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**BYLAW 2021-22 TO AMEND LAND USE BYLAW FOR SOLAR  
FARMS**

PUBLIC HEARING  
DECEMBER 14, 2020

## PURPOSE

- Amend Land Use Bylaw 2017-18 to add “Solar Farm” as a discretionary use to the Agricultural General District and the Agricultural Restricted District.
  - Support expanded opportunities for Solar Farm developments in Parkland County.
- Rationale:
  - Land Use Bylaw Amendment Application received from Eins Development Consulting Ltd. and Voltarix Group.
  - Solar Farm is currently a Permitted Use only within the Agricultural Industry Development District.
  - Including Solar Farm as a Discretionary Use provides the County with the authority to review proposed development on a case-by-case basis.

## BENEFITS

- Demonstrate County support for sustainable growth opportunities.
- Diversify the County's economic base while supporting industry that reduces greenhouse gas emissions.
- Streamline the development permitting process while still providing a level of oversight and review.

## BACKGROUND RESEARCH

- Applicant assessed the Land Use Bylaw of each of the municipalities within the Edmonton Metropolitan Region and throughout southern Alberta.
- Reference Land Use Bylaws were selected based on the following criteria:
  - Municipalities with a blend of rural/agricultural and urban areas.
  - Municipalities with recently amended Land Use Bylaws to include solar or renewable energy generation.
  - Municipalities that have large-scale solar projects proposed or approved.
- Solar farm uses are typically considered discretionary uses and located within agricultural and/or industrial districts.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- Applicant hosted a virtual open house
  - June 17, 2021
  - Notification via newspaper advertisements, social media posts, and direct mail outs
- Three County residents attended the virtual open house.
  - No comments made
- Comments expressing concern were received from one landowner in response to the direct mail outs.

## LAND USE BYLAW 2017-18

### Existing definition:

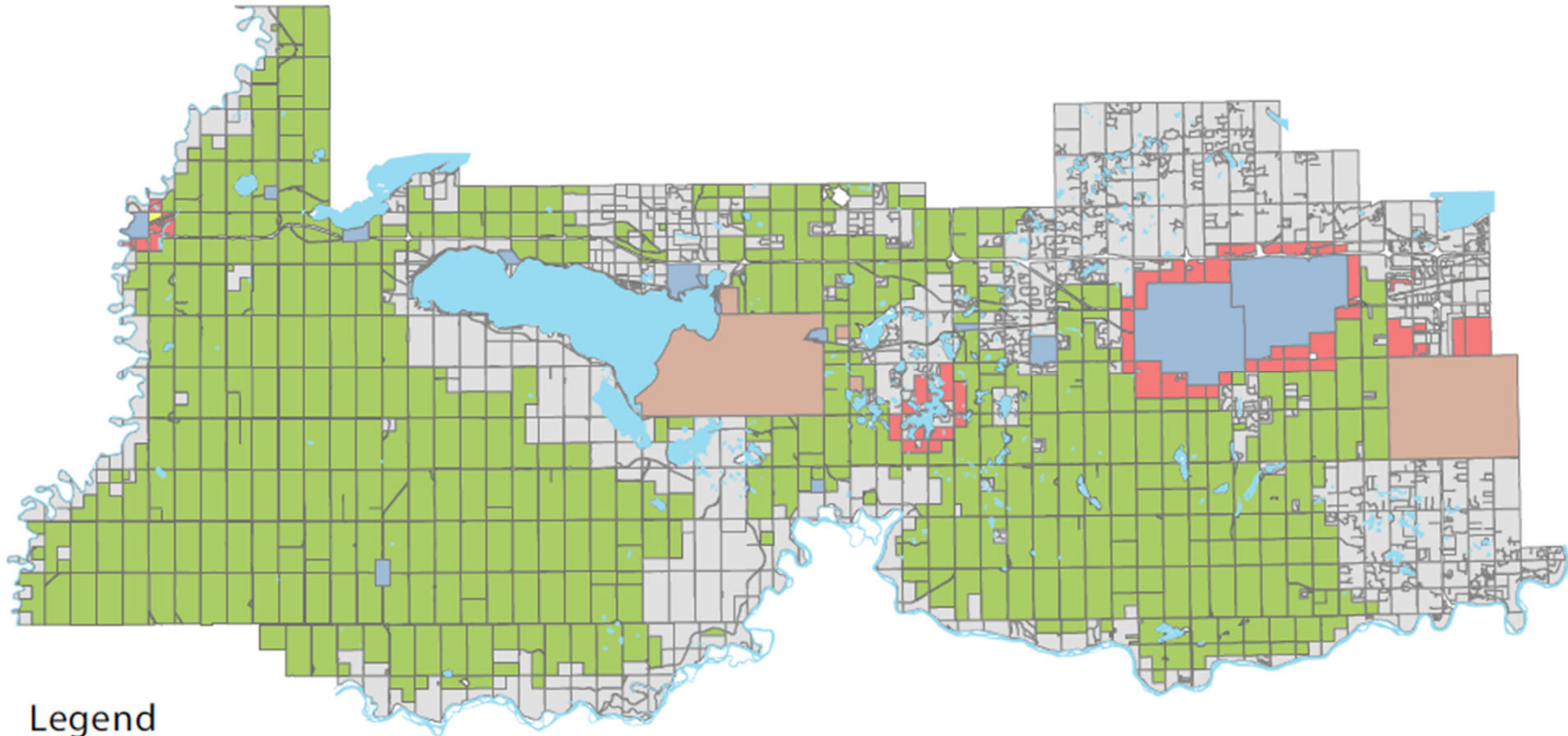
**SOLAR FARM** means an installation or area of land in which a large Solar Energy System is installed in order to generate alternative energy.

