



ROCKY VIEW COUNTY

Agriculture Master Plan



2026
- 2036

Summer 2025



Rocky View County

Agriculture Master Plan

Prepared by Intelligent Futures and Serecon,
with support from Rocky View County and the
Rocky View County Agricultural Service Board,
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2026 - 2036



ROCKY VIEW COUNTY



intelligent
futures



serecon



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Executive Summary

The Rocky View County Agriculture Master Plan (AMP) offers a strategic roadmap to guide agricultural policy with a long-term vision and a ten-year horizon for action. With 89 percent of the County's land zoned for agricultural use, the AMP emphasizes the importance of balancing agricultural preservation with economic diversification, including agri-businesses and agri-tourism.

The plan addresses emerging challenges such as urban development pressure, generational planning, and a changing climate while fostering environmental stewardship and regional collaboration.

Building on the successful implementation of the 2011 plan, the current AMP aligns closely with the *Municipal Development Plan* (MDP) to ensure policies meet current agricultural needs and community priorities. The AMP includes a framework for achieving a long-term vision through clearly defined goals, strategies, metrics, and actions. The AMP's key elements are listed on the following page.



Vision

The AMP vision describes the ideal future state for agriculture in Rocky View County:

Rocky View County is a community where agriculture and agricultural lands are valued, respected, and protected. The agriculture industry is thriving and supports innovation and diversification to adapt to evolving technologies and trends. Agriculture continues to be promoted as essential to the County's social, economic, and ecological sustainability, ensuring its role in a resilient and prosperous future.

See **Section 3.1** for more information →

Goals

Four overarching goal areas guide the direction of the AMP:

1. Promote the critical role of the agricultural sector
2. Increase agricultural sector awareness and facilitate diversification
3. Collaborate with industry partners
4. Preserve and enhance ecology

See **Section 3.2** for more information →

Strategies and Metrics

The AMP proposes strategies to guide its implementation, such as integrating agriculture into other policy documents, promoting agri-business, and encouraging water efficiency. Metrics will measure the plan's impact, such as the extent of agricultural awareness, updated policies, and acres of agricultural land preserved.

See **Section 3.2 (under each goal area header)** for more information →

Actions

The AMP outlines concrete actions for implementation, phased over the designated implementation period (2026-2036).

Through these actions, Rocky View County aims to adapt to both emerging challenges and opportunities, and maintain the county's agricultural heritage for future generations.

See **Section 3.3** for more information →

Land Use and Planning:

- A1. **Implement land use and subdivision monitoring program for the Irrigation Area:** Monitor the extent of land use conversion and subdivision occurring on agricultural lands in the Irrigation Area as the basis for potential future policy area development.
- A2. **Review allowable housing options for agricultural parcels:** Explore policies to support the ongoing viability of agricultural producers and provide flexibility for on-site worker housing that minimize the fragmentation of agricultural land.
- A3. **Recognize the value of agricultural lands, environmental function, and natural assets:** Develop policies that protect agricultural land while balancing productivity with ecological sustainability.
- A4. **Prioritize natural assets in the decision-making process through ALUS and the Agri-Environmental Incentive Program:** Use environmental data to guide decision-making for conservation projects.
- A5. **Support safe transport of agricultural products and equipment through effective transportation planning:** Address infrastructure needs to facilitate the movement of agricultural equipment and goods.

- A6. **Identify suitable locations for renewable energy development on agricultural lands:** Create policies to balance agricultural land use with large-scale renewable energy projects.

- A7. **Review the Agricultural Boundary Design Guidelines:** Update guidelines to minimize conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural uses.

Economic Development:

- A8. **Pursue value-added agricultural investments and opportunities:** Position the County as a hub for value-added agriculture and agricultural innovation.
- A9. **Support sector diversification through agri-business and agri-tourism initiatives:** Build partnerships to increase agri-business and showcase local agriculture and ensure planning policies encourage innovative agri-tourism activities while minimizing conflicts.

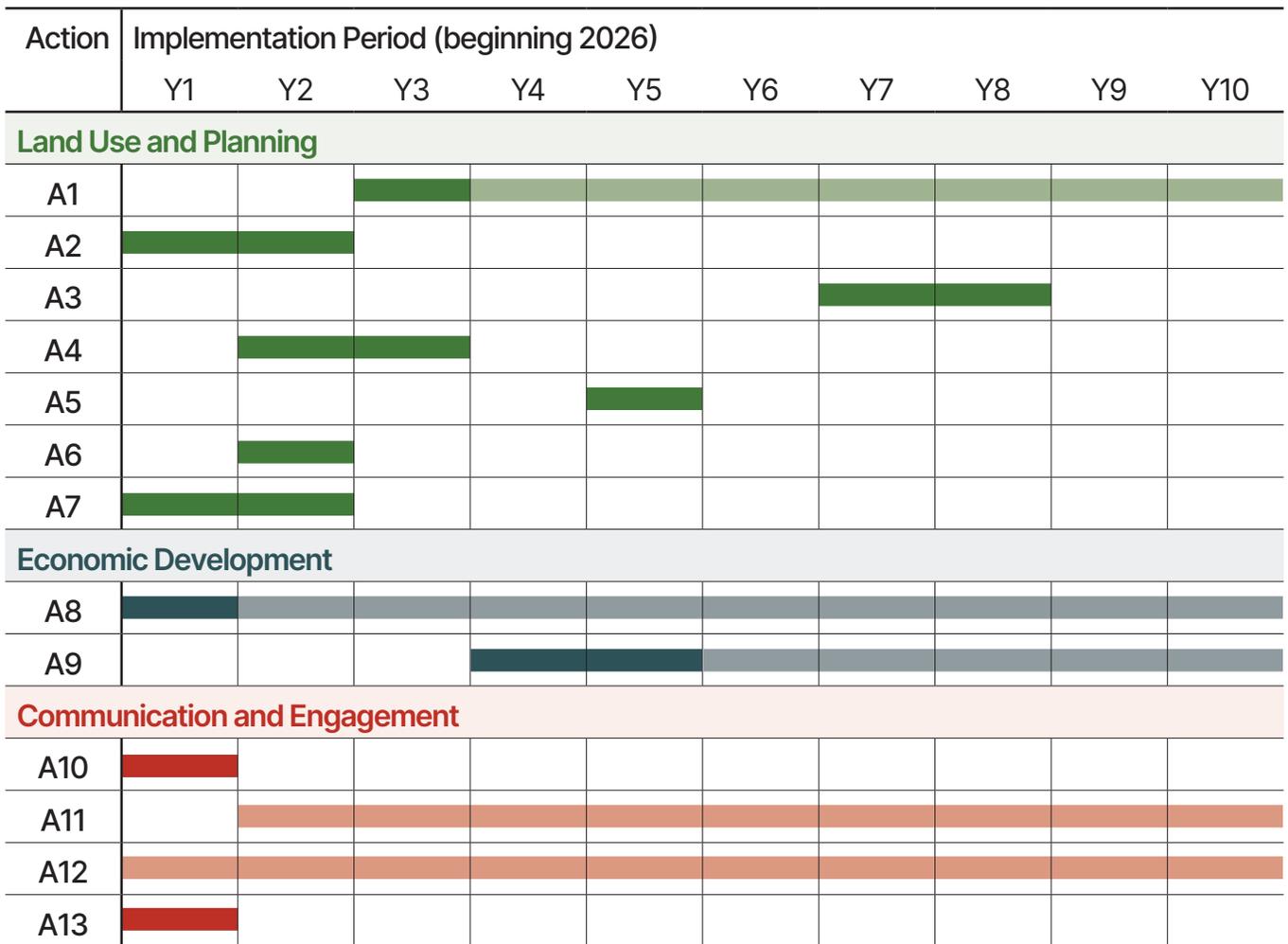


Figure. Implementation Timeline ■ ■ ■ Indicates activities delivered on a rolling basis

Communication and Engagement:

A10. Support education and outreach for legislated Agricultural Services Programs: Promote awareness of agricultural legislation among interest holders to support compliance and sector sustainability.

A12. Launch an agriculture education campaign focused on farming and ranching: Promote agricultural activities through seasonal workshops, the annual Agricultural Tour, and supporting educational materials.

A11. Revise and maintain agriculture-focused public communication materials: Provide up-to-date information on agricultural programs, events, and opportunities in the County.

A13. Supplement County Council and staff training with tools for working with the agriculture sector: Ensure new staff and council members are equipped to support agricultural operations.

Introduction



Agriculture is the backbone of Rocky View County. The prairie landscape provides ideal conditions for farming and supports a diverse range of agricultural activities, from grain and livestock production to smaller-scale farms and ranches.

2.1 Agriculture in Rocky View County

The agricultural diversity of Rocky View County not only fuels the local economy but also shapes its culture and community; the agriculture sector forms a vital part of its identity. This is reflected in the land use of the county, where 89 percent of its land area comprises agricultural uses.

Distinct Agricultural Areas in Rocky View County

The County's land uses are predominantly agricultural in nature and support a wide range of activities including farming, ranching, agricultural processing, and agricultural tourism. The distinct agricultural areas in Rocky View County are listed below.



East Agricultural Area

The East Agricultural Area is generally better suited to dryland farming of cereal crops due to its relatively flat topography, higher-quality soils, and access to irrigation through the Western Irrigation District (WID) canal system. The area also holds agricultural processing and complementary land uses.

Irrigation Zone

Within the East Agricultural Area, the **Irrigation Zone** is primarily focused on the irrigated farming of cereal crops. As the area overlaps with the WID system, these lands are intended to be preserved for current uses.

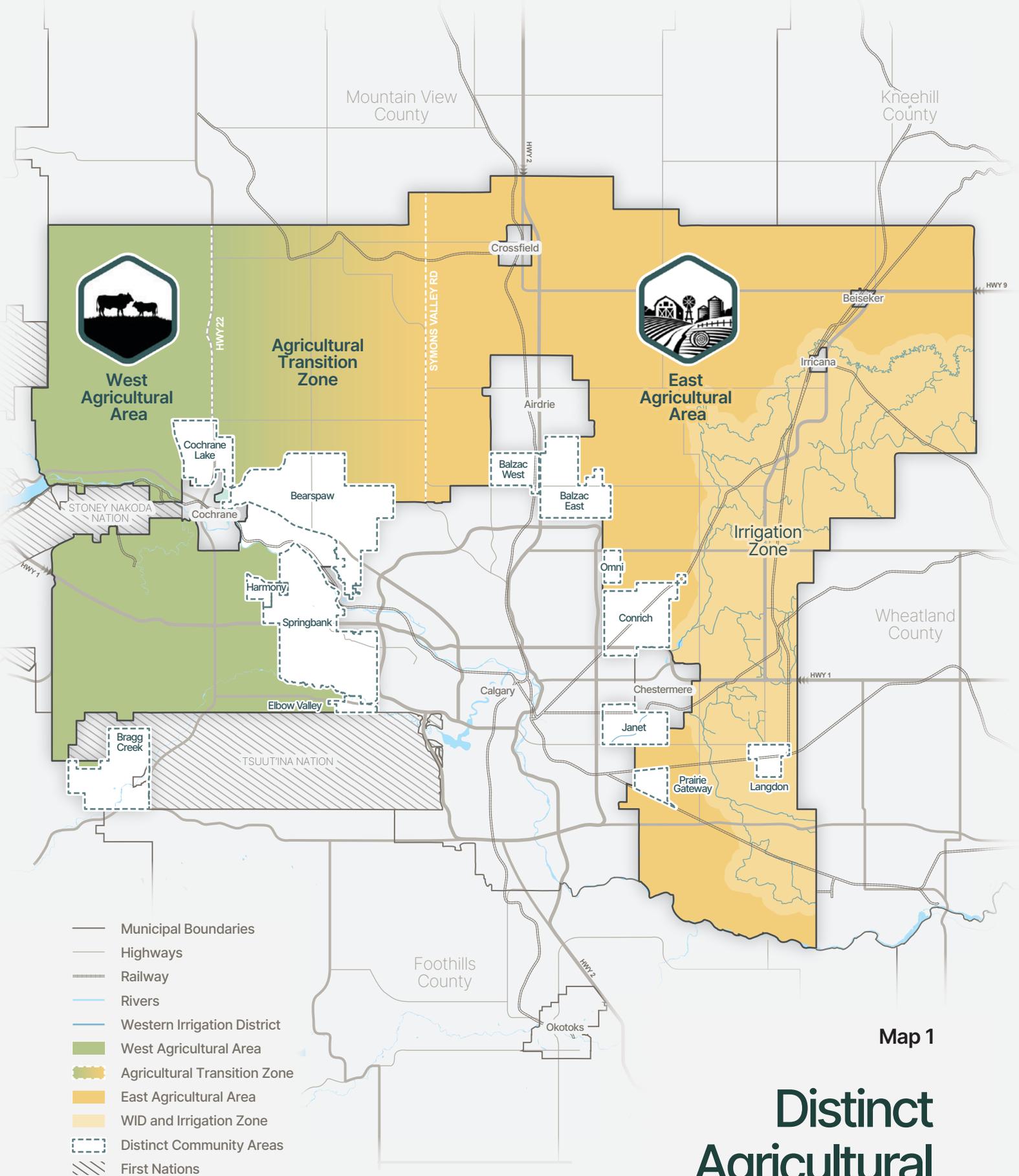


West Agricultural Area

The West Agricultural Area is generally well suited for ranching and grazing due to its rolling landscapes, variable soil conditions, and shorter growing season; it similarly features complementary uses and equestrian services due to land use clustering.

