



ROCKY VIEW COUNTY



MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Shaping the growth of
Rocky View County

Stage 1 Public Engagement Summary

October 2019

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About the Project

The Municipal Development Plan outlines the vision for Rocky View County’s future from a planning and development perspective, and helps shape how and where the County will grow.

Project Overview

Rocky View County (the County) will likely grow by at least 15,000 people in the next 20 years. To accommodate this growth, the County is replacing the existing Municipal Development Plan. The new Municipal Development Plan will identify important areas for new development to occur and establish guidelines for protecting the rural and urban character, economic opportunities, and community diversity that make the County a great place to live and work.

The **Municipal Development Plan (MDP)** will:

- » Set the vision for how to accommodate responsible growth
- » Serve as a decision-making tool for Council, County Administration, and stakeholders
- » Help residents and landowners understand how their land may be used now and in the future
- » Ensure that growth meets the needs of the community.

We are currently in Stage 1 of the project, as shown in the chart below. Public and stakeholder engagement is vital to this project’s success, and through Stage 1 Engagement, community feedback will inform the Vision and Principles of the new MDP.



Photo Credit: Jack Borno





585
ONLINE
RESPONDENTS



364
OPEN HOUSE
ATTENDEES

Approach

Engagement Opportunities

To reach a wide range of residents, a variety of engagement tactics were used throughout Stage 1. Using a combination of online and in-person engagement in several locations across the County, residents had several opportunities and formats they could use to provide their input to the project.

Online Survey

An online survey accessed through the County's project website was available from August 26 to September 15, 2019, for a total of 21 days. The survey included a short questionnaire and interactive map that allowed respondents to identify and highlight areas of Rocky View County that they value or want to see change. A total of 585 respondents completed the survey.

Open Houses

Open houses were held throughout the County where attendees were provided information about the project, opportunities to talk with the Project Team, and several activity stations to provide feedback. A total of 6 open houses were held throughout Rocky View County:

- » **Langdon** (Boulder Creek Golf Course)
Wednesday, September 4
- » **Bragg Creek** (Bragg Creek Community Centre)
Thursday, September 5
- » **Bearspaw** (Bearspaw Lifestyle Centre)
Monday, September 9
- » **Springbank** (Springbank Park for All Seasons)
Tuesday, September 10
- » **Conrich** (Chestermere Christian Fellowship)
Wednesday, September 11
- » **Balzac** (Rocky View County Hall)
Thursday, September 12

364 participants attended the open houses, providing over 750 pieces of feedback directly to the Project Team.

Communications

Stage 1 engagement events were promoted through a number of channels over the course of the engagement period, including:

- » Project website updates
- » County-wide mail-out flyer
- » Social media posts
- » Lobby display at County Hall
- » Rocky View Weekly newspaper ads
- » Safe and Sound email list
- » MDP project email list

In addition to the tactics above, Stage 1 was also covered by local media during the engagement period. Articles about the ongoing engagement were published in Rocky View Weekly and Airdrie Today.





VALUES



PRIORITIES



VISION



PLACES

Engagement Strategy

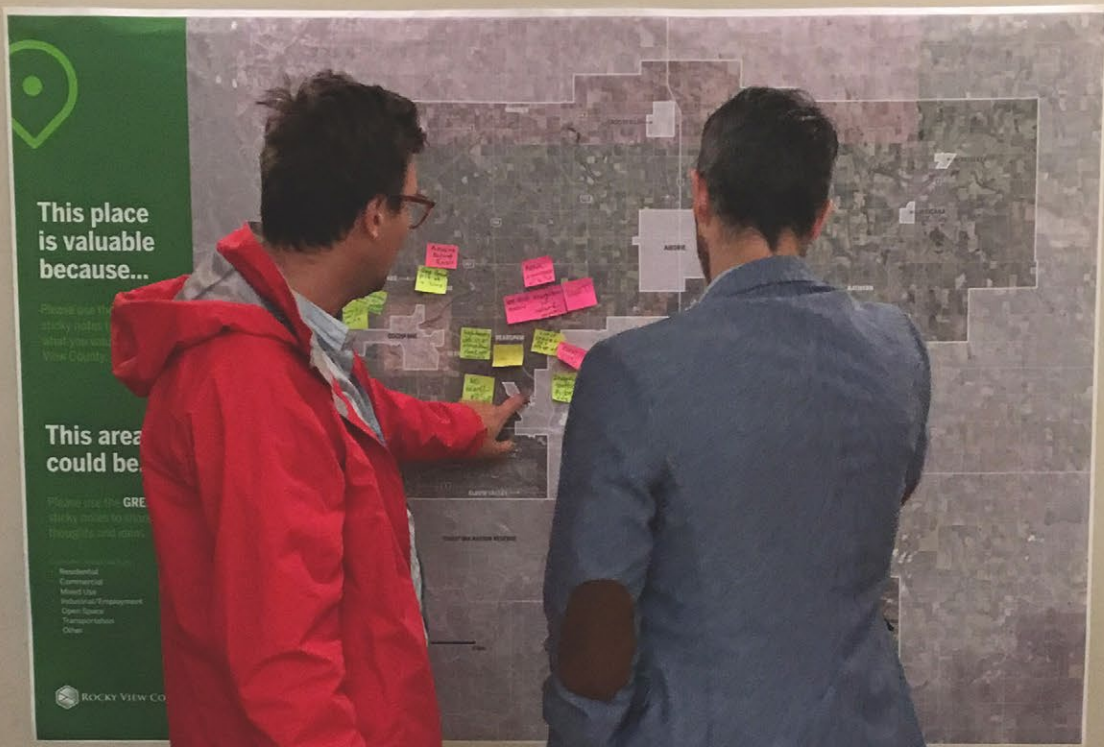
Stage 1 Engagement was intended to help guide the establishment of the Vision and Principles for the new MDP. To do this, the Project Team asked the public to answer three main questions:

