

County of Grande Prairie No.1 Growth and Economic Development Strategy Executive Summary

2016-2066



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What is a Growth and Economic Development Strategy ?

A *Growth and Economic Development Strategy* is a strategy that can be adopted by Council that provides a road-map for attracting new investment and ensuring long-term sustainable growth. The *Growth and Economic Development Strategy* (the Strategy) also provides a framework for how land in the County can best be utilized to create additional economic opportunities.

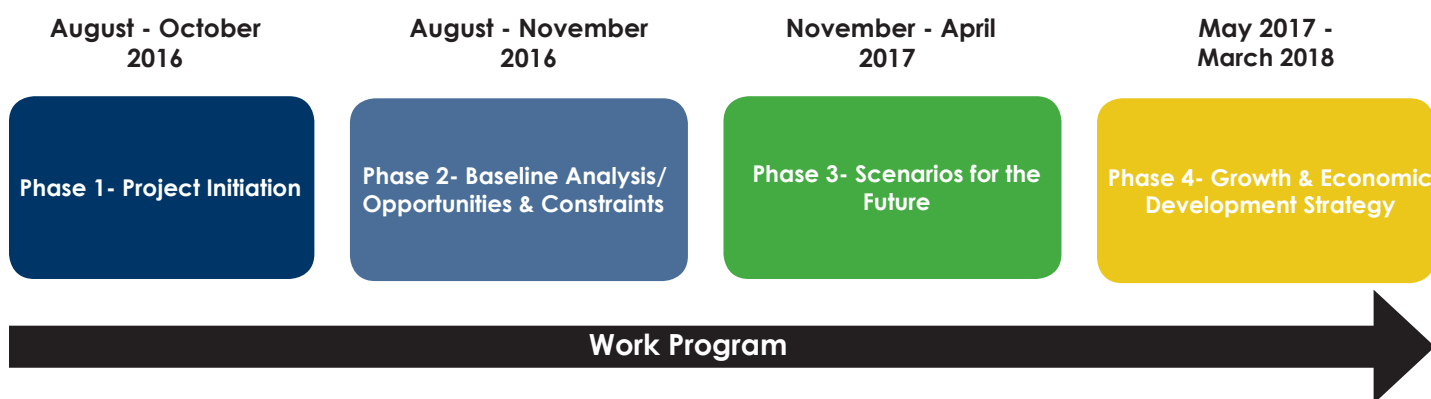
Why is the County of Grande Prairie Preparing a Growth and Economic Development Strategy ?

The County of Grande Prairie is proactively identifying current and future economic opportunities that can supplement its rich agricultural, resource, and tourism based economy.

By gaining a comprehensive understanding of the social, economic, and environmental factors at play in the County, the *Growth and Economic Development Strategy* will establish a 50-year vision that shows how to best accommodate future growth, and how to strengthen economic development in a sustainable, responsible way. In doing this it will become part of the foundation for a review and update to the County's *Municipal Development Plan* (MDP) and can serve as a strategic document for participation in the *Upper Peace Regional Plan* when it is being prepared by the Alberta Government.

How was the Growth and Economic Development Strategy Prepared ?

The preparation of the County of Grande Prairie *Growth and Economic Development Strategy* followed a four-phase work program completed over 19 months between August 2016 and March 2018 as seen in the figure below. Opportunities for stakeholder and public consultation were provided during each phase of the work program.





What are the Vision and Guiding Principles for the Strategy ?

Vision building and establishing guiding principles are effective planning tools for establishing a single shared vision for the future while incorporating the needs of the community and affected stakeholders. Vision and Guiding Principles benefit a project by developing a greater sense of community consensus, establishing a long-term direction for the project and community, helps in setting priorities, and allocates responsibilities for implementation.

Vision 2066

“Capitalizing on its strategic location, as the “Middle of Everywhere”, by the year 2066 the County of Grande Prairie will have grown to a community of over 74,000 people and a model of sustainable development for the region. Building on Clairmont’s transformation into a model “green community”, the hamlets and rural areas of the County will become vibrant and desirable places to live, work, and play.

