

# Town of Athabasca Municipal Development Plan

**DRAFT**

BYLAW ##-##

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	PURPOSE	2
1.2	LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS	2
1.3	MDP REVIEW PROCESS	2
1.4	GUIDES TO THE PLAN	3
1.5	VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES	5
1.6	GOALS	7
SECTION 2.0	COMMUNITY PROFILE	8
2.1	REGIONAL CONTEXT	9
2.2	COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS	10
SECTION 3.0	POLICIES	21
3.1	LAND USE	22
3.2	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	32
3.3	ENVIRONMENT	33
3.4	INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICING	35
3.5	LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	37
SECTION 4.0	FUTURE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT	38
4.1	FUTURE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT	39
SECTION 5.0	PLAN ADMINISTRATION	41
5.1	AUTHORITY OF THE PLAN	42
5.2	IMPLEMENTATION	42

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Statutory and Regulatory Planning Documents .....4

Figure 2: Town of Athabasca Population History, 1971–2021 ..... 11

Figure 3: Town of Athabasca Population Projections, 2021–2075 ..... 12

Figure 4: Population Pyramid for the Town of Athabasca ..... 13

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Town of Athabasca Population History, 1971–2021 ..... 10

Table 2: Town of Athabasca Population Projections, 2021–2075..... 11

Table 3: Highest Level of Education for Population Aged 15+ ..... 14

Table 4: Income for All Private Households (Total = 1,155)..... 14

Table 5: Housing Inventory ..... 15

Table 6: Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA)..... 17

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Future Development Concept Map

Appendix B: Sustainable Resource Development Recommended Environmental Setbacks





SECTION 1.0

# Introduction

## 1.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of the Town of Athabasca Municipal Development Plan is to serve as a road map, guiding the community to its future destination for years to come. To provide comprehensive guidance, the Plan addresses not only future development and infrastructure needs, but also provides policies which link the physical and social development of the community in a way that is easy to read and understand.

Through the implementation of this Plan, the Town of Athabasca seeks to harness the optimism and creativity of the Town Council and residents and articulate these ideas as goals and objectives for future development to provide economically, socially and environmentally responsible lifestyle options for existing residents and the community well into the future.

## 1.2 LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

The Alberta Municipal Government Act (MGA) gives extensive governing powers to municipalities.

The MGA requires that municipalities over the population of 3,500 adopt a Municipal Development Plan (MDP), to outline a broad set of goals, objectives and policies about the long-term development that is desired by the community. The main focus of the MDP is to assist Council – and the Town's approving authorities – in achieving and maintaining orderly and efficient land use and development.

An MDP accounts for both the past and present human and physical environments. Considering where the community has been, where it is currently and where it wants to go, enables the Town to set in place a “plan” for how to reach its desired destination. Baseline environmental data, stakeholder interests and the socio-perceptual concerns of the community are considered to ensure that the vision enshrined in the MDP addresses the needs and objectives of all affected parties.

The Town of Athabasca is aware that other federal and provincial statutes will have a role to play in the future development of the Town. In a spirit of cooperation, consultation and communication, the Town looks forward to working with government agencies and community stakeholders in the implementation of this plan to achieve a pattern of land use and development that is attractive, efficient and beneficial to all residents of the municipality and the larger region.

## 1.3 MDP REVIEW PROCESS

In 2009, Town Council engaged residents and stakeholders in the development of a Sustainability Plan. With the assistance of Municipal Planning Services Ltd. (MPS), Council encouraged the whole community, both as individuals and as stakeholder groups, to consider the future of the Town from the perspectives of community well-being, social infrastructure, environmental integrity and protection, the built environment, economic prosperity, governance, and community co-ordination and co-operation.

The result was a comprehensive Sustainability Plan that included both strategies and implementation tools for various objectives within those consideration parameters, together with indicators of the success for the strategies and objectives.

One of the major recommendations within the Sustainability Plan was a review and adoption of a new MDP for the Town that would address and provide policy to achieve the objectives of the Sustainability Plan.

In January of 2010, the Town and MPS began working on a new MDP. The Town actively solicited stakeholder comments and provided opportunities for meaningful public input in the form of public meetings. At that time,

the MDP included much of the vision of the Town identified by the Sustainability Plan and by the Town's residents.

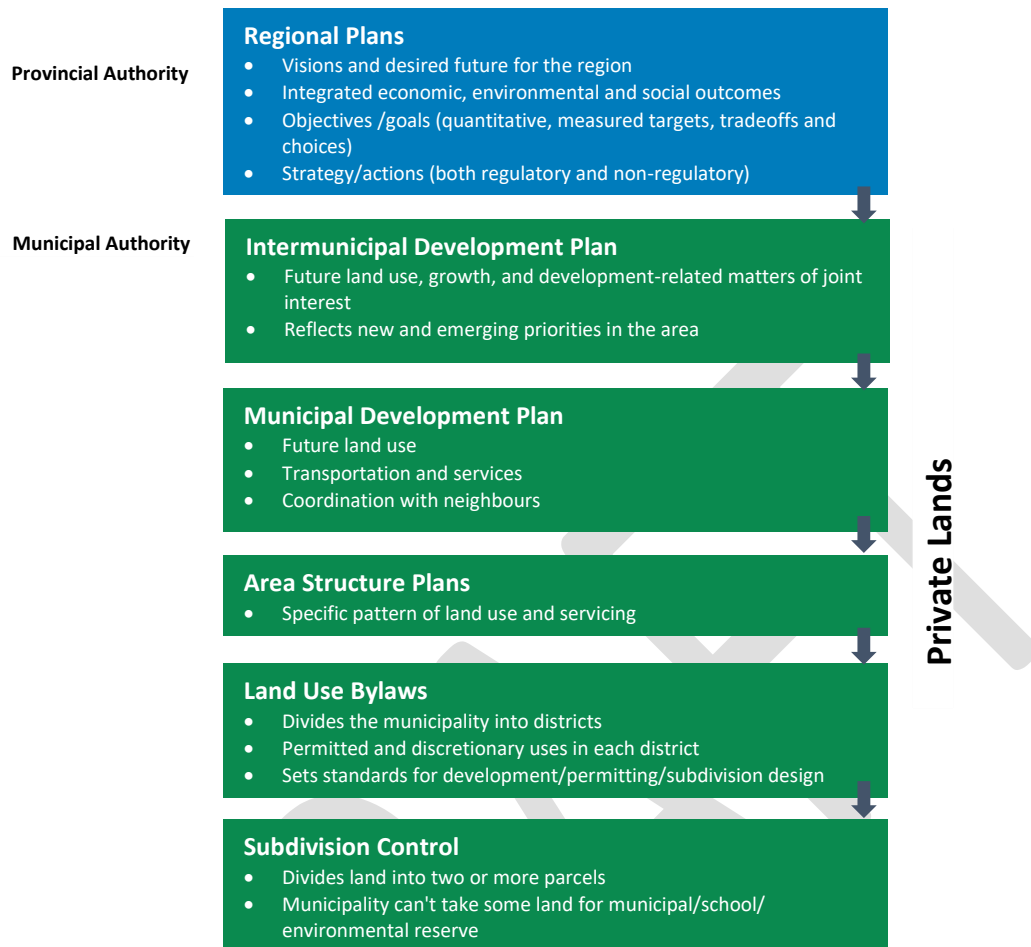
In 2024, the Town and ISL Engineering and Land Services (ISL) initiated a comprehensive MDP update to address current community needs, reflect changes in the community and development trends, and align with recent changes in provincial legislation. The content of this MDP is reflective of the process that was undertaken in 2010, introducing a new template, document structure, and several new and revised policy statements.

## 1.4 GUIDES TO THE PLAN

The Municipal Development Plan provides a broad land use, infrastructure and transportation framework for the future development of the Town. It includes a series of goals, objectives, and policies that support the orderly and economical development of land, encourage the development of a more balanced community, and address the preferred characteristics of future development and the development process within the corporate boundaries of the Town. The Plan attempts to provide for a range of housing opportunities, enhance quality of life, and promote a strong sense of community and complete neighbourhoods. It strikes a balance between the advantages of growth and the preservation of the small, friendly, and safe community known as Athabasca.

The broad provisions of Municipal Development Plans are often implemented through the preparation of Area Structure Plans (ASPs) and/or Area Redevelopment Plans (ARPs), both of which are Statutory Planning documents and are subject to provisions in the Municipal Government Act. All municipal statutory plans are required to be consistent with each other. This implies that all ASPs and ARPs conform to the Municipal Development Plan and, if applicable, any Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDPs).

Figure 1: Statutory and Regulatory Planning Documents



In addition, changes to the Land Use Bylaw (LUB), which regulates development on specific sites, and subdivision approvals, must also be consistent with the Municipal Development Plan.

Development that does not conform to the MDP will not be approved. If a proposed development does not comply with the MDP but is felt to be desirable, an amendment to the Plan may be considered by Council.

For the purposes of land use planning and development, this Plan will serve as the senior municipal land use planning document, and will be implemented, among other ways, through the Town of Athabasca Land Use Bylaw.

Decision making on all subdivision and development permit applications will conform to the spirit and intent of the goals, objectives, and policies of this Plan.

The boundaries of the land use classes described in this Plan's Future Land Use Map are approximate only and might not follow legal surveyed boundaries. Minor adjustments or variances that may be required to land use classes, the location of future roads, quantities or figures shall not require an amendment to this Plan. In addition, Municipal Development Plans should be periodically reviewed to account for changing circumstances and municipal preferences.



## 1.5 VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### 1.5.1 Vision Statement

The Town of Athabasca is a thriving riverside community that celebrates its natural beauty and rich history. Fostering a friendly, inclusive atmosphere for all ages and abilities, the Town retains and attracts diverse businesses and economic prospects, while prioritizing infrastructure that is required for responsible growth. Athabasca is committed to providing unique cultural and recreational amenities that enrich residents' quality of life and sustaining the health of the environment for future generations.

### 1.5.2 Guiding Principles

The Town of Athabasca's approach for managing growth and its land base is captured within this Municipal Development Plan. The approach comprises three philosophical principles, and three planning principles that are embodied in the Municipal Government Act and the Provincial Land Use Policies.