1. **Values:** What do you love about Rocky View County?
2. **Priorities:** What do you think is most important to consider when planning Rocky View County's future?
3. **Vision:** What are your hopes for the future growth of Rocky View County?

The Project Team also collected **location-based** comments on a map from survey respondents and open house attendees that responded to the following prompts:

4. This area is **valuable** because...
5. This area **could be**...

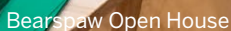
The Project Team has analyzed this feedback collected from Stage 1, and identified important findings and considerations, that will inform and guide the development of the new MDP. The following pages summarize these insights and reflect the major values, priorities, and vision for growth expressed by participants.





In order to determine what Rocky View County residents and visitors value most, the Project Team asked respondents to provide up to three words that represented what they love and value about the County. Approximately 1,600 individual values were provided.

1. Rural Lifestyle
2. Peace and Quiet
3. Natural Landscape





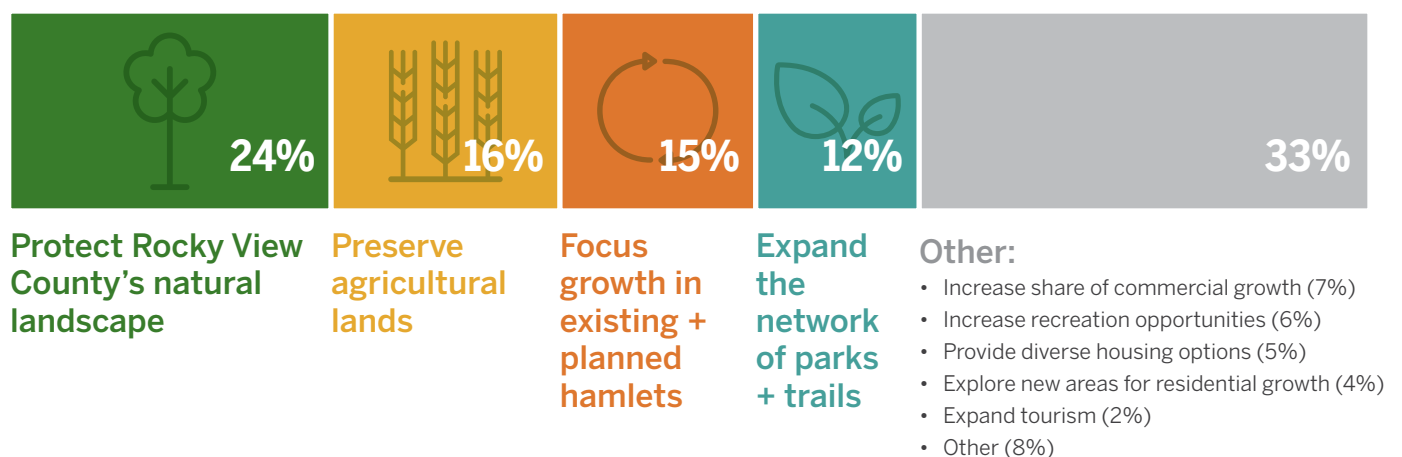
Priorities

What do you think is most important to consider when planning Rocky View County's future?

As we consider how the County should grow over the next 20 years, it is important to prioritize what is most important to County residents and visitors. Online survey and open house participants were asked to select their top three priorities from a list of options, and could add their own. Just under 2,000 answers were given, with the survey and open house results closely aligned.