Agricultural Transition Zone

The **Agricultural Transition Zone** serves as a transition between the East and West Agricultural Areas. There is a focus on established and ongoing agricultural activity; as a result, there is greater flexibility in terms of policy design and application in this area.



Map 1

Distinct Agricultural Areas

- Municipal Boundaries
- Highways
- Railway
- Rivers
- Western Irrigation District
- West Agricultural Area
- Agricultural Transition Zone
- East Agricultural Area
- WID and Irrigation Zone
- - - Distinct Community Areas
- ▨ First Nations



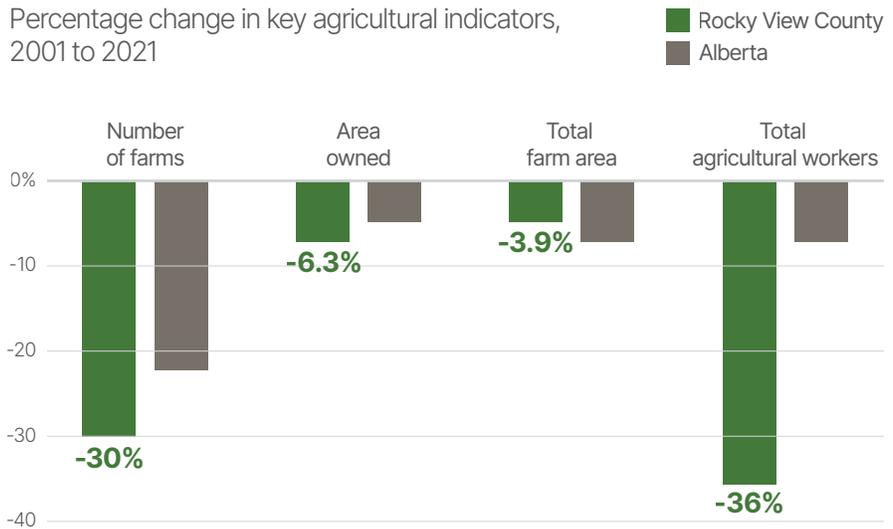
2.2 Trends in the Agriculture Sector

At all geographic scales, the agriculture sector has changed dramatically over the past 20 years. With the onset of new farming technologies, a changing climate, and shifting economic realities, Rocky View County's agricultural industry continues to adapt to these ongoing changes and emergent pressures.

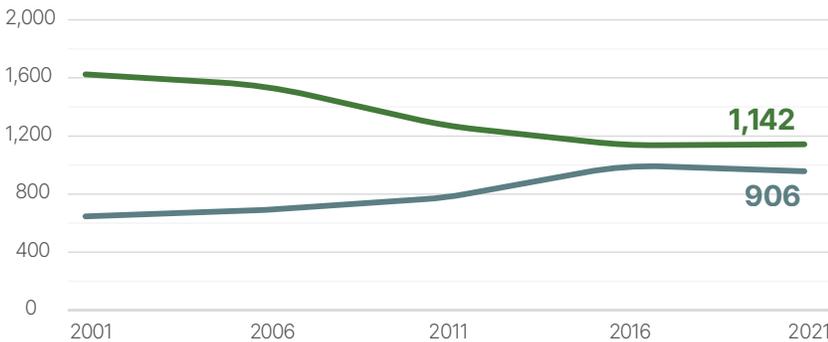
Key Takeaways

Notable Decreases

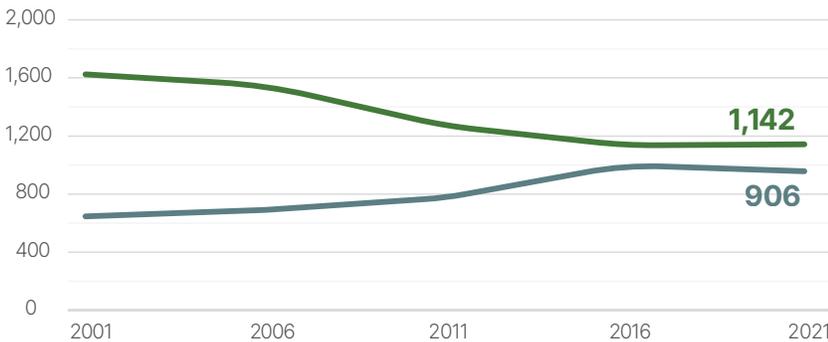
Over a twenty-year period, both Rocky View County and Alberta at large experienced a decreasing number of farms, farm area ownership, the total overall farm area, and the number of agricultural workers.



Average farm size (acres), 2001 to 2021



Number of farms, 2001 to 2021



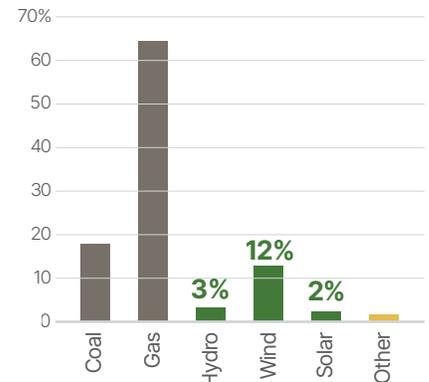
Farm Consolidation

Rocky View County has seen an increase in average farm size (37 percent), and a decrease in the total number of farms (1,142) over a twenty year period.

Solar Infrastructure

Solar farms are being introduced on parcels in the County and across Alberta.

Alberta-wide energy supply, 2022
AESO Annual Market Statistics

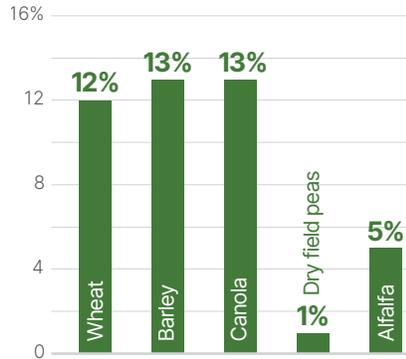


Key Takeaways

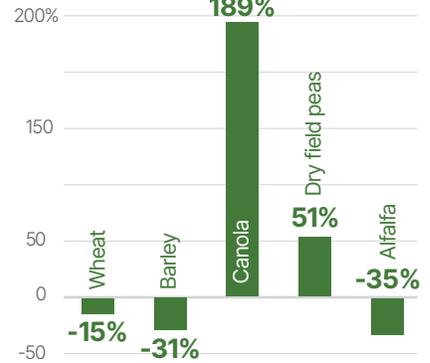
Field Crops

The three largest field crops within the county by share of total farm area are: wheat (12 percent), barley (13 percent), and canola (13 percent). Wheat and barley have both decreased in field crop acres while canola has experienced a sizeable increase (189 percent increase from 2001 to 2021).

Field Crop Share of Total Farm Area, 2021



Change in Field Crop Acres, 2001 to 2021



Farms reporting direct sales

20% change, 2016 to 2021

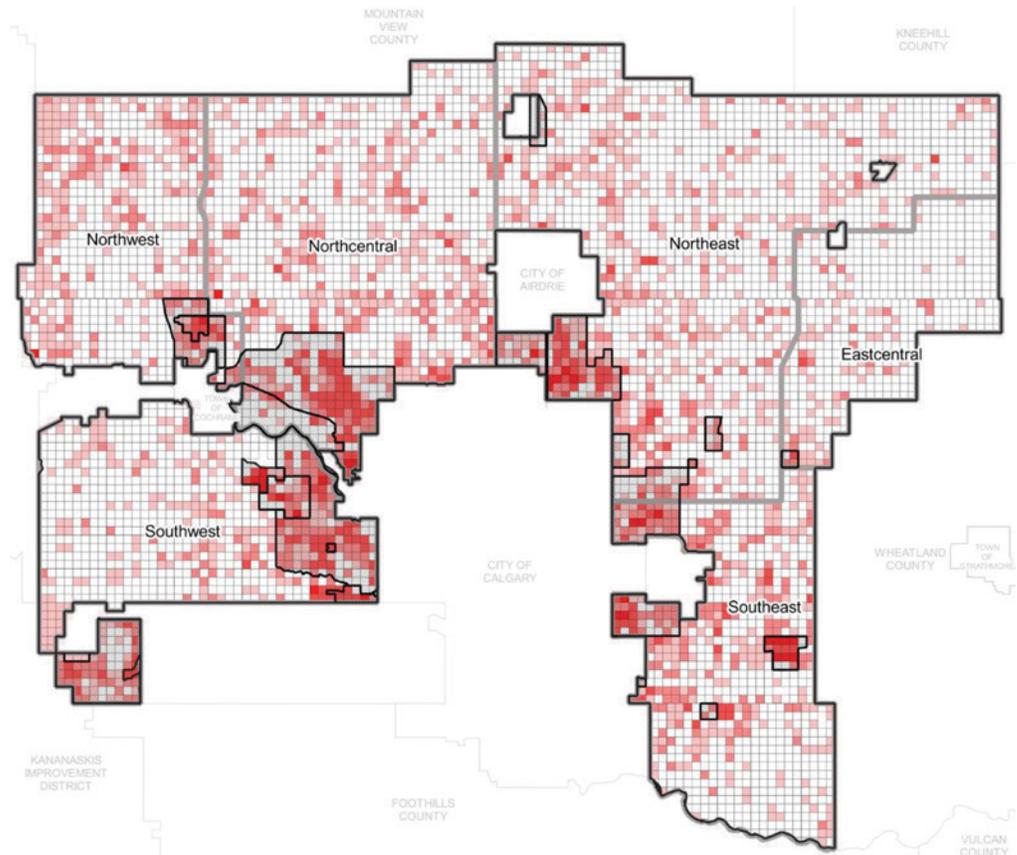
132 farms reporting direct sales, 2021

Direct Sales

There has been an increase in farms conducting direct sales with consumers.

Land Fragmentation

Rocky View County has experienced increased land parcel fragmentation; this is predominant in lands designated under Area Structure Plans but has also occurred across the county outside of these designated areas.



2.3 Tensions in the Agriculture Sector

Given the rate and extent of change in agriculture within the county, there is a continual need to explore and understand the producer community's perspectives on the state of agricultural livelihoods in the county. In the first phase of the AMP planning process in spring 2024, several challenges and opportunities were raised with respect to the agricultural sector within the county.

Protection of agricultural lands

Urban development pressure prompted by economic opportunity and population growth has led to the loss of productive agricultural land in Rocky View County. In the first phase of AMP community engagement, producers indicated the need to protect these lands from such development pressures. Concurrently, respondents suggested that a reduction in regulation from Rocky View County is desirable on the basis that this would allow landowners and producers to continue the practice of agriculture. They indicated that their expertise and experience should be trusted in determining the best use of their agricultural land.

There is an observed preference from this feedback towards the creation of agricultural land use policies that provide flexibility for landowners (for reasons including succession planning and housing for on-farm workers) that do not cause a significant increase in the subdivision of land.

Financial sustainability

Participants in AMP engagement expressed concern about financial sustainability through the lens of government support vs. perceived over-regulation. Cited issues of financial sustainability include the level of municipal taxation, real estate speculation in the region, and farm succession planning. Engagement participants noted perceived constraints placed on land use by the municipal planning process and regulatory framework.

However, they concurrently expressed appreciation for County-led enforcement and administrative support in instances of land use conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural uses.

Perception of agriculture

Producers perceive a lack of understanding and support for the agricultural sector and an acknowledgement of the value it brings to the region from the general public (i.e., those who do not work in the agriculture sector) and Rocky View County administration and Council. This perspective is motivated in part by the county's location within the Calgary region and the adjacent urban context; city residents are perceived to have little understanding of the necessary operations and associated requirements that support agricultural operations. Effective communications and education is intended to improve understanding among identified interest holders (outside of the sector) in the county.

Productivity and environmental sustainability

Agricultural lands contribute to environmental sustainability in the county, while simultaneously, the productivity of the land stands in some tension with a purely environmental focus. In general, engagement findings show support for the integration of environmental considerations into agricultural practices. To maintain agricultural productivity in these ecological landscapes, there is expressed support for:

- more weed control measures in the county to prevent the spread of invasive pests and species
- monitoring and regulation of topsoil disposal, and
- sustainable management of water resources.

Desired vs. undesired infrastructure

Infrastructure was a common point of concern raised during the engagement period. For example, the transport of goods and access to water—underpinned by the region's transportation and water infrastructure, respectively—are considered integral to sustainable agricultural operations. Barriers to access of this infrastructure can have direct and negative impacts on producers. Concurrently, respondents indicated low support for renewable energy infrastructure—for example, active solar and wind farms—being developed on productive agricultural lands.

