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# Parkland County



## Future of Agriculture Study

### Situation Report

August 26, 2015



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# Executive Summary

## Phase 1

1. **Purpose of the Study:** the purpose of the Future of Agriculture study is to address three key questions: **(a)** what is the future for agriculture in Parkland County? **(b)** What is the vision for agriculture—namely what is to be achieved? and **(c)** What policies and tools will facilitate the achievement of this future.
2. **Activities to date:** these include the identification of the major agri-food trends impacting Parkland County; a detailed review of agricultural statistics; personal interviews with twenty-two stakeholders/individuals involved in the Parkland County agri-food sector; detailed input from the Agricultural and Rural Life Advisory Committee which included representatives from Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS); three focus group interviews—two with commercial farmers and one with the equine sector; 10 individual interviews with value added businesses; a review of all relevant plans and policies. In total we interviewed between 90 and 100 people in person.
3. **Major agri-food trends:** we identified the following key trends and implications for Parkland County (see text box below):

- a. **Growing global demand for food and agricultural products**—long term assured markets for Parkland County food and agricultural products
- b. **Increased specialization and scale of farming operations**—a continued trend to fewer, larger farms requiring large contiguous areas for crop production and the ability to move large equipment safely
- c. **Growing demand for ‘local’ foods**—creates opportunities, but will require focused development strategies
- d. **Rapidly advancing quality control systems and traceability**—increased standards and protocols that exceed the practices of many current operators who may be challenged to meet these requirements
- e. **Agri-tourism as a growing opportunity**—creates opportunities, but requires clear strategies and investments
- f. **Land use and the commitment to preserve agricultural lands is a growing issue in Alberta**—need for long term agricultural land policies.

4. **The statistical review:** Parkland County has experienced growth in farm size, average gross farm receipts and capital invested per farm similar to the rest of Alberta. The greatest positive changes include small increases in vegetable, greenhouse and nursery production, the sheep population as well as a stable horse population. The largest negative changes are the 21% loss of total cropland between 2001 to 2011 (nearly 50,000 acres); a decline in beef cows by 44% vs. a provincial decline of 25%. By comparison, the dairy sector in terms of cow numbers is stable, although the number of operations has dropped in half (21 down to 10 producers). Other intensive livestock enterprises such as poultry and hogs have little presence. The overall crop mix has changed to larger acreages of canola while wheat, barley, mixed grains and alfalfa acreages have declined.
5. **The consultation input:** This is summarized as follows:
  - a. Individual Interviews: many of the interviewees identified subdivisions and the fragmentation of land to be major concerns. The eastern part of Parkland County is under considerable industrial and residential development pressure and an area where

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many farmers see a limited future for agriculture. Overall many feel that farming is not known, appreciated, considered or respected and seemingly a low priority for Parkland County and many of its residents. Many interviews expressed great concern about the future for agriculture in the County itself.

