

Big Lake Environment Support Society (BLESS)

Update on Issues Related to Big Lake and Surrounding Natural Areas

Presentation to the County of Parkland
November 21th, 2023



Kevin Aschim – Vice President – BLESS
on Behalf of the BLESS Board of Directors and Membership

Who is BLESS?



- Established in 1991 as a non-profit and registered charity by Dr. Fin Fairfield and Dr. Bob Lane.
- BLESS has been responsible for and involved in establishing Big Lake as a provincial Natural Area, a designated Important Bird Area, as a destination on the Red Willow Park system, and as a Provincial Park.
- BLESS has received the prestigious Alberta Emerald Award for Environmental Excellence and the Steward Service Excellence Award.



BLESS OBJECTIVES

- Protect the physical and biological integrity of Big Lake, including its banks, marshes and surrounding wetlands, and portions of the Sturgeon River, to prevent environmental damage to these areas.
- Ensure the preservation of the character and biological diversity of Big Lake for educational, scientific and research purposes.
- Promote nature-oriented activities.
- Foster recognition of the values of environmental conservation and responsible management of natural areas.
- To work with governments at all levels to assist in the proper management of the areas described.

Building Stakeholder Relationships and Collaboration – 2023 Activities

- July presentation to City of St Albert – Committee of the Whole outlining BLESS concerns related to developments on east side of Big Lake.
- Ongoing dialogue with City of St Albert Transportation and Public Planning officials.
- Dialogue with City of Edmonton Councillor Andrew Knack regarding developments in NE Edmonton in areas within and bordering Lois Hole Provincial Park reserved lands.
- Meetings with Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park officials regarding nearby developments.
- Meetings and dialogue with local developers and landowners regarding their intentions for development.

BLESS HAS IDENTIFIED A STRONG NEED FOR REGIONAL COORDINATION TO ENSURE BEST POSSIBLE OUTCOMES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND PRESERVATION OF AREAS AROUND BIG LAKE.

Building Public Awareness – 2023 Activities

- Daily summer nature interpretive programs at Lois Hole Park and in downtown St Albert at the BLESS Cabin. Including several evening events at Lois Hole Park.
- World Migratory Bird Day Event at Lois Hole Park May 13, 2023 with presentations and activities for the public.
- Quarterly newsletter publication with significant growth in readership and subscription requests over the past year.
- Expanding board membership and volunteer base further to include more membership from City of Edmonton, Sturgeon County and Parkland County.

OUR MEMBERSHIP BASE CONTINUES TO GROW AS MORE PEOPLE RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS AREA TO THEIR COMMUNITY AND WELL BEING.



Concerns with St Albert West Area Structure Plan (ASP).

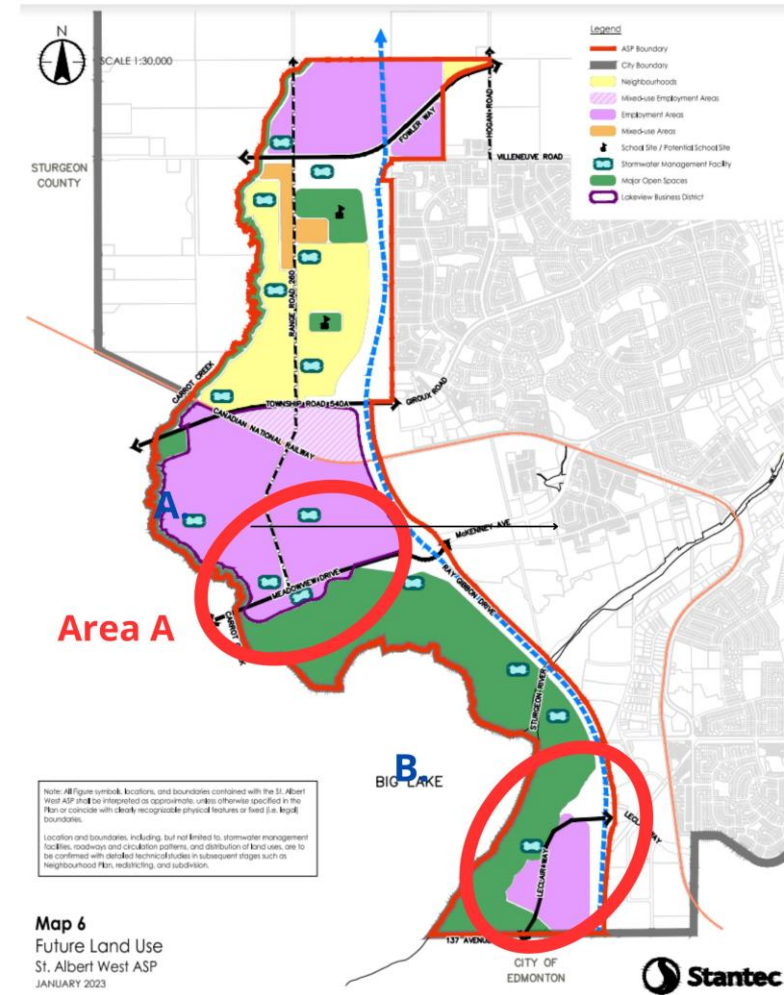
1. Meadowview Drive Developments
2. Employment Lands designation on Cook Lands
3. LeClair Way Road alignment and connection with 137th Avenue