In this respect, infrastructure policies will need to continue to address water and road infrastructure needs. Industrial/utility-scale renewable energy development was not supported by the agricultural community and may require separate land use criteria under commercial and/or industrial zoning.

2.4 The Planning Framework for Agriculture

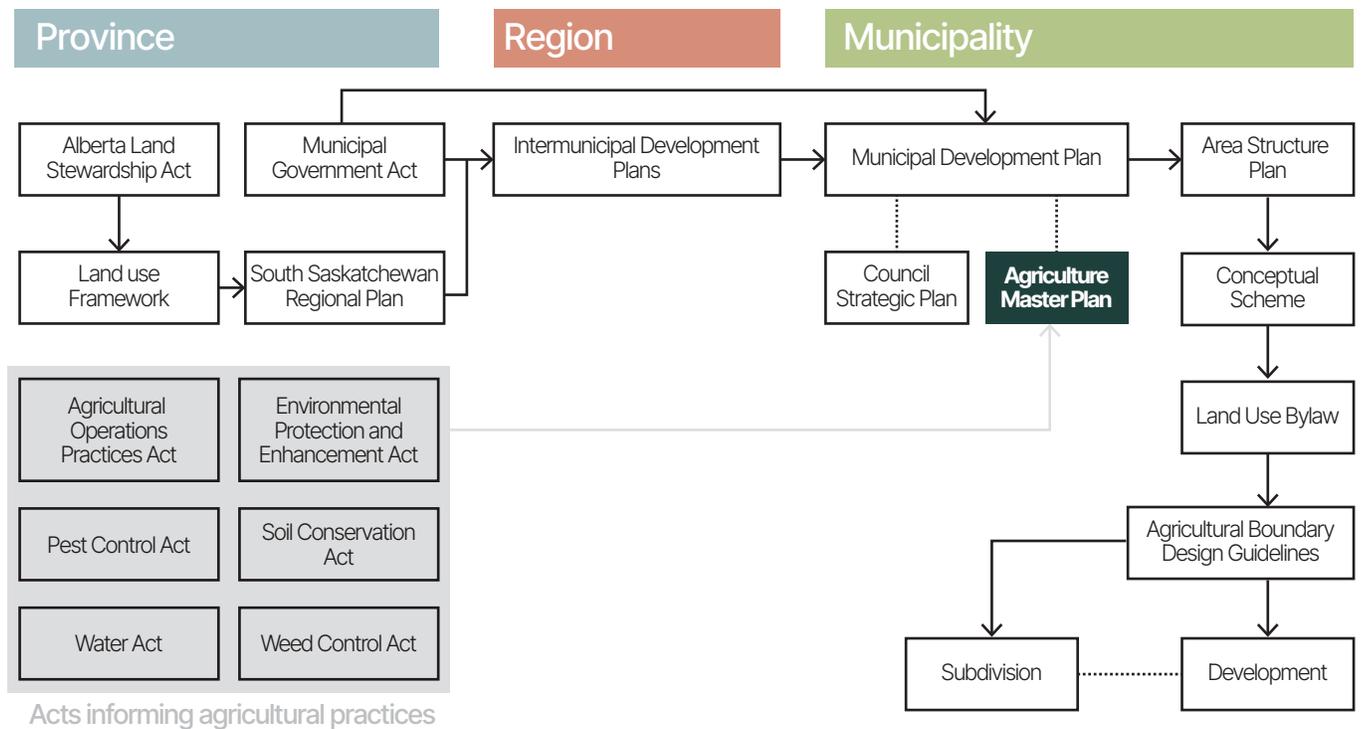
Agricultural planning in Rocky View County is shaped by a planning framework that reflects a blend of provincial legislation, intermunicipal collaboration within the region, and municipal policies.

Provincial Legislation: Government of Alberta

At the provincial level, agriculture and land use policies are guided by the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA), which grants municipalities the authority to manage land-use planning through guiding statutory plans. Additionally, the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* (ALSA) establishes regional planning frameworks, ensuring that municipalities align their local policies with provincial land use priorities like sustainable development, environmental conservation, and agricultural land preservation.

A key component of this framework is the *South Saskatchewan Regional Plan* (SSRP), which specifically addresses land use and resource management in the South Saskatchewan region, which includes Rocky View County.

Below:
The planning framework in Rocky View County.



The SSRP emphasizes:

- **Sustainable agricultural practices:** The plan identifies areas suitable for agriculture, promotes practices that enhance productivity, and safeguards agricultural land from non-agricultural development pressures.
- **Water management:** The SSRP outlines strategies for protecting water resources critical to agricultural operations, recognizing the interdependence of agriculture and water sustainability.
- **Biodiversity and ecosystem health:** The plan encourages practices that protect ecosystems while supporting agricultural land use, ensuring that both agricultural and natural landscapes thrive.

Several provincial acts also shape land use planning and agricultural operations:

- **Agricultural Operation Practices Act (AOPA):** The Act regulates farming practices, with particular focus on the livestock sector, and ensures that agricultural operations follow environmental standards while protecting air, soil, and water resources. The Act also establishes the permitting and related compliance processes for the construction of confined feeding operations.
- **Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act (EPEA):** The Act serves as Alberta's main legislation for regulating air, water, land, and biodiversity. It aims to protect, enhance, and promote the sustainable use of the environment by specifying activities that require approval or registration before proceeding.
- **Pest Control Act, Soil Conservation Act, and Weed Control Act:** These acts ensure sustainable land management by addressing invasive species, pests, and soil degradation, promoting the long-term health of agricultural lands across the province.
- **Water Act:** The Act focuses on conserving and managing water resources in the province by regulating water use and allocation. It mandates the creation of a water management framework and the development of detailed water management plans. The Act outlines the right to divert water, prioritizes water rights among users, specifies the tools available for water diversion and use, and establishes decision-making processes for resource governance. Additionally, it provides enforcement measures to ensure its objectives are achieved.



Municipal Land Use Planning: Rocky View County

Rocky View County's agricultural policies are integrated into its land-use planning framework through several interrelated plans and regulations:

- **Municipal Development Plan (MDP):** The MDP is the County's primary statutory document, guiding long-term growth, land use, and development priorities. It establishes broad policies to protect agricultural land and promote sustainable farming practices across the municipality.
- **Agriculture Master Plan (AMP):** The AMP is a roadmap for supporting agricultural needs in Rocky View County. It determines the priorities for municipal support and identifies actions and goals that work towards the County's ideal future for agriculture. This plan is intended to be an aspirational and agricultural-focused complement to the MDP.
- **Area Structure Plans (ASP):** ASP are statutory plans that provide detailed land use direction for specific areas within the County. They guide subdivision and development while ensuring alignment with the goals established in higher-level plans.
- **Conceptual Schemes (CS):** A CS is a non-statutory document, informed by the provincial MGA and subdivision and development regulations, that provides a plan of future subdivision or development that applies to a specific parcel of land. It also attends to the future potential of adjacent or remnant parcels to be further subdivided in the future.

- **Land Use Bylaw (LUB):** The LUB regulates zoning and land-use activities within the County. It designates areas for agricultural use and sets specific development standards for farming operations, agricultural industries, and other related activities.
- **Agricultural Boundary Design Guidelines (ABDG):** These guidelines aim to minimize conflicts between agricultural operations and non-agricultural uses, such as residential development. They provide best practices for buffer zones, setbacks, and land-use transitions along the boundaries of agricultural lands.
- **Development Permit (DP):** A DP must be obtained for new development (construction, renovation, and changes to how a building or land is being used). A submitted DP is reviewed by the County administration to ensure compliance with the LUB. In certain instances, applicants may need to apply for a land use redesignation prior to application for a DP.

Through the planning framework, Rocky View County balances agricultural preservation with other interests in the community. The integration of provincial and municipal policies ensures that agricultural land remains protected while supporting economic development and sustainable community growth.



2.5 Refreshing the Agriculture Master Plan

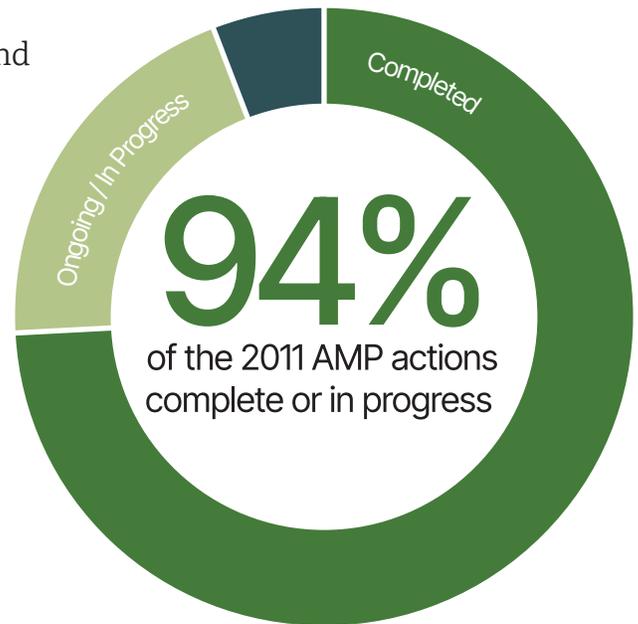
The current AMP builds off the foundation set by the preceding 2011 AMP, which outlined a vision, goals and actions to support agriculture in the County. The County has successfully implemented or is in the process at writing of implementing **94 percent** of the identified actions in the prior AMP.

Building on the momentum established by the 2011 document, the updated AMP supports the County and local producers as they navigate contemporary agricultural challenges. While containing a robust set of actions, the prior AMP was inflexible to new and changing agricultural issues, such as regional policy, renewable energy, and topsoil.

The update that led to this plan aimed to:

- Identify a long-term vision for supporting both existing agricultural operations and providing new opportunities for diversification of the county's agriculture sector.
- Update the 2011 AMP based on refreshed goals and best practices to ensure the flexibility for the preservation and prosperity of the agriculture sector for future generations.
- Capture and reflect the updated context for the agricultural sector in the county.
- Align AMP considerations with a concurrent update to the MDP, to ensure that the latter document meaningfully reflects the needs of the agricultural community today.

Much has changed since the first AMP was adopted in 2011. To capture new challenges for agricultural businesses, the AMP planning process has explored what is currently working well and areas where policy and service delivery can be improved. The current AMP will plan for a wide range of contemporary agricultural challenges, including: generational planning, sector diversification, water and roadway infrastructure, tourism, and renewable energy.



Above: The status of 2011 AMP implementation, at time of writing.

3.0

What is the vision for agriculture in Rocky View County?

Direction



The following section establishes the vision, goals, strategies, and actions for the AMP. Each component is described briefly below:

- **Vision:** A concise, compelling description of the ideal state of the future.
- **Goals:** An ideal state of the pillars of the AMP. These provide additional description and direction to the vision.
- **Strategies:** Areas of strategically important activities to move towards the vision and goals. These include ongoing activities and allow for alignment of activities that are not reflected in the actions of the AMP.
- **Metrics:** A measurement of progress toward the goals and strategies. Metrics are classified as **impact** (to be measured at the conclusion of the implementation window) and **progress** (to be measured on a yearly basis for evaluation of progress).
- **Actions:** Detailed activities that provide specificity to the streams of action and can be achieved within the next ten years.

3.1 Vision

Rocky View County is a community where agriculture and agricultural lands are valued, respected, and protected. The agriculture industry is thriving and supports innovation and diversification to adapt to evolving technologies and trends. Agriculture continues to be promoted as essential to the County's social, economic, and ecological sustainability, ensuring its role in a resilient and prosperous future.

3.2 Goals

Goal Area 1: Promote the critical role of the agricultural sector

Promote the critical role of agriculture in Rocky View County and the region while enhancing awareness and understanding of its value to the community and economy.

Strategies

1.1 Integrate agricultural considerations into all large-scale policies and plans to ensure agriculture is recognized as a vital component of Rocky View County.

1.2 Create and revise strategies as needed to support the long-term financial viability of the agriculture industry for future generations.

1.3 Create and promote tools and procedures to raise awareness of agricultural needs and practices to reduce land use and transportation conflicts.

