

Terms of Reference

TOR #1013-222

Direction

- Council directed Administration on April 22, 2025 to develop a Terms of Reference for the creation of an Emerging Sector Strategy.
- The County's Strategic Plan sets a vision to support investment and development through clear planning policies that define land use, protect agricultural lands, and guide responsible growth and servicing.

General Schedule & Deliverables

Phase 1 – Issues and Opportunities (Q1-Q2 2026)

- Initial public and stakeholder engagement
- Best practice and information gathering
- Phase 1 Engagement Summary Report and Options Report presented to Council

Phase 2 – Sector Strategy Development

- Sector Strategy sequencing, focus, and deliverables to be determined by revised terms of reference.

Project Focus

The Emerging Sector Strategy will be a framework of deliverables to proactively guide the development of emerging business sectors in the County. Initial sectors to be studied are:

- Technology and Energy;
- Tourism and Hospitality

The following items will be addressed per Council's direction:

- Identify a technical study area and potential future area structure plan boundaries;
- Identify planning framework to proactively guide development of specific sectors; and
- Support the development of an efficient planning approvals that aligns with provincial approval processes,
- Develop the framework through meaningful public engagement.

Following Phase 1, Administration will submit a Phase 1 Summary Report and an Options Report to Council for consideration and further direction.

Project Budget

- A project budget of \$80,000 is required to complete Phase 1 of the project. It is anticipated that a budget adjustment will be required when the project moves into subsequent phases.

Principal Risks

- Consensus amongst stakeholders cannot be reached therefore, delaying the next phase of the project.
- Expectations of deliverables from public are not possible.



Direction

- 1 On April 22, 2025, Council directed the development of a Terms of Reference (“TOR”) to guide the creation of an Emerging Sector Strategy (“ESS”). As per Council’s direction, the ESS should:
 - (1) Identify a technical study area and potential future area structure plan boundaries;
 - (2) Identify planning framework to proactively guide development of specific sectors; and
 - (3) Support the development of an efficient planning approvals [service] that aligns with provincial approval processes, while promoting and defining meaningful public engagement.
- 2 The ESS will look to provide guidance for the following sectors:
 - (1) The technology and energy sector; and
 - (2) The tourism and hospitality sector (“tourism sector”).
- 3 The ESS project aims to establish a framework of deliverables that will enable Rocky View County (“the County”) to proactively guide development to appropriate locations and effectively manage development to ensure it generates positive environmental, community and economic outcomes for County landowners.
- 4 The ESS will align with the County’s Strategic Plan aligning with the vision to support investment and development through clear planning policies that define land use, protect agricultural lands, and guide responsible growth and servicing.



Study Area

- 5 The ESS will apply to all lands within the County, establishing comprehensive frameworks to guide the management of the data and tourism sectors. While the framework is county-wide, special consideration will be given to the central and east areas of the County for technology sector related uses and the west side for tourism sector related uses. This is in alignment with the Economic Development Strategy’s identified economic zones, together with existing development forms, infrastructure, and business areas.



Background

Technology and Energy Sector

- 6 The data sector is evolving rapidly, driven by advancements in artificial intelligence (“AI”) and other technology-based concepts. To respond effectively to this rapid pace of advancement, municipalities must remain agile in managing emerging developments such as data centres and other AI-related infrastructure. In December 2024, the Government of Alberta released the provincial *Artificial Intelligence Data Centre Strategy*, aimed at attracting investment from

developers by leveraging the province's cold climate and energy resources. The Minister of Technology and Innovation has stated that the province's goal is to attract \$100 billion in data centre investments to Alberta. The province and its agencies are currently reviewing legislation, standards, and processes to support these new developments sufficiently.

