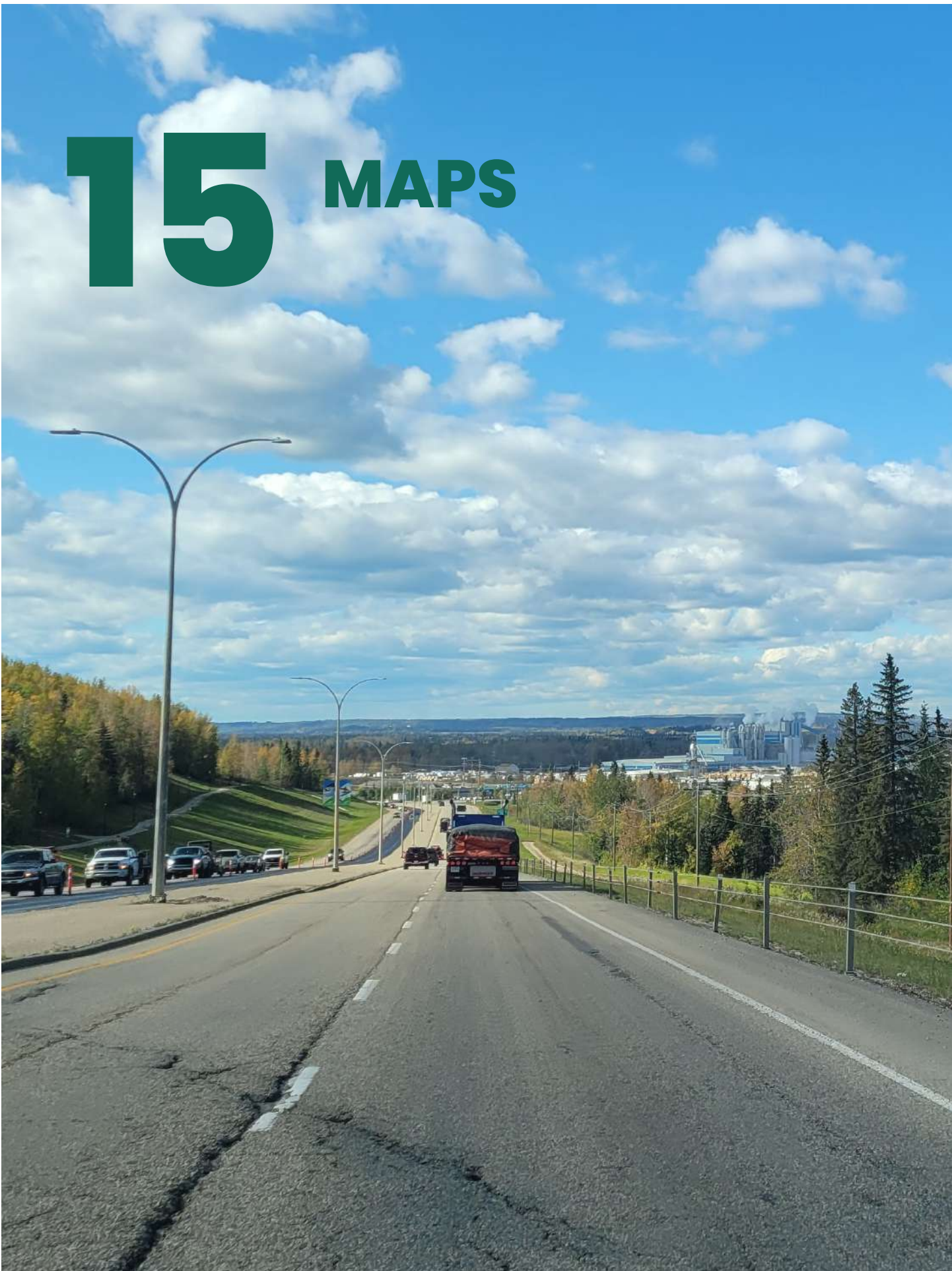
Urban Form refers to the physical characteristics that are built within the Town, including the shape, size, density, and configuration of buildings and infrastructure.

Walkability means the extent to which the built environment allows people to walk to get to everyday destinations such as work, shopping, education, and recreation. Walkability can be affected by street connectivity, mix of land uses, destinations, and pedestrian infrastructure.