The traditional economic base of agriculture, oil and gas, forestry, and tourism will look to grow and diversify through innovation, the application of new technology, and value-added manufacturing. The County will continue to be open for business and foster collaboration with neighbouring municipalities by promoting economic development and efficient, cost effective delivery of physical and social infrastructure.

People will recognize that the County of Grande Prairie is an ideal place to invest, start a business, raise a family, and age in place.”

Guiding Principles for Achieving the Vision 2066

- 1. Grow and diversify the County’s economy through innovation, use of technology, and entrepreneurship.*
- 2. The County will continue to protect its natural environment and pursue environmentally sustainable practices.*
- 3. Ensure that agriculture remains an important economic activity and way of life in the County by maintaining the Right to Farm and avoiding the premature fragmentation of high quality farmland.*
- 4. Through the provision of social infrastructure (i.e. health, education, recreation and cultural facilities and programming), the County will be a healthy, safe, and inclusive community that provides high quality of life for people of all ages.*
- 5. Promote land use patterns that provide for the economic and responsible use of infrastructure and avoid land use conflicts.*
- 6. The County will help facilitate regional partnerships with industry, neighbouring municipalities, and the provincial and federal orders of government to continue to develop a competitive, resilient, attractive, and liveable region.*
- 7. County Council and staff will endeavor to facilitate responsible, transparent and well-informed decision making based upon on-going public engagement to better understand the needs of County residents and ratepayers.*

What is the Best Growth Option for the County of Grande Prairie ?

To determine which of the three alternate Growth Options developed would form the basis of the Strategy, a series of evaluation criterion were developed. These Evaluation Criteria aim to evaluate which growth option most closely aligns with the agreed upon seven Guiding Principles for the project to ensure these principles have concrete outcomes that can be seen throughout the project.

The Balanced Growth Option was chosen because it offers the following key features:

- Supporting continuous growth and development of the urban municipalities of Sexsmith, Beaverlodge, Hythe, and Wembley. Intermunicipal Development Plans are being prepared to manage growth and development in the urban fringe areas.
- Directing future residential and industrial development and growth to the growth hamlets of Clairmont, La Glace, and Bezanson.
- Revitalizing and maintaining service in the stable hamlets of Hueallen, Dismsdale, Wedgewood, Teepee Creek, and Valhalla Centre.
- Clustering country residential development to maintain efficient and cost effective provision of municipal services including water, wastewater, and roadways.
- Directs, whenever possible, industrial and commercial development away from high productivity farmland to promote agriculture in the County.
- Ensures that existing community services and amenities such as schools, hospitals, community halls, and arenas remain viable and accessible to the greatest number of residents. It provides opportunities to create new services in these communities as they are needed.
- Creates complete communities that are healthy, safe, and inclusive that provide a high quality of life for residents by preserving the existing community fabric while providing housing choices from country residential or country estate, to single family, to apartment style housing along with recreational and community amenities.
- Protects environmentally sensitive areas around the Wapiti River Corridor, the Smoky River, Saskatoon Mountain Park and the many streams, creeks, ponds, and lakes throughout the County. Wildlife habitat and movement corridors are protected.
- Supports the County's guiding principles of growing and diversifying the economy and providing ample "shovel ready" land for commercial and industrial development by creating a variety of locations and servicing levels for industrial and commercial development that cater to a range of industry sectors and commercial typologies.

Overall, the Balanced Growth Option provides the best mix of quality of life, cost of servicing, protection of environmentally significant areas and agricultural lands, and support of economic activities within the County. See "*Map 1: Balanced Growth Option*" for an overview of the growth option.



What are Strategic Directions for Diversifying the Economy ?

Through engagement with residents, stakeholders, and industry representatives along with research into economic trends and forecasts, a number of strategic directions and principles were identified that the County could adopt to promote growth and diversification of its economy.

Though agriculture, energy and forestry will remain critical drivers of the regional economy, emerging opportunities in value added agriculture, bio-industry, tourism, and commercial and retail development will play an increasingly important role in the region's development. The ability to provide high quality education and training to leverage important public investments such as the new regional hospital will be important enablers to capitalize on new growth opportunities.

