



ROCKY VIEW COUNTY

PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
END OF YEAR REPORT

2023





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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following Summary provides a high-level overview of 2023 for Planning and Development.

### Customer Service and Operations Improvements

<b>Customer Service Charter</b>	Placing the customer at the center of the service experience for inquiries and applications.
<b>Pre-Application Process</b>	Formalized and standardized the pre-application process to increase effectiveness and improve outcomes.
<b>Customer and Stakeholder Feedback Surveys</b>	Began surveying Planning customers on the quality, accuracy, and responsiveness of our service to guide improvements based on customer experience.
<b>Quarterly Reports</b>	Tracking vital statistics on service delivery in quarterly reports will help us understand trends and improve quality to meet service standards.
<b>Process Mapping and Standard Operating Procedures</b>	Process mapping and standard operating procedures includes mapping over 120 processes and templates in Planning. Mapping current processes, simplifying our templates, removing legacy files, and improving current processes will increase consistency, timeliness, and quality.

### Growth and Service Improvements

<b>Inquiries</b>	Planning received 11,200 inquiries in 2023. We supported 282 more inquiries at the planning counter than in 2022. This was the first year of tracking phone and email data, so we will compare future years to 2023.
<b>Pre-Application Meetings</b>	Planning held 108 pre-application meetings in 2023. As this was the first year that pre-application meetings were formalized, we will continue to monitor the process to ensure it is resulting in improved application quality and reduced timelines.
<b>Planning and Subdivision Approvals</b>	Planning reduced processing time for Subdivision approvals by 43 days and Planning approvals (redesignation, amendment, conceptual scheme, master site development plan) by 28 days compared to 2022. Planning approved 406 development permits in 2023, which was consistent with 405 development permit approvals in 2022.
<b>Development Permits</b>	Planning received 467 development permits in 2023, which was an increase of 40 development permits from 2022. This increase was managed by building capacity and efficiency in the development team to maintain responsiveness and timeliness.
<b>Real Property Reports</b>	Planning prepared 612 real property reports, which helped landowners and applicants understand how structures can be placed on their land.
<b>Intermunicipal Planning Circulations</b>	Planning received 274 intermunicipal planning circulations, showing growth trends in neighbouring municipalities, especially Calgary, Cochrane, Airdrie, and Wheatland County. Responses ensured that impacts to County landowners are considered and responded to appropriately.

## Planning Projects

<b>Joint Planning Areas</b>	JPA 1 - Rocky View County, Calgary, Airdrie and JPA 2 - Rocky View County, Calgary, Chestermere were inaugurated, and work began with background documents that will be informed by a gap analysis.
<b>Municipal Development Plan</b>	The Municipal Development Plan was launched, and a background report was approved by Governance Committee in October. Engagement began in late 2023 and will continue into 2024.
<b>Langdon Area Structure Plan</b>	The developer led Langdon ASP project to expand the hamlet began with adoption of the Terms of Reference and project kickoff.
<b>Janet Area Structure Plan</b>	The Janet ASP was submitted to Council and the CMRB, which requires further servicing options to be explored for approval.
<b>Conrich Area Structure Plan</b>	The Conrich ASP project team completed public engagement and initiated technical studies for the future policy area.
<b>Springbank Area Structure Plan</b>	The draft Springbank ASP was prepared and presented to the public. An engagement summary report was created and published based on the feedback collected.
<b>Bearspaw Area Structure Plan</b>	The Bearspaw ASP received approval for the Terms of Reference. The background report was prepared, and a draft land use strategy was prepared and presented to Governance Committee.
<b>Prairie Gateway Area Structure Plan</b>	The Prairie Gateway ASP is a joint planning project with The City of Calgary. The Planning team is assisting Legislative and Intergovernmental Services to develop the ASP.
<b>Aggregate Resource Plan</b>	The Aggregate Resource Plan was launched in the second half of 2023 and the Stakeholder Advisory Committee met to provide input and work toward the creation of an ARP.
<b>Land Use Bylaw</b>	<p>Planning brought forward new land use bylaw amendments for Business, Live-Work District, Special, Future Urban Development District, Special Function Business, and Home-Based Business Uses, which were all approved by Council. The changes modernize and update the land use bylaw for today's context.</p> <p>Planning also updated the Landowner and Adjacent Landowner information letter mailout for better communication with the public.</p>

# ALIGNING WITH COUNTY STRATEGY



## Effective Service Delivery

### Customer and Stakeholder Feedback Surveys

Understanding how we are meeting customers' expectations across services and inquiring into areas of improvement through follow-up calls.

### Performance Tracking

Tracking performance data from Planning to understand application timelines, development trends, and areas for improvement.

### Pre-Application Process

Setting up customers for success with their proposals through a simple and efficient process.

### Development Permit Renewal Improvements

Reducing the amount of information applicants submit for renewals to reduce unnecessary redundancy and improve timelines.



## Financial Prosperity

### Approval Timelines

Decreased Planning and Subdivision approval timelines and supported several significant business developments through the process. This increases the County assessment value and investment in infrastructure.



## Thoughtful Growth

### Defining Distinct Areas in the Municipal Development Plan

Celebrating the diverse communities and values across Rocky View County and planning for appropriate levels of growth allows us to work alongside communities by creating distinct area plans.

### Land Use Bylaw Updates

Protecting communities from unsuitable development and removing unnecessary barriers to compatible proposals.

### Regional Growth Plans

Guiding regional growth with Joint Planning Areas, Area Structure Plans, and the Aggregate Resource Plan in collaborative planning projects.

### Responsible Growth

Guiding growth through the Municipal Government Act and Rocky View County policies and bylaws to grow responsibly and connect policy to land.