- 7 With the release of the provincial strategy, the Alberta Electrical System Operator ("AESO") has experienced a surge in the number of requests for data centre proposals to the electrical grid. The power input required to operate data centres is significant and therefore to accommodate these proposals AESO is undertaking a phased project to understand how these developments can be constructed without jeopardizing the reliability of the electrical grid system.
- 8 Given that AESO cannot accommodate all proposals to connect to the electrical grid, data centre proponents and the province are exploring options for integrating on-site power generation, including natural gas and solar energy, to address their energy requirements. In addition to exploring on-site power generation, options to co-locate facilities that utilize waste by-products from data centre operations and benefit from secure server access are being investigated.
- 9 **Figure 1: Current Data Sector Landscape** below illustrates the County's current landscape for the data sector, including ongoing data centre projects and the location of external infrastructure. The County continues to receive inquiries from data centre proponents

Tourism Sector

- 10 The County's 2023 Economic Development Strategy identified tourism and hospitality sector as a priority defining the County's western boundary as the Tourism and Hospitality Enhancement Zone, as illustrated in **Figure 2: Current Tourism Sector Landscape**.
- 11 In March 2022, the Government of Alberta announced the development of ten Tourism Development Zones ("TDZs") across the province. These zones are intended to support regional economic diversification, promote year-round tourism, and guide sustainable development aligned with local values and environmental priorities. Each TDZ is guided by a Destination Development Plan that outlines key priorities for infrastructure, experience development, and long-term growth. The western boundary of the County falls within both the Foothills and Cochrane/Sundre/Rocky Mountain House TDZs.
- 12 In February 2024, the Government of Alberta released *Higher Ground: A Tourism Sector Strategy*. The strategy aims to identify and implement opportunities to expand the visitor economy by approximately \$15 billion annually by 2035, while also creating more jobs and fostering economic growth throughout the province.
- 13 The Tourism Industry Association of Alberta released their 2025 State of the Industry Report. The report cites that in Alberta the tourism industry contributed \$12.7 billion in spending, \$1.5 billion in taxes collected and 119,000 jobs in 2023. Tourism data specific to the County is not available.
- 14 The County is located within Canada's fifth largest Census Metropolitan Area, which is home to over 1.4 million people. With Calgary International Airport, the fourth busiest airport in the country located within this Census Metropolitan Area, and two primary highways running through the County, there is significant potential to leverage both domestic and visitor tourism. The County is

strategically positioned to build on its diverse landscapes, nearby population centres, and a strong potential visitor base to enhance the tourism sector.