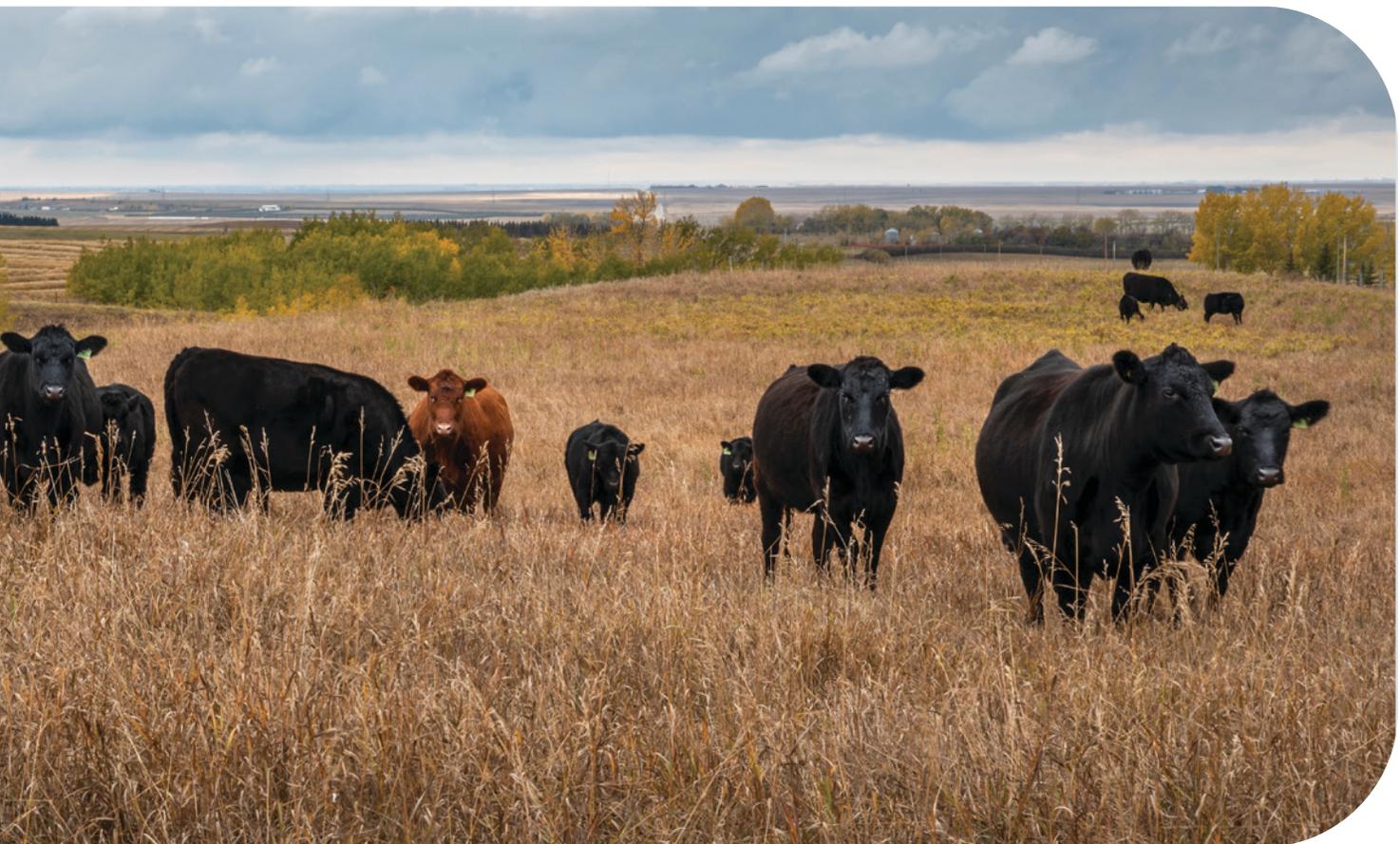
1.4 Promote the value of agriculture to regional partners and adjacent businesses, landowners, and residents to support respect and awareness for the industry.

1.5 Integrate environmental and social benefits of agriculture into communications messaging to build support and awareness for the industry within the region.

Goal Area 1: Promote the critical role of the agricultural sector

Metrics

- **Progress:** Number of updated or new plans and policies that specify agriculture as a priority consideration.
- **Progress:** Portion of public-facing materials noting the sustainability and community value of agriculture.
- **Progress:** Number of promotional activities conducted or contributed to in order to support agricultural awareness.
- **Progress:** Number of online interactions (website or social media) with targeted agricultural content.
- **Impact:** Rocky View County farm size industry structure changes (e.g., Census of Agriculture changes in number of farms in each cropland and livestock size class) in comparison to applicable regional and urban-periphery municipalities (e.g., Foothills County, Red Deer County and composite of counties in the Edmonton Metropolitan Region).
- **Impact:** Level of agricultural awareness and support as measured by responses to questionnaires delivered during the AMP implementation period.



Goal Area 2: Increase agricultural sector awareness and facilitate diversification

Increase awareness and facilitate opportunities for the diversification of the agriculture industry in Rocky View County.

Strategies

2.1 Include agri-tourism, agri-business, and value-added agriculture in all economic development and planning considerations to reduce barriers to diversification.

2.2 Support innovative agricultural practices through adaptive policy and business development to support agricultural productivity.

2.3 Build strong connections to existing agricultural support and value-added agricultural businesses to enable productive review of infrastructure and policy investments.

2.4 Promote opportunities for residents to benefit from their own small-scale agricultural initiatives.

2.5 Deliver strategic marketing initiatives to support the diversification of the agricultural industry.

Metrics

- **Progress:** Number of agri-tourism and diversified agriculture promotional activities undertaken or contributed to.
- **Progress:** Number and percentage of agricultural support and value-added agriculture businesses engaged with through economic development activities.
- **Impact:** Number of 'Open Farm Days' hosts and visitors in Rocky View County.
- **Impact:** Number of value-added agriculture businesses operating in Rocky View County, over AMP implementation period.

Goal Area 3: Collaborate with industry partners

Collaborate with the agricultural industry to update Rocky View County and regional policies, addressing opportunities, resolving conflicts, and supporting economic growth.

Strategies

3.1 Cooperate with other municipalities to support diversification, land use, and transportation matters within the region's agricultural sector.

3.2 Elevate and implement tools and policies to protect agricultural lands from fragmentation.

3.3 Create water efficiency plans and policies that prioritize protection of irrigated lands.

3.4 Capture and report on actions related to the MDP to integrate observed agricultural trends into policy.

3.5 Proactively work with agricultural interest-holders and the Agricultural Service Board to identify opportunities and conflicts between policy and agriculture.

3.6 Use AMP goals in Rocky View County planning framework to ensure alignment between agriculture industry and municipal government direction.

Metrics

- **Progress:** Number of agricultural issues addressed with the Agricultural Service Board.
- **Progress:** Number of AMP Goals in alignment with County Council's Strategic Plan and other high-level plans.
- **Impact:** Number of parcels, and percentage change in number of parcels in distinct agriculture areas.
- **Impact:** Percentage of land within active agricultural use as measured within various parcel size categories (i.e., use land cover and parcel data to conduct GIS analysis).
- **Impact:** Number of irrigated acres in Rocky View County.
- **Impact:** Acres of agricultural land converted for renewable energy development (i.e., solar and wind turbine footprint.)

Goal Area 4: Preserve and enhance ecology

Acknowledge the value of natural assets on agricultural lands, and establish appropriate policies, incentives, and regulation to preserve and enhance the ecological integrity and connectivity of the region.

Strategies

4.1 Build relationships with sectoral and environmental partners to support environmental stewardship of agricultural land and the economic viability of ecologically-beneficial agricultural practices.

4.2 Apply an environmental lens to agricultural decision-making processes within ecological networks to preserve and enhance ecological connectivity and integrity.

4.3 Enhance the existing *Agri-Environmental Incentive Program* and develop new incentives, education, communication materials, and connections to provincial initiatives to support environmental sustainability through agriculture.

4.4 Build on-farm capacity to manage drought conditions through best management practices and assistance with applications to funding opportunities.

Metrics

- **Impact:** Number of acres within Rocky View County enrolled in ALUS program.
- **Impact:** Number of producers using the agri-environmental incentive program.
- **Impact:** External funds for environmental stewardship projects on agricultural lands undertaken by residents (e.g., *Wetland Replacement Program*, ALUS partners, federal and provincial funding programs, etc.).

3.3 Actions

The following actions follow from the high-level strategy introduced in Sections 3.1 and 3.2. A phased approach to plan implementation has been created, reflective of discussions with administration and an understanding for how the results of one action may inform the development of another. Phasing of actions is focused on the first ten-year interval (2026-2036) of plan implementation.

Action Structure

Each of the identified actions includes supporting information to provide clarity, sharpen focus, and encourage prioritization of effort. Each action contains the following information:

- **Category:** The overarching category to which the action belongs.
- **Action name:** The identified name of the action.
- **Description:** An explanation of the action to be taken.
- **Purpose:** The reason for the action's inclusion in the AMP.
- **Key steps:** The major steps necessary to implement the action.
- **Action owner:** The County department responsible for implementing the action.
- **Municipal role:** The type of role the County assumes in delivering the action (for more information, consult Section 4.2: Roles).
- **End state:** The conditions under which the action is considered complete.
- **Goal alignment:** How the action aligns with the listed AMP goals.
- **Strategy alignment:** Given goal alignment, the supporting strategies which inform and are informed by the action.
- **Initiatives related to this action:** Supporting County activities—current and ongoing—that inform or are otherwise supported by this action.
- **Estimated resources required:** The assumed resources required to complete the action as described.
- **Implementation partners:** Key interest-holding departments in Rocky View County administration and external groups that can support implementation of the action.
- **Anticipated timeframe:** The timeframe in which the implementation of the action is expected.

Action Summary

Land Use and Planning:

- A1. Implement land use and subdivision monitoring program for the Irrigation Area
- A2. Review allowable housing options for agricultural parcels
- A3. Recognize the value of agricultural lands, environmental function, and natural assets
- A4. Prioritize natural assets in the decision-making process through ALUS and the Agri-Environmental Incentive Program
- A5. Support safe transport of agricultural products and equipment through effective transportation planning
- A6. Identify suitable locations for renewable energy development on agricultural lands
- A7. Review the Agricultural Boundary Design Guidelines

Economic Development:

- A8. Pursue value-added agricultural investments and opportunities
- A9. Support sector diversification through agri-business and agri-tourism initiatives

Communication and Engagement:

- A10. Support education and outreach for legislated Agricultural Services Programs
- A11. Revise and maintain agriculture-focused public communication materials
- A12. Launch an agriculture education campaign focused on farming and ranching
- A13. Supplement County Council and staff training with tools for working with the agricultural sector

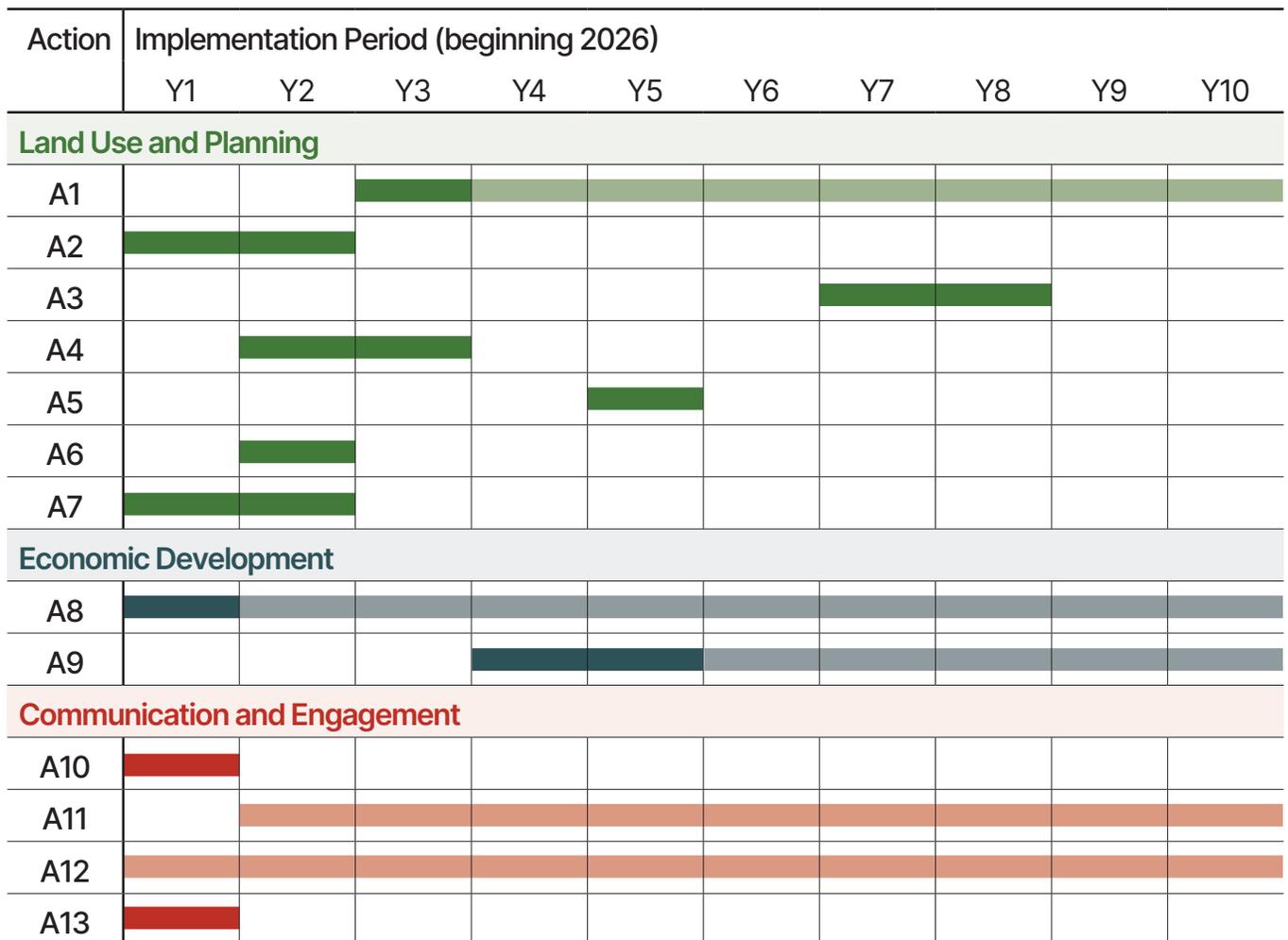


Figure. Implementation Timeline ■ ■ ■ Indicates activities delivered on a rolling basis

Action 1

Implement land use and subdivision monitoring program for the Irrigation Area

Description:

Develop and implement a monitoring program to track the subdivision and conversion of agricultural lands under irrigation in the Irrigation Area. The program will gather data and insights necessary to inform decision-making as to whether an additional layer of planning policy is required to support the preservation of agricultural lands in this area, and if so, guide the creation of a pilot policy area to be included in a future amendment to the MDP.