- b. Agricultural and Rural Life Advisory Committee: very concerned about development pressures, the growth of industry and conflicts from rural non-farm residents. This group would like to see stronger long term land use policies that preserve agricultural land and more diversity both in terms of farm size, age and enterprises. Overall there is strong support for a more ‘balanced’ approach between agriculture and urban development.
  - c. Commercial farmers in the Tomahawk area: experiencing the effects of a declining agricultural community (fewer farm neighbours, loss of local dealers, fewer local markets such as auctions and elevators). Operationally, they commented on the challenges associated with the increased number of acreages—this reduces the available land for farming, increases the traffic and creates more difficulties in moving equipment. This group also reported increased vandalism and trespassing (attributed to incursions from Drayton Valley). They expect current trends to continue: fewer larger farms, more non-farm residents, a continuation of vandalism and nuisances.
  - d. Commercial farmers in the Stony Plain area: experiencing more and more conflicts with development, the loss of available farm land, traffic, moving equipment safely and nuisance complaints. This group sees some opportunities for small operations to supply local food but larger operations like themselves will inevitably be displaced.
  - e. Equine operators: this group expressed the view that the equine sector is not well known or appreciated by Parkland County and has been overlooked. However, they see opportunities to create both business opportunities and be the basis for destination attraction(s) for Parkland County. This might include a dedicated public arena/facility to host events and/or a dedicated outdoor area (park?) or trail system.
  - f. The Specialty value added sector: strongly voiced the opinion that Parkland County is ideally located with its proximity to a large urban market. Overall this group had few if any issues with doing business in Parkland County. Many spoke of Parkland County as being very supportive of their business and good to work with. Several felt that there are opportunities for Parkland County to strengthen its commitment to develop this sector.
6. **Soils**: We reviewed the Canada Land Inventory (CLI), detailed soil maps, as well as GIS imagery available on a field-by-field basis since 2009. Overall we conclude that this information provides valuable technical data describing the agricultural capacity of a particular property. However, this data alone is not sufficient to determine the suitability of that property for rezoning. A more robust analytical system is required to assess a proposed site relative to the contiguous nature of agriculture taking place in the immediate vicinity and the suitability for development relative to the available or required services.
  7. **The Regional Context**: For decades, it has been generally accepted in the context of the Edmonton region, that better agricultural land is generally (a) land that has been that designated by the Canada Land Inventory as Classes 1, 2, and 3; and (b) land with potential of producing specialty or other crops, or of supporting land-intensive agricultural operations, none of which are considered in the CLI agricultural capability classification scheme. Preliminary work on concepts for Parkland County’s new Community Sustainability and Development Plan speaks to the criteria to provide areas for agricultural land preservation by referring to the best classed soils (CLI classes 1-3) for agricultural related purposes. Parkland County’s Community Scan and Analysis Report stated, ‘To date, only 4% of the County’s Suitable Agricultural Land has been consumed by non-agricultural development.’ Of the 4% consumed, 3.3% was for residential. However, it is important to note that the Community

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Scan and Analysis Report only included Classes 1 and 2, but not Class 3, as lands being Suitable Agricultural Land. The rationale put forward is that ‘Parkland County’s current MDP has an agricultural policy that states multi-lot country residential subdivisions may occur on lands with a FAR (Farmland Assessment Rating) of 57% or less. This rating translates to Class 1 and Class 2 within the CLI agricultural soil suitability classification system.’ The definition of better agricultural land needs to be clarified.

8. **Emerging opportunities:** There are several emerging and arguably non-traditional agricultural enterprises such as equine events and/or experiences, market gardens, horticultural, specialty crops or agri-tourism that offer potential in view of Parkland County’s location within the Capital Region. However, each of these requires careful assessment to understand the market development and infrastructure requirements (both public and private) that will be necessary to establish sustainable enterprises.
9. **Opportunity areas:** The types of agricultural that have a ‘future’ in Parkland County are identified, as follows:
  - a. Large scale field crop agriculture: namely the production of canola, wheat, barley, alfalfa and other crops such as peas, lentils and corn. Note: we would include dairy production in this category which still has a significant presence in the eastern part of Parkland County.
  - b. Grazing and accordingly the beef cow-calf sector particularly in the western region of Parkland County.
  - c. Specialty crops including potatoes, vegetables, fruits and a growing interest in local foods.
  - d. Agri-tourism that features a set of destinations including opportunities within the equine market.
  - e. Agri-food value added enterprises that focus on food, beverages and primary processing.
10. **Reclamation:** Another major factor impacting the future of agriculture in Parkland County is the future of the lands that have been mined and are yet to be reclaimed. To be sure, the impact of the mining/power sector on the agricultural sector has already been profound—large areas of land have been lost; many farmers have been displaced; and to quote one interviewee, “communities have been killed.” The recent announcement to close the Keephills School is the latest reverberation of this negative dynamic.

Many interviewees expressed strong views about the potential for this area in terms of grazing lands, recreational areas with extensive trails for horses, or even a site for a large scale greenhouse enterprise. At the same time they vented frustrations with the power companies in terms of how available farm lands under their control are being managed and the rate at which mined lands are being reclaimed. Generally speaking, the power companies are considered as ‘poor’ neighbours with little regard for the community.

11. **Alberta Government Position:** In August 2014, the Alberta Government wrote a letter to the Capital Region Board, stating the Province’s position that ‘municipalities are now expected, rather than encouraged, to follow the direction provided through the Provincial Land Use Policies (PLUP) on this important issue. The plan is now undergoing a review and needs to address issues like agricultural land fragmentation and conservation. In addition, Parkland County has started a process to prepare a new municipal development plan. As a result, it is opportune for Parkland County to ensure that any new agriculture directions are included in its own new MDP. It is also a good time for Parkland County to attempt to have its agricultural policies addressed at the CRB and incorporated across the Capital Region so there is a comprehensive policy that addresses agriculture in the context of metropolitan growth and considers the creation of ‘a level playing field’ across the region.