To capture the many opportunities identified, based on the feedback received, the following are directions the County needs to work towards:

1. **Support Collaboration** by facilitating community dialogue.
2. **Foster Entrepreneurship** to capitalize on the entrepreneurial and driven community.
3. **Develop Local Leadership** to foster a strong and diverse team of local leaders.
4. **Foster Market Access** by developing initiatives that carefully balance agricultural, industrial, commercial and residential land uses with regional environmental sustainability.
5. **Leverage Natural Advantages** have driven historical growth and will be critical to developing new value-add opportunities in evolving bio-economy and energy markets.
6. **Focus on Impacts** to target and achieve a clear set of outcomes.

What are the Key Initiatives the County and Its Partners need to Undertake Over the Next 5 Years (2018-2023) ?

To achieve the vision, and guiding principles the County of Grande Prairie needs to undertake 22 initiatives related to growth management, required infrastructure, and economic development:

Growth Management

1. Review and update the County's Municipal Development Plan.
2. Complete Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDPs) and Intermunicipal Collaboration Frameworks (ICFs) with neighbouring municipalities.
3. Complete Area Structure Plans (ASPs) and Master Servicing Plans for the growth hamlets of La Glace and Bezanson.
4. Prepare Area Structure Plans for the three (3) country residential growth areas identified in the Balanced Growth Option.
5. Participate in the creation of the Upper Peace Regional Plan with the Government of Alberta.

Provision of Infrastructure

6. Work with Aquatera to implement the required upgrades to sewer and water infrastructure in: Clairmont, Mercer Hill Reservoir, and a Regional Lift Station to Grande Prairie.
7. Make representation to the Province of Alberta to twin Highway 40 to Grande Cache.
8. Make representation to the Province of Alberta and the Government of Canada to twin Highway 43 to British Columbia.
9. Make representation to the Province of Alberta and the Government of Canada to construct the Grande Prairie Highway 43 Bypass, Southwest Resources Road, and Southeast Bypass.
10. Design and construct upgrades to the Bezanson lagoon.
11. Investigate municipal water systems for La Glace.
12. Investigate implementation of municipal water system in Dimsdale after regional line to Wembley is constructed.
13. Update County Design Standards to reflect Alberta Environment and Parks Standards and Guidelines regarding stormwater quality.
14. Adopt Infrastructure Resiliency Practices with County Design Standards.
15. Investigate opportunities to improve broadband speed or wireless internet system within County.
16. Include wetlands in policy development; consider identifying wetland areas where onsite replacement instead of in-lieu fee payment should take place.
17. Investigate the development of a intermunicipal bus system with the County and surrounding Municipalities.
18. Rank agricultural capability of the growth areas and prioritize conservation of the highest value agricultural land through land use zoning and development permitting as part of the MDP review and update.