Action Owner:

- Planning

Purpose:

To monitor the extent of subdivision and land use changes in the Irrigation Area, preserving valuable irrigated lands and ensuring that future policies align with agricultural priorities and sustainable land use practices.

Key steps:

1. **Design monitoring framework:** Establish criteria for tracking subdivision and land use changes in the Irrigation Area, focusing on irrigated lands. Identify data sources and methodologies for ongoing data collection. This will also involve definition of the geographic extent of this distinct agricultural area.
 2. **Collect baseline data:** Gather initial data on existing parcels, subdivision trends, and land use within the Irrigation Area to establish baseline understanding.
 3. **Engage stakeholders:** Work with the WID and County planners to ensure monitoring efforts align with on-the-ground realities and priorities.
 4. **Analyze trends:** Use collected data to identify patterns and emerging pressures on irrigated agricultural lands in the defined area.
 5. **Inform policy development:** Use results to inform decision-making respecting the potential creation of a pilot policy area for the Irrigation Area that regulates subdivision and land redesignation.
-

Action 1, continued

Municipal role:

- **Leader/Owner:** Rocky View County directly owns actions and embodies the aims of the AMP through its own processes.
-

End state:

A comprehensive monitoring program is operational, providing clear insights into land use trends in the Irrigation Area, with data informing the potential development of a pilot policy area that safeguards irrigated agricultural lands.

Goal alignment:

- **Goal Area 3:** Collaborate with the agricultural industry to update Rocky View County and regional policies, addressing opportunities, resolving conflicts, and supporting economic growth.
-

Strategy alignment:

- **S3.2** Elevate and implement tools and policies to protect agricultural lands from fragmentation.
 - **S3.3** Create water efficiency plans and policies that prioritize protection of irrigated lands.
 - **S3.4** Capture and report on actions related to the MDP to integrate observed agricultural trends into policy.
-

Initiatives related to this action:

- MDP Update
-

Estimated resources required:

- 1 staff member, part-time
-

Implementation partners:

- County Administration:
 - » Agricultural & Environmental Services
 - Agricultural Service Board
-

Anticipated timeframe:

- Year 3, repeating each Q3 thereafter (monitoring)
-

Action 2

Review allowable housing options for agricultural parcels

Description:

This action involves a comprehensive review of housing allowances and discretionary uses on parcels designated for agricultural use to (a) support the ongoing viability of agricultural producers in the county and (b) provide flexibility for farms expanding their operations with on-site worker accommodations.

The review will explore alternate housing opportunities in the LUB to mitigate the subdivision and fragmentation of agricultural land, and therefore preserving it for long-term agricultural use.

Purpose:

To identify and evaluate housing options on agricultural parcels that reduce subdivision pressure and maintain the contiguity and integrity of agricultural land, while supporting agricultural operations with evolving housing needs.

Key steps:

1. **Conduct a County-wide review:** Assess the infrastructure needs, costs, and policy implications of allowing more than two dwellings per agricultural parcel.
2. **Engage the agricultural community:** Consult with farmers to understand their anticipated needs for additional housing units on agricultural parcels (e.g., family housing or worker accommodations).
3. **Share findings with the public:** Present the review findings to the broader community to gather feedback and refine the direction for housing policy.
4. **Develop recommendations:** Create a set of policy recommendations for future LUB updates to support housing allowances while balancing agricultural preservation.

Action Owner:

- Planning

Action 2, continued

Municipal role:

- **Leader/Owner:** Rocky View County directly owns actions and embodies the aims of the AMP through its own processes.
 - **Broker:** Rocky View County acts as a facilitator to bring together organizations and individuals to achieve collective impact on the aims of the AMP.
-

End state:

The review of housing allowances on agricultural land is completed, and recommendations for planning framework updates are circulated for interest holder feedback and further refinement.

Goal alignment:

- **Goal Area 2:** Increase awareness and facilitate opportunities for the diversification of the agriculture industry in Rocky View County.
 - **Goal Area 3:** Collaborate with the agricultural industry to update Rocky View County and regional policies, addressing opportunities, resolving conflicts, and supporting economic growth.
-

Strategy alignment:

- **S2.2** Support innovative agricultural practices through adaptive policy and business development to support agricultural productivity.
 - **S3.5** Proactively work with interest-holders and the Agricultural Service Board to identify opportunities and conflicts between policy and agriculture.
-

Initiatives related to this action:

- LUB
 - MDP Update
-

Estimated resources required:

- Multiple staff members, part-time
-

Implementation partners:

- County Administration:
 - » Agricultural & Environmental Services
 - » Economic Development
-

Anticipated timeframe:

- Years 1 through 2 (assumed LUB update during this time)
-

Action 3

Recognize the value of agricultural lands, environmental function, and natural assets

Description:

Develop and utilize environmental data to ensure the preservation of agricultural lands, environmental function, and natural assets. Agricultural lands offer essential natural assets encouraging soil health, biodiversity, water regulation, and carbon sequestration. Ensuring sustainable land use helps maintain these environmental benefits while supporting agricultural productivity.

Local studies will be conducted to assess the viability of conservation efforts, focusing on key environmental assets such as water availability and drainage basins.

Purpose:

To ensure the protection of environmental function and natural assets within agricultural lands, balancing agricultural productivity with ecological sustainability.

Key steps:

1. **Leverage environmental sustainability data:** Use county-level environmental sustainability data, the *Miistakis Institute Ecological Corridors* report, and other sources to guide policies and inform future development decisions.
 2. **Conduct local studies to confirm conservation viability:** Assess local water availability, drainage basins, and other environmental assets to verify sustainability efforts.
 3. **Develop policies in MDP:** Create policies within the MDP to recognize and protect agricultural lands, environmental functions, and natural assets.
 4. **Integrate environmental valuation in the planning process:** Integrate the importance of agricultural lands and natural assets into all relevant municipal planning decisions to ensure sustainable growth.
-

Action Owner:

- Agricultural & Environmental Services
- Planning

Action 3, continued

Municipal role:

- **Leader/Owner:** Rocky View County directly owns actions and embodies the aims of the AMP through its own processes.
 - **Supporter:** Rocky View County assists and builds capacity for other organizations towards the aims of the AMP.
-

End state:

Agricultural lands, environmental functions, and natural assets are consistently considered and integrated into the County’s planning process.

Goal alignment:

- **Goal Area 3:** Collaborate with the agricultural industry to update Rocky View County and regional policies, addressing opportunities, resolving conflicts, and supporting economic growth.
 - **Goal Area 4:** Acknowledge the value of natural assets on agricultural lands, and establish appropriate policies and incentives to protect and enhance the ecological integrity and connectivity of the region.
-

Strategy alignment:

- **S3.2** Elevate and implement tools and policies to protect agricultural lands from fragmentation.
 - **S4.1** Build relationships with sectoral and environmental partners to support environmental stewardship of agricultural land and the economic viability of ecologically-beneficial agricultural practices.
 - **S4.2** Apply an environmental lens to agricultural decision-making processes within ecological networks to preserve and enhance ecological connectivity and integrity.
-

Initiatives related to this action:

- MDP Update
 - ALUS program
 - Miistakis Institute Ecological Corridors
-

Estimated resources required:

- 1 staff member, part-time
 - New staff member(s) (at full implementation)
-

Implementation partners:

- County Administration:
 - » Asset Management
 - ALUS
 - Watershed Stewardship Groups
-

Anticipated timeframe:

- Years 7 through 8
-

Action 4

Prioritize natural assets in the decision-making process through ALUS and the Agri-Environmental Incentive Program

Description:

The ALUS program is a scalable, turn-key solution developed at the community level that engages farmers and ranchers in creating, restoring and enhancing new acres of nature to respond to local environmental challenges, build community resilience, and respond to both a changing climate and biodiversity loss. The *Agri-Environmental Incentive Program* is available to all Rocky View County residents and provides funding to offset the cost of environmentally beneficial projects. It is operated on a first-come first-serve basis while funding is available.

Rocky View County will prioritize natural assets and ecological functions within ALUS and the *Agri-Environmental Incentive Program* to facilitate informed decision-making through a natural asset inventory and defined criteria for ecological function and services.

Purpose:

Reflective of the contributions of agricultural lands to environmental sustainability and stewardship in Rocky View County, this action will inform decision-making and prioritization of ALUS and the *Agri-Environmental Incentive Program* projects through an environmental and ecological lens that prioritizes natural assets and ecological function.

Key steps:

1. **Review Agri-Environmental Incentive Program:** Use local environmental studies to support viability of this review.
2. **Categorize natural assets:** Categorize assets and define their ecological functions within Rocky View County.
3. **Prioritization matrix:** Create a prioritization matrix to facilitate informed decision-making that prioritizes natural assets and ecological functions in collaboration with the Agricultural Service Board and ALUS Partnership Advisory Committee.

Action Owner:

- Agricultural & Environmental Services

Action 4, continued

Municipal role:

- **Leader/Owner:** Rocky View County directly owns actions and embodies the aims of the AMP through its own processes.
 - **Advocate:** Rocky View County advocates for increased funding and resources to realize the aims of the AMP, and shares stories that build momentum.
-

End state:

An updated *Agri-Environmental Incentive Program* that focuses on high-demand tools or programs that protect and conserve natural assets, which compliments a more developed and priority-driven ALUS program.

Goal alignment:

- **Goal Area 1:** Promote the critical role of agriculture in Rocky View County and the region while enhancing awareness and understanding of its value to the community and economy.
 - **Goal Area 4:** Acknowledge the value of natural assets on agricultural lands, and establish appropriate policies, incentives, and regulation to protect and enhance the ecological integrity and connectivity of the region.
-

Strategy alignment:

- **S1.5** Integrate environmental and social benefits of agriculture into communications messaging to build support and awareness for the industry within the region.
 - **S4.3** Enhance the existing *Agri-Environmental Incentive Program* and develop new incentives, education, communication materials, and connections to provincial initiatives to support environmental sustainability through agriculture.
-

Initiatives related to this action:

- *Agri-Environmental Incentive Program*
 - ALUS
-

Estimated resources required:

- 1 staff member, part-time
-

Implementation partners:

- Agricultural Service Board
 - ALUS
-

Anticipated timeframe:

- Years 2 through 3
-

Action 5

Support safe transport of agricultural products and equipment through effective transportation planning

Description:

Integrate agricultural considerations into transportation planning to accommodate the unique requirements of transporting equipment and agricultural products. Key aspects include:

- Facilitating easier movement of large farming equipment by ensuring roads of sufficient width, safe intersection design and clear access points
- Roadside signage and guardrail modifications to better accommodate the movement of farming equipment
- Improve driver awareness of slow moving and large sized farming equipment on the road through the installation of “slow moving vehicle” signs and “farm equipment crossing” signs
- Setbacks for overhead power line poles on corners to ensure safe turns for large farming equipment, and
- Bridge and culvert upgrades to ensure the infrastructure can support heavy and over-dimensional farm loads

These considerations will promote safe, efficient transport and prevent infrastructure from becoming a bottleneck for agricultural operations. As equipment and products may need to move across municipal boundaries, broader collaboration with regional partners may be required.

Purpose:

To ensure the safe and secure movement of agricultural equipment, products, and people through transportation systems designed with agriculture-specific needs in mind.