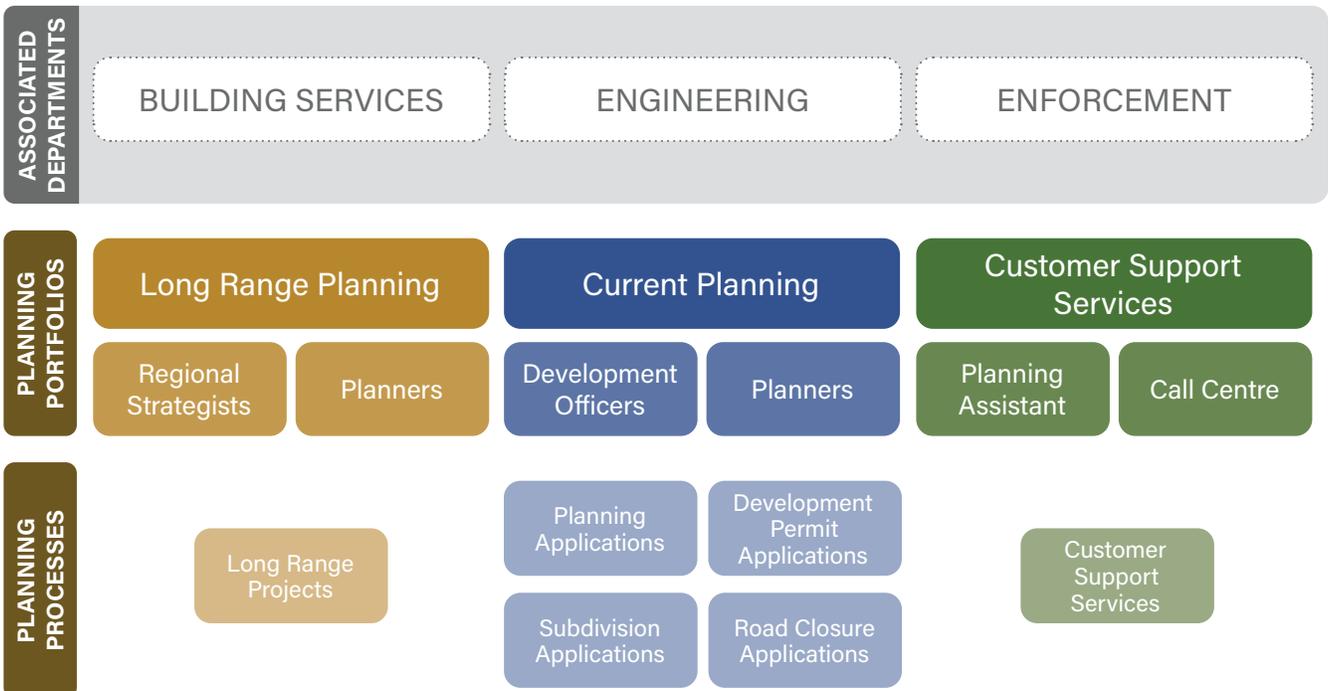
# DEPARTMENT SUMMARY AND SERVICES

In collaboration with other departments, Planning works with landowners, developers, adjacent municipalities, and Council to support orderly and successful development within the County. The department is taking measures to truly put the customer at the center of the planning process in everything it does. This means:

- Improving communication and engagement opportunities with residents, developers, and communities, and using this engagement to sensitively balance different interests within the County.
- Delivering a clear and effective policy framework to guide development in the County to increase certainty in how development is approved and implemented.
- Providing a timely and efficient service in responding to customer inquiries and processing planning and development applications.

The Planning service is split into three broad service areas:

- **Long-Range Planning** focuses on setting a vision for how the overall County and individual communities and industries will grow and develop. To achieve this, the department is currently preparing the County’s Municipal Development Plan and several community area structure plans.
- **Current Planning** focuses on implementing the long-term vision through land use and development approvals. The department processed 570 planning, subdivision, development permit, and road closure applications in 2023.
- **Customer Support Services** is the department’s first point of contact for applicants and wider public. Services include pre-application meetings, application intake, real property reports, and responding to general planning inquiries.



Planning staff work in a dynamic environment, where community sentiment can be diverse and development conditions change rapidly.

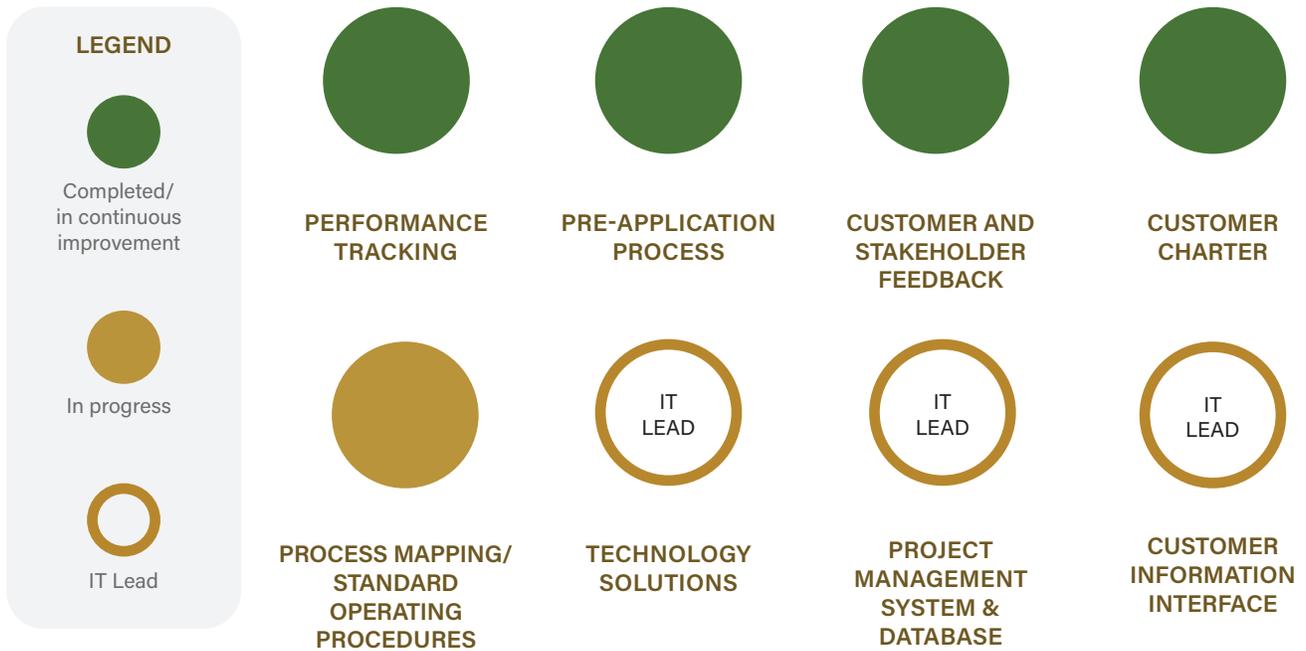
The department has been reorganized over the past two years to better serve the community and provide a more responsive structure and customer service culture. Planning and Development applications are directed to teams that specialize in each process to allow for clear expectations, consistency in our responses, and faster timelines.



We aim to build positive relationships with community members and meaningfully engage with people across Rocky View County.



# DEPARTMENT ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY (DES) PROJECTS



## What is the Department Enhancement Strategy?

The Department Enhancement Strategy (DES) was initiated in Q1 of 2023 with approval from Council. The goal was to map baseline Planning processes to identify areas of improvement, increase responsiveness to customers, and improve department resources for improved internal and external communication.

Process improvements began with formalizing the pre-application process and customer and stakeholder feedback. Two Process Specialists started in Q3 2023 to begin process mapping, standard operating procedures, the customer charter, and performance tracking.

## Performance Tracking

An important part of measuring progress for the department staff is through the collection and analysis of data.

Performance tracking will assist the department in observing trends and the impact of department improvements on overall service levels.

Since Q2 2023, quarterly reports have been produced measuring performance across a range of department services and this report includes many of the data points that continue to be tracked within the department.