Figure 1: Lands South of Meadowview Drive

- maintain as constructed wetlands to preserve natural character and preserve natural vistas.



Proposed St. Albert West ASP

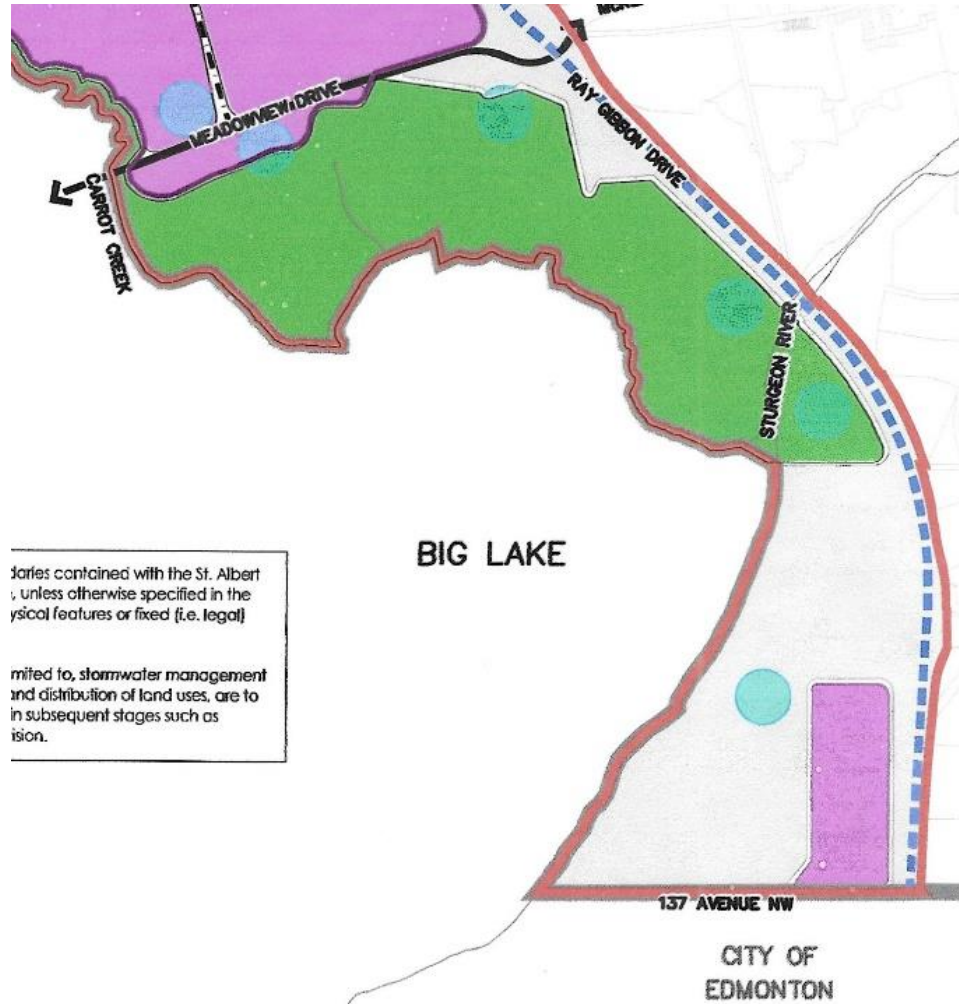


BLESS Areas of Concern

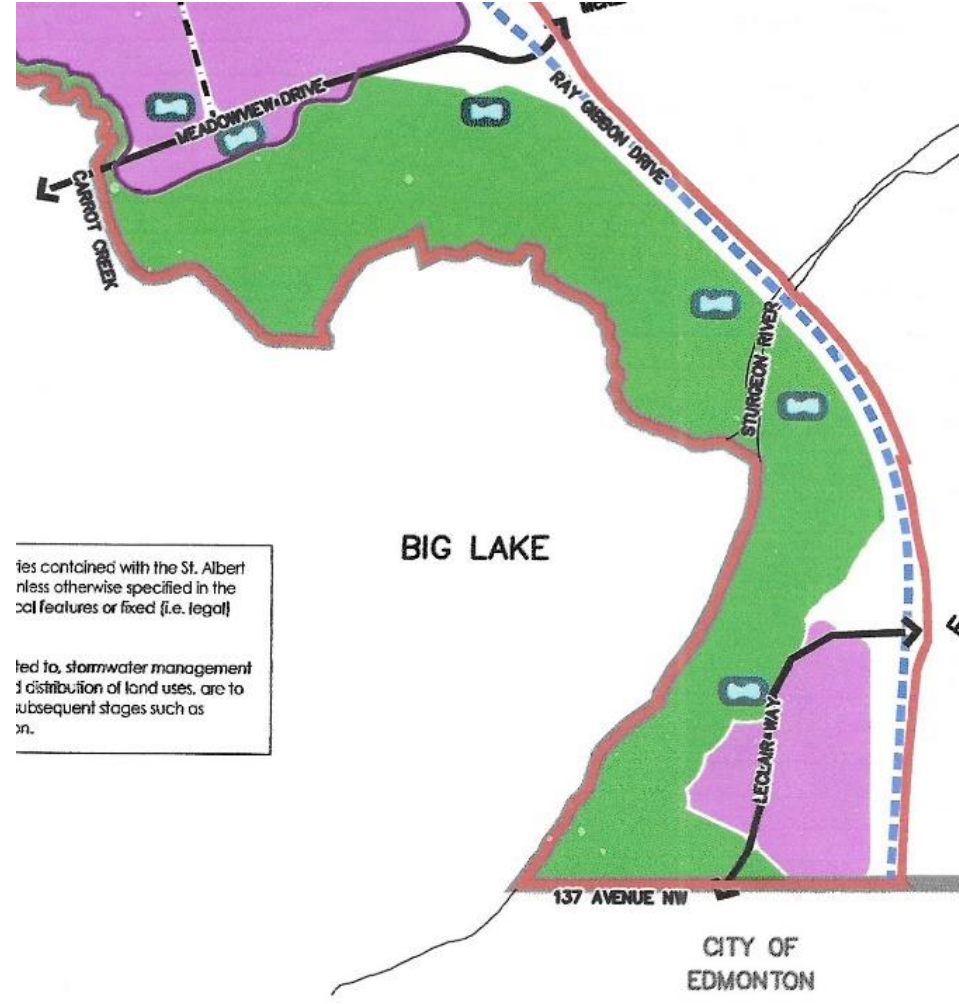
- A. South Side of Meadowview Drive
- B. Adjacent to LeClair Way Extension