Action Owner:

- Transportation Services

Action 5, continued

Key steps:

- **Compile a list of key routes and criteria:** Identify routes connecting priority agriculture areas and draft accompanying design criteria to identify where upgrades or new infrastructure are recommended within Rocky View County.
 - **Conduct community engagement:** Engage producers to gather insights on transport challenges and identify problem areas.
 - **Consult with administration:** Work with Agricultural & Environmental Services to align transportation plans with agricultural needs.
 - **Propose policy changes:** In discussion with municipal departments and provincial transportation staff, propose policy changes to address road designs, signage, guardrail heights, and overhead power line pole setbacks.
 - **Implement improvements:** Implementation of considered infrastructure improvements on roads, bridges, culverts, and signage will occur at end-of-lifecycle stages.
-

Municipal role:

- **Leader/Owner:** Rocky View County directly owns actions and embodies the aims of the AMP through its own processes.
 - **Broker:** Rocky View County acts as a facilitator to bring together organizations and individuals to achieve collective impact on the aims of the AMP.
-

End state:

Transport corridors with improved infrastructure and policies that support the safe and efficient movement of agricultural products and equipment.

Action 5, continued

Goal alignment:

- **Goal Area 2:** Increase awareness and facilitate opportunities for the diversification of the agriculture industry in Rocky View County.
 - **Goal Area 3:** Collaborate with the agricultural industry to update Rocky View County and regional policies, addressing opportunities, resolving conflicts, and supporting economic growth.
-

Strategy alignment:

- **S2.3** Build strong connections to existing agricultural support and value-added agricultural businesses to enable productive review of infrastructure and policy investments.
- **S3.5** Proactively work with agricultural interest-holders and the Agricultural Service Board to identify opportunities and conflicts between policy and agriculture.

Initiatives related to this action:

- Ongoing transportation planning
-

Estimated resources required:

- Multiple staff, part-time
-

Implementation partners:

- County Administration:
 - » Agricultural & Environmental Services
 - » Capital & Engineering Services
 - » Communications & Engagement
 - » Economic Development
 - » Fire Services & Emergency Management
 - » Regional Planning
 - Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors (ATEC)
 - Producers
-

Anticipated timeframe:

- Year 5

Action 6

Identify suitable locations for renewable energy development on agricultural lands

Description:

This action balances the managed growth of renewable energy infrastructure and the preservation of agricultural land under development pressure from renewable energy projects in Rocky View County. This will be performed through the application of the *Municipal Land Use Suitability Tool (MLUST)*. A broad range of environmental and agricultural factors will be considered, including:

- Wetlands, riparian habitats, and native grasslands to ensure that biodiversity is protected.
- Windbreaks over sensitive agricultural facilities (e.g., confined feeding operations, barns, quonsets) and infrastructure like irrigation canals, parking lots, and warehouse roofs to mitigate disruption.
- End-of-life planning for sand and gravel pits and oil and gas sites to evaluate their potential repurposing for agricultural or renewable energy use.
- Solar energy installations prioritized for the WID infrastructure and other pre-existing assets, acknowledging that power generation is under private corporate control.

Action Owner:

- Agricultural & Environmental Services (AMP portion)
- Planning
- Regional Planning (MDP portion)

Purpose:

To prioritize the protection and express the importance of agricultural land over renewable energy development and ensure renewable projects are strategically placed without compromising agricultural productivity. In general, this will focus on larger industrial- or utility-scale renewable energy development projects; micro-scale personal renewable energy projects are attended to by standard Rocky View County permitting processes.

Action 6, continued

Key steps:

1. **Review and define implications of renewable energy on agricultural land:** Assess potential impacts of industrial- or utility-scale renewable energy development on agricultural operations, ensuring that risks are identified and mitigated.
 2. **Create enabling policy in the MDP:** Develop policies within the MDP to prioritize agricultural land over renewable energy development.
 3. **Incorporate MLUST into renewable energy reviews:** Use MLUST to guide decisions on renewable energy applications and ensure they align with agricultural priorities. MLUST data should be reviewed and updated as new information is made available.
 4. **Monitor and report on land conversions:** Track and report on the conversion of agricultural land to renewable energy uses to assess trends and policy outcomes over time.
-

Municipal role:

- **Leader/Owner:** Rocky View County directly owns actions and embodies the aims of the AMP through its own processes.
 - **Broker:** Rocky View County acts as a facilitator to bring together organizations and individuals to achieve collective impact on the aims of the AMP.
-

End state:

Policies, processes, and tracking systems are in place to prioritize high-quality agricultural lands, ensuring strategic placement of large-scale renewable energy infrastructure without compromising the agricultural carrying capacity of land in Rocky View County.

Action 6, continued

Goal alignment:

- **Goal Area 1:** Promote the critical role of agriculture in Rocky View County and the region while enhancing awareness and understanding of its value to the community and economy.
 - **Goal Area 3:** Collaborate with the agricultural industry to update Rocky View County and regional policies, addressing opportunities, resolving conflicts, and supporting economic growth.
-

Strategy alignment:

- **S1.1** Integrate agricultural considerations into all large-scale policies and plans to ensure agriculture is recognized as a vital component of Rocky View County.
- **S3.2** Elevate and implement tools and policies to protect agricultural lands from fragmentation.

Initiatives related to this action:

- Alberta Utility Commission, accepting greater municipal policy input
 - MDP Update
 - MLUST
-

Estimated resources required:

- 1 staff member, part-time
-

Implementation partners:

- County Administration
 - » Planning
 - » Regional Planning
 - Alberta Utility Commission
-

Anticipated timeframe:

- Year 2

Action 7

Review the Agricultural Boundary Design Guidelines

Description:

Review the 2015 *Agricultural Boundary Design Guidelines* (ABDG) to ensure alignment with current trends in agriculture and the updated direction of the AMP. This will support the continued minimization of land use conflicts that can occur when agricultural and non-agricultural uses are located adjacent to each other.

Action Owner:

- Agricultural & Environmental Services

Purpose:

The County's design guidelines are maintained in accordance with more recent policy development embedded in the AMP. County planners are able to consult application review tools to ensure consideration of agriculture in planning applications, and to reduce land use conflicts between agricultural producers and non-agricultural landowners and businesses.

Key steps:

1. **Review the Agricultural Boundary Design Guidelines:** Review guidelines to determine gaps and opportunities in alignment with the current AMP and trends in agriculture.
2. **Engage with County planners:** Work with Planning to understand gaps and opportunities in the existing implementation and enforcement of the ABDG.
3. **Revise Agricultural Boundary Design Guidelines:** Revise documentation based on lessons learned from Steps 1 and 2.
4. **Integrate guidelines into LUB:** Integrate updated Agricultural Boundary Design Guidelines into the LUB.

Action 7, continued

Municipal role:

- **Leader/Owner:** Rocky View County directly owns actions and embodies the aims of the AMP through its own processes.
-

End state:

The ABDG are updated to reflect current agricultural and development trends, in alignment with the AMP.

Goal alignment:

- **Goal Area 1:** Promote the critical role of agriculture in Rocky View County and the region while enhancing awareness and understanding of its value to the community and economy.
 - **Goal Area 3:** Collaborate with the agricultural industry to update Rocky View County and regional policies, addressing opportunities, resolving conflicts, and supporting economic growth.
-

Strategy alignment:

- **S1.1** Integrate agricultural considerations into all large-scale policies and plans to ensure agriculture is recognized as a vital component of Rocky View County.
 - **S1.2** Create and revise strategies as needed to support the long-term financial viability of the agriculture industry for future generations.
 - **S1.4** Promote the value of agriculture to regional partners and adjacent businesses, landowners, and residents to support respect and awareness for the industry.
 - **S3.4** Capture and report on actions related to the MDP to integrate observed agricultural trends into policy.
-

Initiatives related to this action:

- *Agricultural Boundary Design Guidelines (2015)*
-

Estimated resources required:

- 1 staff member, part-time
-

Implementation partners:

- County Administration:
 - » Planning
 - » Regional Planning
-

Anticipated timeframe:

- Years 1 through 2
-

Action 8

Pursue value-added agricultural investments and opportunities

Description:

Rocky View County takes an active role in attracting value-added agriculture by leveraging its competitive advantages in the Calgary region. Value-added agricultural opportunities involve transforming raw products into higher-value goods through activities such as agri-tourism, food processing and packaging.

Emphasis will also be placed on controlled environment production (e.g., greenhouses) to expand agricultural potential where needed. In addition, the County will participate in regional trade missions and international promotion to attract investments and position Rocky View County as a hub for agricultural innovation and value-added activities within the region and the province.

Purpose:

To diversify the County's agricultural economy by promoting value-added agriculture and attracting associated businesses and investments.

Key steps:

1. **Clearly define the County's competitive advantage:** Identify and articulate key factors (e.g., location, infrastructure, resources) that differentiate Rocky View County as an attractive destination for the value-added agriculture sector.
2. **Advocate for policy in the MDP:** Create policies within the MDP that encourage value-added agriculture development, aligning with the County's strategic goals.
3. **Engage with external agencies:** Partner with agencies such as Invest Alberta and Invest Canada to share strategies and align efforts to attract agricultural investments to the County.

Action Owner:

- Economic Development

Action 8, continued

Municipal role:

- **Broker:** Rocky View County acts as a facilitator to bring together organizations and individuals to achieve collective impact on the aims of the AMP.
 - **Advocate:** Rocky View County advocates for increased funding and resources to realize the aims of the AMP, and shares stories that build momentum.
-

End state:

An increase in the number of value-added agricultural businesses operating in Rocky View County, contributing to a more diversified local agricultural sector.

Goal alignment:

- **Goal Area 2:** Increase awareness and facilitate opportunities for the diversification of the agriculture industry in Rocky View County.
 - **Goal Area 3:** Collaborate with the agricultural industry to update Rocky View County and regional policies, addressing opportunities, resolving conflicts, and supporting economic growth.
-

Strategy alignment:

- **S2.2** Support innovative agricultural practices through adaptive policy and business development to support agricultural productivity.
 - **S2.5** Deliver strategic marketing initiatives to support the diversification of the agricultural industry.
 - **S3.5** Proactively work with interest-holders and the Agricultural Service Board to identify opportunities and conflicts between policy and agriculture.
-

Initiatives related to this action:

- Economic Development Strategy
 - MDP Update
-

Estimated resources required:

- 1 staff member, part-time
-

Implementation partners:

- County Administration:
 - » Planning
 - Agricultural industry
-

Anticipated timeframe:

- Year 1, with updates in Q4 thereafter (ongoing engagement)
-

Action 9

Support sector diversification through agri-business and agri-tourism initiatives

Description:

This action contains two streams of work: a policy review and an external communications campaign to support sector diversification through agri-business and agri-tourism initiatives. The two concepts are defined as:

- **Agri-business** refers to industries and enterprises involved in the production, processing, distribution, and sale of agricultural products and services. It encompasses all aspects of agriculture and related activities, including farming, the production of agricultural inputs (like seeds, fertilizers, and machinery), food processing, distribution, and marketing.
- **Agri-tourism** refers to any commercial enterprise at a farm or ranch that provides direct-to-consumer services, such as tours, farm stays, and educational experiences, aimed at attracting visitors and enhancing their understanding of agriculture.

Key communications efforts will include the development of regional directories, accessible maps, and community events that highlight local agricultural offerings. This action also includes maintenance of those initiatives which are already in place, including the annual agricultural tour and the promotion of Open Farm Day participation.

A concurrent review of Rocky View County planning policies will determine whether the policy framework provides adequate flexibility for landowners to diversify revenue streams through novel on-farm agri-business and agri-tourism related activities.

Purpose:

To diversify and strengthen the agricultural economy by supporting innovative on-farm activities and reducing barriers to agri-tourism and agri-business development through policy updates, stakeholder engagement, and targeted promotion.

Action Owner:

- Agricultural & Environmental Services
- Economic Development

Action 9, continued

Key steps:

Communications campaign:

1. **Identify regional partnering groups:** Connect with local organizations, businesses, and other interest-holders to build a network for support.
2. **Solicit and compile active list of applicable operations:** Gather and maintain a list of farms and businesses that can participate in agri-tourism and diversification efforts.
3. **Initiate partnerships:** Build partnerships with identified partners to enhance collective impact within Rocky View County and the region
4. **Implement promotion activities:** Execute marketing initiatives, community events, and promotions to increase visibility and participation in agri-tourism.

Policy review:

1. **Engage with the agriculture community:** Engage with local agri-tourism and agri-business operators to understand how Rocky View County land use policy supports or hinders their operations.
2. **Conduct a regional assessment:** Assess regional agri-tourism and agri-business activities.
3. **Promising land use practices:** Conduct a jurisdictional scan for promising agri-tourism and agri-business land use practices.
4. **Identify gaps and opportunities:** Review results from Policy Review Steps 1-3 against existing Rocky View County land use policies and development regulations to identify gaps and opportunities.
5. **Develop criteria:** Develop a list of criteria to regulate on-farm agri-tourism and agri-business uses.
6. **Integrate learnings:** Integrate outcomes into future LUB and MDP updates.

Action 9, continued

Municipal role:

- **Supporter:** Rocky View County assists and builds capacity for other organizations towards the aims of the AMP.
 - **Advocate:** Rocky View County advocates for increased funding and resources to realize the aims of the AMP, and shares stories that build momentum.
-

End state:

Rocky View County is recognized as a destination for agri-tourism and agri-business, supported by updated planning policies, enhanced visibility, and a network of diversified agricultural enterprises.