Philosophical Principles	
#1:	Land uses and development activities must respect and maintain the integrity of the Town's land base, which varies throughout the Town.
#2:	Growth must be managed and directed in a compatible, equitable manner that recognizes the diverse needs and aspirations of all Town residents.
#3:	Smart growth principles will be applied in maintaining the integrity of the land base and to promote sustainable development such that the needs of the present generation are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
Planning Principles	
#1:	In carrying out their planning responsibilities, municipalities are encouraged never to lose sight of the rights of individual citizens and landowners. Municipalities must assess the impact of any planning decision on individuals having regard to the purpose statement of the planning legislation.
#2:	Municipalities should establish land use patterns which make efficient use of land, infrastructure, public services and public facilities and which contribute to the development of healthy, safe, and viable communities by encouraging appropriate mixes of all land use types and a wide range of economic opportunities.
#3:	Planning activities are carried out in a fair, open, consistent, and equitable manner.



### 1.5.3 A New Way Forward

Traditionally, developments in Alberta have been characterized by the following features: high consumption of land; low housing density; car dependent land use patterns that are poorly suited for walking and/or cycling; neighbourhood designs that emphasize privacy rather than community; less efficient use of infrastructure and higher costs for new infrastructure; single-family detached houses for a limited range of incomes and demographics; and/or fragmented working and natural lands.

This type of development may not be compatible with best planning practices because it can result in developments that consume the forests, wetlands, and agricultural lands that are necessary to ecosystem health and the long-term prosperity of the Town and region. Developments with these features also have the added disadvantage, which impacts all Town residents, of increasing infrastructure construction and maintenance costs, and discouraging community capacity through patterns of disassociated and disconnected community design.

The Town of Athabasca recognizes that future development within the Town should not follow this traditional pattern to reduce some of the negative social, economic and environmental impacts that this traditional pattern of development can create.

The Town's land management philosophy requires that the MDP consider new directions to guide the Town into the future while still preserving its past. To achieve this balance, the Town recognizes that this MDP must provide policies that facilitate sustainable community development and growth. Community development is multi-faceted, encompassing not just economic imperatives, but also environmental, social and cultural components.

Each of these components is integral to the success of the others: just as environmental stewardship can lead to innovative economic opportunities; economic growth can lead to social and cultural development, thereby improving people's quality of life and the overall desirability of the community as a place to live, work and to recreate.

### 1.5.4 Smart Growth

To facilitate sound planning and development within the Town, the MDP champions principles of Smart Growth. These principles emphasize the value of enhancing quality of life for residents and preserving significant natural areas to ensure that new growth and development in the Town will be socially, fiscally and environmentally responsible well into the future. The Smart Growth themes that are evident in this Plan include:

- Fostering an identity that is unique, vibrant, diverse, and inclusive.
- Nurturing engaged citizens, where community members feel comfortable participating in community life and decision-making.
- Encouraging the redevelopment of existing urban areas through the provision of prescriptive land use policies.
- Maximizing the use of existing infrastructure.
- Encouraging growth in existing urban areas and using investments in infrastructure (such as roads and schools) efficiently.
- Preserving open spaces, natural beauty, and environmentally sensitive areas. Development will respect natural landscape features and thus have higher aesthetic, environmental, and financial value.

## 1.6 GOALS

The Municipal Government Act, R.S.A. 2000 provides considerable municipal discretion concerning the contents of Municipal Development Plans. Beyond the specific requirements of the Act, the Town's Municipal Development Plan shall be used to develop, insofar as is possible, objectives and policies that will achieve the following **goal statements**:

- 1) Facilitate sustainable growth and development in the Town by balancing economic growth, environmental protection, and the preservation of recognized historic resources.
- 2) Encourage economic development and renewal by supporting new and existing economic assets within the community including traditional and regional economic drivers.
- 3) Encourage growth of the Town's economic development capacity by providing opportunities for commercial and industrial development.
- 4) Encourage the development of a variety of transportation choices including safe infrastructure for walking and cycling, in addition to driving, in urban areas and multi-lot residential areas.
- 5) Maintain a high quality and cost-effective infrastructure within the Town.
- 6) Encouraging the use of green buildings and other systems that can save both money and the environment in the long run.
- 7) Develop land in a cost effective and orderly manner.
- 8) Maintain a physical separation between incompatible land uses.
- 9) Establish sustainable and equitable land use planning standards that will minimize adverse impacts on working landscapes<sup>1</sup> and significant natural features for future generations without placing an unreasonable burden on individual landowners.
- 10) Support Smart Growth principles for new development such as compact, efficient, serviced subdivisions adjacent to existing serviced and developed areas.
- 11) Facilitate the provision of diverse housing opportunities so that people of different family types, life stages, and income levels can afford a home in the Town.
- 12) Enhance existing regional and community partnerships and seek new collaborative opportunities.
- 13) Identify and promote significant cultural and heritage resources within the Town.

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<sup>1</sup> Working landscapes means lands that are used for agriculture, forestry or other resource industries.



SECTION 2.0

# Community Profile



## 2.1 REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Town of Athabasca is located 135 km north of Edmonton at the intersecting point of major transportation routes and near the natural resources of the region.

The features of this regional setting are characterized by the following:

- 1) In the past, the Athabasca Trail connected Fort Edmonton, located at the North Saskatchewan River waterway with Athabasca Landing located at the Athabasca River. Both major water courses have substantially contributed to the development of early settlement – both native and non-native – even before roads and railways were built.
- 2) The arrival of railways in Western Canada took place first in an easterly-westerly direction, and then in a northward-southward direction, with extension from Edmonton to the Town of Athabasca.
- 3) The steadily increasing demand for development of natural resources beyond the agricultural basis has also been focused on the Athabasca area during the last two decades. The fact that the Town of Athabasca is located halfway between the Wabasca area and Alberta's Industrial Heartland, means that the community will, in the future, play an even more significant role in the growth of this part of Alberta.
- 4) The economic map of Alberta shows that, during the entire history of development of Alberta (until recent times), most of the urban growth was concentrated in the area located south of the Yellowhead Highway. This includes the cities of Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, and Lethbridge. Despite the continuous growth of the above urban centres, the major investments for the expansion of the resource areas are located north of the Yellowhead Highway. Athabasca is again located at the intersecting point of the northerly direction of this urban growth and the corridor between Cold Lake and Peace River.



## 2.2 COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

### 2.2.1 Incorporation History

Athabasca Landing was incorporated as a village on May 18, 1905, and later as a Town on September 19, 1911. On August 4, 1913, the Town of Athabasca Landing changed its name to the Town of Athabasca. Between 1901 and 2021, the community has grown from 268 to 2,759 residents.

### 2.2.2 Athabasca Today

Today, the Town is still a centre for agriculture, resource extraction and forestry industries. It has developed into a major service centre for the region offering a broad range of healthcare, governmental, educational, entertainment, and recreational and social services to residents of the community and the surrounding areas.

### 2.2.3 Population

#### Historical Population Growth

Table 1 presents Athabasca's population history according to federal census results for the 50 years prior to 2021, including percentage changes and compound annual growth rates (CAGR). Overall, the population of the Town has increased by approximately 56% over the period between 1971 and 2021. This equals a 50-year compound annual growth rate of 0.9%.

Table 1: Town of Athabasca Population History, 1971–2021

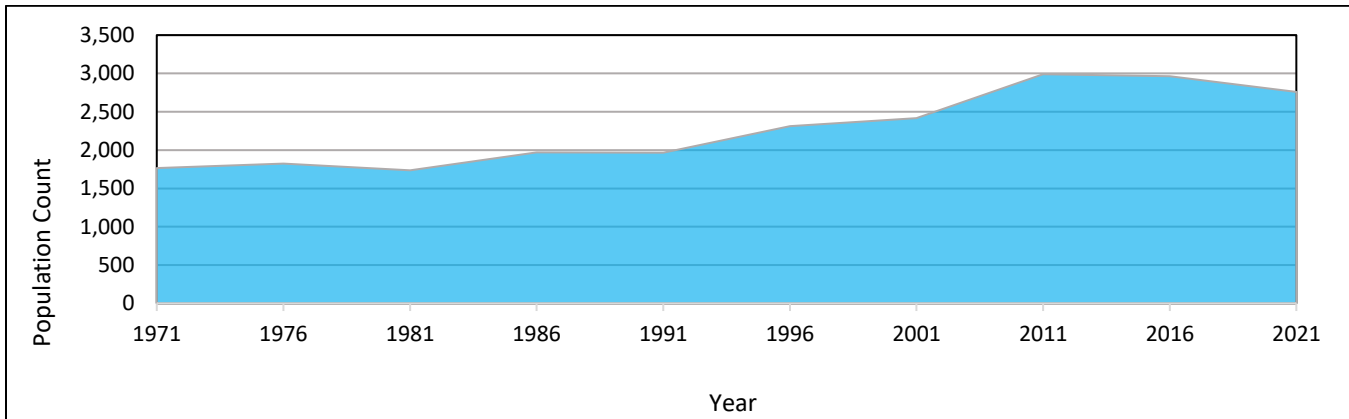
Year	Original Population	Adjusted Population <sup>2</sup>	Percentage Change (%)	Compound Annual Growth Rate (%)
1971	1,765	—	13.8	2.6%
1976	1,759	1,823	-0.3	-0.1%
1981	1,731	1,737	-5.0	-1.0%
1986	1,970	—	13.4	2.5%
1991	1,965	—	-0.3	-0.1%
1996	2,313	—	17.7	3.3%
2001	2,415	—	4.4	0.9%
2006	2,575	2,580	6.6	1.3%
2011	2,990	—	15.9	3.0%
2016	2,965	—	-0.8	-0.2%
2021	2,759	—	-6.9	-1.4%

Source: Statistics Canada (1971–2021) as compiled by ISL Engineering and Land Services

Figure 2 illustrates the Town's historical population growth as presented in Table 1 above.

<sup>2</sup> Adjusted due to municipal boundary changes that occurred between federal censuses.