As technology improvements are made to the department, the range of data collection methods will expand, allowing a better understanding of how the department is contributing to the achievement of Council's key performance indicator targets.

## Pre-Application Process

Planning formalized and implemented the pre-application process this year. The goal of this improvement is for Planning and associated departments to better support potential applicants at the start of the process with a formal meeting and follow-up letter that provides a comprehensive review of the applicant’s proposal. Applicants may request a one-hour meeting to get ahead of challenges on their proposal and to understand how to submit a high-quality application.

The pre-application process is intended to offer greater certainty to customers and help the application approval process run more efficiently. The process will continue to require further refinements over the next year to ensure that the scope of projects considered for pre-application meetings are appropriate and the process optimizes resources and outcomes.

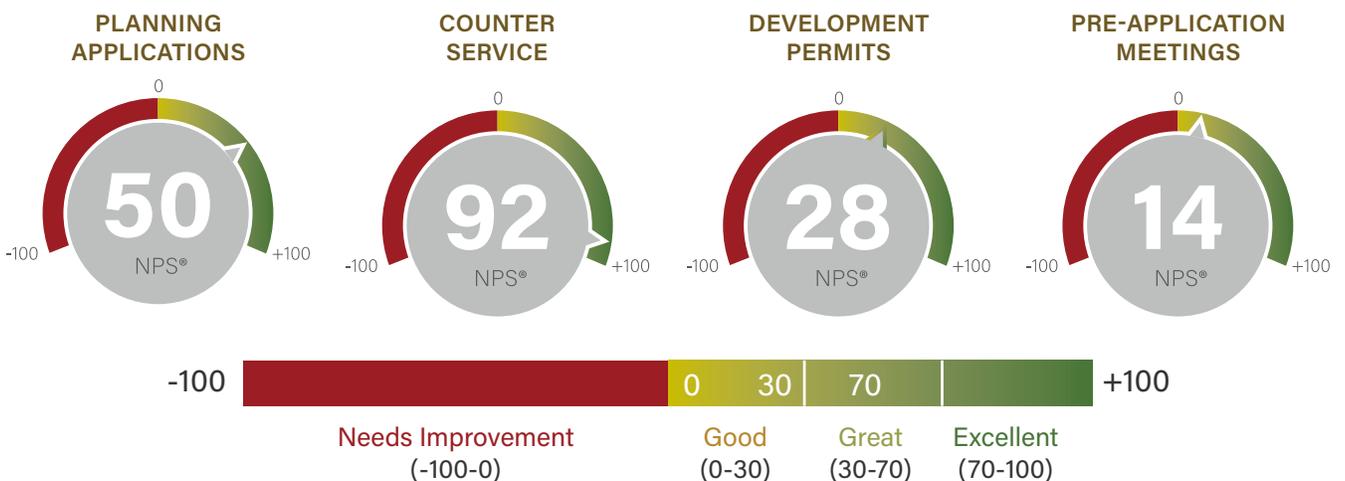
## Customer and Stakeholder Feedback

In Q3 2023, Planning began the Customer and Stakeholder Feedback Survey. Distribution of the surveys commenced in August, and customers were asked to grade the level of service they received on a scale of 1-10. Department supervisors proactively reached out to customers who submitted a score lower than 7 to better understand concerns and opportunities for improvement.

we will continue to seek further customer input to achieve a more representative sample size. As of end-of-year 2023, the data suggests that the department is providing good to excellent customer service across the measured services. This is illustrated in the images below.

Survey results were analysed using the Net Promoter Score (NPS) method, an industry-wide approach to understand the quality of a customer’s experience. Sample sizes are currently small due to recent implementation; therefore,

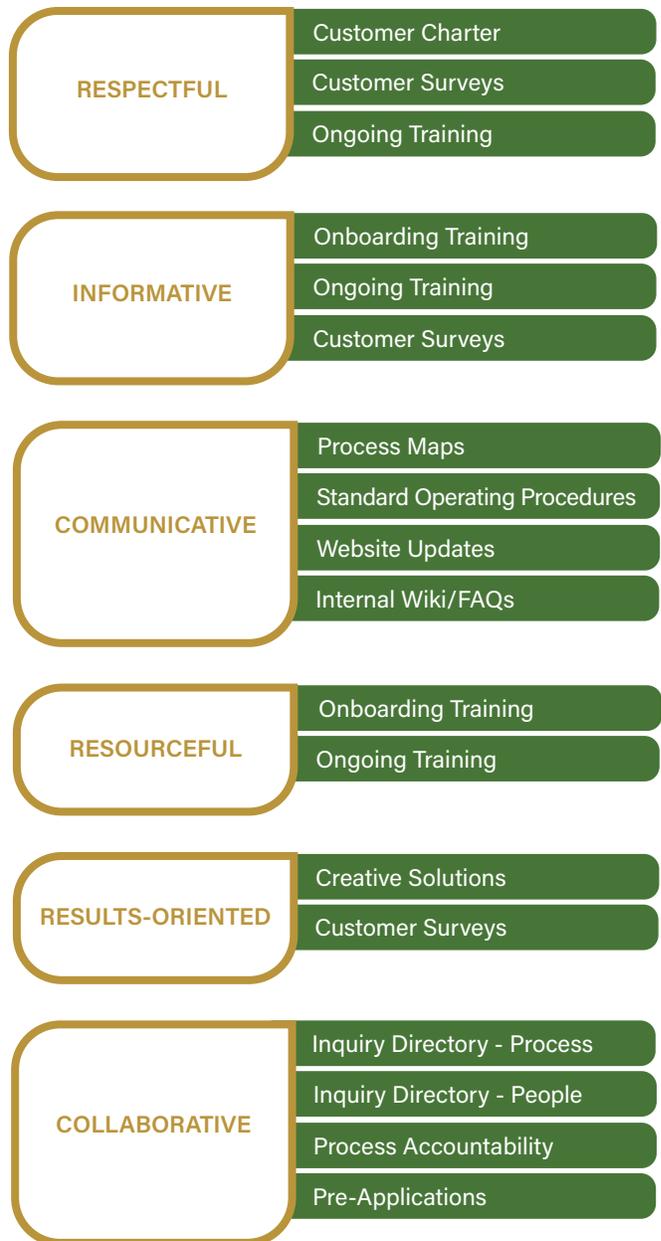
In addition to using feedback to improve overall department processes, it has been used to celebrate exceptional service and to coach staff on areas for improvement in interacting with customers. It has also been incorporated into the department’s customer charter, which is discussed below.



## Customer Charter

The Customer Charter is both a guide and assessment tool in focusing the department's efforts on customer service excellence. By connecting values and tools, staff can align with department expectations and be supported in how to meet them. The Charter is a result of collaborative workshops that gathered department-wide input, alongside analysis of

department processes and customer feedback. The Charter will create greater accountability across the department, it will act as an onboarding document for new employees, a reference for current employees, and a framework for understanding employee performance and department improvements.