Figure 2: Cook Lands and Provincial Lands now Designated as Employment Lands

Changes Made to the ASP After the Public Review Process Was Completed



October 2022 Proposed Land Use



February 2023 Revised Version

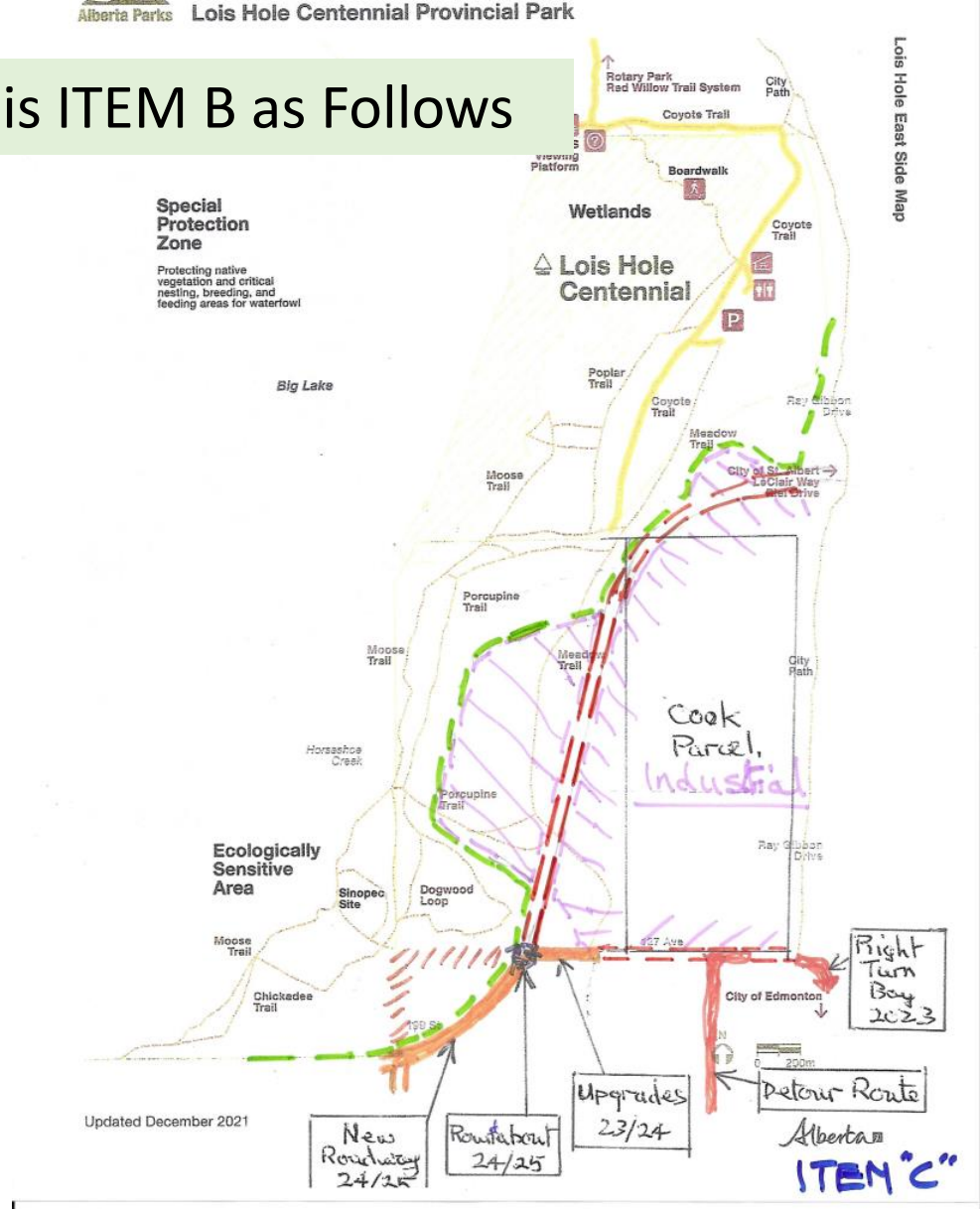
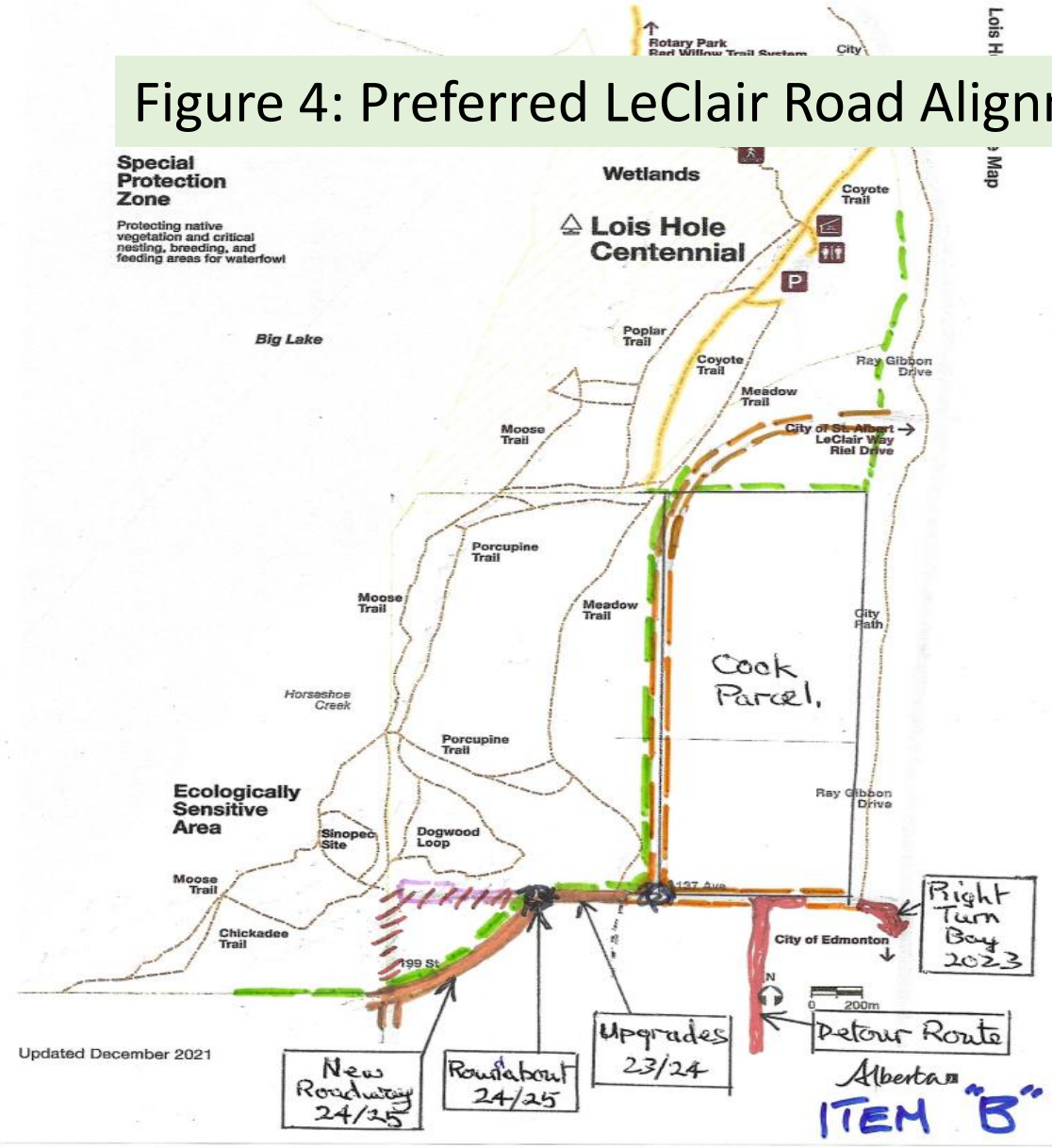
Figure 3:
Rohit
Development
Plans for 137th
Avenue