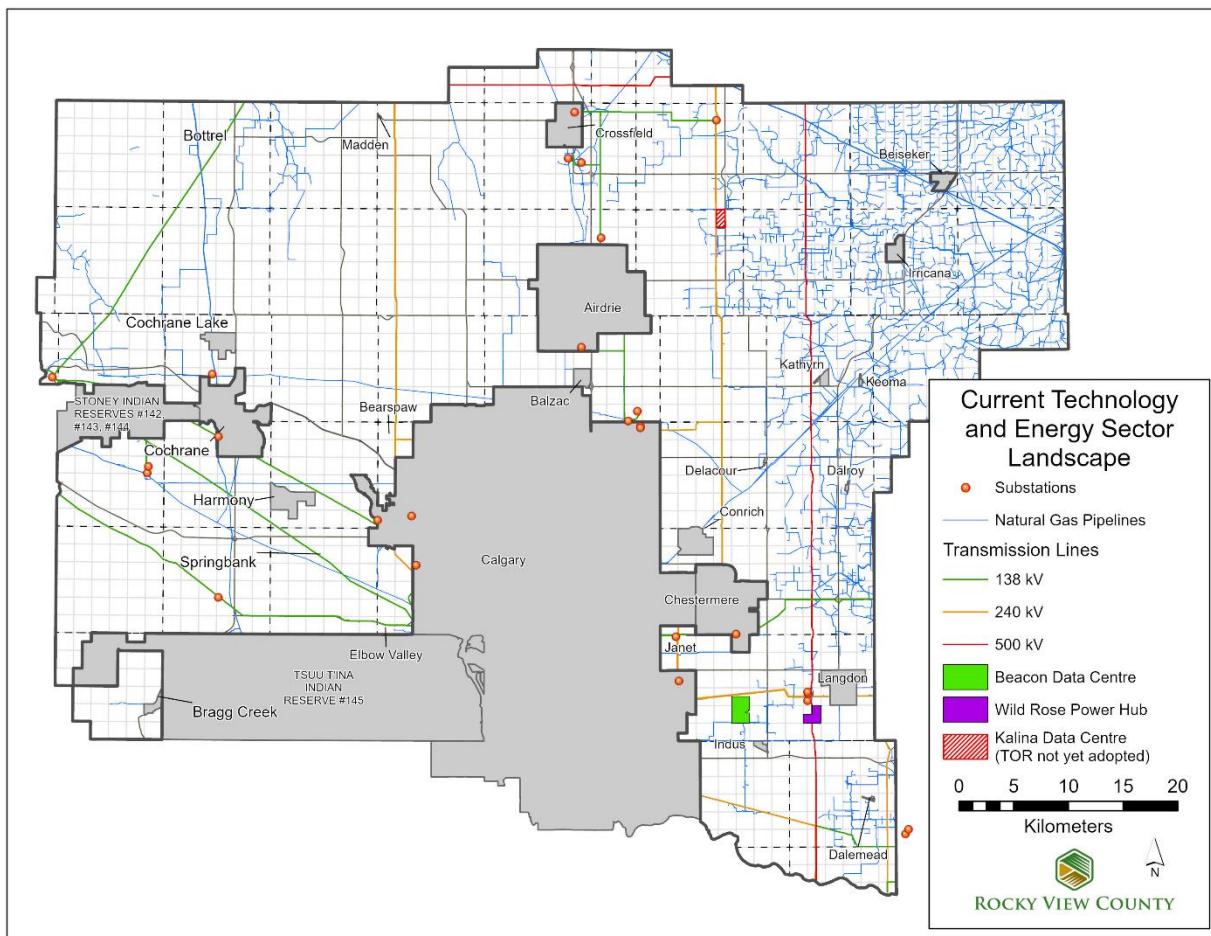


Figure 1: Current Data Sector Landscape

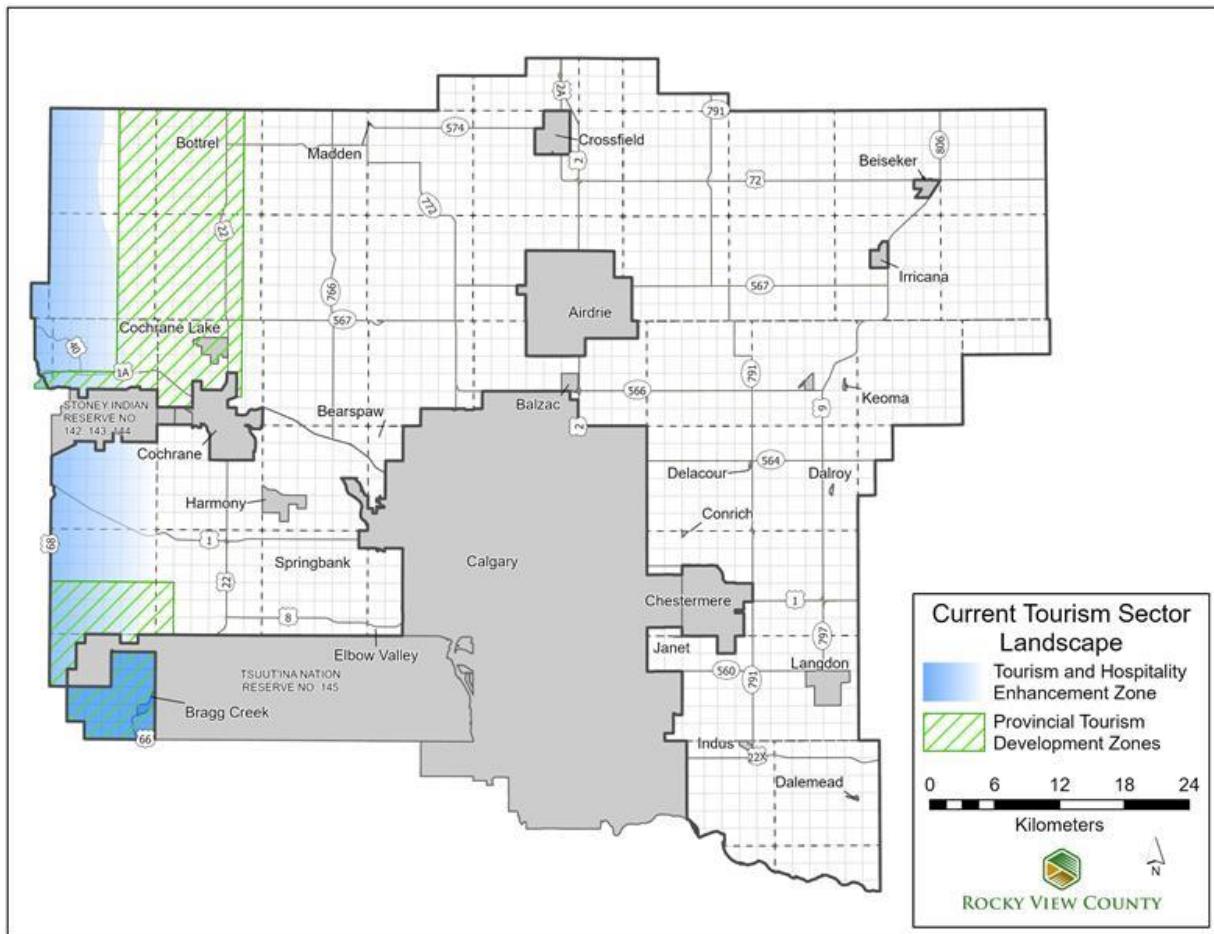


Figure 2: Current Tourism Sector Landscape



Project Principles

15 The ESS will be developed around the following project principles:

- (1)** Identify areas within the County suitable for the uses in the identified sectors, considering constraints such as servicing and infrastructure beyond the County's jurisdiction, among others;
- (2)** Utilize public and stakeholder feedback and best practice research to identify and address sector issues and opportunities raised in Phase 1;
- (3)** Review existing County policies, regulations, standards, and procedures to support growth in the identified sectors;

- (4) Develop a framework to preserve residential and agricultural communities, and environmental assets by sensitively locating, scaling, and transitioning business development.
- (5) Determine how the identified sectors will help support and grow the County's assessment base; and
- (6) Ensure ongoing, meaningful consultation with residents, landowners, businesses and neighbouring municipalities related to any potential impacts from identified sectors on shared boundaries.



Project Team

16 The ESS project is an extensive undertaking by the County to determine appropriate actions required to effectively manage the identified sectors. Direction will be required from Executive Leadership and Council throughout the project. Additional internal/external resources will be required throughout the project. Below are the project team roles and responsibilities:

Project Sponsor	Executive Director of Community Services
Provide resources, support, and organisational coordination to support the project goals and objectives.	
Project Manager	Supervisor, Policy Planning
Set and monitor project direction, coordinate project tasks and timelines, liaise with the Project Sponsor, Council, and other key stakeholders.	
Planning Support Team	Planning Department Staff
Undertake project tasks such as drafting deliverables, carrying out engagement activities, and conducting relevant research, among others.	
Subject Matter Expertise	Internal Departments
Engage in the project, provide technical advice, and review as required. Support the drafting of the ESS deliverables to meet the needs of the County.	
Third-Party Consultants	To be determined through procurement process
Support the work of the project team as set out in the procurement process.	