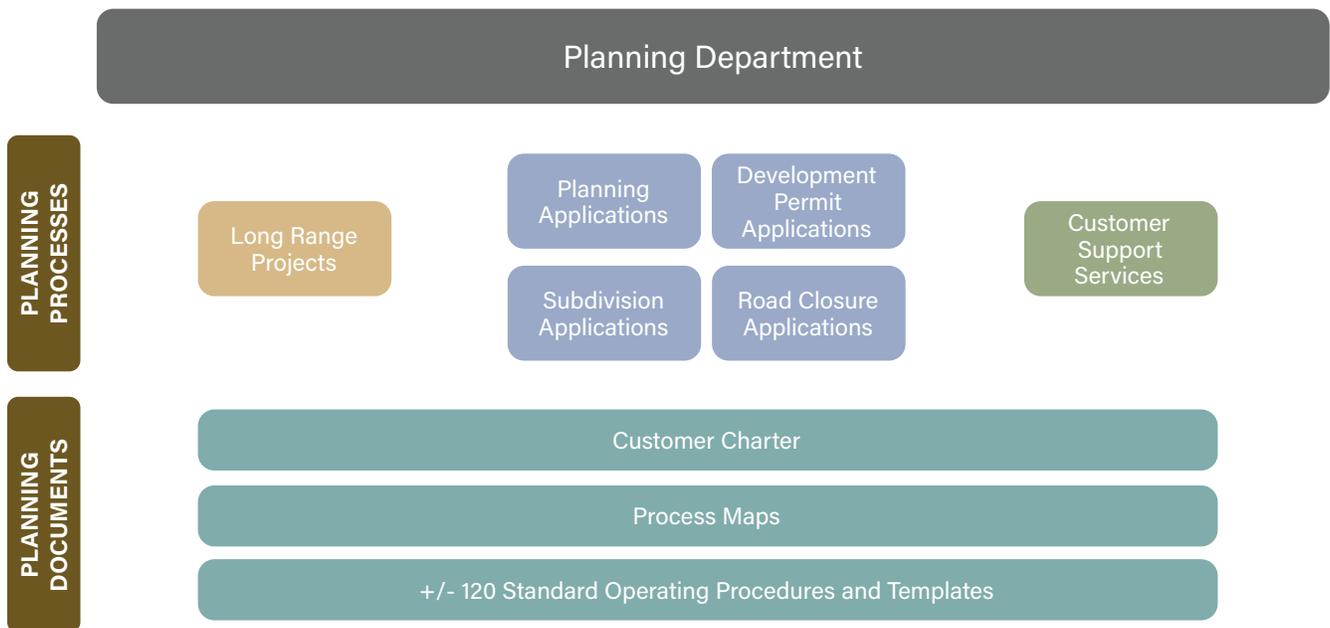


## Process Mapping and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

As introduced in the Department Summary, Planning has six major focus areas. Within these focus areas are approximately 120 procedures and templates. The DES project team has been gathering resources and interviewing subject matter experts throughout the second half of 2023 to map baseline procedure information.

This mapping and SOP creation will create certainty and efficiencies for Planning staff, while also being able to guide customers on the Planning departments processes and timelines.

Standard Operating Procedures combine procedure maps with additional information and step-by-step guides to clarify and streamline the department's processes. In 2024, SOPs will serve as the baseline for process improvements to be able to identify bottlenecks, provide Planning staff with resources to learn the processes promoting consistency, allow automation and tracking of process steps to better serve customers, improve outcomes, and reduce inefficiencies.



## Technology Solutions, Customer Information Interface, & Project Management System and Database

In 2023, Planning started work with the County's IT department to explore technology improvements that could be made to create efficiencies and a better customer experience. This work focused on the following areas:

- **Technology Solutions** – working with IT department to leverage existing technology such as CityView software, to improve how the Planning department processes applications (i.e. developing an online payment system for customers)
- **Customer Information Interface** – working with IT department and Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) to develop an interactive online mapping tool, online application submission and tracking
- **Project Management System** – continuing to use Monday.com as a project management tool while working with the IT department to develop permanent solutions

Looking ahead to 2024, the IT department will be leading these three DES projects with project kickoffs and immediate collaboration with the Planning department. This is expanded upon in the 2024 Roadmap at the end of this document.



# RESPONSIVENESS TO CUSTOMERS



In 2023, Planning responded to over 11,200 inquiries with an average of 930 inquiries per month. The team of Planning Assistants and Call Centre Representatives work together to respond in a timely manner with response times averaging half a day. This year, Planning added capacity to start taking live calls, providing an immediate point of contact for the customer, and moving away from the previous voicemail system in the department. Planning Assistants and Call Centre Representatives work closely with Planning & Development staff to respond to customer’s questions and connect customers with additional resources.



Planning formalized the pre-application process this year. The process brings together applicants, Planning & Development staff, and relevant Rocky View County staff to proactively discuss projects. There has been significant uptake of the department’s new process and the initial target of providing a comprehensive pre-application review letter within 21 days is largely being met. Potential improvements to reduce this timeline will continue to be explored as the process is refined.



## Supporting Development



**467**

DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

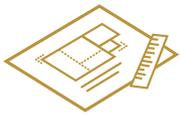
In 2023, Planning received 467 Development Permits, an increase of 40 Development Permits from 2022, which shows continued growth in the County. We rendered decisions on 406 applications, which is consistent with 2022, which saw 405 approvals.



**406**

DECISIONS RENDERED

Due to timing of applications and complexity of files, the timeline and decisions rendered varies annually. We have increased staff in 2024 to increase responsiveness and decrease approval timelines.



**612**

REAL PROPERTY REPORTS

Real Property Reports allow applicants to verify compliance with bylaw, request remeasurement for small variances, understand the need to move or remove a structure, or apply for a Direct Control use district. This service allows landowners to inquire into potential uses on their land.



The Planning department is taking measures to truly put the customer at the centre of the planning process in everything it does.