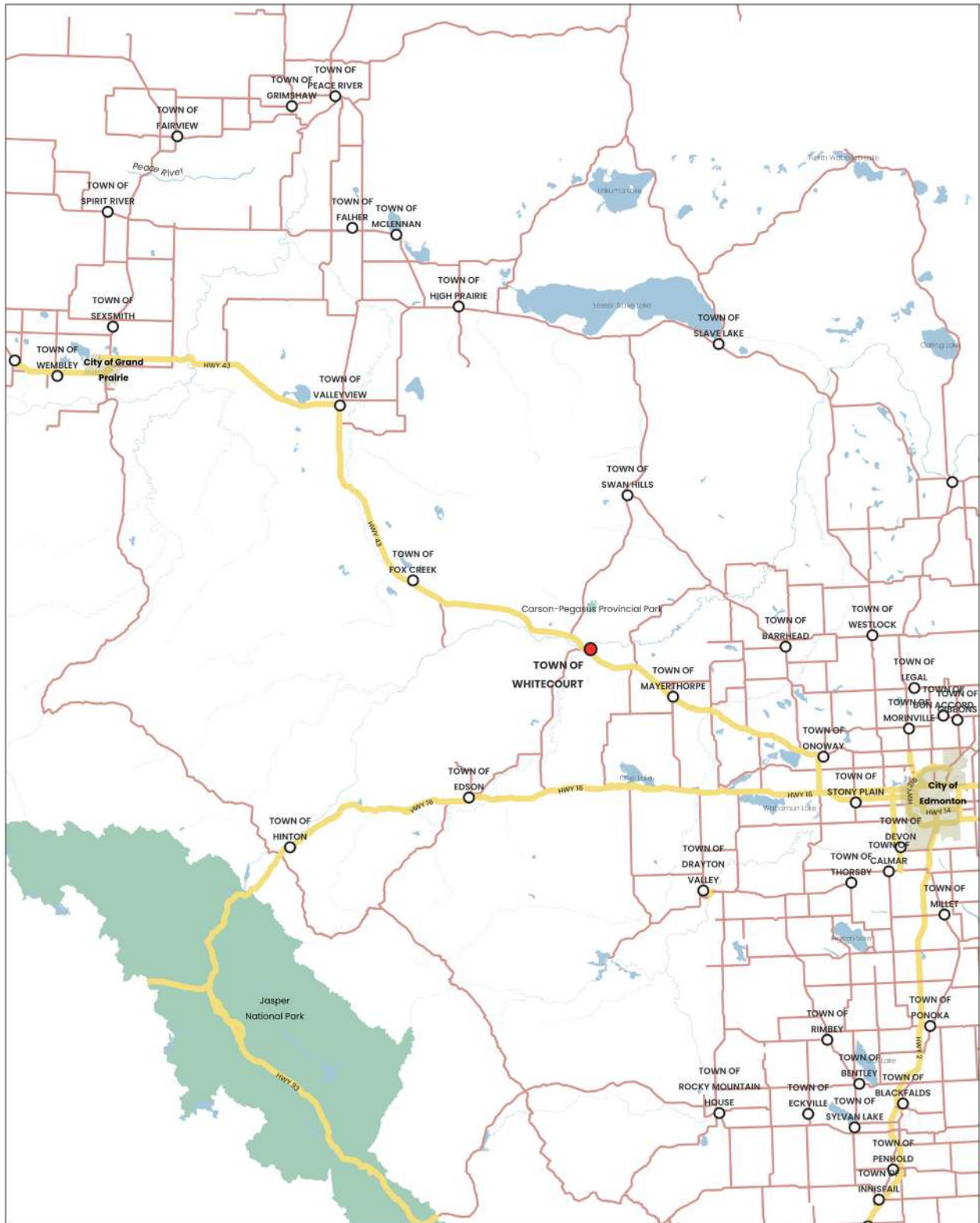
Muskeg refers to an area which may be flooded or saturated with water seasonally or permanently. Such areas require special considerations given their potential ecological significance and given the potential challenges they pose to development.

Zero Lot Line Development refers to a property in which the building touches or comes very close to the boundary of the lot.