The results highlighted the following top four priorities:

1. Protect Rocky View County's natural landscape
2. Preserve agricultural lands
3. Focus growth in existing and planned hamlets
4. Expand the network of parks and trails across the County



Protect Rocky View County's Natural Landscape

Reiterating the common values identified in the first question, the protection of the natural landscape is the top priority for planning the future of Rocky View County, indicated by participants. There is significant opposition to resource extraction, the proposed automall, and other forms of development perceived to be in conflict with the County's rural landscape.

Preserve Agricultural Lands

Respondents identified preservation of agricultural lands as the second key consideration. Respondents recognize the existing agricultural land within the County greatly contributes to the economy, lifestyle, and character of the County today and should be protected.

Focus Growth in Existing and Planned Hamlets

While respondents are clear on their desire to protect the rural landscape, they also indicated a firm commitment to focused growth. This includes prioritizing growth in existing and planned hamlets first before expanding into new areas. Some participants also expressed their dissatisfaction with the current practices and desire for stricter adherence to existing plans and less development permitted outside of planned areas.

Expand the Network of Parks and Trails

Respondents highlighted their interest in expanding the network of parks and trails across the County. This response was often combined with the protection of the rural and/or environmental landscape, highlighting the interest to not only protect the natural assets of the County, but to provide access to experience them first hand.





Vision

What are your hopes for the future growth of Rocky View County?

To develop a vision for the new MDP that accurately reflects the aspirations of County residents and visitors, participants were asked to share their thoughts on the future of the County. 600 responses were received from the online survey and open house. From these responses several clear themes about the County's future growth emerged.

The most frequently occurring themes included:

1. **Controlled + Focused Growth**
2. **Maintain the Rural Character**
3. **Preserve Natural Environment + Wildlife**



Controlled + Focused Growth

Participants indicated a desire to control the growth of Rocky View County, and highlighted the importance of planning growth properly. Strategies to do so included focusing growth in existing planned areas, prioritizing fiscally and environmentally sustainable growth only, smart and strategic planning, and concentrating new residences together rather than spreading them out across the County.

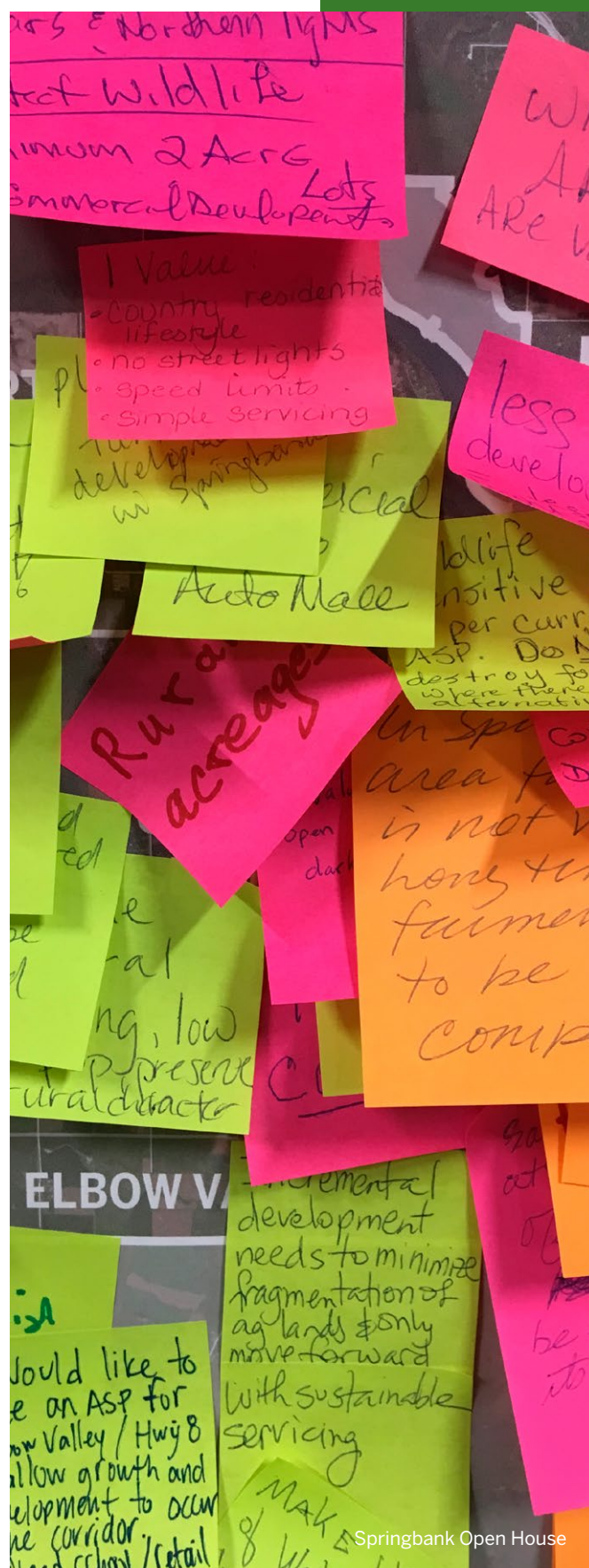
Many respondents indicated a need for the County to ensure coordinated growth of infrastructure and services along with new developments. People did not want to see increased fragmentation of land and the associated servicing gaps that “leap-frog” development has created.