## Processing Time for Planning Applications

### DAYS FOR SUBDIVISION APPLICATION DECISION

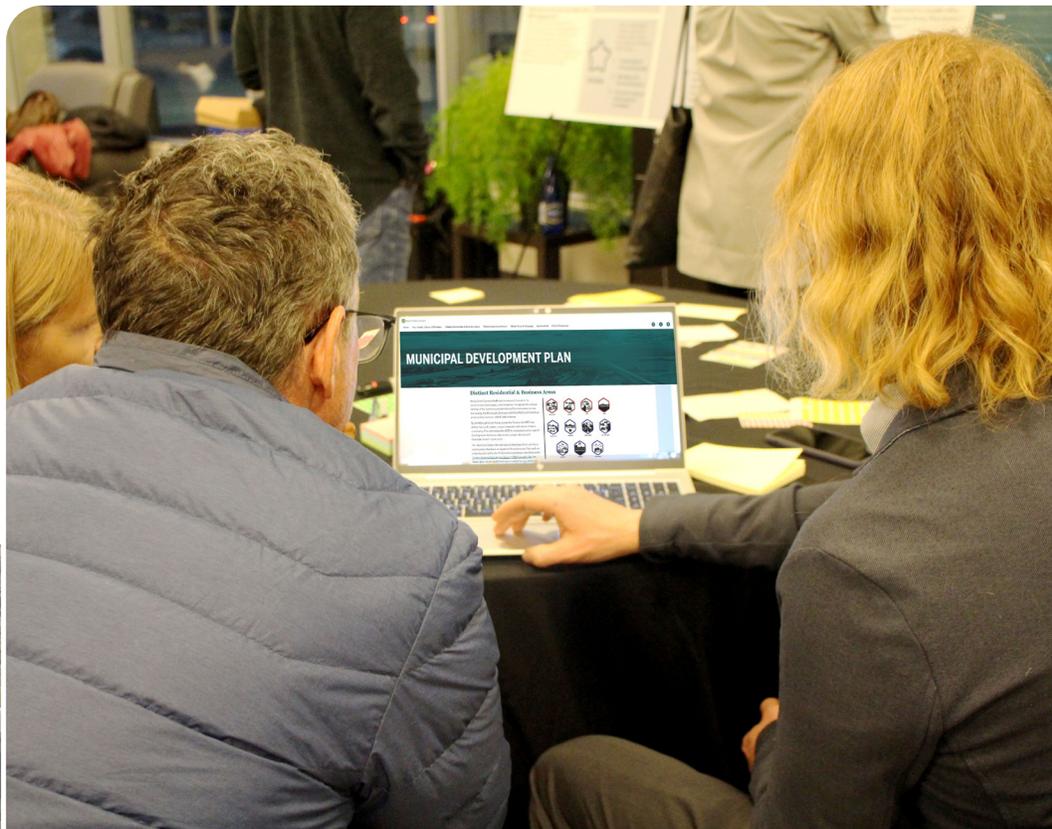


In 2023, the average time for Subdivision Application Decisions was 142 days – a 28-day improvement over 2022 and 41 days faster than the Rocky View County service policy standard. The average time for Planning Application Decisions was 207 days – a 43-day improvement from 2022 and 98 days faster than the service policy standard.

### DAYS FOR PLANNING APPLICATION DECISION



Several factors can impact the decision timeline including project scope, applicant responsiveness, and resource availability. Continued improvements in process mapping and standardized operating procedures can support continuous improvement to align Planning and applicant expectations.



## Ongoing Planning Applications



**136**  
**56**

PLANNING  
FILES

PLANNING  
FILES WAITING  
ON INFORMATION



**70**  
**31**

SUBDIVISION  
FILES

SUBDIVISION  
FILES WAITING  
ON INFORMATION

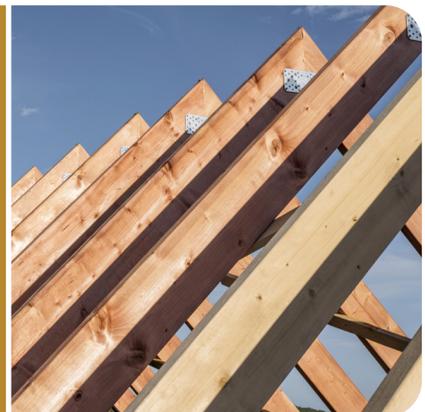
As previously discussed, Planning requires both Rocky View County staff and applicants to actively participate throughout the process for applications to reach final approval. In 2023, Planning was waiting on information for 41% of 136 ongoing Planning files and 44% of 70 ongoing Subdivision files. At the end of 2023, Planning made decisions on 79 Planning applications and was managing 89 Subdivision files post-approval.

Planners proactively contact applicants to request information, however, there are no processes currently in place for creating detailed timeline targets for department staff or the applicant.

One area for improvement is to create a process of mutually agreed upon timelines for reaching application milestones. This can help reduce uncertainty, increase accountability, and ensure that realistic goals are set depending on project considerations.



Planning and Development applications are directed to teams that specialize in each process to allow for clear expectations, consistency in our response, and faster timelines.

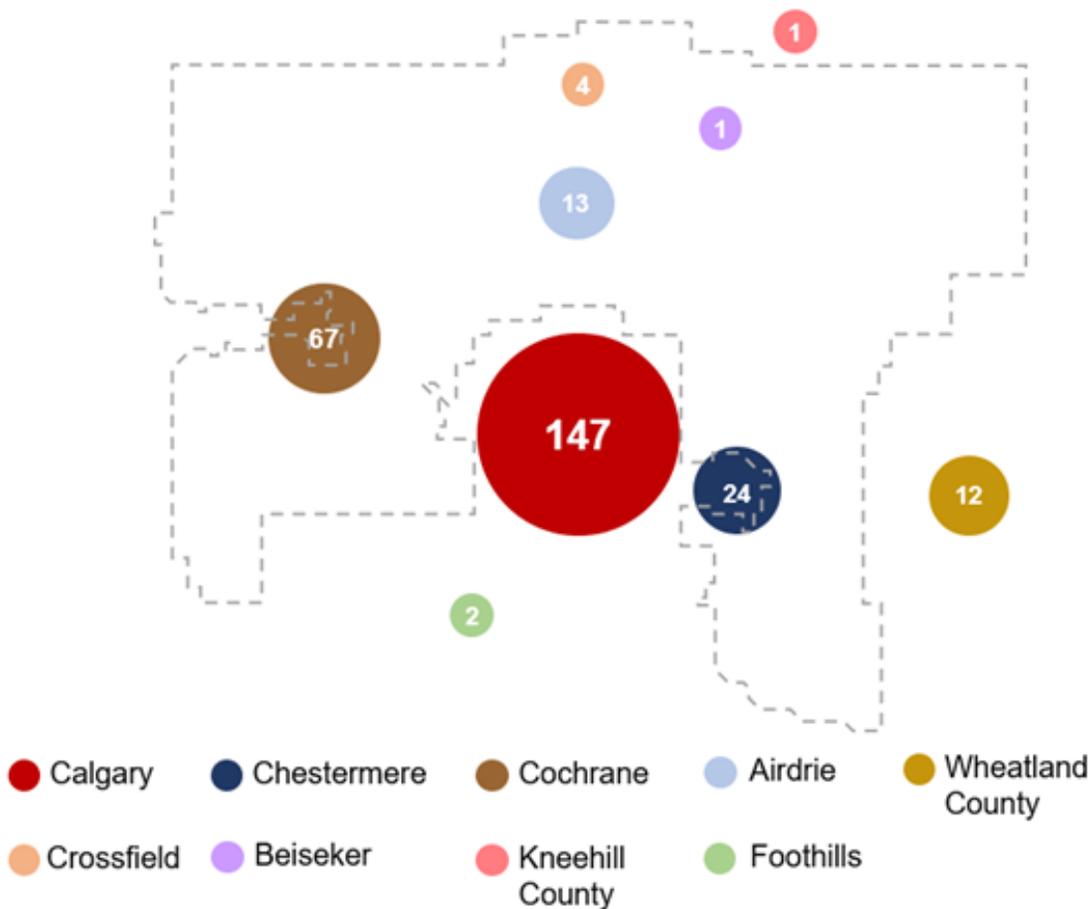


## Legacy Files

Legacy files are Planning applications over 16 months old. In 2023, 34 Planning (including redesignation, amendment, conceptual scheme, and master site development plan) and 18 subdivision legacy files were closed by the

Planning department. Staff have been working with applicants to either bring legacy files to Council for a decision or encourage applicants to withdraw the legacy file until they are prepared to move forward.