Figure 2: Town of Athabasca Population History, 1971–2021



Source: Statistics Canada (1971–2021) as compiled by ISL Engineering and Land Services

### Population Projections

Three population growth scenarios were prepared based on Athabasca's 50-year historical CAGR of 0.9%. The low growth scenario assumes a CAGR of 0.4%, the medium (or status quo) growth scenario carries forward the historical CAGR of 0.9%, and the high growth scenario assumes a CAGR of 1.4%; these scenarios are presented in Table 2. In the low growth scenario, Athabasca's population is estimated to increase by 24% to 3,423 in 2075. The medium growth scenario estimates a 62% increase to 4,476 by 2075. Under the high growth scenario, Athabasca's population is estimated to increase by 112% to 5,845.

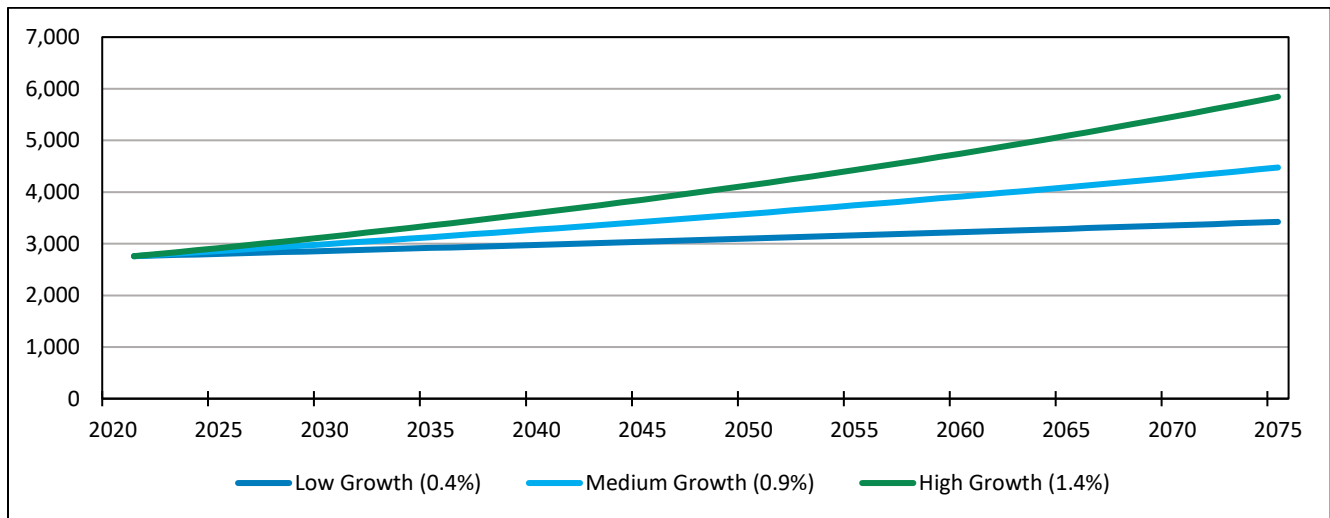
Table 2: Town of Athabasca Population Projections, 2021–2075

Year	Low Growth (0.4%)	Medium Growth (0.9%)	High Growth (1.4%)
2021	2,759	2,759	2,759
2025	2,803	2,860	2,917
2030	2,860	2,991	3,127
2035	2,918	3,128	3,352
2040	2,976	3,271	3,593
2045	3,036	3,421	3,852
2050	3,098	3,578	4,129
2055	3,160	3,742	4,426
2060	3,224	3,913	4,745
2065	3,289	4,092	5,087
2070	3,355	4,280	5,453
2075	3,423	4,476	5,845

Source: ISL Engineering and Land Services

Figure 3 illustrates the projected population growth of the Town of Athabasca according to the three population growth scenarios presented in Table 2 above.

Figure 3: Town of Athabasca Population Projections, 2021–2075



Source: ISL Engineering and Land Services

### 2.2.4 Demographics

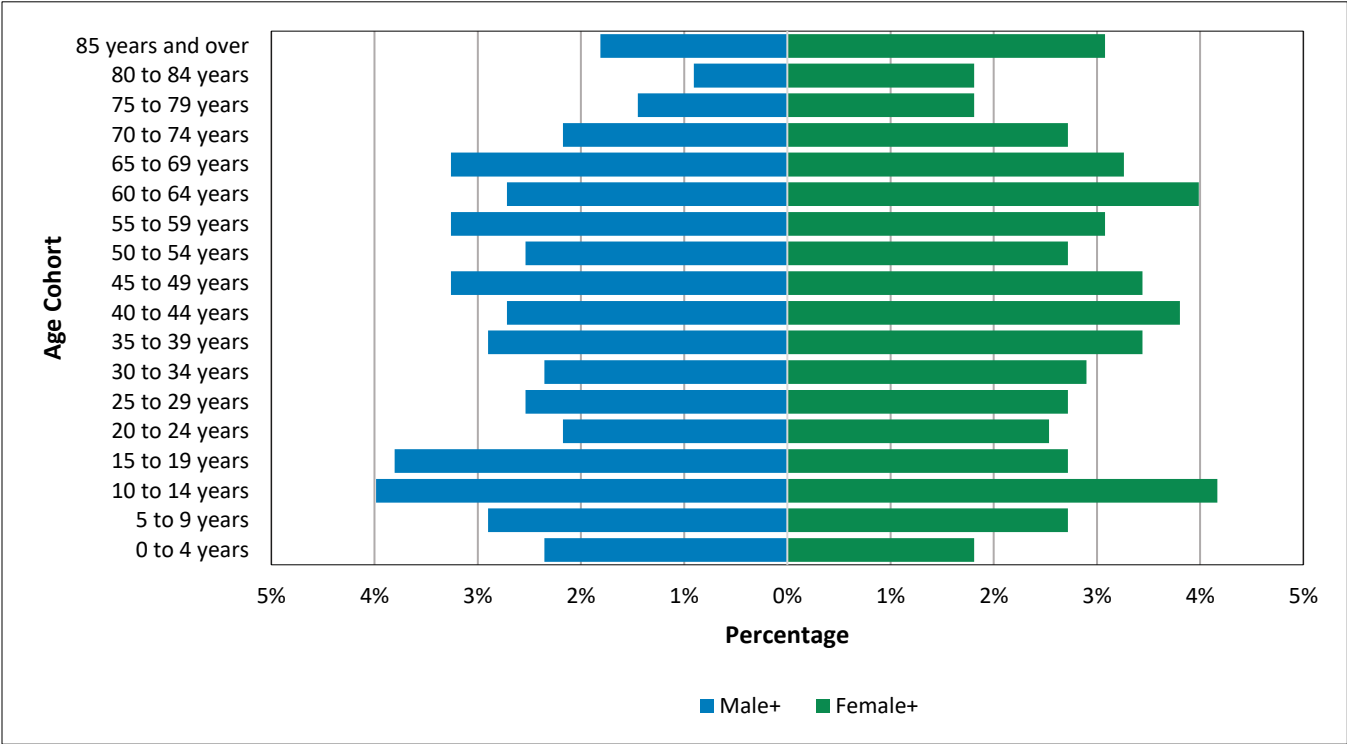
#### Age

In 2021, the median age of Town residents was 42.8, which was slightly older than the median age of the population for Alberta as a whole, at 40.8.

The population pyramid of Athabasca shows a smaller proportion of young people in the 0-4 age cohort compared to the 5-9 age cohort, demonstrating that less children were born in the community in 2021 than the five years prior.

It should also be noted that the Town has a significant proportion of older residents: 22.1% of residents are over the age of 65.

Figure 4: Population Pyramid for the Town of Athabasca



Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Federal Census of Population



## Education

The Town of Athabasca offers comprehensive educational opportunities at the elementary, secondary and adult level. Elementary school students attend Whispering Hills Primary School (kindergarten to grade 3), Landing Trail Intermediate School (grade 4 – grade 6), and Edwin Parr Composite High School (grade 7 – grade 12), administered by the Aspen View Regional Division #19.

Athabasca University has an international reputation for distance education. With more than 375 staff, Athabasca University offers several undergraduate degree programs and credit transfer arrangements can be made to and from other institutions. The campus in Athabasca includes a library, archives, daycare centre, recreation area, and hosts events such as films, seminars, workshops, and cultural activities. Athabasca is also part of the Northern Lakes College service area.

The following chart details the level of educational attainment in the Town, which provides insight into the type of workforce present in the region. Over half of all Athabasca residents (52%) have some form of post-secondary education.

**Table 3: Highest Level of Education for Population Aged 15+**

	Number of residents	Percentage (%)
No certificate; diploma or degree	360	17.7%
High school certificate or equivalent	615	30.3%
Post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree	1,055	52.0%
<b>Total number of residents aged 15+</b>	<b>2,030</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Federal Census of Population

## Income

In 2020, the median income for all private households in the Town of Athabasca was \$81,000, which was lower than the Provincial median of \$96,000.

**Table 4: Income for All Private Households (Total = 1,155)**

Income Range	Number of Households (#)	Percentage of Total Households (#)
< \$19 999	40	3.5%
\$20 000 – \$39 999	200	17.3%
\$40 000 – \$59 999	180	15.6%
\$60 000 – \$79 999	150	13.0%
\$80 000 – \$99 999	110	9.5%
> \$100 000	470	40.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,150*</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Federal Census of Population

\*Numbers may not add up due to rounding by Statistics Canada

## Housing

In 2021, there were a total of 1,155 dwellings in the Town of Athabasca, 58.0% of which were occupied by owners as opposed to renters. The majority of the housing inventory was made up of single-detached houses (68.0%), followed by apartments in a building with less than 5 storeys (15.6%). The average household size was 2.3 persons, which was slightly lower than the Alberta average of 2.6. Statistics Canada estimates that 8.3% of Athabasca residents were in core housing need<sup>3</sup>.

**Table 5: Housing Inventory**

Housing Type	Number of Dwellings (#)	Percentage of Total Dwellings (%)
Single-detached houses	785	68.0%
Semi-detached houses	100	8.7%
Row houses	60	5.2%
Apartment in a flat or duplex	20	1.7%
Apartment in a building with < 5 storeys	180	15.6%
Movable dwelling	15	1.3%
Total	1,160*	100.0%

Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Federal Census of Population

\*Numbers may not add up due to rounding by Statistics Canada

## Economics and Employment

The economy of the Athabasca region is based on agriculture, natural gas, forestry and, more recently, tourism. Historically, the primary economic activity of the Athabasca area was agriculture, although its importance has decreased over the last few decades.