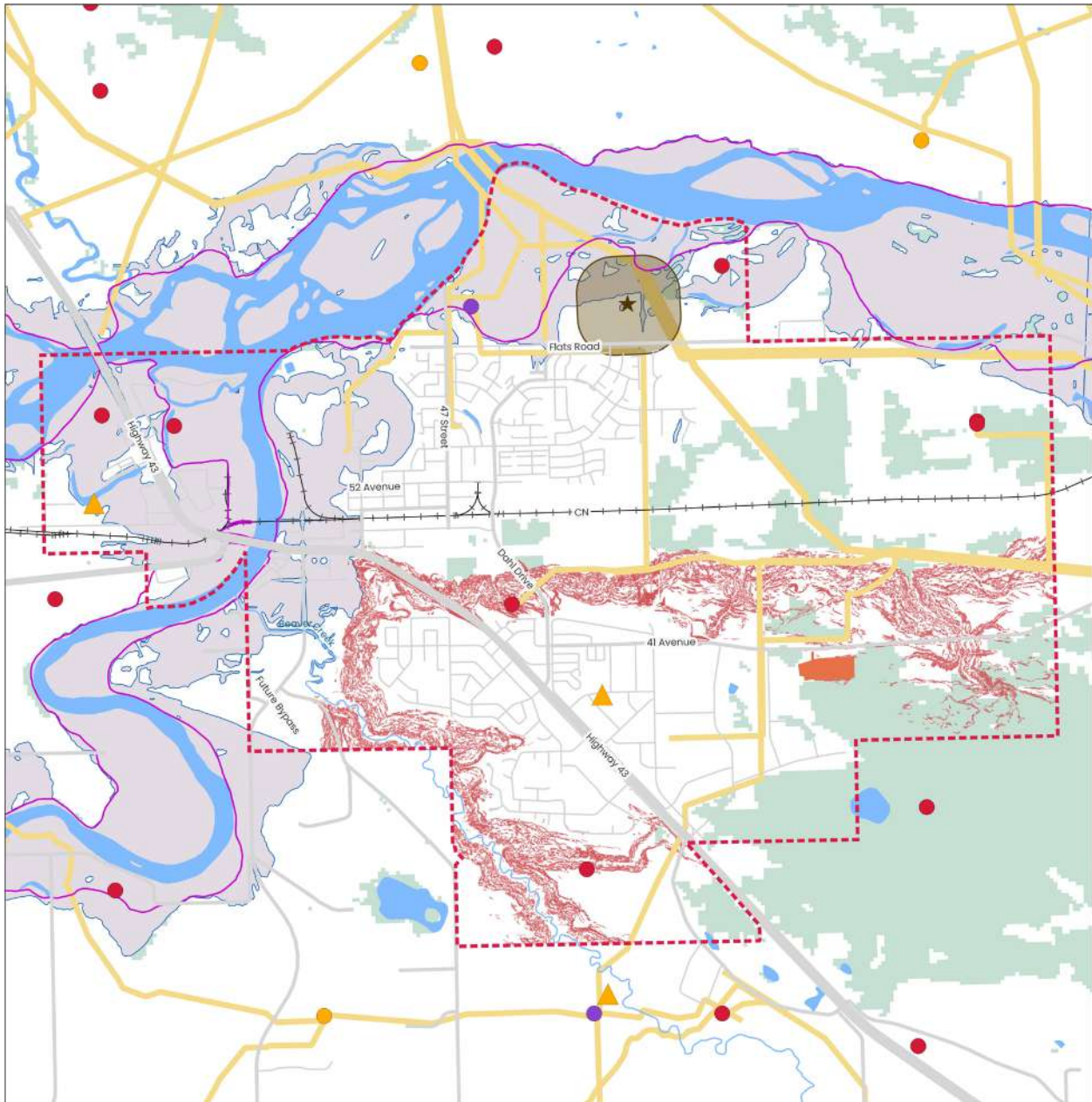
15 MAPS



MAP 1. REGIONAL CONTEXT



MAP 2. DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS

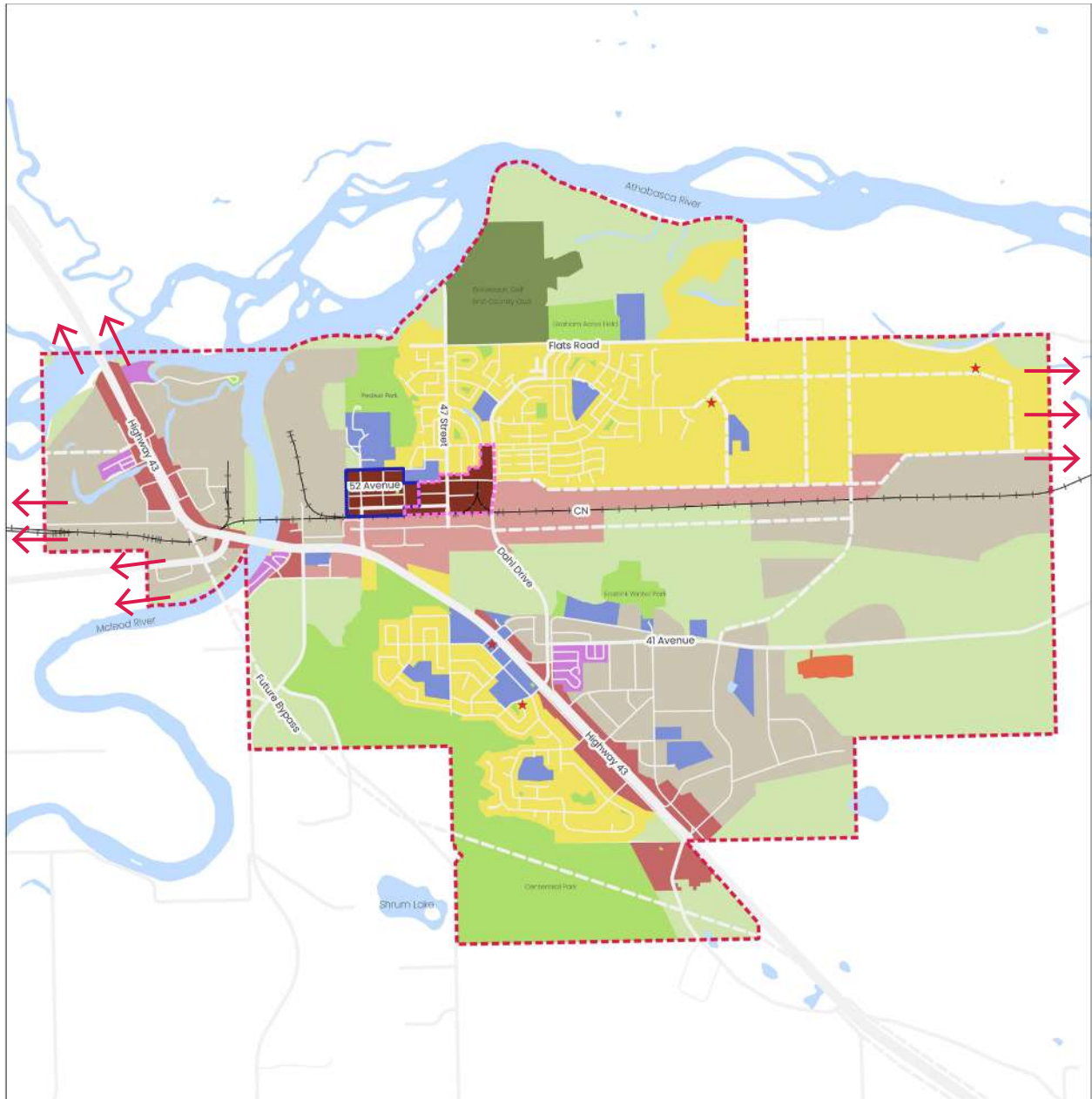


Legend

Town Boundary	Gas Pipeline	Floodway	Old Landfill	Muskeg
Rail Line (simplified)	Abandoned Well	Flood Fringe	Waste Water Treatment Plant	Waterbodies
	Flowing Gas Well		Wastewater Treatment Plant Buffer (300m)	Major Areas with Slope > 15%
	Suspended Gas Well			
	AER Facility			



MAP 3. FUTURE LAND USE CONCEPT



Legend

- Town Boundary
- Future Roads
- Rail Line
- Waterbodies
- Downtown Core Policy Area
- Downtown Transition Policy Area

