

RURAL RESIDENTIAL

BACKGROUND | 5 OF 8



INTRODUCTION

Strathcona County includes the urban area of Sherwood Park and a large rural area with 8 hamlets. It is the fifth largest municipality in Alberta, with a projected 2015 population of 97,500. The County has experienced steady residential growth over the last 15 years, with a population growth rate of 2.5% per year since the year 2000. It is expected that Strathcona County will continue to be faced with complex questions on how and where to accommodate this growth into the future.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

While most of the County's population lives in Sherwood Park (24,942 dwellings), there are 9,920 dwellings in the rural portion of the County. Rural residential development takes many different forms, from Hamlet communities, to large and small lot country residential acreages, to "farm house" residences associated with agricultural operations.

There are three primary areas in the County where a variety of rural residential communities have evolved over time. These areas are identified in the MDP as:

1. Country Residential Policy Area
2. Agriculture – Small Holdings Policy Area
3. Hamlets of Ardrossan, Josephburg, North Cooking Lake, Half Moon Lake, Collingwood Cove, South Cooking Lake, and Hastings Lake

COUNTRY RESIDENTIAL

Residents living in the Country Residential Policy Area are able to enjoy a rural lifestyle without necessarily engaging in agricultural activities. These 'acreage' communities are made up of large parcels with sufficient space for one or more accessory buildings.

Minimum lot sizes for new development range from 0.2 hectares (0.5 acres) in the low density area to 0.125 hectares (0.3 acres) in the high density country residential area.

While new country residential development must have piped water and sewer, most of the country residential areas in the County are older and are not connected to the County's water and sewage systems. Residents in many country residential communities may take advantage of limited rural activities on their land, such as large-scale gardening and the keeping of horses and other animals.

AGRICULTURE SMALL HOLDINGS

Residential development in the Agriculture Small Holdings Policy Area is geared towards fostering a rural agriculture lifestyle. There is a diverse range of housing forms allowed in this area, from farmsteads or farm houses associated with an agricultural operation to isolated, unserviced, small country residential areas.

Minimum lot sizes for new development range from 2.0 hectares (5 acres) to 8.0 hectares. (20 acres).

Residential development in the Small Holdings area is carefully managed to ensure there will be a focus on conserving habitat, wetlands, upland areas, ecosystems and open space.

HAMLETS

The County's Hamlets are greatly varied in their character, size, function and the range of services they offer to their residents and those in the surrounding rural area. They are a traditional form of rural living, with each hamlet reflecting its particular history and environment.

Hamlets may have a number of different housing forms and a variety of land uses, including local commercial, institutional, and recreational land uses. Some hamlets with a range of community facilities, and sewer and water capacity (e.g. Ardrossan, Josephburg and South Cooking Lake), may realize additional development and a wider range of housing choices over time, while others with limited services are not necessarily expected to grow in population.

CURRENT TRENDS

- The County's urban area population grew by 29.4% between 2001 and 2009; the rural area population grew by 8.3% over that period.
- Average housing price in 2015 is predicted to be \$460,000 in the urban area, and \$600,000 in the rural area.

WHAT DOES THE 2007 MDP SAY?

Some of the key objectives and policies contained in Chapter 5 of the MDP are:

- Promote the development of a broad range of housing types and locations, in both rural and urban settings.
- Provide for various age groups, family types, lifestyles and income levels.
- Minimize the consumption of agricultural land for residential purposes.
- Encourage attractive residential environments.
- Retain the character, amenities, and quality of life aspects of existing residential areas.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Protecting the environment while acknowledging the demand for a rural residential lifestyle.
- Protection of groundwater systems where unserviced lots are being developed in the agriculture small holdings area.
- Desires for business uses in country residential areas.
- Addressing the implications of the aging farming population (e.g. sustainability of small farming operations, accommodating seniors in rural areas, etc).
- Providing municipal sewer and water to low density development in the rural area.

SUCCESS STORIES SINCE THE 2007 MDP

- Council adopted the Country Residential Area Concept Plan (ACP) in 2012, providing detailed guidance for country residential development.
- Increased emphasis on conservation design principles.
- County has established more compact forms of country residential development.
- Increased flexibility for incorporating minor agriculture uses (e.g. community gardens, or local-scale equestrian centres) in rural residential areas.
- Policies are in place to provide for limited commercial activities (e.g. B&Bs, home offices, minor care centres) based out of residence, in country residential areas.
- MDP amended to require new development to achieve the Capital Region Growth Plan density targets.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Do you think the County is on the right track in its efforts to manage country residential and Hamlet development?
- Are there any Hamlets that you think should be identified as priorities for growth over the next few years? If so, what types of support or encouragement should be provided by the County?
- Do you think it is possible to provide for more affordable forms of rural living than is currently available? How would this be accomplished?
- Do you think there should be a strategy in place to accommodate retiring farmers, to encourage them to stay within their surrounding area? What would that look like?