The area is well suited to forage production. Barley is the main grain crop, but significant acreages of wheat, oats, and rapeseed are also grown. Beef cattle is the major livestock industry in the area, but there are also a number of specialized dairy, sheep, swine, and beef feed lot operations.

The development of gas fields in the area has had a profound impact on the economy in recent years. As the demand for natural gas stabilizes, it is expected this industry will increase in the Athabasca region, along with the potential for the development of oil sands activity north of Athabasca.

Timber has been and continues to be a major source of employment in the Athabasca area. Currently, the major areas are Smith, Calling Lake, and Wandering River, all in the northern portion of the Athabasca trading area. In addition, there are many small lumber mills in the immediate area which are operated by farmers on a part-time basis.

The local retail/service sectors have also grown significantly in the past five years in response to developments within these other industry sectors.

<sup>3</sup> Core housing need refers to whether a private household's housing falls below at least one of the indicator thresholds for housing adequacy, affordability or suitability, and would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable (attains all three housing indicator thresholds).

In 2020, the top three largest industry sectors in the Town were Retail Trade (15.2%), Educational Services (14.4%), and Health Care and Social Assistance (14.4%), representing a combined 44.0% of employed individuals in the labour force who are aged 15 and older.

When looking at where employed individuals in the labour force who were aged 15 and older commute to work, Statistics Canada estimated that approximately 80.0% commuted within the Town, 12.0% commuted to another municipality within the same census division<sup>4</sup>, 7.2% commuted elsewhere in Alberta, and 1.2% commuted to another Canadian Province.

### 2.2.5 Environment

#### General

The Town of Athabasca is located within the Boreal forest natural region. This region consists of broad lowland plains and extensive hill systems. The bedrock is buried deeply beneath glacial deposits and outcrops occur only rarely along major stream valleys. More specifically the Town is located within the Boreal Plain terrestrial ecozone. The landscape in this particular region is covered almost entirely by trees, with aspen and balsam poplar dominating the evergreens<sup>5</sup>. Other commonly found tree types include black and white spruce and jackpine.<sup>6</sup> Physiographical characteristics of the area include plains and some foothills. The soil type for this ecozone is luvisolic; moraine, and/or lacustrine.

#### Topography

The Town of Athabasca is located within the Athabasca River valley. Also located within the Town are the valleys of the Tawatinaw River and the Muskeg Creek. Both water bodies join the Athabasca River within the town boundary. The terrain generally slopes towards the Athabasca River, however within the Tawatinaw and Muskeg valleys, the terrain slopes toward these water bodies. There are a number of intersecting drainage channels and gullies within the Town boundary which carry runoff to Muskeg Creek and the Tawatinaw and Athabasca Rivers, which create a complex mix of steeply sloped topography within the original Town site and to the south. Outside these valley walls, the uplands are considerably flatter and poorly drained.

The elevation within the Town ranges from approximately 618.5 m on the south side of the Athabasca River to 571.0 m on the north side. The nominal elevation for the Athabasca River is approximately 509.0 metres, which is the lowest point in the Town. Therefore, the total relief within the Town Limits exceeds 100 m which results in steep slopes that create significant challenges for drainage (high velocities and potential for erosion).

#### Environmentally Significant Areas

Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs) represent important, useful and often sensitive features of the landscape. As an integral component of sustainable development strategies, these areas provide long-term benefits to the community and region by maintaining ecological processes and by providing useful products.

<sup>4</sup> Census division (CD) is the general term for provincially legislated areas of neighbouring municipalities that are joined together for the purposes of regional planning and managing common services. The Town of Athabasca is part of CD No. 13, which also contains Westlock, Barrhead, Onoway, Mayerthorpe, and Whitecourt, in addition to numerous villages and summer villages.

<sup>5</sup> "The Boreal Forest Region." Retrieved from: The Boreal Forest, <http://www.abheritage.ca/abnature/boreal/boreal.htm> On: 18-March-2010

<sup>6</sup> Borneuf, D. 1973. "Hydrology of the Tawatinaw Area." Research Council of Alberta Report 72-11.

The following criteria are used by the Province to determine environmental significance.

<b>Criterion 1:</b>	Areas that contain elements of conservation concern
<b>Criterion 2:</b>	Areas that contain rare or unique landforms
<b>Criterion 3:</b>	Areas that contain habitat for local species
<b>Criterion 4:</b>	Areas that contain important wildlife habitat
<b>Criterion 5:</b>	Riparian areas
<b>Criterion 6:</b>	Large natural areas
<b>Criterion 7:</b>	Sites of recognized significance

There are three (3) areas within the Town that are designated as ESA. They are described as **ESA 692**, **ESA 527** and **ESA 525**. Information about the ESA's is depicted in the following table.

**Table 6: Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA)**

Area	ESA ID #	Location	Size	Level of Significance
1	692	Generally the land adjacent to the Athabasca River	667295.3 ha	National
2	572	Tawatinaw River Valley Area	64.25 ha	Provincial
3	525	NE 7-66-22-W4 and the S½ of 7-66-22-W4	459.4 ha	Provincial

### Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas in Alberta are lands that are managed by the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA). The purpose of these lands and the ACA is to manage important wildlife and/or fisheries habitat resources on public and private lands in order to conserve, protect, enhance and provide access to these habitat resources. Conservation Areas may include lands which have been directly purchased, donated, or leased to the ACA and lands affected by a Conservation Easement in which the ACA has an interest. All lands identified within the Conservation Site database are available for **public use**, whether privately owned by the Alberta Conservation Association or its partners, or public lands managed by ACA on behalf of the Crown<sup>7</sup>.

There are currently zero (0) recognized Conservation Areas within the Town of Athabasca.

### 2.2.6 Industry

Except for small time periods during its history, the Town has experienced minimal growth. Even after the arrival of Athabasca University, the Town saw redevelopment of existing businesses, but little growth occurred.

In December 1990, construction began on the Alberta Pacific (Alpac) Pulp Mill. As a result of this single project alone, the community grew 20% in four years. However, since that time, there has been little additional growth in population and small increases in the industrial and commercial base – rather, there was first a retrenchment of the community within the context of the larger population and economic base, and then the slow, steady growth from that larger base.

<sup>7</sup> "Land Management Program Agreement". Retrieved from: [http://www.ab-conservation.com/go/tasks/sites/default/assets/File/pdfs/02AboutUs/02RolesandResponsibilities/Land\\_Management\\_Program\\_Agreement.pdf](http://www.ab-conservation.com/go/tasks/sites/default/assets/File/pdfs/02AboutUs/02RolesandResponsibilities/Land_Management_Program_Agreement.pdf). On: 22 December 2009.



The entire Alpac proposal – specifically the Paper Mill – has not been developed, and the early forecasts of huge numbers of jobs (either in Alpac operations or in industries and businesses serving Alpac) and therefore new residents of the community became much smaller numbers when the impact of Alpac settled out. However, Alpac has meant that marginal economic endeavours, be they trucking operations or drug stores, have a larger potential clientele and therefore better economic prospects. Alpac has also meant that there are many more businesses than there would have been without Alpac.

The impact on the Town was varied. There was considerable additional business in the Town's downtown core, and that core spread a bit into the surrounding residential area. New commercial development expanded towards the east but did not grow within the Town or towards the Highway accesses to the west or south. Industrial development within the Town peaked during Alpac construction. There are, however, now still lots available in the Town's industrial subdivision. As far as residential development is concerned, there was considerable growth in the south and eastern portions of the Town, but even today, there are still large areas available for development within the Town – particularly, in the form of manufactured homes.

The Town must reinforce long-range planning. This will allow the Town to define the gap between short-term needs and long-term advantages, in relation to the essential business, commercial, service, tourism, and residential growth in the Town. Servicing of appropriate industrial and commercial lots and keeping residential costs as low as possible will be key factors in ensuring public confidence in the Town as a progressive body, undertaking the necessary preparations for long-term economic development.

Mention also needs to be made of the number of tourism destination projects that are currently on the drawing board: the riverfront development plan, the TransCanada Trail development that runs through the Town's south, north, east, and west side, Heritage Site development, beautification projects, revitalization of the downtown core, and the adoption of the abandoned railway line into a possible recreational corridor, amongst others. The maturation of these developments will also lead to a new and expanded support services. The Town will be focussing on tourism as a member of the Alberta North Tourism Destination Region.

It is important to note that some of the positive factors influencing growth for the Town of Athabasca are the basic agricultural industry; the beautiful community setting in which the Town is located, educational and professional employment opportunities as well as the people who live in the Town.

It is obvious that major growth for the Town and the Region will continue to occur. Accordingly, the Town must be prepared for such growth in order to ensure the maximum potential is realized while still maintaining the quality of life already being experienced in the Town. The Town plans to position itself as the hub/service centre of a growing area. Thus, a strategic land use plan is critical.

### 2.2.7 Services

The information below summarizes the current municipal servicing systems within the Town.

#### Waterworks System

The Town of Athabasca's water system consists of:

- Reservoirs and Pumphouses (3)
- Rupert Reservoir and Pumphouse
- Cornwall Reservoir and Pumphouse
- University Reservoir and Pumphouse
- Water Distribution System which consists of five pressure zones

Raw water is drawn from the Athabasca River and is transported to a raw water wet well located at the water treatment plant.

The Town of Athabasca purchases water from the Athabasca Regional Water Services Commission, who operates a water treatment plan in Athabasca.

### Sanitary Sewer System

The Town's existing sanitary sewer system consists of:

- **A collection system** that is comprised primarily of 200 mm laterals, and trunk mains that range in size from 200 mm to 675 mm in diameter. The system is divided into two major catchments, one serviced by a lift station, and the other by a trunk sewer main. The majority of the Town flows toward the existing lift station and is transported to the sewage lagoon by a 200 mm diameter forcemain.
- **One forcemain and two lift stations**
- **An aerated lagoon** comprised of three cells. Based on the existing Wastewater Approval, the cells consist of the following:
  - One complete mix cell (2 days retention time)
  - One partial mix cell, mechanically aerated cell (25 days retention time)
  - One storage cell (5 days retention time)

The Master Services Plan prepared in 2007 indicates that some upgrading of this system will be required to meet provincial requirements. More recently, the 2016 Infrastructure Study (Tagish Engineering Ltd.) identifies available capacities and timelines for future development for each of the trunk mains.