Goal alignment:

- **Goal Area 2:** Increase awareness and facilitate opportunities for the diversification of the agriculture industry in Rocky View County.
 - **Goal Area 3:** Collaborate with the agricultural industry to update Rocky View County and regional policies, addressing opportunities, resolving conflicts, and supporting economic growth.
-

Strategy alignment:

- **S2.1** Include agri-tourism, agri-business, and value-added agriculture in all economic development and planning considerations to reduce barriers to diversification.
 - **S2.2** Support innovative agricultural practices through adaptive policy and business development to support agricultural productivity.
 - **S2.5** Deliver strategic marketing initiatives to support the diversification of the agricultural industry.
 - **S3.5** Proactively work with agricultural interest-holders and the Agricultural Service Board to identify opportunities and conflicts between policy and agriculture.
-

Initiatives related to this action:

- Economic Development Strategy
 - LUB
 - MDP Update
 - Ongoing transportation planning
-

Estimated resources required:

- Multiple staff, part-time
-

Implementation partners:

- County Administration
 - » Communications & Engagement
 - » Planning
-

Anticipated timeframe:

- Years 4 through 5, with updates in Q4 thereafter (communications implementation)
-

Action 10

Support education and outreach for legislated Agricultural Services Programs

Description:

Increase awareness and understanding of provincially legislated Agricultural Services Programs—such as the *Weed Control Act*, *Agricultural Pests Act*, and *Soil Conservation Act*—with local farmers, agri-businesses, developers, and internal County staff. Where possible, Rocky View County will connect local education and outreach efforts with provincially-led education extension programs to increase the impact and effectiveness of this action.

These programs guide essential agricultural operations, including weed and pest control, soil conservation, and biosecurity. They also assign Rocky View County Agricultural & Environmental Services staff as inspectors responsible for ensuring compliance with these regulations. Expanded education will help streamline internal processes across multiple departments and align interest holders on compliance, sustainable agricultural practices, and environmental stewardship.

Purpose:

The Province’s *Weed Control Act*, *Agricultural Pests Act*, and *Soil Conservation Act* and associated regulations impact the workflows of departments such as enforcement, planning, and development authorities by assigning agricultural inspectors with regulatory responsibilities.

Enhanced education will ensure better compliance with legislation, while fostering collaboration with industry and residents. It will also support sustainability efforts, reduce operational conflicts, and promote public awareness about the environmental and economic value of agriculture. This educational focus aligns with the County’s commitment to balance agriculture with environmental preservation and foster community partnerships that enhance the region’s agricultural sustainability

Action Owner:

- Agricultural & Environmental Services

Action 10, continued

Key steps:

1. **Develop education materials:** Create targeted education materials for farmers, agri-businesses, developers, and internal staff. These materials will provide practical guidance on the *Weed Control*, *Agricultural Pests*, and *Soil Conservation Acts*, detailing responsibilities, compliance requirements, and sustainable agricultural practices.
 2. **Update the Agricultural Services Program:** Review and revise internal forms, including pest and weed management plans and inspection documents, ensuring they are current and incorporated into the development permit process to improve efficiency and consistency.
 3. **Develop a communications and marketing plan:** Create a plan to distribute education materials through multiple channels (e.g., workshops, newsletters, and online platforms). Work with Communications & Engagement to reach relevant interest holders and promote awareness within the community.
 4. **Establish metrics and reporting mechanisms:** Implement tracking tools (e.g., CountyWorks, Citizen Satisfaction Survey) to monitor program engagement, measure compliance across departments, and report on success indicators regularly. Use insights to adjust the strategy as needed.
-

Municipal role:

- **Broker:** Rocky View County acts as a facilitator to bring together organizations and individuals to achieve collective impact on the aims of the AMP.
 - **Supporter:** Rocky View County assists and builds capacity for other organizations towards the aims of the AMP.
-

End state:

The County has developed, distributed, and integrated comprehensive education materials on legislated agricultural programs for internal and external interest holders.

Action 10, continued

End state, continued:

Internal processes are streamlined through updated program forms, ensuring that weed management plans and related documentation are effectively incorporated into the development permit process. Cross-departmental collaboration is enhanced, with regular reporting in place through CountyWorks.

Goal alignment:

- **Goal Area 1:** Promote the critical role of agriculture in Rocky View County and the region while enhancing awareness and understanding of its value to the community and economy.
 - **Goal Area 4:** Acknowledge the value of natural assets on agricultural lands, and establish appropriate policies, incentives, and regulation to protect and enhance the ecological integrity and connectivity of the region.
-

Strategy alignment:

- **S1.3** Create and promote tools and procedures to raise awareness of agricultural needs and practices to reduce land use and transportation conflicts.
 - **S1.4** Promote the value of agriculture to regional partners and adjacent businesses, landowners, and residents to support respect and awareness for the industry.
 - **S1.5** Integrate environmental and social benefits of agriculture into communications messaging to build support and awareness for the industry within the region.
 - **S4.3** Enhance the existing *Agri-Environmental Incentive Program* and develop new incentives, education, communication materials, and connections to provincial initiatives to support environmental sustainability through agriculture.
-

Initiatives related to this action:

- Weed control / inspection program
 - Circulation review process
-

Estimated resources required:

- 1 staff member, part-time
-

Implementation partners:

- County Administration:
 - » Communications & Engagement
 - » Enforcement Services
 - » Planning
 - » Capital & Engineering Services
-

Anticipated timeframe:

- Year 1
-

Action 11

Revise and maintain agriculture-focused public communication materials

Description:

Rocky View County will revise and maintain both print and digital communication materials to provide up-to-date information on agricultural considerations, issues, and events. This includes regular updates on programs, workshops, pest and weed control efforts, ALUS initiatives, equipment rentals, and other services. Materials will also feature guidance on developing diversified agricultural operations, and include relevant connections to other County services (e.g., waste and recycling, development, and enforcement).

As part of this action, the County will develop a suite of “Welcome to Rocky View County” online reference materials for new residents, promoting the importance of agriculture and practical considerations in interacting with the sector. The goal is to improve outreach to both producers and residents, ensuring agricultural awareness across the community, and fostering collaboration with regional partners, adjacent businesses, and landowners.

Action Owner:

- Communications & Engagement

Purpose:

To provide accessible, up-to-date agricultural information on the Rocky View County website to promote the value of agriculture to producers, residents, and regional partners. This is done with the aim to foster a stronger connection between agriculture and the community.

Key steps:

1. **Determine information needs:** Agricultural & Environmental Services will assess the information required by producers, residents, and partners (within the first year).
2. **Develop “Welcome to Rocky View County” package:** Communications & Engagement will draft online reference materials targeted at new residents (within the first year).
3. **Finalize materials:** Review and finalize communication materials through internal meetings with key interest holders.

Action 11, continued

Key steps, continued:

- 4. **Establish yearly review:** Implement an annual timeline to ensure all information remains current and relevant, with reviews anticipated each Q4 starting in 2027.
- 5. **Public outreach for new residents:** Build an outreach program to connect new residents with agricultural information and County processes.

Municipal role:

- **Leader/Owner:** Rocky View County directly owns actions and embodies the aims of the AMP through its own processes.

End state:

The County's Agriculture and Environment website section is fully updated, and the "Welcome to Rocky View County" digital content is available to the public. A system for annual reviews ensures continuous revision and relevance of communication materials.

Goal alignment:

- **Goal Area 1:** Promote the critical role of agriculture in Rocky View County and the region while enhancing awareness and understanding of its value to the community and economy.
- **Goal Area 2:** Increase awareness and facilitate opportunities for the diversification of the agriculture industry in Rocky View County.

Strategy alignment:

- **S1.5** Integrate environmental and social benefits of agriculture into communications messaging to build support and awareness for the industry within the region.
- **S2.5** Deliver strategic marketing initiatives to support the diversification of the agricultural industry.

Initiatives related to this action:

- Regular website maintenance, Agriculture and Environment section

Estimated resources required:

- Multiple staff, part-time

Implementation partners:

- County Administration:
 - » Agricultural & Environmental Services
 - » Economic Development
- Agriculture non-governmental organizations
- Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation

Anticipated timeframe:

- Every Q4, beginning in Year 2 (yearly review)

Action 12

Launch an agriculture education campaign focused on farming and ranching

Description:

Rocky View County will develop and launch an ongoing educational campaign, building upon the farming and ranching narrative within the County to raise awareness of agricultural practices, a rural lifestyle, and the experience of living in close proximity to agriculture. This program will be delivered to agricultural and non-agricultural residents on a seasonal basis to build empathy, support, and awareness for the agriculture industry in the county.

Action Owner:

- Agricultural & Environmental Services
- Communications & Engagement

Purpose:

Reflecting a perceived lack of understanding, respect, and support for the agriculture industry in Rocky View County, this campaign will serve to educate and promote agriculture and its way of life to regional partners and adjacent businesses, landowners, and County residents.

Key steps:

1. **Outline a timeline of agricultural activities:** Agricultural & Environmental Services and Communications & Engagement departments to collaboratively outline a timeline of agricultural activities, and review current communications campaigns for alignment.
2. **Develop awareness campaign:** Communications & Engagement to develop the awareness campaign, in alignment with existing communications campaigns.
3. **Launch awareness campaign:** Agricultural & Environmental Services to review and initiate the awareness campaign.
4. **Ongoing collaboration:** Seasonal collaboration between the two departments throughout the year as required to ensure successful seasonal implementation.

Action 12, continued

Municipal role:

- **Leader/Owner:** Rocky View County directly owns actions and embodies the aims of the AMP through its own processes.
 - **Advocate:** Rocky View County advocates for increased funding and resources to realize the aims of the AMP, and shares stories that build momentum.
-

End state:

Awareness campaign materials have been developed for all four seasons, and have been implemented at least once throughout the year.

Goal alignment:

- **Goal Area 1:** Promote the critical role of agriculture in Rocky View County and the region while enhancing awareness and understanding of its value to the community and economy.
-

Strategy alignment:

- **S1.4** Promote the value of agriculture to regional partners and adjacent businesses, landowners, and residents to support respect and awareness for the industry.
- **S1.5** Integrate environmental and social benefits of agriculture into communications messaging to build support and awareness for the industry within the region.

Initiatives related to this action:

- Code of the West
 - Communications & Engagement materials currently sharing agriculture events
-

Estimated resources required:

- Multiple staff, part-time
-

Implementation partners:

- County Administration:
 - » Economic Development
 - Agriculture producers
-

Anticipated timeframe:

- Every Q2-Q3, beginning in Year 1

Action 13

Supplement County Council and staff training with tools for working with the agriculture sector

Description:

Develop and share agricultural educational content tailored to both County Council and administration staff to increase awareness and understanding of the agricultural community's realities in Rocky View County. Materials for administration staff will be incorporated into onboarding within the first three months of employment, while materials for Council will be delivered as part of new Councillor orientation.

Action Owner:

- Agricultural & Environmental Services

Purpose:

Reflective of a perceived lack of understanding, respect, and support for the agriculture industry in Rocky View County, agricultural educational content will increase awareness of the realities of agricultural producers, processors, and distributors to facilitate Council and staff working with the agriculture sector.

Key steps:

1. **Develop a shared introductory outline:** Collaborate with other departments to establish a shared introduction outline to different departments. This shared outline would explore the different ways in which County departments influence and are influenced by the agricultural sector.
2. **Develop educational tools:** Develop interactive educational tools for working with the agriculture sector in collaboration with the Agricultural Service Board.
3. **Implement:** Deploy orientation package with new Councillors (during Council orientation) and new administrative hires.

Action 13, continued

Municipal role:

- **Leader/Owner:** Rocky View County directly owns actions and embodies the aims of the AMP through its own processes.
-

End state:

A human resources process for Council and staff orientation has been developed to introduce agricultural considerations and tools for working with the agriculture sector. All staff and Council have undergone orientation.

Goal alignment:

- **Goal Area 1:** Promote the critical role of agriculture in Rocky View County and the region while enhancing awareness and understanding of its value to the community and economy.
-

Strategy alignment:

- **S1.1** Integrate agricultural considerations into all large-scale policies and plans to ensure agriculture is recognized as a vital component of Rocky View County.
- **S1.3** Create and promote tools and procedures to raise awareness of agricultural needs and practices to reduce land use and transportation conflicts.

Initiatives related to this action:

- Agricultural Tour
 - Council, Administration (People and Culture) orientations
-

Estimated resources required:

- Multiple staff, part-time
-

Implementation partners:

- County Administration:
 - » All departments
 - » People & Culture (implementation)
 - Agricultural Service Board
-

Anticipated timeframe:

- Year 1

4.0

How will this plan be put into action over time?

Implementation



Effective implementation of the AMP depends on a clear and coordinated framework that guides action, defines responsibilities, and supports long-term progress. This section outlines the foundational principles, roles, and adaptive approach that together ensure the AMP remains actionable, responsive, and aligned with its vision over time.