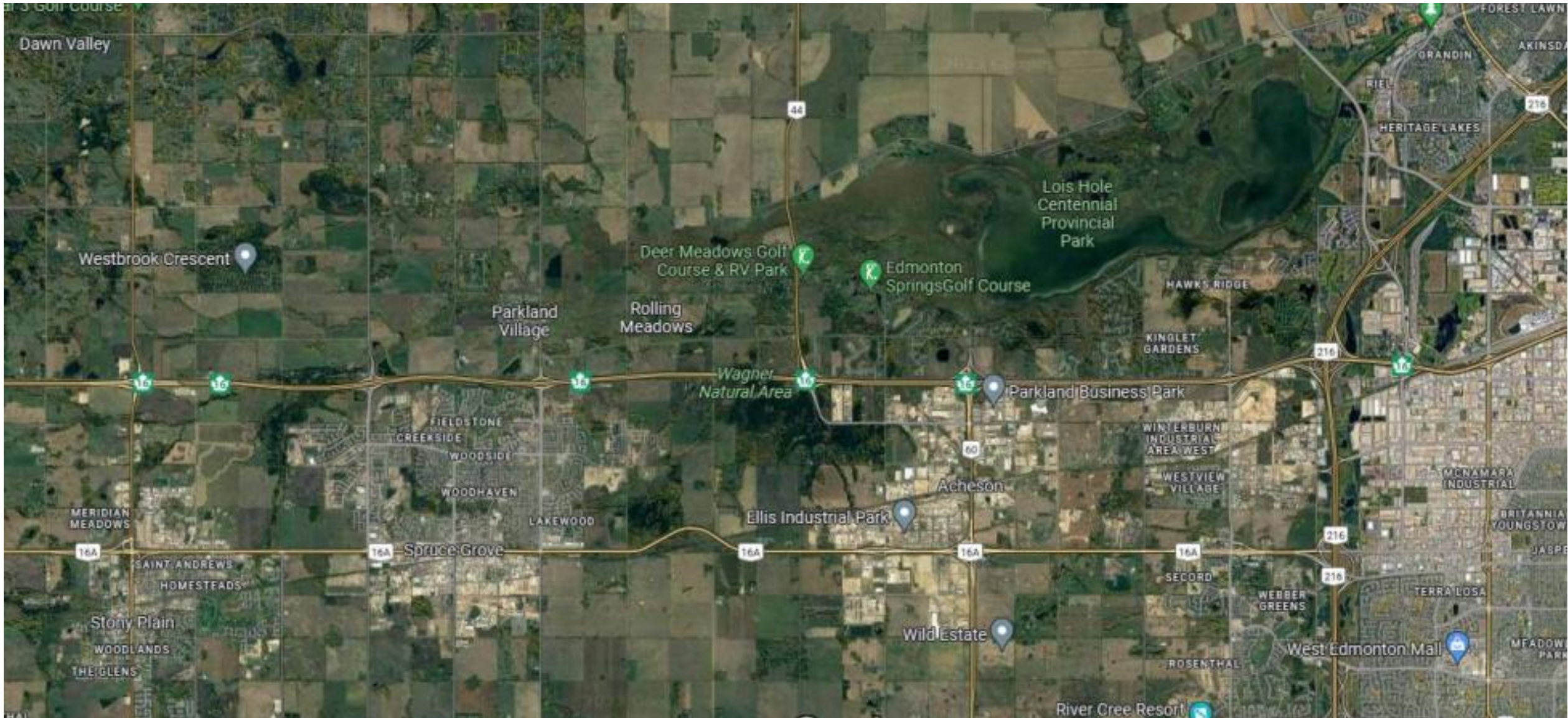
Starling Roadway
Improvements
2023 to 2025



Figure 4: Preferred LeClair Road Alignment is ITEM B as Follows



County of Parkland – Opportunities



Maintaining a Healthy Regional Ecology

- Big Lake ecological integrity doesn't recognize political boundaries.
- Vital that various governments and stakeholders are aware of the concerns and work together for best possible outcomes.
- Especially important to recognize the value of ecological continuity with the various natural areas in the region and that this is protected to avoid the creation of dwindling ecological islands:

Lois Hole Provincial Park & Adjacent Forests and Wetlands

Grey Nuns Park, Red Willow Park, Riverlot 56 and the Sturgeon River

Carrot Creek reserve lands

Wagner Natural Area

Atim Creek Natural Area

Chickakoo Lake and other natural areas to the west



Parkland County Opportunities

- Regional cooperation for responsible planning and to protect ecological integrity.
- Trail connections around Big lake.
- Cooperation on tree planting, stewardship, nature interpretation and public engagement.
- Cooperation on promoting the ecological asset values of the area for people and our communities.

Our Challenge:

How do we best work together to protect and promote this?

How can BLESS play a role in facilitating these efforts?

Thank You!

Big Lake Environment Support Society (BLESS)

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