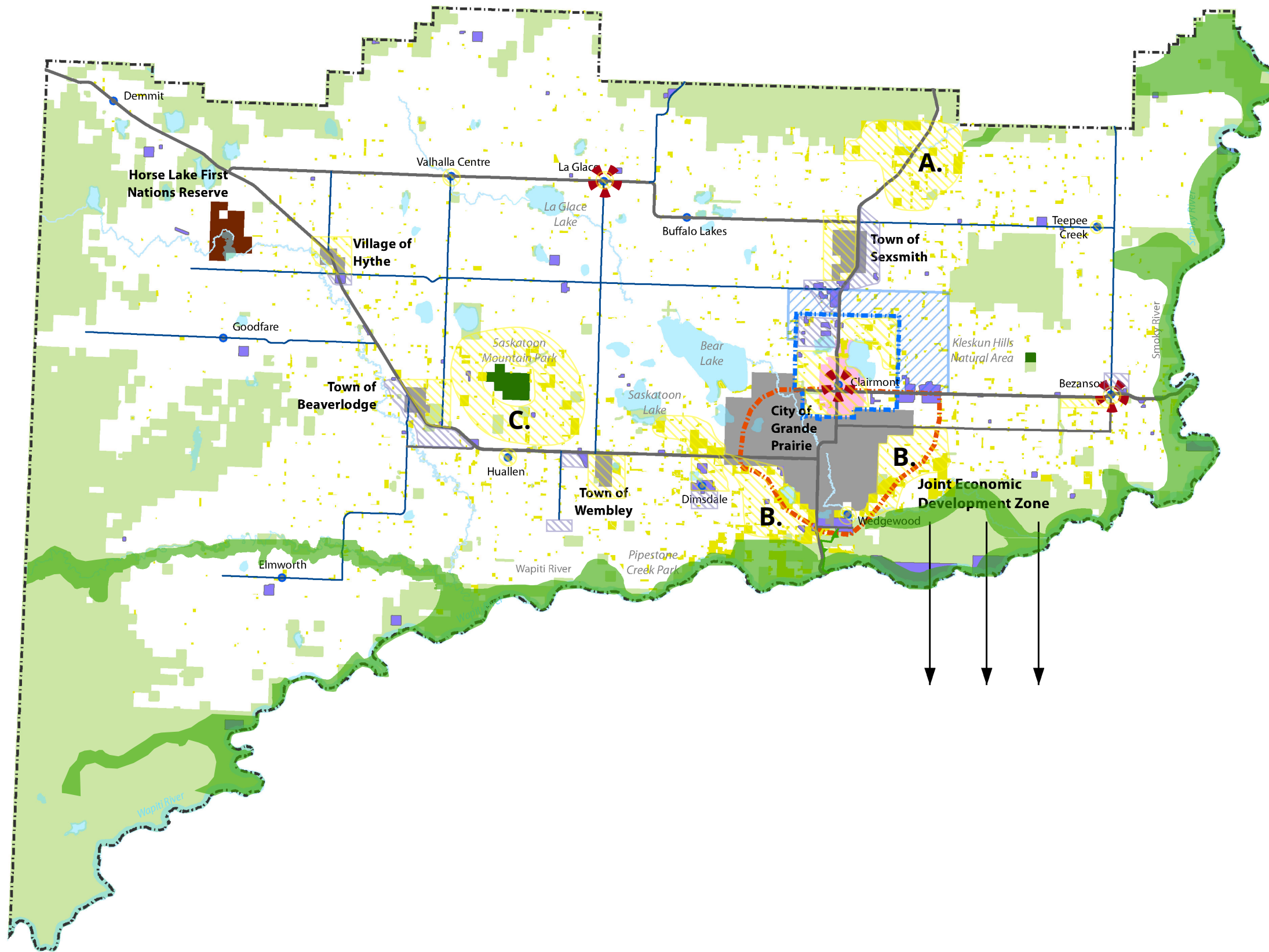
Economic Development

19. Strengthen Economic Development Governance to engage key community leaders in the growth strategy.
20. Develop a measurement and reporting framework to share with County Stakeholders the impacts of the Economic Development Strategy.
21. Create an integrated advocacy plan to leverage key stakeholders and partners in a common effort to influence local, regional, provincial, and national partners around the Strategy and its initiatives.
22. Develop strategic initiatives that align with the Strategies objectives to attract investment, improve productivity, and develop regional capacity to support growth.



Growth & Economic Development Strategy

County of Grande Prairie No.1, Alberta



Legend

- Growth Hamlets
 - Stable Hamlets
 - Urban Municipality
 - Horse Lake First Nations Reserve
 - Clairmont Boundary
 - Clairmont Growth Area
 - Agriculture/Rural
 - Crown Land
 - Country Residential
 - Industrial / Commercial
 - Clairmont Urban Area
 - Provincial Park
 - County of Grande Prairie
 - Natural Areas
- ### Growth Areas
- Industrial / Commercial Growth Areas
 - Residential Growth Areas
- ### Transportation
- Primary Highway
 - Secondary Highway
 - Future Trail Network
 - Future Ring Road
 - Railway (CN Rail)

Map 1: Balanced Growth Option