4.1 Principles

The AMP is designed with the five primary implementation principles of accountability, clarity, cooperation, focus, and priority.

Accountability ensures that all participants in the plan remain responsible for their commitments and actions, fostering transparency throughout the process. Clear roles, expectations, and performance measures are established to track progress towards the goals. By regularly reviewing actions and communicating results, accountability builds trust among interest holders and ensures that the plan stays aligned with its intended vision over time.

Clarity provides a clear understanding of the direction of the plan, and where we find ourselves in progressing towards the vision. Momentum is encouraged by providing a defined and accessible workflow, where both Rocky View County and external interest holders can provide appropriate support and resourcing to implementation.

Cooperation is premised on both the opportunity and need for continued collaboration and formation of new partnerships to realize the aims of the AMP.

Focus recognizes competing priorities apart from the AMP and the need to scale this ambition appropriately to emphasize the quality of results over the quantity of action. This principle supports implementation by including only the most impactful actions that can build momentum and provide a continual line-of-sight to future progress towards the vision and goals.

Priority is the logical sequencing of the plan's actions to reflect both administration and partner priorities while respecting available resources that can be dedicated to implementation. By understanding how each action contributes to each other and to other initiatives being delivered in Rocky View County, the AMP can be best positioned to realize progress towards overall vision and goals.

4.2 Roles

For the actions that comprise Rocky View County’s AMP to be successfully implemented, the scope of work for both the County and potential government and industry partners must be properly understood, with the associated roles clearly defined.

Under this role-driven model, Rocky View County may assume one or more of the four different roles listed below. Here, a role is defined as a general function that a party may fulfill to help achieve the overarching goals and supporting actions of the AMP.

The County may act in one or multiple roles at a given time, and can coordinate roles with partnering organizations for increased effect. The roles are:

- **Leader/Owner:** Rocky View County directly owns actions and embodies the aims of the AMP through its own processes.
- **Broker:** Rocky View County acts as a facilitator to bring together organizations and individuals to achieve collective impact on the aims of the AMP.
- **Supporter:** Rocky View County assists and builds capacity for other organizations towards the aims of the AMP.
- **Advocate:** Rocky View County advocates for increased funding and resources to realize the aims of the AMP, and shares stories that build momentum.

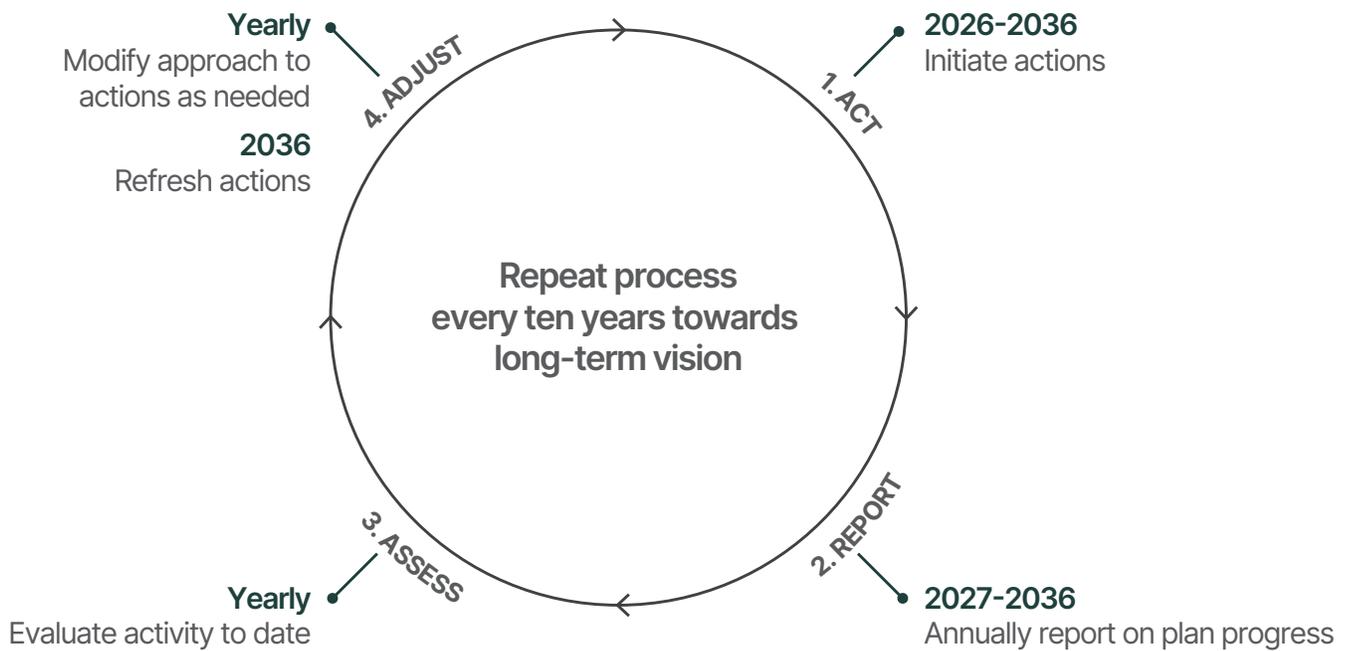
4.3 Approach

Implementation of the AMP will follow a four-phase adaptive management approach, in which the principles and roles discussed previously are integrated to realize the plan’s aims.

The timeframe—a long-term vision animated by ten-year intervals of action and review—will support learning, iteration, and progress while ensuring the AMP remains relevant to emerging opportunities and unanticipated challenges impacting municipal government and the agriculture sector at large.

The adaptive management approach comprises four phases: **Act, Report, Assess, and Adjust**. These phases are defined in brief below and on the following page:

1. **Act:** The actions form the foundation of the AMP. It is through implementation of the plan’s actions that the County and community partners will build and maintain momentum to realize progress towards the aims of the plan.



Above:
The adaptive management approach, visualized.

2. Report: Rocky View County administration will provide yearly progress summaries to support accountability and transparency in the implementation process. Reports should be presented to the Agricultural Service Board for review.

As part of the **Report** phase, on an annual basis, Rocky View County administration will review, and if necessary, modify delivery of the plan’s actions to address the lessons learned from ongoing implementation of the AMP. Such interim modifications can include:

3. Assess: Through the ten-year implementation period, attention should be placed on the state of the work—the successes, existing and new resources, and adherence to anticipated timelines—to ensure progress towards the vision remains on track.

- identifying and implementing new approaches to delivering an existing action,
- new opportunities for collaboration with external partners, and/or
- the application of newly available resources.

4. Adjust: An effective AMP is one that can respond to both anticipated and unexpected obstacles. Administration will ensure continued alignment with the aims of the AMP through annual (report-driven) and ten-year milestone (plan update) adjustment mechanisms.

To ensure continued relevance, the AMP should be updated on a **ten-year** basis. The update process will support reflection on the initial plan implementation period for 2026-2036, with reference to lessons learned and any observed changes in the context for the agriculture sector in Rocky View County.

Next Steps

Through the AMP, Rocky View County and the agricultural sector will continue to position the county as a leader in sustainable agriculture, agri-business innovation, and resilient rural development. The County will emphasize the importance of balancing economic growth with agricultural preservation, fostering diversification in agricultural production, and strengthening local agricultural systems to meet evolving market demands and community needs.

The implementation framework in Section 4.0 will support adaptation and progress towards the long-term vision through the implementation of actions, the introduction of new initiatives, and ongoing advocacy and outreach in support of the agriculture sector and way of life in the county.

Rocky View County will revisit the AMP to celebrate achievements, track progress, and explore new opportunities at the conclusion of this first ten-year planning period in 2026-2036. This review will allow the County to reflect on successes, identify gaps or emerging challenges, and update the plan to remain aligned with changing agricultural, economic, and environmental conditions. Future updates will ensure that Rocky View County continues to thrive as a dynamic agricultural hub while safeguarding its rural character and agricultural heritage for generations to come.

References

Internal

Agricultural & Environmental Services

Agriculture Master Plan (2011)

Agricultural Service Board Strategic Plan (2020-2024)

Agricultural Service Board Terms of Reference

Council Policy

Council Policy C-322: Area Structure Plan Priority Policy

Council Policy C-419: Riparian Land Conservation & Management

Council Policy C-420: Wetland Conservation & Management

Council Policy C-508: Right to Farm

Economic Development

Economic Development Strategy (2023)

Planning

Agriculture Boundary Design Guidelines (2015)

County Plan (2013, amended 2023)

Land Use Bylaw (2020, amended 2023)

External

Government of Alberta

Agricultural Pests Act

Agriculture Operation Practices Act

Alberta Land Stewardship Act

Municipal Government Act

Soil Conservation Act

Weed Control Act

South Saskatchewan Regional Plan

7.0

What informed the development of the Agriculture Master Plan?

Appendices

A: Process
B: Definitions

Appendix A: Process

The drafting process for the Rocky View County AMP comprised two phases, from winter 2024 to spring 2025.

Phase 1: Project Foundations

The first phase was designed to build a foundational understanding of the agricultural context in Rocky View County, and was conducted from February to September 2024. The project team reviewed both the 2011 AMP and contemporary guiding policies and plans, assessed local and comparator municipal data, and reviewed promising agricultural practices in place in municipalities in Western Canada. Finally, the team consulted with the agricultural community in Rocky View County through a month-long community engagement process in summer 2024.

2011 AMP review

Actions and sub-actions were tracked to understand how much has been implemented since the initial approval of the 2011 AMP.

Policies and plans review

A review of the most impactful provincial, regional, municipal and committee documents influencing agriculture in Rocky View County. Policies were reviewed for general understanding and identification of gaps.

Data and benchmarking review

Using *Statistics Canada Census of Agriculture* data for the years 2001-2021 and agricultural mapping data, a dataset was compiled and analyzed to identify trends and comparative agricultural circumstances.

Data was compiled for the following jurisdictions: Rocky View County, Mountain View County, Wheatland County, Foothills County, and Alberta.

Existing practices

A high-level overview of municipal agricultural practices was conducted by examining the MDPs of benchmarked municipalities and reviewing policies and programs implemented across Western Canada. Case studies provided valuable insights into existing municipal approaches to supporting and managing agriculture.

Community Engagement: Phase 1

From June 13 to July 21, 2024, a comprehensive public engagement was held to ensure local farmers, agri-businesses, and residents had the opportunity to share their insights and feedback on a new AMP for Rocky View County.

Throughout the public engagement process, more than 170 participants spent a collective 160 hours sharing feedback on the future and current state of agriculture in Rocky View County. The project team received more than 1,000 comments from the participants. The County extensively promoted the engagement through 2,000 direct letters to agricultural landowners, phone calls with agri-business members, road signs throughout the County, interviews with local media, and a digital media campaign.

Complete community engagement feedback can be found in the *Phase 1 What We Heard Report*, while detailed secondary research findings can be found in the *Agriculture Snapshot Document*.

These documents are available within the AMP webpage on the Rocky View County website.

Phase 2: Plan development

In the second phase of the process, the project team integrated new engagement and research findings into knowledge of planning practice and the established municipal planning framework to develop a draft AMP for review by Rocky View County administration and the Agricultural Service Board. The draft document was then presented to community interest holders through a second round of engagement to validate the emerging direction for the plan.

The phase ran from September 2024 to May 2025 and culminated in a final AMP document.

Community Engagement: Phase 2

From December 27, 2024 to February 7, 2025, more than 130 participants from the Rocky View County community, including local farmers, agri-businesses, and residents, provided feedback on the emerging vision for the updated AMP. The County presented participants with specific actions drawn from the plan, focused on key agricultural issues such as land protection, farm succession, renewable energy, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability.

Through this validation process, participants shared a collective 1,078 comments to further inform the draft direction. This was done through an online project page and companion survey, and a series of four community conversations held at community halls and recreation centres throughout Rocky View County.

A summary of community engagement feedback can be found in the *Phase 2 What We Heard* report.

This document is available within the AMP webpage on the Rocky View County website.



Appendix B: Definitions

The following definitions were consulted in the development of the Rocky View County AMP.

Agri-business: Suppliers/businesses who enable agricultural production by providing inputs, machinery, equipment or services; such as fertilizer, pesticides, seeds, machinery and equipment, services (i.e. machinery maintenance or veterinary services), financial services, data management, grain drying, agronomy advice, agricultural research, transportation services, marketing, traders, etc.

Value-added agriculture: Activities that enhance the economic value or market potential of agricultural operations through processing, diversification, and/or marketing. This includes transforming raw commodities into higher-value products, expanding into complementary enterprises (such as agri-tourism or beekeeping), or accessing new markets and supply chains.

Agri-tourism: Forms of tourism that touch upon the agricultural sector. These include:

- tourism that supports commercial agricultural production at a working farm, ranch, or processing facility
- tourism that generates supplemental income for an agricultural producer, and
- tourism related to activities that promote or market livestock and agricultural products such as fairs, market gardens and rodeos.