### Stormwater Management System

The function of the storm drainage system is to collect surface-water runoff generated in an urban area, and to convey it safely to a receiving water course in a manner that minimizes the disruption to land uses and impacts to the environment. The Town's storm water management system includes the "minor" drainage system, a network of pipes, manholes, and catchbasins that carries most of the runoff from streets and other surfaces to the receiving stream, and the "major" drainage system, which consists of the street surfaces, ditches, and swales that carry the excess runoff beyond the capacity of the minor system, in a major storm event. In conjunction with the conveyance system, stormwater management facilities (storage ponds) are generally used in most modern stormwater drainage systems to control the rate of flow and to minimize the potential downstream impacts.

The developed areas within the Town boundary rely primarily on surface drainage facilities (roadways and paved surfaces, drainage swales, and culverts), which discharge into nearby ditches and drainage channels that eventually flow to the Athabasca River.

Sections of storm sewer exist in the following areas:

- Cornwall Place Subdivision
- Hees Estates Subdivision
- Downtown Athabasca
- 41 Avenue between 53 and 54 Streets
- Athabasca University contains a private storm sewer system which drains to a stormwater management pond on the University grounds, and then to Muskeg Creek.

### Transportation

A proposed roadway network system was prepared in 2007 as part of the Town's Master Services Plan. As development plans for these areas are finalized and area structure plans are developed, detailed traffic impact assessments should be completed to ensure that the collector road network will not exceed capacity. More recently, the 2016 Infrastructure Study (Tagish Engineering Ltd.) indicates that a definite grid of minor arterial and local collector roads should be planned for to avoid future congestion as the community grows.

A traffic impact assessment should be completed for each development area as development plans are finalized. These studies should address the development area as a whole and evaluate the impact of each stage of development. In addition, these studies should examine the long-term impacts to the existing roadway network and intersections and include consideration for intersection spacing and access management.

### Natural Gas

Apex Utilities and Fortis Alberta provide gas and power services to Town residents.

### Solid Waste Management

Solid Waste Management Services are provided by the Athabasca Regional Waste Management Services Commission. Residential waste is collected at the curbside every week. While the collection of solid waste from commercial and industrial properties is the responsibility of the land owner. All solid waste is taken to a regional transfer station where it is collected and taken to the regional landfill.

The Town also provides a recycling service that is contracted through Athabasca Regional Waste Management Services.





## SECTION 3.0

# Policies



## 3.1 LAND USE

### Objectives

- Allocate sufficient land for future residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and parks and open space uses
- Collaborate with interested parties to invest in and grow the Town
- Approve comprehensive land use plans that provide necessary information to make informed land development decisions
- Preserve historically significant built features and cultural landscapes and views
- Celebrate important historic resources and community heritage

#### 3.1.1 General

- 1) The Town will encourage development to conform to the Future Land Use Concept (**Appendix A**) and the policies within this Plan.
- 2) The Town will encourage and engage private developers to participate in residential, commercial industrial, and institutional development.
- 3) The Town will actively seek out industries and businesses that could locate in the Town.
- 4) The Town will encourage the expansion and diversification of existing commercial and industrial uses, where appropriate.
- 5) The Town will require preparation of an area structure plan prior to approving any new development within future residential, commercial, industrial, or institutional areas when the development proposes:
  - (a) Significant changes to the land uses identified in the Future Development Concept; or
  - (b) New municipal infrastructure or significant upgrades to existing municipal infrastructure (i.e., roads, water, wastewater, or stormwater management).
- 6) The Town may require preparation of an area structure plan to address potential cumulative impacts on current or future land uses.
- 7) The Town may require preparation of an area redevelopment plan prior to approving redevelopment that proposes significant changes to the planned scale, intensity, or density of an existing neighbourhood.
- 8) The Town will establish a terms of reference for area structure plans, area redevelopment plans, outline plans/development concepts, and other studies or assessments that may be required by the Town, in addition to submission requirements for land development applications and amendments.
- 9) The Town will require development applications for lands with an overarching statutory plan (i.e., area structure plan or area redevelopment plan) to comply with the intent of the plan, as applicable.
- 10) The Town will discourage successive subdivision applications or stages until the majority of lots in previous stages have been issued development permits, unless otherwise deemed appropriate by the Town.
- 11) The Town will discourage development of land that is separated from developed areas (i.e., “leapfrog” development) to mitigate costs associated with unfeasible servicing connections.

- 12) Notwithstanding Policy 8 above, the Town may consider development proposals adjacent to existing approved plans when:
- (a) servicing connections exist and are available on the site or at a property line adjacent to the site;
  - (b) adequate capacity exists to service proposed development in a manner that is consistent with the Town's Master Services Plan; and
  - (c) where it is demonstrated that the overall development pattern is complementary with adjacent land uses and infrastructure.
- 13) The Town will implement appropriate recommendations from provincial and regional plans to support and protect agricultural land and operations from premature fragmentation and conversion.
- 14) The Town will discourage further subdivision of fragmented parcels, unless the fragmentation was caused by public roadways, railways, rivers, or creeks.
- 15) If a fragmented parcel is in a remote location that has legal access to a public roadway, but that roadway is undeveloped or substandard and therefore requires construction or extensive upgrading, the municipality may refuse an application to further subdivide that parcel if:
- (a) in the opinion of the municipality, the construction and maintenance of the roadway would be premature to serve a greater or long-term public interest; and
  - (b) the municipality shall maintain the roadway on completion of its construction or upgrading.



### 3.1.2 Residential

#### Objectives

- Provide sufficient land to meet future residential and housing needs
- Achieve an appropriate mix of housing types and styles
- Develop orderly and efficient residential neighbourhoods that foster community pride
- Minimize costs associated with residential development

- 1) The Town will direct residential development to areas designated “Residential” on the Future Land Use Concept.
- 2) The Town will encourage rehabilitation of older, structurally sound housing units, where feasible.
- 3) The Town will encourage development of innovative housing including new building forms, design, and construction techniques.
- 4) The Town will encourage a diverse housing mix within existing, developing, and newly planned neighbourhoods.
- 5) In cooperation with developers and other government agencies, the Town will aim to provide:
  - (a) a range of dwelling and lot sizes;
  - (b) a variety of housing types;
  - (c) an adequate supply of rental units;
  - (d) social housing to meet special housing needs in the community; and
  - (e) affordable non-market housing to meet the needs of the community.
- 6) The Town will require the preparation and approval of an Area Structure Plan or Outline Plan/Development Concept prior to approving new residential neighbourhoods. Costs associated with preparing new plans or amendments to existing plans, and costs incurred by the Town to review applications for new plans and amendments of existing plans are the responsibility of the applicant.
- 7) The Town will encourage a range of housing types and compatible housing types to be sited adjacent to one another.
- 8) The Town will require the development of multi-ways or coordinated walkway and bikeway systems in new residential areas, linking them to recreation areas and facilities where appropriate. The rights-of-way for these multi-ways shall be provided at the time of subdivision.
- 9) The Town will encourage subdivision and site planning techniques in residential areas to use building forms, landscaping features, etc., to reduce noise from railways and major roadways, enhance neighbourhood security, and provide visual privacy.
- 10) The Town will encourage an overall residential density of approximately 30 persons per net residential hectare for new residential developments but may consider a higher density threshold in specific circumstances.
- 11) The Town will encourage all new or amended residential area structure plans to have a residential housing mix of 80% low and medium density residential and 20% high density residential. The Town may approve a larger percentage of high density residential if the applicant can demonstrate the following:
  - (a) that the development can be serviced in a manner that is consistent with the Town’s Master Services Plan;

- (b) that the overall development pattern is complementary to adjacent land uses and infrastructure;
  - (c) that the development will provide a percentage of social and/or affordable housing; and
  - (d) that the development will provide a higher percentage of public amenity areas, including but not limited to, park areas, multi-ways, recreation amenities and/or public art.
- 12) The Town will encourage high-density sites to be located adjacent to arterial or collector roads.
  - 13) The Town may require new residential developments to provide buffers from potential negative impacts of adjacent land uses.
  - 14) The Town will encourage a residential density of up to 50 units per net residential hectare for medium density ground-oriented residential development.
  - 15) The Town will encourage a residential density of up to 100 units per net residential hectare for high density residential developments. The Town may more than 100 dwelling units if the developer can demonstrate the following(a)that the development can be serviced in a manner that is consistent with the Town’s Master Services Plan;
    - (a) that the overall development pattern is complementary to adjacent land uses and infrastructure;
    - (b) that the development will provide a percentage of social and/or affordable housing; and
    - (c) that the development will provide a higher percentage of public amenity areas, including but not limited to, park areas, multi-ways, recreation amenities and/or public art.
  - 16) The Town will encourage medium density ground-oriented residential development in new neighbourhoods to increase the diversity of housing types. Medium density residential sites should be spread throughout multiple neighbourhoods rather than being concentrated in a single area.
  - 17) The Town will encourage low density residential sites to incorporate design features that foster quiet, low traffic areas, and encourage network connectivity through the use of sidewalks and multi-ways.
  - 18) The Town will consider the design and development of complete neighbourhoods as part of the evaluation criteria for all new multi-lot residential developments.





### 3.1.3 Commercial

#### Objectives

- Provide an adequate supply of competitively priced commercial land to achieve the Town's commercial development potential
- Encourage local and regional commercial growth
- The Town will encourage a balanced land use strategy that sees commercial development within the downtown, along the highway, and low intensity commercial uses in neighbourhoods

- 1) The Town will direct commercial development to areas designated "Commercial" on the Future Land Use Concept.
- 2) The Town will collaborate with local business groups to promote the municipality as an optimal place to live and establish business.
- 3) The Town will encourage employers and employees to use modes of active transportation and alternative parking areas to allow customers better access to retail frontages and service outlets.
- 4) The Town will consider the need to buffer potential negative impacts of Highway Commercial development from adjacent uses.
- 5) The Town will encourage rehabilitation of commercial buildings, which may involve structural repairs, cleaning, painting, or installing decorative features such as awnings, canopies, or shutters, or installing street furniture such as benches and planters.
- 6) The Town may consider commercial uses and developments in residential neighbourhoods when they are compatible with residential uses.