Very few participants did not want to growth of any kind in the County, however it was emphasized that properly managed, controlled, planned, and limited growth was desired.

Maintain the Rural Character

The rural identity of Rocky View County is very important to respondents. The spaciousness, the country residential (low) density, and the rural lifestyle were all highlighted as aspects of the County that should be maintained and prioritized. Many participants highlighted the desire to maintain the low density lifestyle that attracts so many to live in the County instead of a more urban area.

Agriculture is also highly valued, with many people enjoying the rural landscapes of farms and rolling fields. Many indicated that the preservation of the rural agricultural character and history was of particular importance to the identity of the County. Additionally, preservation of productive agricultural and ranch land was noted as a critical component of the County’s economy that should be considered in growth strategies.



Preserve Natural Environment + Wildlife

In the future respondents want to see the County's natural environment and wildlife protected and enhanced. Individuals expressed a desire to conserve environmentally sensitive areas, grow in an environmentally sustainable manner and, overall, protect the natural landscape they cherish. Participants highlighted the need to preserve the ecological functions of the County's landscapes, the habitats they create, and the wildlife that resides in and passes throughout. A desire to see more protection and consideration for wildlife was also clearly identified.

The importance of watershed protection and the associated riparian areas was also shared. Participants highlighted the necessity of not developing in flood zones to reduce the risk to humans from flooding, preserving these areas as parks and

open spaces, and protecting the source of drinking water for many people. A desire to reduce or eliminate resource extraction activities such as gravel pits and oil wells was also clear.

The human enjoyment of nature was also noted alongside the desire for preservation. Participants enjoy their ability to directly access nature everyday, to view wildlife, and experience the overall beauty of the natural world close to home. Responses frequently highlighted the desire for increased parks, trails and pathways throughout natural areas to increase both conservation of and recreational access to these areas in the future.



Bragg Creek Open House



Conrich Open House



Places

To learn about the values and vision related to specific locations across the County, additional comments were collected through an online interactive map and at each of the six open houses on a large map of Rocky View County. Participants were asked to leave notes based on the following two prompts:

- » **This place is valuable because...**
- » **This area could be...**

In total, participants placed 285 sticky notes on the maps in person, with an additional 413 responses online. The most common themes that arose from the map responses are summarized on the following pages, including where most comments were located on the map and notes on the types of feedback received.



This place is valuable because...

Frequent Responses

Location: The responses were most heavily concentrated in the County's southwest.

Ecological Value: The map comments primarily emphasized the preservation of the environment, especially watersheds and the protection of wildlife. Participants highlighted areas surrounding the Bow and Elbow Rivers as important wildlife corridors, presenting these places as opportunities for conservation and/or park development. Large wetland complexes were also identified as ecosystems worthy of protection. Participants highlighted the beauty of the County landscape and the rural character as very valuable.

