

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

The Municipal Development Plan (MDP) is the primary planning policy document for use at the municipal level. It is intended to provide a framework for the ongoing development of Birch Hills County.

The preparation of this Plan has been motivated by a number of factors.

- a) Changes to Alberta's planning legislation in 1994 resulted in the Planning Act being rescinded and revised planning provisions being incorporated into the Municipal Government Act. Included in this legislative change was the provision of new requirements for MDP content.
- b) Formerly known as Improvement District No. 19, the municipality was incorporated as the Municipal District of Birch Hills in 1995 and Birch Hills County in 1999. This resulted in important administrative changes and jurisdictional autonomy that need to be reflected in local plans and bylaws.
- c) Although MDP's are not mandatory for municipalities with a population of less than 3,500 persons, County Council deemed it desirable to adopt a Plan in order to establish policies addressing confined feeding operations and watershed protection.

1.2 Municipal Government Act Requirements

This Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Municipal Government Act According to Section 632 (3) of the Act, Municipal Development Plans must address;

- (i) the future land use within the municipality, (ii) the manner of the proposals for future development in the municipality, (iii) the coordination of land use, future growth patterns and other infrastructure with adjacent municipalities if there is no intermunicipal development plan with respect to those matters in those municipalities, (iv) the provision of the required transportation systems either generally or specifically within the municipality and in relation to adjacent municipalities, and (v) the provision of municipal services and facilities either generally or specifically...

- 5.2.6 Subdivision and development proposals located in Environmentally Sensitive Areas may be submitted to the applicable Provincial agencies for comment and advice.
- 5.2.7 As a condition of subdivision approval, the County may require that environmentally sensitive or hazard lands be dedicated as environmental reserve, either in parcel or easement form, as provided in the Municipal Government Act.
- 5.2.8 The County shall encourage and promote the use of Conservation Easements as a means of protecting environmentally sensitive features on private lands.
- 5.2.9 Subject to Section 5.2.5 the development of sand and gravel extraction operation may be permitted subject to the site being reclaimed to the satisfaction of the County and the Province.

5.3 Recreation Policies

- 5.3.1 The County supports the development of areas with high recreational potential. Some of these important recreational resources include:
 - a) the Peace, Smoky and Burnt River valleys;
 - b) the confluence of the Peace and Smoky Rivers, which is identified under the Special Places 2000 program;
 - c) Kakut Lake;
 - d) Lakeside (Eaglesham) campground and golf course;
 - e) Shaftesbury Crossing (Tangent Park) campground; and
 - f) Dreamer’s Lake.
- 5.3.2 Through the subdivision process, public access to shoreline areas shall be accommodated through the dedication of environmental and/or municipal reserve.
- 5.3.3 The use of environmental sensitive areas for unobtrusive recreational development is supported, subject to the requirements of the Special Places 2000 program.

6.0 HAMLETS & SETTLEMENTS

The Hamlets of Eaglesham, Peoria, Tangent, Wanham and Watino play important roles in the provision of services to the residents of the County. Eaglesham and Wanham, the two largest hamlets, were formerly villages within the County but have dissolved. Although they are primarily residential in nature, these centres provide commercial and instructional facilities and services to area residents. The long term sustainability of these hamlets is of utmost importance to the County.