### 3.1.4 Industrial

#### Objectives

- Provide an adequate supply of competitively priced industrial land to achieve the Town's industrial development potential
- Encourage local and regional industrial growth
- Prioritize the site design and visual appearance of industrial development to be compatible with surrounding land uses

- 1) The Town will direct industrial development to areas designated "Industrial" on the Future Land Use Concept.
- 2) The Town will prohibit non-industrial uses from being developed within industrial land use districts, except for those allowed in the Land Use Bylaw.
- 3) The Town will prohibit heavy industrial development within the Town's boundary.
- 4) The Town will encourage concentrated industrial growth to generate a compact land use pattern that enables efficient, logical, and sustainable use and extension of municipal servicing.
- 5) The Town will require future industrial developments to be connected to a paved road network. New industrial developments should have quick and direct links to truck routes and highways, where possible.

- 6) The Town may encourage the gradual relocation of existing industrial uses to the industrial area.

### 3.1.5 Institutional

#### Objectives

- Provide adequate public and quasi-public facilities to meet the Town's needs
- Provide access to small- and large-scale recreation opportunities throughout the community
- Minimize costs associated with recreational amenities and developments
- Provide, support, and promote a diverse range of cultural opportunities and initiatives
- Maximize the use of existing recreational amenities and facilities
- Plan for the Town's future recreational and tourism needs
- Collaborate with partners to encourage local and regional tourism

- 1) The Town will direct the development of recreation facilities and institutional uses (e.g., schools, health care facilities, arenas, etc.) to areas designated "Institutional" on the Future Land Use Concept.
- 2) The Town will encourage and promote the development of tourist facilities.
- 3) The Town will collaborate with area tourism groups, municipal neighbours, and tourism zones to promote local and regional tourism connections and opportunities.
- 4) The Town will consult with regional partners and affected school boards to identify school requirements related to the allocation of Municipal Reserve land.
- 5) The Town may require proposed subdivisions and developments in significant cultural landscapes to preserve recognized, historically significant views.
- 6) The Town will encourage the utilization and/or development of cultural, historic, and recreational resources to promote tourism, where appropriate.
- 7) The Town will encourage effective maintenance of public and quasi-public facilities through annual assessments and necessary works, subject to annual budgets.
- 8) The Town will continue to support improvements and upgrades to existing cultural facilities, including but not limited to the library, museum, archives, and other cultural facilities.
- 9) The Town will encourage the use of historic resources to promote tourism, where appropriate.
- 10) The Town will support the activities of community clubs, sports clubs, cultural and heritage societies, churches, schools, individuals, etc. through funding, policy development, and facility development.
- 11) The Town will support efforts to preserve and protect historic and cultural resources.
- 12) The Town may require Heritage Resource Impact Assessments to be included with proposed subdivision and development applications in locations where the proposal may impact significant cultural landscapes.
- 13) The Town will require all recreation areas and facilities to have clearly defined accesses that are visible and easily accessible by the public.
- 14) The Town will complete a community recreation needs assessment to identify potential future recreation facilities, amenities and services within the community.



- 15) The Town will encourage subdivision and development for recreational purposes to address the following design principles:
  - (a) the density of development shall be directly related to the development capability of the land resource;
  - (b) the design shall be directly related to the site's topography, vegetation, soil, and drainage characteristics. In this regard, the development proposal shall include a detailed analysis of the environmental constraints of the site and the means by which the proposal will protect and harmonize with the natural environment;
  - (c) the design shall protect wildlife habitat; and
  - (d) the design shall protect, maintain and re-establish (where necessary) vegetative cover, and maximize the quality of the natural features.
- 16) The Town will encourage development of a multi-use recreation areas in the centre of new neighbourhoods, preferably adjacent to a school site and within proximity to the majority of residential dwellings.
- 17) The Town will encourage development of attractive, highly accessible, well-maintained recreation areas and facilities that offer adequate space for activities, convenience for users, and variety in terms of size, location, natural features and development potential.
- 18) The Town will encourage optimal utilization of recreation areas and facilities.
- 19) The Town may require applicants of a proposed recreational facility or amenity to identify all municipal costs associated with the development. The assignment of these costs shall be included in an agreement to be entered into as a condition of subdivision approval or the issuance of a development permit. Normally, however, all development servicing costs associated with the development will be carried by the proponent.
- 20) The Town will continue to support development of a network of recreation areas at various scales including facilities for community-wide use, neighbourhood use, and for pre-schoolers (e.g., tot lots).
- 21) During the term of this MDP, growth in the SE- 19-66-22 W4 and NE 18-66-22-W4 will be generally limited to Athabasca University, University related development, and recreational uses only.



### 3.1.6 Parks and Open Space

#### Objectives

- Provide sufficient land to meet future recreation and open space needs
- Provide an active multi-way network that connects the Town's amenities and neighbourhoods and provides the Town with an additional recreation facility

- 1) The Town will direct development of parks and open spaces, including recreational amenities, to areas designated "Parks and Open Space" on the Future Land Use Concept.
- 2) The Town may require subdivision applicants to provide 10% of developable land as Municipal Reserve in accordance with the Municipal Government Act.
- 3) The Town may require Municipal Reserve land as an open space buffer of sufficient size and composition to provide a visual and noise barrier between disparate land uses.
- 4) The Town will encourage Municipal Reserve dedication to be:
  - (a) concentrated to establish larger parcels on suitable sites rather than smaller sites scattered throughout subdivisions; and
  - (b) evaluated and inventoried with the aim of making the most efficient use of the reserve land
- 5) The Town will encourage landscaping and tree planting to make recreation areas more attractive.
- 6) The Town may require cash-in-lieu of reserve land if the proposed land is too small or in an unfavourable location for the Town's recreational purposes. Cash-in-lieu shall be used in accordance with the Municipal Government Act.
- 7) The Town may consider disposing of existing Municipal Reserve land, subject to Council review of the applicability and effect of such disposition on surrounding land uses, and the area's recreational potential.
- 8) The Town will encourage integration of powerlines and pipeline rights-of-way in future developments as parts of the open space network including multi-way paths or buffers to incompatible land uses, where appropriate.
- 9) The Town may encourage local service clubs and citizen groups to participate in the process of planning new parks and open spaces.

## 3.1.7 Downtown

## Objective

- Establish an attractive and vibrant downtown that provides a mix of land uses and transportation options

- 1) The Town will direct and encourage development of local commercial uses, mixed use, and high density residential to areas within the “Downtown Area Overlay” on the Future Land Use Concept.
- 2) The Town will promote an attractive streetscape in the Downtown area by providing plazas, street furniture and landscaped areas, where possible.
- 3) The Town consider the creation of incentive programs, such as a Façade Improvement Program, to encourage Downtown revitalization.
- 4) The Town will encourage conversion of existing dwellings in the Downtown area to commercial uses.
- 5) The Town will conduct a vacant land inventory for the downtown area, and will encourage the development of these lands in accordance with the Land Use Bylaw.
- 6) The Town will encourage development of vacant lands in the Downtown area in accordance with the Land Use Bylaw.
- 7) The Town will support development and expansion of the Downtown by prioritizing opportunities in the following order:
  - (a) Development of vacant lots and/or redevelopment of commercial properties and buildings.
  - (b) Development of vacant lots and/or redevelopment of commercial and non-conforming uses located in existing commercial districts adjacent to the downtown.
  - (c) Redevelopment of residential land located near the downtown.
- 8) The Town will encourage the development of an attractive pedestrian environment within the Downtown area which may involve:
  - (a) Removing obstructions to pedestrian flow,
  - (b) Considering restaurant and café patios.
  - (c) Providing sufficient sidewalk widths with decorative materials such as brick or stone, and clearly marking pedestrian crosswalks,
  - (d) Developing pedway corridors between streets in the downtown core,
  - (e) Encouraging businesses to provide rear or side entrances to offer access to employee and customer parking areas.
- 9) The Town will require proposed subdivisions and developments in the Downtown area to protect built heritage and enhance the historic significance and character of significant cultural landscapes including: heritage buildings, parks, and viewsapes.





## 3.2 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### Objectives

- Maintain a current understanding of growth, development, and land use needs
- Adequately maintain, upgrade, and expand municipal services

#### 3.2.1 General

- 1) The Town will review and update the Future Development Concept map on an as needed basis to remain reflective of community needs.
- 2) The Town will continue to encourage development of Athabasca as an important regional commercial/human service centre for agricultural and natural resource industries in northern Alberta.
- 3) The Town will only encourage future development in areas that are both reasonable and economically feasible for development.
- 4) The Town will require future development to be based on achievable standards that are within the financial capabilities of the community.
- 5) The Town will encourage the use of building materials, textures, colour, landscaping, and signs to enhance the appearance of Town entrances, including areas along Primary Highways 2 and 55.
- 6) The Town will encourage the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to work with various community groups to sponsor an awareness of crime in Athabasca and adopt a preventive attitude among Town residents.
- 7) The Town may use architectural controls in major developments to promote an aesthetically appealing built environment.
- 8) The Town may limit development of the lands north of the Athabasca River until servicing requirements and costs have been identified.
- 9) The Town will prepare and maintain an inventory of historic structures within the community.
- 10) The Town will encourage the retention and preservation of historic structures and may develop a funding program to provide financial assistance to maintain historic structures.

#### 3.2.2 Municipal Services

- 1) The Town will collaborate with regional partners and appropriate provincial agencies to provide effective protective and emergency services.
- 2) The Town will continue to work with federal and provincial agencies to assess the level of municipal protective/emergency services including fire protection, ambulance, and health services.
- 3) The Town will continue to encourage and support the volunteer fire department through collaboration at regular meetings between Administration and Council, completing regular needs assessments, and considering fundraising and grant opportunities.
- 4) The Town will explore opportunities to collaborate with provincial agencies, not-for-profit groups, and organizations to provide affordable, efficient, diverse, and accessible social and healthcare services to meet the needs of the community and surrounding region.
- 5) The Town will encourage the expansion of social services as needs arise.