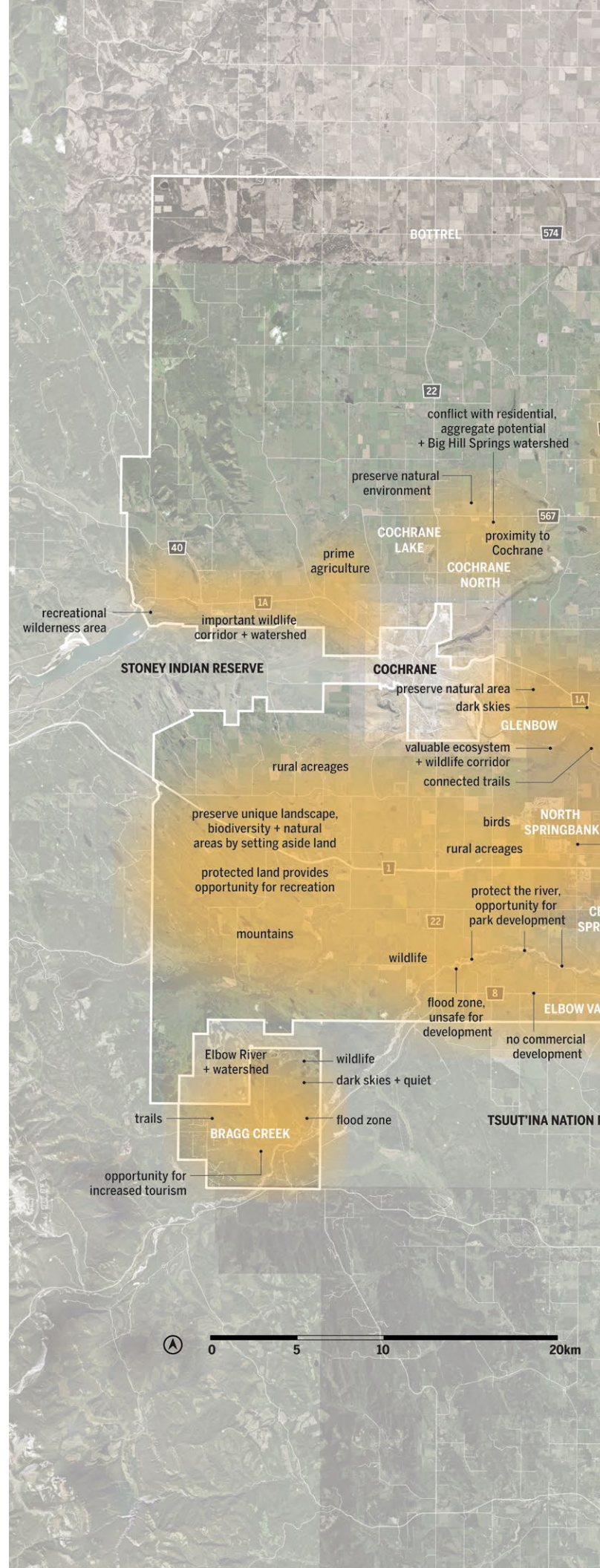
Recreation: The opportunity for increased recreation opportunities was also frequently identified. In particular, increased trail connection through parks and open spaces were seen as valuable.