## Intermunicipal Planning Circulations



Planning received 274 Intermunicipal Planning Circulations in 2023 from neighbouring municipalities. The main centers of activity are Calgary, Cochrane, Chestermere, Airdrie, and Wheatland County. There were 3 Circulations from the Natural Resources Conservation Board, which are most often feedlot operations toward east Rocky View County. The intensity of development

is consistent with population and growth areas in the Calgary Municipal Regional Board.

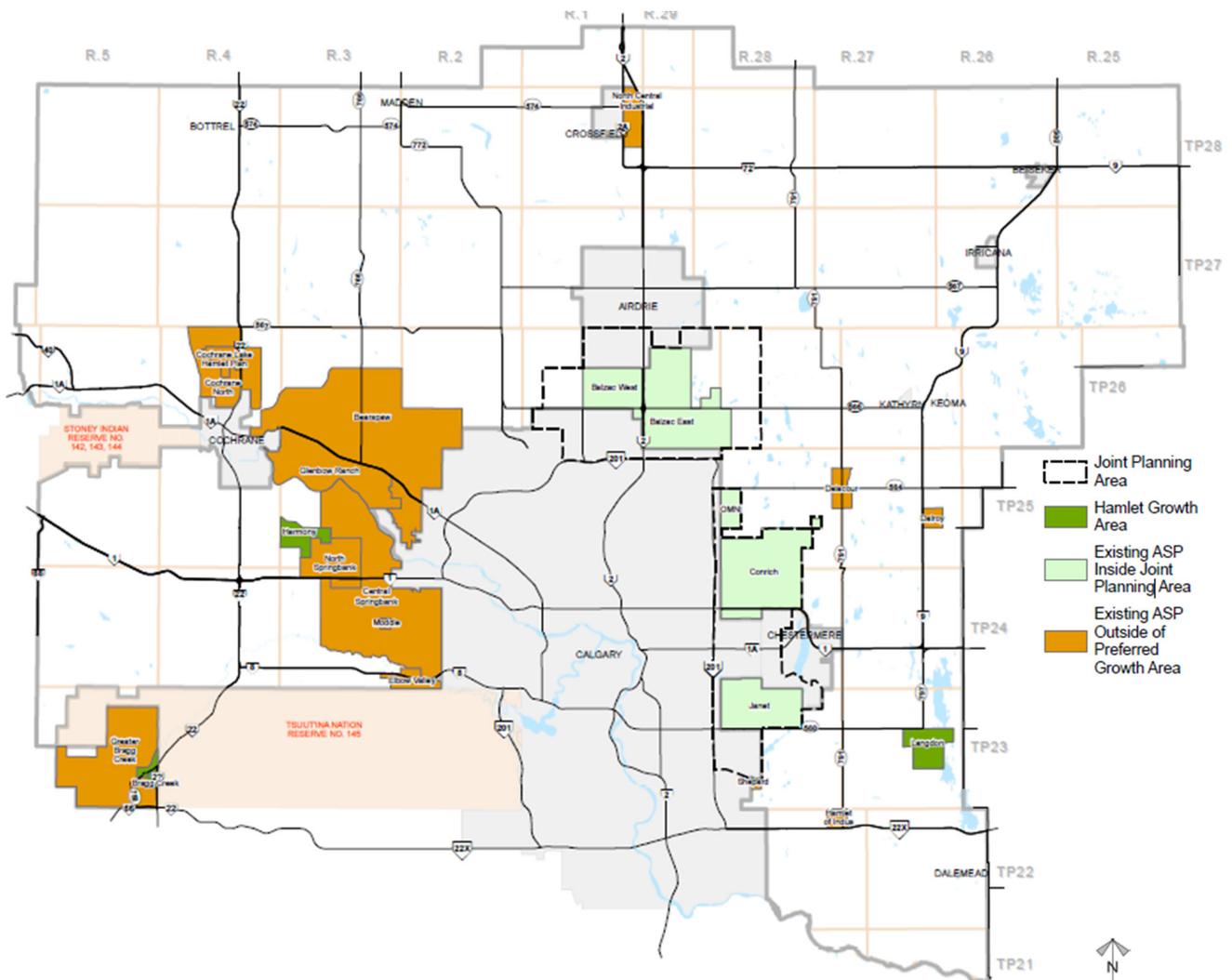
Strategic investments of time, staff, and resources with neighbouring municipalities can build positive relationships and result in mutual benefits through cost-sharing and collaboration.

# DEPARTMENT PROJECTS

## Joint Planning Areas (JPAs)

Joint Planning Areas are required as part of the Calgary Metropolitan Region Growth Plan and are identified as areas between municipalities where higher growth levels are forecasted. The JPAs focus on development pressure and growth management at a regional scale to improve collaboration and ensure efficient use of land,

infrastructure, and services. Cost-sharing will also be determined through the JPA process. JPA 1 is between Rocky View County (east and west Balzac), the City of Calgary, and Airdrie while JPA 2 is between Rocky View County (Conrich, Omni, and Janet), the City of Calgary, and the City of Chestermere.



In early 2023, Council approved the Joint Planning Areas (JPA) 1 and 2 Terms of References and appointed two members of Council to each Trilateral JPA Committee. The Trilateral JPA Committees held their inaugural meetings in the fall of 2023. The project team has compiled a repository of background documents for each JPA that will inform the Gap Analysis Report. The Gap Analysis Report is currently being created by Invistec Consulting Ltd.

In 2024, the Trilateral JPA Committees will be presented with a Gap Analysis Report. Each Committee will then provide their direction on what criteria will be a prioritized as action items from the Gap Analysis Report. The Gap Analysis Report and completed action items will be used to develop the JPA Context Study prior to the Growth Plan's deadline of August 2025.