Initial Timeline and Deliverables

- 17 The initial timeline for the ESS project is outlined below. The results of the Phase 1 work to identify issues and opportunities through engagement and best practice research will guide the subsequent project phases by identifying key considerations related to the development forms within the identified sector.
- 18 Upon completion of Phase 1, Administration will return to Council by the end of June 2026 with a Phase 1 Summary Report and an Options Report that will outline specific deliverables for each identified sector that may be pursued in subsequent phases of the project.
- 19 Upon receiving the Options Report, Council may choose to proceed with both sectors or sequence them and will determine which proposed deliverables should be advanced in the subsequent phases.
- 20 Following further direction from Council, Administration will return with a proposed amendment to this TOR with revised phasing, schedule, and budget request to address identified deliverables.

Phase 1: Issues and Opportunities (Q1-Q2 2026)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practice and information gathering • Initial public and stakeholder engagement • Phase 1 Engagement Summary Report and Options Report presented to Council • Revised terms of reference
Phase 2: Sector Strategy Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector Strategy sequencing, focus, and deliverables to be determined by revised terms of reference.



Best Practice and Information Gathering

Purpose and Intent

- 21 The project will commence with a gathering of available data, information, and best practice drawing upon sources such as:
 - (1) Existing County studies and data, including the Municipal Land Use Sustainability Tool, County transportation and servicing assessments, and economic studies.
 - (2) Land use and permitting data on existing and proposed sector development within the County.
 - (3) Best practice research within Alberta and other jurisdictions applying sector-specific planning approaches, tools, and strategies to proactively manage development.

Technical Studies

- 22** It is intended that a consultant will be retained in Phase 1, with support from Administration, to conduct a best practice review. The consultant will examine the technical approaches and strategies that have been implemented for developments within the identified sectors.
- 23** Further technical studies may be identified following Phase 1 of the project and will be outlined when Administration presents a revised Terms of Reference.

Options report

- 24** Administration will collate gathered information with public engagement feedback to produce a potential framework and principles for developing the identified strategies. Options identified will seek to address:
 - (1)** How zones may be identified where development may be supported or would be inappropriate.
 - (2)** What potential planning approvals processes could manage sector development to ensure efficient but also thoughtful management of growth opportunities.
 - (3)** What criteria could be included to determine appropriate development areas.
 - (4)** How community engagement should be undertaken at each stage of development.
 - (5)** How co-location opportunities might be incorporated being mindful of the scale of new development areas.
 - (6)** Potential design, transition, and interface criteria to ensure that the intensity of development is graduated in an orderly fashion and that the benefits of development can be shared as much as possible amongst landowners.



Initial Public and Stakeholder Engagement

Purpose and Intent

- 25** The initial public and stakeholder engagement serves a dual purpose:
 - (1)** To inform stakeholders, residents, and landowners about the upcoming development of the ESS project and the types of development proposed within the identified sectors; and
 - (2)** To collect feedback on the perceived barriers, concerns, and risks related to those development forms.
- 26** A key focus of the initial engagement will be to promote trust and collaboration between all stakeholders so that policy solutions can be explored in an open and transparent manner.

- 27** The engagement campaign will employ a range of techniques to reach a broad audience and gather comprehensive feedback from all interested parties. These engagement opportunities will consider both in-person and virtual events.
- 28** In scheduling engagement opportunities, the project team shall have regard to avoiding core holiday periods to maximize stakeholder participation.
- 29** Feedback collected through engagement will be compiled into a Phase 1 Summary Report. This report will inform the development of an Options Report, which will be presented to Council to support their decision-making on the number and scope of deliverables to advance into Phase 2 of the project.

In-person Open House

- 30** Several open houses will be scheduled as the primary method for gathering public feedback to better understand concerns, barriers, and risks related to development forms within the identified sectors.
- 31** The open houses will also serve an educational purpose by raising awareness of the ESS project and showcasing examples of successful developments within the identified sectors.
- 32** Open houses held in the eastern portion of the County will primarily focus on the data sector, while those in the western portion will focus on the tourism sector. Regardless of location, all feedback received will be considered in the Phase 1 Summary Report.
- 33** A minimum of three open houses will be held in both the eastern and western portions of the County.