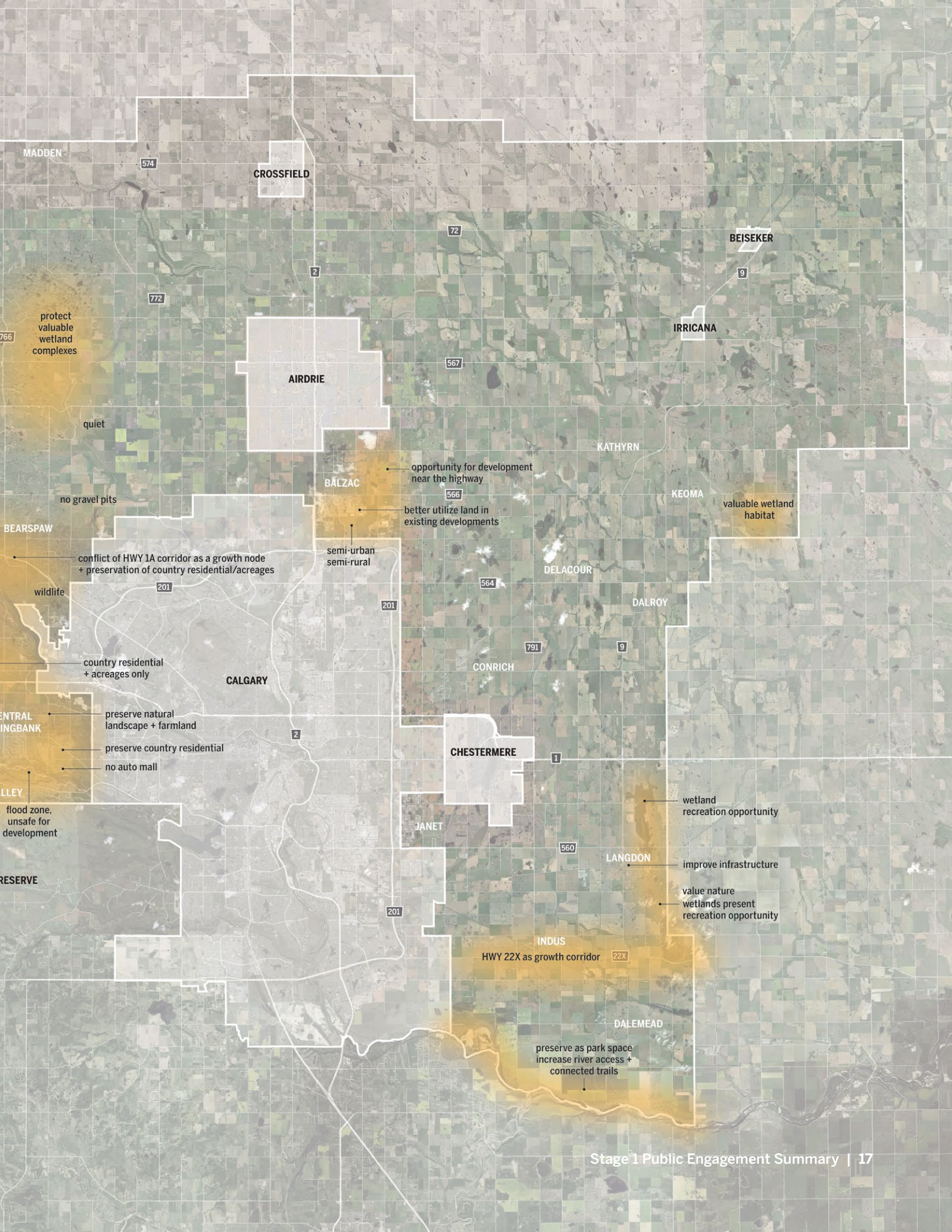
Tensions

Development: Participants were conflicted in their desire for development. Many respondents identified their rural, country residential lifestyle as highly valuable, while others noted these areas as potential growth nodes for higher density residential or commercial development. In particular Highway 1, Highway 1A, and development near Cochrane Lake were controversial.

Opportunities

Conservation & Recreation: The identification of important wildlife corridors and ecosystems present opportunities for potential conservation areas and future park development. In addition, the identification of trails and recreation opportunities as valuable highlights the desire for their further development in the future.





This area could be..

Frequent Responses

Proximity: Responses were generally concentrated around the City of Calgary limits, in close proximity to Cochrane, Langdon, and within the southwest of the County, indicating opportunities for future commercial, industrial or residential development.