## Municipal Development Plan (MDP)

The Municipal Development Plan (MDP) is a statutory plan within Alberta’s planning framework, which informs all lower-order plans such as Area Structure Plans and other land use decisions, infrastructure investments, and provision of community services. The MDP review is part of a requirement from the Calgary Metropolitan Region Growth Plan and is required to align with the Growth Plan by August 15, 2025. The new plan will replace Rocky View County’s existing MDP, which was adopted in 2013.

The MDP Review project was officially launched at the start of 2023, with Phase 1 – Initiation and Planning. Phase 1 included the development of the MDP Review Background Report, which outlined the project’s workplan, strategies, and deliverables. The Background Report also compiled analyses from a county-wide

economic assessment, land use inventory, and other supporting documents to set a baseline of understanding on the current state of development across the county. The delivery of the Background Report to Governance Committee in October 2023 marked the completion of Phase 1 – Initiation and Planning, and the transition into Phase 2 – Draft Plan and Engagement.

Moving into 2024, the project team will continue to engage the public on the MDP Review project. During Phase 2, residents and interested parties will be able to provide their input through various in-person and online engagement activities including: open houses, coffee chats, industry/agency workshops, and the interactive project website. A complete draft of the new MDP based on resident and interested party feedback will be delivered to Governance Committee by the end of 2024.



The County’s approach to growth aligns with our vision and reflects our desire to support investment and development.

## Area Structure Plans (ASPs)



LANGDON



JANET



CONRICH



SPRINGBANK



BEARSPAW

Over the course of 2023, Planning worked on six Area Structure Plans (ASP). The **Langdon ASP** Expansion project began in late-2023 with the Terms of Reference being approved at Council and a project kick-off meeting held with the lead proponent. In 2024, the Developer will execute the project scope in preparing and engaging on the ASP project.

Amendments to the **Janet ASP** to facilitate development of the final phase of the business area was submitted to Council and the Calgary Metropolitan Region Board (CMRB) in Spring 2023 and Fall 2023, respectfully. Following CMRB Administration refusal recommendations over the limited water and wastewater servicing approach, the County is now exploring the potential to provide full water and wastewater servicing to the area.

A new land use strategy for the **Conrich ASP** Future Policy Area was prepared in alignment with the CMRB Growth Plan and presented to the County's Governance Committee in September 2023. Public engagement was conducted in October and November based on this land use strategy and the technical studies were initiated following feedback from the community. In 2024, the revised ASP document will be finalized and supporting technical studies will be completed. The ASP is expected to be brought to Council and CMRB for review in Q2, 2024.

The draft **Springbank ASP**, which combines the North Springbank, Central Springbank, and Middle ASPs, was presented to the public in June 2023. Significant community feedback was received, and an engagement summary was prepared and published in Fall 2023. The Engagement Summary and revised land use concept is scheduled to be presented to Governance Committee for further direction in January 2024.

The **Bearspaw ASP** review project recommenced in August 2023, with the project team conducting a background review and preparing a draft land use strategy, which was presented to Governance Committee in November 2023. In 2024, technical studies will be completed, and a draft Plan will be created. Public engagement will be conducted for the draft ASP in Spring 2024, followed by ASP finalization for presentation to Council and the CMRB towards the end of 2024.

The **Prairie Gateway ASP** is a joint planning project with The City of Calgary. The Planning department has supported the County's Legislative and Intergovernmental Services department on the project through site analysis work, concept development, and drafting of the ASP. In 2024, public engagement, technical studies, and Council and CMRB review are planned to go forward.

## Aggregate Resource Plan (ARP)

The Aggregate Resource Plan (ARP) project was launched in Q2 of 2023. Phase 1 of the project saw the successful appointment of all Chair and Committee Member positions to the Stakeholder Advisory Committee, the completion of five public Committee Meetings and two online meetings, and submission of monthly progress reports to Council.

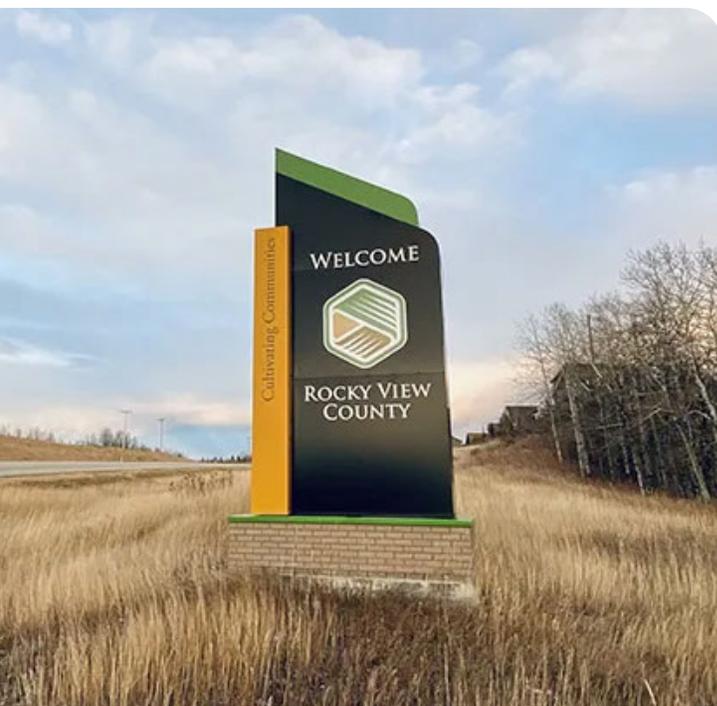
Moving into 2024, the Committee Chair will submit the final Committee Report and recommendations to Council (Q1), marking

the completion of Phase 1. The project will then transition into Phase 2: Draft Plan and Engagement, which is intended to include drafting of the Aggregate Resource Plan, Land Use Bylaw amendments, an Aggregate Site Monitoring Bylaw, MDP section drafts, and updated application standards and requirements. Phase 2 will also see additional public engagement opportunities on the ARP project and should see completion by the end of 2024.

## Land Use Bylaw (LUB) Amendments

The department’s Development team successfully drafted and presented several amendments to the Land Use Bylaw in 2023 to support better management of problematic development. Bylaw updates were completed for the Business, Live-Work District, Special, Future Urban Development District, Special Function Business, and Home-Based Business Uses. Council approved all LUB

amendments in 2023. Additionally, Planning and Development updated the Landowner and Adjacent Landowner information letter mail out for improved communication. Looking ahead to 2024, the department will continue to bring forward changes to modernize and simplify the Land Use Bylaw for ease of use and implementation.



## 2024 ROADMAP

Over the course of 2023, Planning saw steady improvements in customer service, application timelines, and progression on long-range projects. The department will build on this momentum in 2024 through the various projects set out within the **Department 2024 Roadmap**. Key areas that the department will focus on are outlined below.



### RESPONSIVENESS TO CUSTOMERS

Responsiveness will continue to be a key metric for Planning to understand how we serve customers in a timely manner. We will continue to build new tools for improved communication to increase transparency and access to information.