### 3.3 ENVIRONMENT

#### Objectives

- Preserve significant ecological sites and environmental features
- Prohibit development in areas with critical development constraints
- Discourage fragmentation of working landscapes

#### 3.3.1 General

- 1) The Town will encourage significant environmental features to be persevered in their natural state.
- 2) The Town will require the preservation of existing vegetation in future subdivisions and developments that contain significant cultural landscapes.
- 3) The Town will encourage the retention of significant tree stands on Town owned land and privately owned land.
- 4) The Town will encourage flood plain and flood prone areas to be kept in their natural state or be used for extensive agricultural uses, where applicable.
- 5) The Town will establish environmental quality targets to inform future development.
- 6) The Town may require an environmental assessment or evaluation for proposed developments that could have an impact on an identified natural or environmentally sensitive feature.
- 7) The Town may require additional reserve land dedication and/or setbacks based on the recommendations of engineering and/or geotechnical studies requested by the Town.
- 8) The Town may consider or require dedication of land as Conservation Reserve as an alternative to Environmental Reserve in accordance with the Municipal Government Act.
- 9) The Town may consider proposals to designate future conservation areas.
- 10) Where Environmental Reserve Lands are not necessary to provide public access to the feature, the Town shall, at the time of subdivision, consider the option of an Environmental Reserve Easement as provided for in the Municipal Government Act.
- 11) The Town may require developers to submit a Cumulative Effects Assessment with proposed subdivision and development applications.

#### 3.3.2 Development Constraints

- 1) The Town may require subdivision and development applications near water bodies and watercourses to prepare an engineering and/or geotechnical study to determine an adequate setback based on soil conditions and slope stability.
- 2) The Town will discourage development in areas characterized by wetlands, swamps, muskeg, or saturated soils, and in valleys, ravines, or seasonal draws.
- 3) The Town will prohibit development on slopes in excess of 15%, or on slopes that are subject to slippage or mass movement.
- 4) Where development is permitted within a flood prone or flood plain area, the developer shall take mitigative measures required by the Town.
- 5) The Town may allow development on sandy or unstable soil if erosion control measures are implemented.
- 6) The Town will prohibit development on soils that have extremely fast percolation rates and/or might result in the possibility of groundwater contamination.



- 7) The Town will limit new development on municipal lands within flood areas to recreational uses.
- 8) The Town will prohibit development within or adjacent to important wildlife habitat areas.
- 9) Unless unique site requirements determine otherwise, the Town will require development proposals to conform to the Alberta Environment Land Conservation Guidelines pertaining to setback requirements from valley breaks, ravines, and watercourses.
- 10) The Town will require Environmental Reserve dedication of not less than 30 m (98 ft) in width from the high water mark of water bodies and/or the top of bank of lakes and rivers as a condition of subdivision approval. Notwithstanding the above, the Town may consider reducing the setback if the applicant provides a Geotechnical Assessment prepared by a qualified, registered professional engineer. In the event where subdivision approval is not required, the Town will require a comparable setback of 30 m (98 ft) from the high water mark of any large water body and/or the top of bank of the large water body to the wall of the nearest building as a condition of development approval. Figure 3 illustrates the recommended water buffer adjacent to a large waterway.
- 11) The Town will prohibit the location of permanent structures within the 1:100 year flood plain of any river, stream, or lake shore, unless proper flood proofing techniques are applied. The Town will require a certificate from a qualified, registered professional engineer to confirm that the development has been properly flood proofed.



### 3.3.3 Energy

#### Objective

- Facilitate sustainable design and development practices including the utilization of alternative energy sources

- 1) The Town will encourage the use of small alternative energy systems as a green alternative to traditional forms of electricity generation.
- 2) The Town will encourage building design that minimizes energy loss.
- 3) The Town will encourage orienting buildings to maximize passive solar energy, natural shade, and windbreaks.
- 4) The Town will encourage the use of energy-efficient appliances and materials.

## 3.4 INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICING

#### Objectives

- Provide for the safe, orderly, and efficient development of utility corridors
- Prevent conflicts between utility facilities and other land uses
- Support regional collaboration in the provision, operation, and maintenance of critical infrastructure services
- Complete proper upkeep and maintenance of existing infrastructure services
- Complete necessary upgrades or extensions to support future growth and development

### 3.4.1 General

- 1) The Town will require the phasing and staging of future development to promote contiguous development and the orderly extension of roadways and municipal services.
- 2) The Town will encourage future development to be serviced efficiently in accordance with the Town's Master Services Plan.
- 3) The Town will encourage the location of linear transportation and utility facilities to:
  - (a) follow road allowances, wherever feasible;
  - (b) use corridors to integrate multiple utilities; and
  - (c) minimize disruption of recreation, wildlife, and historic resources.
- 4) The Town will require all developments to retain stormwater on-site and discharge at a post-development rate that does not exceed pre-development release rates.
- 5) The Town shall not permit premature installation of municipal services that would adversely affect the desired sequence of development. Utility systems shall be upgraded and expanded in accordance with the Town's long-term utility servicing plans.
- 6) Wherever possible, the Town will encourage all new service connections (power, telephone, etc.) to be underground, as per the Town's Design and Engineering Standards.

- 7) Upon receipt of inquiries and applications from utility agencies, the Town will encourage high voltage power lines and high pressure pipelines to be located away from residential areas.
- 8) The Town will encourage new facilities to accommodate multiple devices. If co-location is not feasible, clustering of wireless communication facilities is preferred.
- 9) The Town will encourage wireless communication facilities to consider planning and design concepts that result in the lowest impact on the natural environment, and the least visual impact on nearby residents.
- 10) The Town will encourage applicants of wireless communication facilities to solicit comment on their proposal through public consultation activities prior to application submission.
- 11) The Town will consult with the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) regarding proposed developments in the vicinity of sour gas facilities and will refer applications for subdivision and development of land to the AER in accordance with the Subdivision and Development Regulation.

### 3.4.2 Transportation and Mobility

- 1) The Town will explore opportunities to enhance the appearance and safety of public roadways, including development of a street design guideline/right of way cross section.
- 2) The Town may develop a truck route and/or a ring road to enable heavy truck traffic to bypass parts of the Town.
- 3) The Town may consider traffic calming techniques to manage traffic flow and speed and enhance pedestrian safety. Traffic calming includes curb extensions to reduce vehicle turning speeds and at mid-block pedestrian crossings to reduce pedestrian crossing widths.
- 4) The Town will support the development of multi-ways (combination bicycle and pedestrian pathways) to enhance connectivity and recreation opportunities.
- 5) The Town will limit direct access onto arterial roads from adjacent properties to limit disruptions to high volume traffic routes.
- 6) The Town will encourage development of a network of arterial and collector roadways in accordance with the Town's Master Services Plan by requiring:
  - (a) the transportation system to complement future land use proposals;
  - (b) a hierarchy of roadways comprising the network shown on the Future Land Use Concept to achieve efficient traffic movement in and through the Town, while encouraging active transportation, multi-way networks and connectivity;
  - (c) the system to minimize unwarranted heavy volumes of traffic in sensitive areas (through traffic should be reduced as much as possible from the Downtown, residential areas and major recreation and institutional areas); and
  - (d) the elements of the transportation system themselves to be mutually complementary.
- 7) The Town will aim to protect sufficient land for future arterial road rights-of-way by requiring dedication of rights-of-way during the subdivision process and from encroachment by other uses.
- 8) The Town will encourage multi-way development that protects adjacent landowners from potential negative impacts through the careful regulation of recreational use of the rights-of-way
- 9) The Town will actively pursue opportunities for roadway maintenance, including repairs and snow removal, based on need and available budget.

### 3.4.3 Water, Wastewater, and Stormwater

- 1) The Town will collaborate with other municipalities and/or the provincial government for the planning, development, and operation of water treatment and sanitary waste facilities.
- 2) The Town will explore opportunities to increase capacity of the water and sewer system when warranted by increased population and/or use.
- 3) The Town will require sufficient quantity and quality of groundwater to support proposed developments. Development will be prohibited in areas without an adequate potable water source.

## 3.5 LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

### Objectives

- Engage in cooperative and collaborative communication with municipal, regional, and provincial partners
- Complete regular reviews and amendments so that municipal statutory and regulatory plans and documents remain consistent and current

### 3.5.1 Advocacy

- 1) The Town will explore opportunities to secure provincial and federal funds for major infrastructure and facility upgrades, housing provision, and planning activities.
- 2) The Town will advocate and seek assistance from other levels of government in promoting affordable housing projects, and local commercial and industrial development opportunities.
- 3) The Town will encourage developers to facilitate tourism development and may assist in accessing government funding programs to develop new, or upgrade existing, tourism attractions.

### 3.5.2 Monitoring and Review

- 1) The Town will complete regular MDP reviews at least once every five years.
- 2) The Town will consider reviewing the MDP when:
  - (a) changes in economic, social or technical developments occur,
  - (b) a new Council is elected, or
  - (c) a major amendment to the plan is proposed.
- 3) When considering a new MDP or substantial amendments to the existing MDP, the Town will notify and actively consult with the public and neighbouring municipalities and give consideration to matters raised by impacted or interested parties.





SECTION 4.0

# Future Development Concept



## 4.1 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

A Future Development Concept (**Appendix A**) has been prepared for the Town based on the review of the previous planning exercises and an analysis of identified challenges and trends.

It contains a conceptual future land use pattern and transportation network for the community to direct future growth. It represents a broad expression of land use policy that is not intended to be used as a precise description of proposed land uses related to specific parcels of land. The Future Development Concept is to be used alongside the goals, objectives, and policies of the Plan.

The Future Development Concept reinforces the general pattern of development currently found within the Town, while ultimately facilitating a more compact community with more balanced land uses. Downtown will continue to be promoted as a focus for commercial and community development. Areas are shown for the development of industrial uses, which are physically and functionally separated from existing and future residential areas. It supports and enables continued protection of significant natural areas for open space and low intensity recreational development. In addition to the downtown area, it emphasizes the Athabasca Landing site and the Athabasca University site as focal points for community, educational, and recreational development.

### 4.1.1 Land Use Classifications

The Land Use Classifications shown on the Future Development Concept are defined as follows:

**Residential** refers to that area of the Town currently used for predominantly residential purposes. Residential also refers to that area to be developed for predominantly low density housing, and some medium and high density housing in selected locations at a scale and density compatible with the neighbourhood.