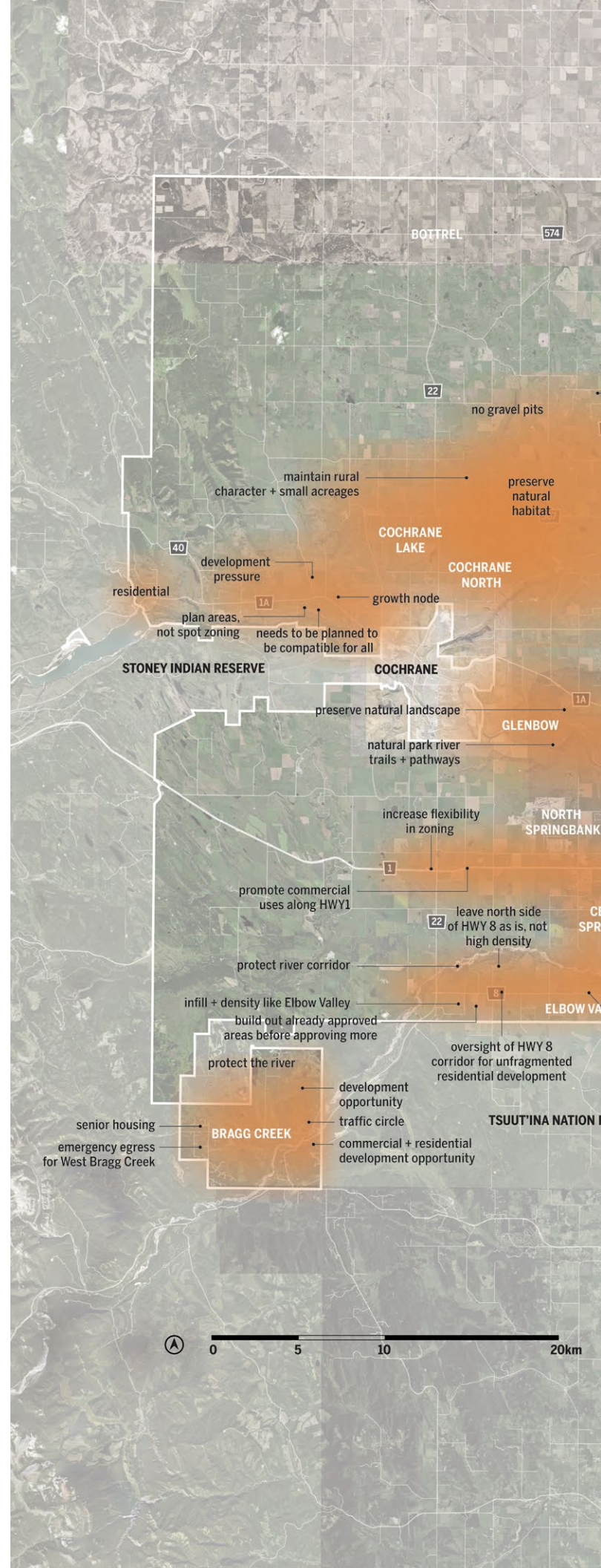
Tensions

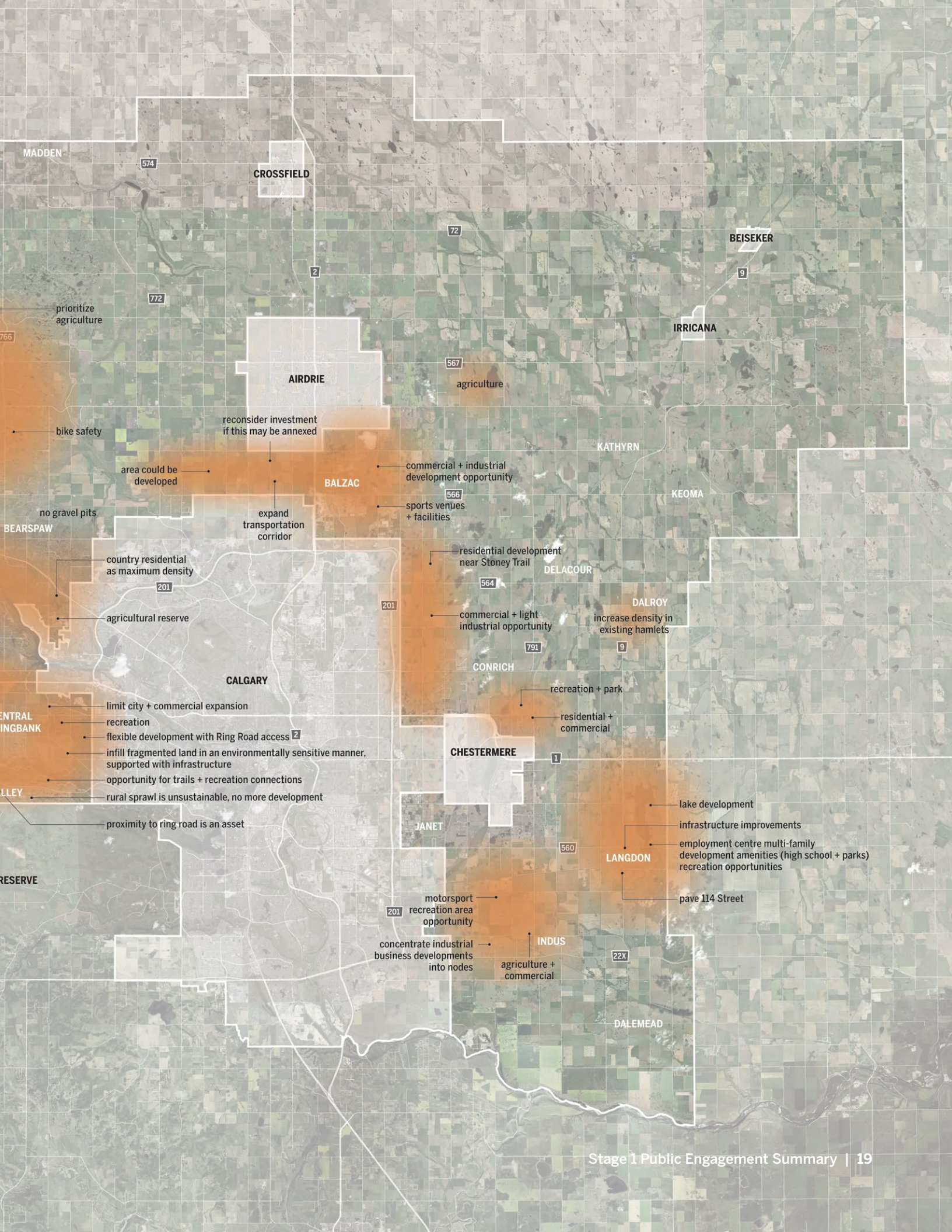
Highway 1: Some responses indicated that proximity to the Ring Road, Highway 1, or Highway 1A were assets to commercial development. However, others indicated the desire to limit rural sprawl and commercial expansion in those locations. Significant conflict between increasing density and commercial expansion or preserving low density is evident.