### Existing Land Use Districts:




**AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT** – Permitted Use

# DRAFT AMENDMENT

- Allowed in these districts:



## Legend

-  Agricultural Industry Development District (Permitted)\*
-  Agriculture General District (Discretionary)
-  Agriculture Restricted District (Discretionary)

\*Existing in the current Land Use Bylaw 2017-18

## DRAFT AMENDMENT

- Specific use regulations (new Section 12.31) ensure land use compatibility, suitability of the site, engagement considerations, impacts to surrounding properties, etc.
- Considerations include:
  - Provincial approvals
  - Solar glare
  - Site security
  - Setbacks
  - Separation Distance from multi-parcel residential subdivisions
  - Decommissioning and reclamation



# DRAFT AMENDMENT

## PRESERVING PRIME AGRICULTURAL LAND

- When locating in Prime Agricultural Lands
  - Development will be encouraged to located in areas with a soil class of 3 – 6.
  - In areas with a soil class of 1 or 2, the development should be designed in such a manner as to maintain the agricultural productivity of the subject lands where not used by Solar Energy Systems.



Colocation of solar energy systems and grazing  
(Cornell, 2020 - <https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/2020/07/solar-grazing-livestock-as-landscapers-at-utility-scale-solar-arrays/>)



Agrivoltaic system in Rural France  
(Fraunhofer ISE, 2020)

# ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

## AGR – AGRICULTURAL RESTRICTED DISTRICT

**PURPOSE:** To permit agricultural production and related farming activities while providing limited opportunity on a discretionary bases for compatible non-farm related land uses, and to prevent premature or scattered subdivision.

- Solar Farm developments in AGR have the potential to impact development and growth in neighbouring municipalities.
  - “Discretionary Use” designation will require referral of development permits to adjacent municipalities.
  - Specific use regulations require a minimum separation distance of 300.0 metres between a Solar Farm and the boundary of a multi-parcel residential subdivision (this includes in adjacent municipalities).

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Solar farms that generate more than 1 KW of electricity fall under the linear assessment performed by the Government of Alberta
  - Linear assessment based on the total project budget per MW of energy produced (includes land development, materials and equipment, labour, fees, commissioning, etc.)
  - Most solar farms are valued at approximately \$2 million per MW with a linear assessment of approximately \$1.2 million per MW.
  - This amounts to approximately 60% of assessed project costs available for municipal tax assessment.

## PUBLIC HEARING

- Notice of the December 14 Public Hearing was posted to the Parkland County website and published in the Pembina Post, Spruce Grove Examiner, and the Stony Plain Reporter for two weeks, as per the requirements of the *Municipal Government Act*.
- Notification was also sent directly to municipalities adjacent to the AGG and AGR land use districts.
- As of December 1, 2021, ten written submissions for the Public Hearing have been received by Administration.
  - Six letters of support from Parkland County residents and local MLAs
  - Two letters of concern from Parkland County residents
  - Three submissions from adjacent municipalities

## RECOMMENDATION

Administration supports the proposed amendment and recommends that Council give second and third readings to Bylaw 2021-22.