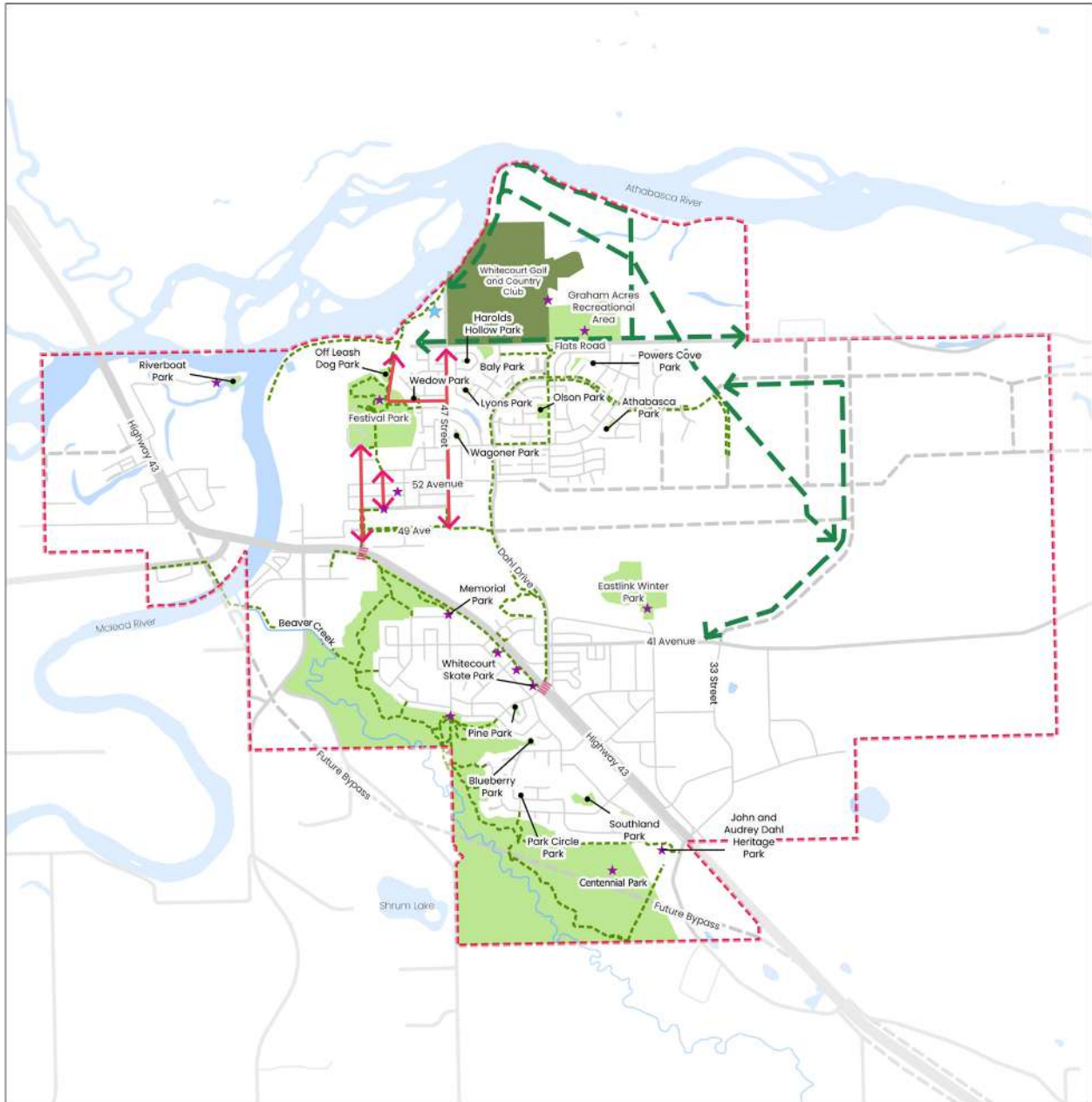
Land Use

- | | |
|--|---|
| Downtown Commercial | Golf Course |
| Residential | Park |
| Institutional | Industrial |
| Mixed-Use Commercial | Special Project Area |
| Highway Commercial | Old Landfill |
| Urban Development Future | Neighbourhood Commercial Node |