### DEPARTMENT PROJECTS

Our department projects will continue to progress with key documents such as the Municipal Development Plan nearing completion. We will work with neighbouring municipalities, community members, and other stakeholders to build plans that reflect the diverse interests in Rocky View County.

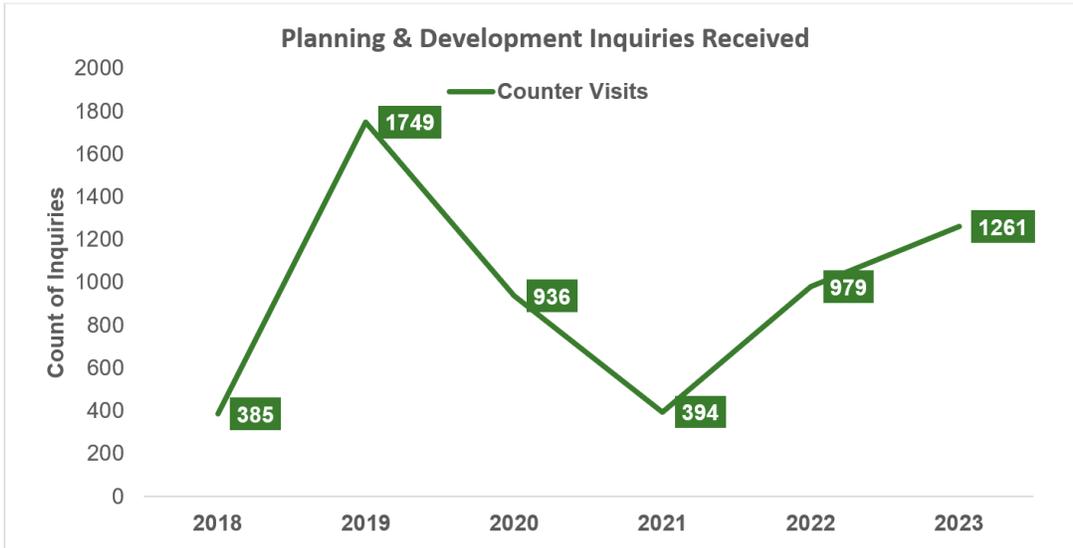


### DEPARTMENT ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY

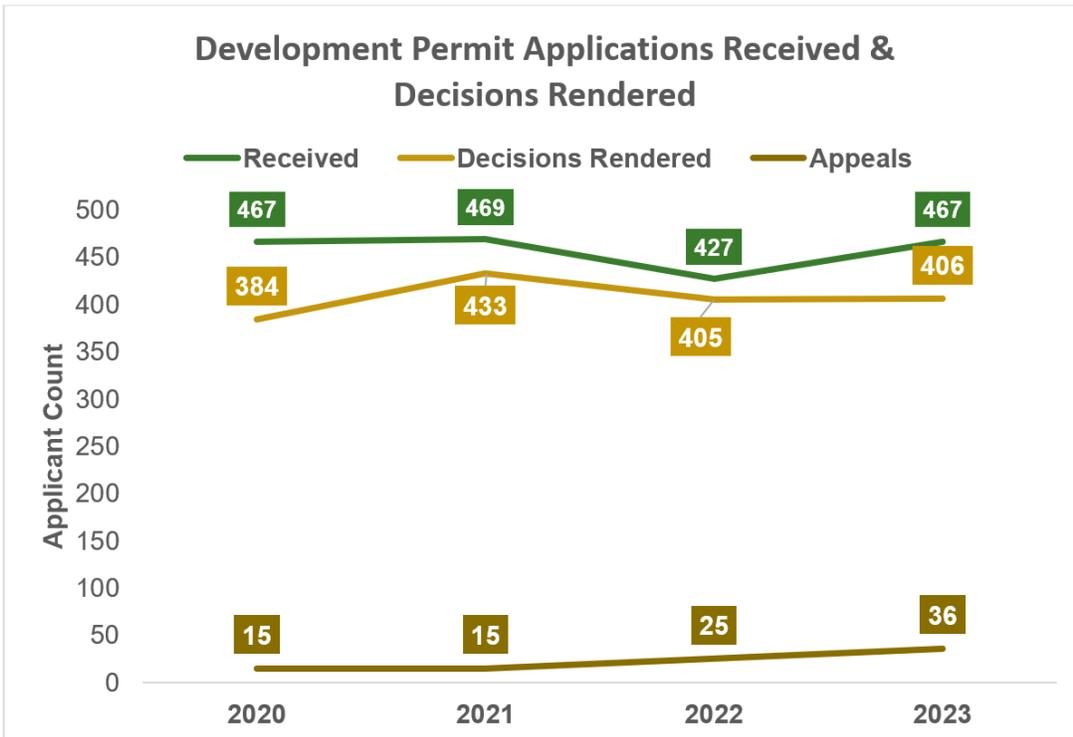
The Department Enhancement Strategy will continue building new resources for improving the staff and customer experience, evolving processes to optimize workflows, and working with IT to create a new digital landscape for the Planning department.

# APPENDIX A: HISTORIC DATA COMPARED TO 2023

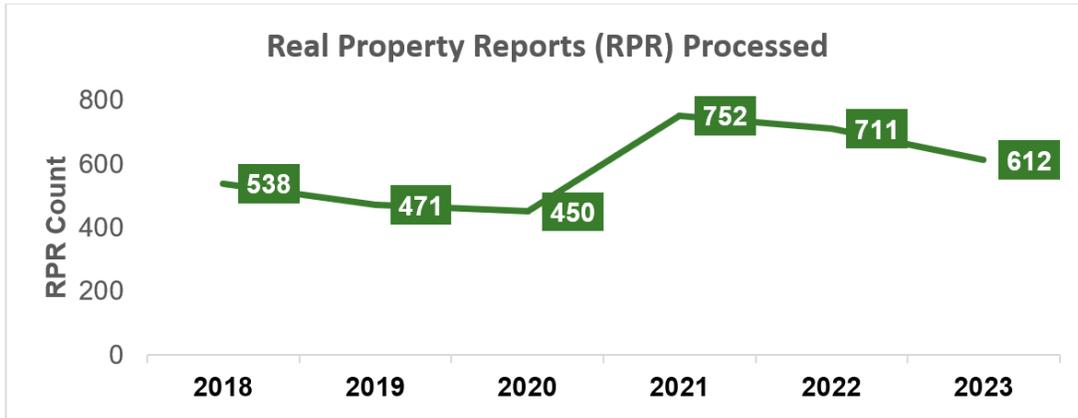
## Inquiries



## Development Permits



## Real Property Reports





**Rocky View County**

**262075 Rocky View Point, Rocky View County, AB T4A 0X2**  
PHONE 403-230-1401 | FAX 403-277-5977 | WEB [www.rockyview.ca](http://www.rockyview.ca)



**ROCKY VIEW COUNTY**