Virtual Open House

- 34** At minimum, two virtual open houses will be held during Phase 1 to provide additional opportunities for public participation, particularly for those unable to attend in-person events.
- 35** The virtual open houses will follow a similar format to the in-person events, offering information about development forms within the identified sectors and allowing participants to share feedback or concerns with the County.

Focus Groups

- 36** Focus group sessions will be scheduled and made available to proponents of development within the identified sectors to provide feedback on barriers related to the County's existing policies, regulations, standards, and procedures.
- 37** These sessions will also provide an opportunity for proponents and Administration to collaboratively explore Council's direction for the ESS project and discuss how a shared vision can be achieved.
- 38** The number and format of events will be determined in consultation with interested proponents.

Book a Planner

- 39** Stakeholders will have the opportunity to schedule one-on-one discussions with Administration for informal consultations on the ESS project.
- 40** At the stakeholder's discretion, these consultations may be held virtually or in a public location.
- 41** The "Book a Planner" initiative aims to enhance accountability through face-to-face conversations and to facilitate more in-depth discussions that may not be feasible during open house events.

Online Surveys

- 42** An online survey will be conducted to gather responses to targeted questions regarding the ESS project and development forms within the identified sectors.
- 43** The survey will primarily include qualitative questions, enabling respondents to provide detailed and individualized feedback.



Budget

- 44** Phase 1 proposes a budget of \$80,000 to support a consultant's work to complete a best practice review for the technical aspects for developments within the identified sectors.
- 45** A budget adjustment may be required at future phases pending results of Phase 1 and further direction from Council. Administration will provide a revised the terms of reference to facilitate the subsequent phases with the associated budget adjustments.



Project Risks

- 46** The principal risks to Phase 1 of the ESS project are as follows:

Risk	Response
Consensus amongst stakeholders cannot be reached.	Administration will provide Council with recommendations on potential next steps to advance the project incrementally if needed, ensuring continued alignment with the project's intended objectives.
Expectations of deliverables from public are not possible.	Administration will be open and clear on the possible outcomes that may be achievable within the ESS.

47 It is anticipated that further project risks will be identified in the anticipated TOR amendment following Phase 1.



Change Control and Accountability

48 Where the scope, budget, or schedule are required to significantly change due to anticipated or unforeseen risks, Administration shall seek direction from Council on amending this TOR. In determining the significance of the change, Administration shall consider the following criteria:

- (1) Cost overruns exceeding any contingency budget amount approved by Council; and
- (2) Scope changes that affect achievement of meeting the project principles.

49 Where differing stakeholder interests cannot be reconciled, consideration shall be given to delivering the components of the ESS.



Definitions

50 In these Terms of Reference, the following definitions apply:

- (1) **“Co-location”** means the siting of multiple related or complementary uses in close physical proximity to one another. These uses often share resources and infrastructure;
- (2) **“Data Centre”** means a dedicated facility that houses computer systems, servers, networking equipment, and storage infrastructure used to collect, process, manage, and store large volumes of digital data. Data centres provide a secure, controlled environment with reliable power supply, cooling, and connectivity to ensure continuous operation of IT services. They support a wide range of applications, including cloud computing, web hosting, data backup, and enterprise IT operations;
- (3) **“Council”** means the duly elected Council of Rocky View County;
- (4) **“Rocky View County”** means Rocky View County as a municipal corporation and the geographical area within its jurisdictional boundaries, as the context requires;
- (5) **“Technology and Energy Sector”** means industries focused on the development, production, and delivery of technological solutions and energy resources, including software, hardware, telecommunications, data infrastructure, as well as traditional and renewable energy generation, storage, and distribution systems.
- (6) **“Tourism and Hospitality Sector (Tourism Sector)”** means all businesses, services, and activities related to the travel and visitation of individuals for leisure, business, or other purposes. This includes accommodations, transportation, attractions, entertainment, food and beverage services, and supporting infrastructure that collectively contribute to the experience of visitors and the economic benefits to the community.



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