Highway 8: The Elbow River watershed and Highway 8 corridor were also contentious areas. Responses in this area expressed the need to protect the river corridor, leave it as is, infill fragmented land, and to build out the existing approved plans in this area before approving more. Many responses imply that this area may require additional development oversight to prevent fragmentation and servicing gaps and to protect the natural river assets. Another area of tension is along Highway 1A, with similar conflicts between protecting the Bow River, the natural landscape, and wildlife corridors while competing with increased commercial and residential development pressure and aggregate extraction.

Opportunities

New Development: Many responses indicated Langdon as a place for increased employment and commercial development, and increased higher density residential development. Additionally, responses indicated opportunities for development, both commercial and industrial development in Balzac, Omni, and near Conrich. Additional recreation and trail opportunities are also identified.





Next Steps

Direction for the MDP

The feedback received during Stage 1 has provided the Project Team with valuable insights that will be incorporated throughout the MDP. Results across the different engagement methods and questions point to many values and priorities of the residents and visitors of Rocky View County, including:

- » Preserve the rural character of the County
- » Preserve and protect the natural environment and wildlife
- » Control and focus growth in existing and currently planned areas

The feedback will help direct the development of the draft MDP, including the Vision, Guiding Principles, and Growth Strategies, incorporating priorities for growth, nature, and agriculture.

Vision + Guiding Principles

Stage 1 of engagement provided clear direction on the most important factors to include in the new MDP's vision and guiding principles. Controlling and focusing growth according to plans should be a key consideration going forward. Similarly, the desire to protect the rural landscape and character that make Rocky View County what it is should be reflected throughout the MDP project.

Based on the findings from Stage 1, a draft Vision and Guiding Principles will be prepared for Council review.

Growth Priorities

The first round of engagement confirmed that residents and visitors of Rocky View County want to see realistic expectations of growth. There is little desire for new growth areas, and many feel that new growth should be concentrated, rather than spread out, with adequate infrastructure and servicing to support new development.



Springbank Open House

Growth strategies that respond to the direction provided by participants through Stage 1 will be prepared and reviewed with Council. These growth strategies will then be presented for public feedback during Stage 2 in November.

Nature + Agriculture

As indicated in this engagement summary, natural and agricultural beauty and character of the County is highly valued by participants. These are the defining features that differentiate Rocky View from other surrounding municipalities, and provide for a lifestyle that is valuable and enjoyed by all who live there.

The preservation of this character and of the natural and agricultural elements that make Rocky View what it is should be reflected in all considerations made in the new MDP.

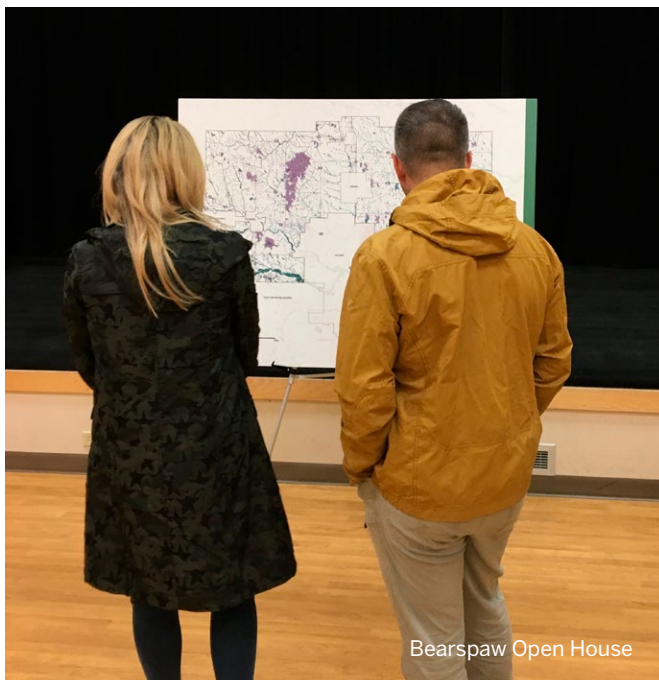
Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Stage 1 Vision + Principles engagement. Your feedback is essential to the development of the new Municipal Development Plan.

Stage 2 of the public engagement process is scheduled to begin in November 2019, when the public and stakeholders will be invited to review and provide feedback on preliminary growth strategies.

Stay Informed

Visit rockyview.ca/MDP to sign-up for email updates and learn about project milestones and opportunities to participate.



Bearspaw Open House



Bragg Creek Open House



rockyview.ca/MDP



ROCKY VIEW COUNTY