↑ ↑ Potential Expansion



MAP 4. OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS CONCEPT

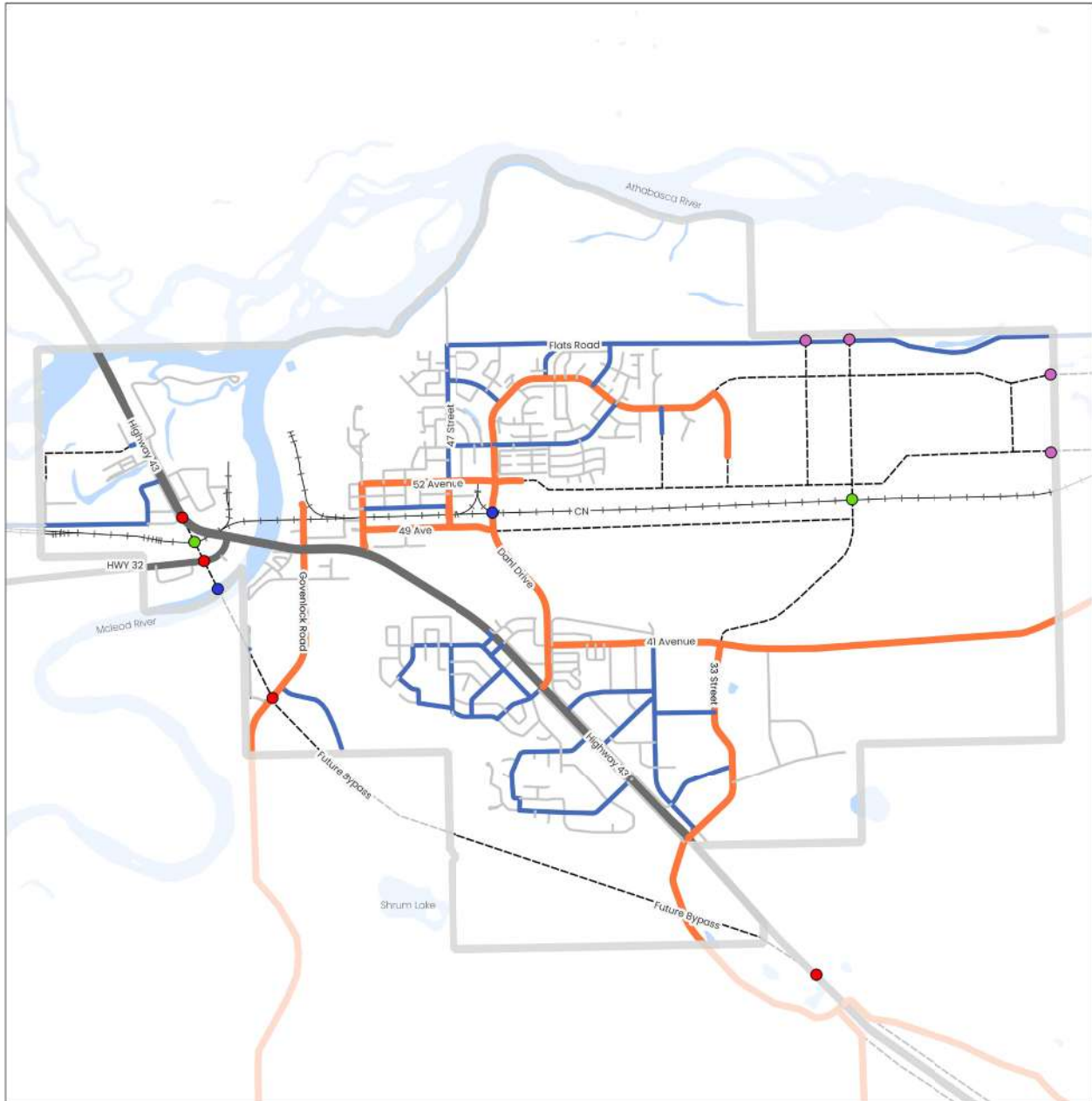


Legend

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Town Boundary | Golf Course | Potential Public Realm Improvements |
| Waterbodies | Key Destinations | Valley Hilltop Connector |
| Existing Roads | Potential Gathering Node | |
| Future Roads | Trails | |
| Parks | Potential Trail Expansion | |



MAP 5. TRANSPORTATION CONCEPT



Legend

Town Boundary	Roadways	Potential Improvements
Rail Line	Expressway / Highway	Future Boundary Intersection
Future Roads	Arterial	Future Interchange
Waterbodies	Collector	Potential Future Overpass
	Local	Potential Future Railway Crossing