**Commercial** refers to that area containing primary and secondary commercial uses and compatible office, residential, institutional and recreational uses. The Commercial area includes that area surrounding the downtown core containing mainly vacant lots, older single family residences and non-conforming uses, which may be suitable to accommodate downtown expansion on a limited and site specific basis.

Compatible highway or secondary commercial uses that would benefit from exposure along highway areas and that are visually attractive in appearance could also be considered within this area. Compatible recreational, park and institutional uses that cannot be reasonably accommodated elsewhere in the community may also be considered.

**Industrial** refers to existing and future industrial development that does not:

- (a) consume a large volume of water or produce high quantities of effluent or waste;
- (b) discharge toxic or noxious by-products into the air or groundwater system; or
- (c) adversely impact adjacent properties through extreme noise, traffic or emissions.

**Parks and Open Space** refers to that area intended for low intensity park, recreation or community development and/or to be preserved in its natural state.

**Institutional** refers to existing and future community facilities such as municipal buildings, schools, Athabasca University, community and/or health services.

**Public Utility** refers to existing and future public utilities such as water treatment facilities, waste transfer stations and sewage lagoons.

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## SECTION 5.0

# Plan Administration



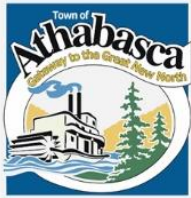
## 5.1 AUTHORITY OF THE PLAN

Pursuant to the Municipal Government Act, R.S.A., 2000, this Plan shall be adopted by the Town of Athabasca, as the Town of Athabasca Municipal Development Plan. Subdivision, development, and re-development of lands within the Town of Athabasca by the municipality and the general public shall be in accordance with the provisions of this Plan. Council shall encourage the Federal and Provincial governments to have regard for the provisions of this Plan in the development and re-development of crown lands, and in the formulation and implementation of Federal and Provincial policies and programs, within the Town of Athabasca.

## 5.2 IMPLEMENTATION

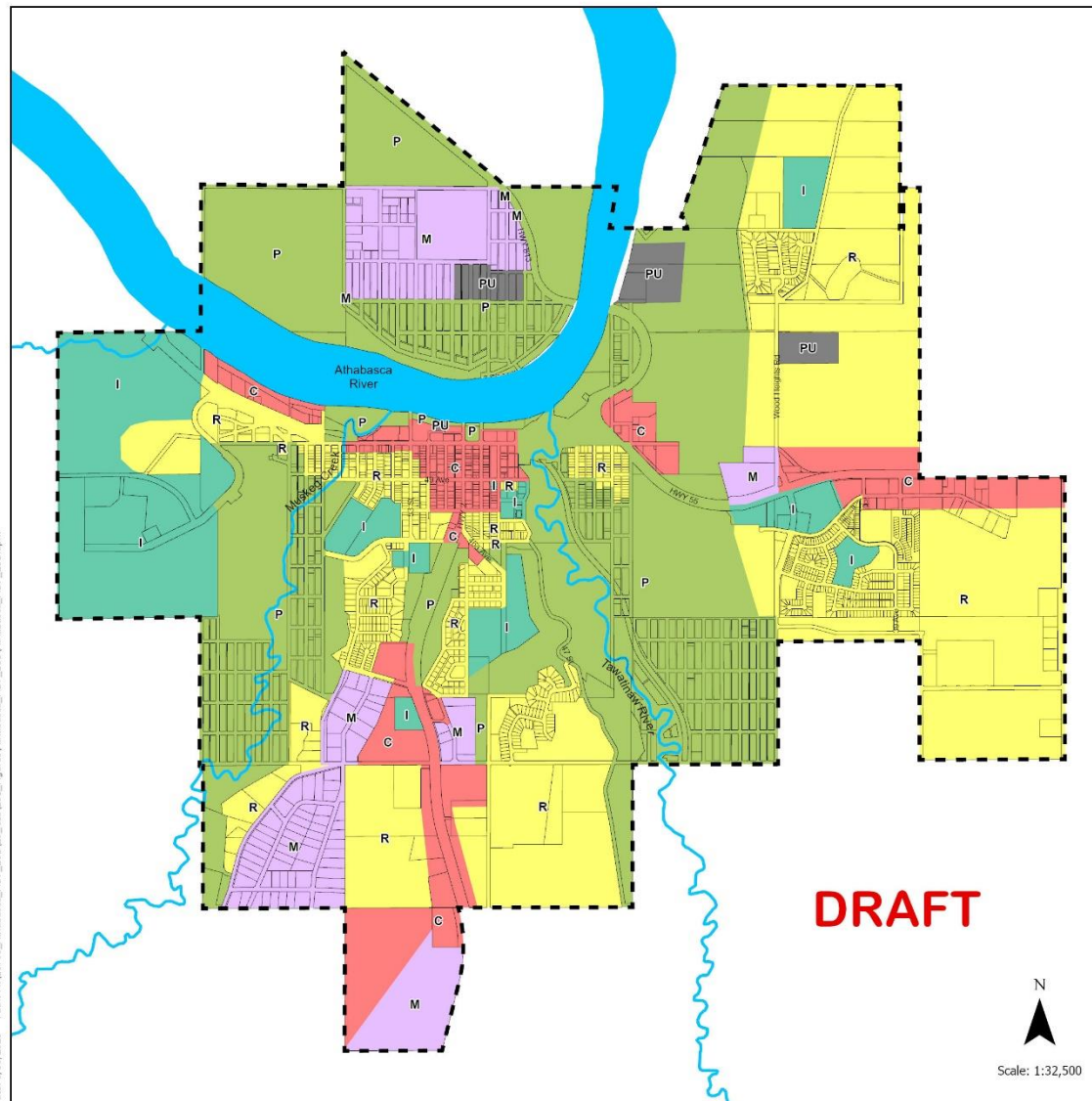
Planning is a continuous process and it is important that the MDP is regularly monitored, reviewed, and updated to address community needs. The Municipal Government Act outlines the procedure for amending statutory plans like the MDP. When reviewing proposed amendments, Council must confirm that proposed changes align with the vision and goals of the plan.

When a new or amended MDP takes effect, the Town will update the Land Use Bylaw, as necessary, to conform to this Plan.



# Appendix A

## Future Development Concept Map



Date: 5/30/2005 Path: M:\16765\_Athabasca\_MDP\_LUBV5\_615\231\_Figures\Athabasca\_MDP\_LUB\Athabasca\_MDP\_LUB.aprx



- Town Boundary
- Parcel
- River
- Stream
- Commercial (C)
- Industrial (M)
- Institutional (I)
- Public Utility (PU)
- Residential (R)
- Park and Open Space (P)

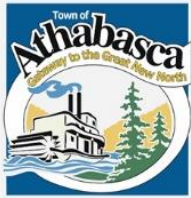


0 125 250 500 750 1,000 m

Spatial Reference  
Name: NAD 1983 10TM AEP Resource

Future Development  
Concept Map





## Appendix B

### Sustainable Resource Development Recommended Environmental Setbacks (2007)

#### Sustainable Resource Development Recommended Guidelines for Minimum Environmental Reserve/Easement Widths

In reference to Section 664 of the *Municipal Government Act*, the following are recommended where a boundary to a proposed subdivision is a water body or watercourse.

**Table 1. Standard recommended minimum widths for Environmental Reserves or Environmental Reserve Easements based on type of water feature.**

Water Feature	Minimum ER Width <sup>2</sup>	Notes
Reservoirs & Regulated Lakes	30 m from right of way or easement boundary	A regulated lake is a lake where water levels are established to a predetermined elevation and actively managed through use of a licensing requirement (e.g. to pump water into the water body).
Lake (natural & controlled)	30 m from natural boundary	On controlled lakes, 30 m from sill elevation of licensed control structure.
Swamp/wetland <sup>1</sup>	Variable, include wet meadow zone	Wet meadow zone can be extensive in some situations, and in these instances the ER should be wide enough to preserve ecological function.
Large River ( $\geq 15$ m width)	30+ m	See additional requirements for hazardous lands.
Small River/Large Stream (6-15 m)	15 m	See additional requirements for hazardous lands.
Medium Stream (3 - 6 m)	10 m	See additional requirements for hazardous lands.
Small Stream ( $\leq 3$ m)	6 m	See additional requirements for hazardous lands.
Ephemeral watercourse (no defined channel)	0 m	Use bylaw to regulate tree cutting within a defined distance from feature to maintain riparian vegetation and drainage.
Braided Stream	10 m from outside boundary of active floodway	
<sup>1</sup> Sustainable Resource Development views the term "swamp" to mean any area with hydrological conditions of sufficient duration to have developed saturated soils and hydrophytic vegetation (i.e. wetlands or peatlands).		
<sup>2</sup> In addition to the recommended ER width for the water feature itself, associated landscape features may require the ER width to be modified to factor in additional inherent hazards to development.		

For lands described in section 664(1)(b) of the *Municipal Government Act* (unsuitable for development because they are subject to flooding, have high risk of erosion, or have existing topographical or geo-technical constraints) the following are recommended.

**Table 2. Additional factors that may necessitate an increase in the width of an Environmental Reserve or Environmental Reserve Easement.**

Hazardous Lands	ER Modifier	Notes
Floodplain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The width of the 1:100 year flood line or 30m from the natural boundary of a watercourse or lake, whichever is less.</li> <li>The width of meander belt for watercourses that tend to meander or entire floodplain if it is highly constrained within a confined valley.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residential development within a floodplain is discouraged.</li> <li>Development within flood fringe area should only be considered if flood proofing undertaken to reduce risk of flood damage. Flood risk mapping or delineation of the 1:100 year flood line generally defines the extent of expected flood occurrence (see Alberta Environment policy and guidelines).</li> <li>The width of a meander belt is determined by multiplying bankfull width by 20 for each reach, and is split equally on either side of creek along axis of meander belt.</li> </ul>
Erosion prone areas	Provide for a toe erosion allowance.	Consider highly erosive soils and annual recession rates.
Gully, ravine, coulee, or valley escarpments	Provide for a stable slope allowance. Apply construction and building setbacks from this line.	Boundary of stable slope allowance measured from top of crest of plateau (terrace), valley slope or tableland.
Steep Slopes ( $>15\%$ )	3X escarpment height or as recommended by a geotechnical report on slope stability, rate of erosion, etc.	