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**12. The Future of Agriculture in Parkland County:** The future is not a process that arrives independently. Rather it is a convergence of major trends, the current situation and the setting of priorities and the making of decisions. ‘Future’ making requires both a detailed understanding of the market/economic forces and what Parkland County can do to shape its own agricultural future that builds on opportunities and strengths. The major issue impacting the future of agriculture which Parkland County can impact directly is land use policy. Specific to agriculture, the current policy (which allows each quarter to be subdivided into four parcels) has an inherently conflictive set of impacts:

- a. On one hand it provides the opportunity for many farmers to capitalize on the value of a portion of their land—an opportunity that is strongly supported by those farmers who are considering or approaching retirement;
- b. On the other hand, it creates a situation whereby agriculture is seen as secondary in importance to development interests making it more difficult for those wishing to farm and expand their farming operations. In effect, the policy creates for smaller agricultural parcels (which in some cases are underutilized), higher land costs, increased traffic and difficulties in moving equipment, more nuisance complaints—all factors that are seen as limiting to commercial farmers and signals that ‘agriculture is on its way out.’

Nevertheless, changes to the current land use policy, both in terms of the subdivision of agricultural land and the designation of agricultural land for other uses will be controversial and difficult since the majority of agricultural landowners have now built in a set of price expectations which includes development potential. Thus any change in policy that impacts this negatively, will not be well received by all and is likely to be strongly opposed by some. Thus, any selection of or changes to policies that minimize or mitigate the negative response will be paramount.

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## Setting the Stage for Phase 2

The purpose of Phase 2 is to build from the findings and implications of Phase 1 and develop a set of scenarios that describe the possible outcomes for agriculture in Parkland County. These will be presented and explored in an interactive session with Parkland County Council (scheduled for September 15th) with the objective to select a preferred outcome (or vision). The choice of outcome will then set the stage for the development of principles, policies and the implementation initiatives required to achieve this vision.

The scenarios are to be developed as part of Phase 2 and will be completed subsequent to our meeting with the Steering Committee. The scenarios will however encompass the following:

- a. **Status Quo:** what will happen to agriculture in Parkland County if no changes are made?
- b. **Land Use Policies:** what changes should be considered, what might be possible and what outcomes would be accomplished?
- c. **Strategic Investments:** what areas or enterprises offer the greatest potential for Parkland County and what are the requirements?

As further background, it is significant to consider Parkland County's Strategic Plan 2014-2018 which states that "Parkland County is a deeply rooted agricultural community... proud to be a forward-thinking rural community and committed to leading Alberta's resurgence of rural living." The updated Strategic Plan 2016-2020 states with respect to agriculture, 'Parkland County stewards a viable agricultural community and is supporting a progressive agri-business industry.' There are key results, which describe the actions that will be undertaken to achieve the outcomes envisioned for the priority areas. For agriculture, they are identified as follows: increase agri-business; create and expand entrepreneurial opportunities for product sales and food innovation; maintain a viable agricultural industry; and create agri-business clusters. In addition, the future development of scenarios for agriculture in Parkland County will need to be carefully reviewed and vetted against the four growth scenarios that have been developed as a part of the Community Sustainability and Development Plan. This report should play a key role in shaping a final recommended scenario.

Respectively submitted,

Jerry Bouma,  
Project Manager,  
Toma & Bouma Management Consultants



# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

This is the first draft of Situation Report—a background document toward the development of an Agriculture Plan for Parkland County. It is meant for discussion purposes with the Parkland County Steering Committee overseeing the project.

The primary purpose of the document is to review the content, the directions and the implications for Parkland County as it considers the future of agriculture. Subsequent to this review and discussion, Phase 2 will begin, which is the process of developing a vision, planning principles and a set of recommendations.

This report focuses on content and does not include photographs and graphics which will be included in the final report designed for a wider audience. These features will be included in the final plan which is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2015.

## 1.2 Purpose of this Report

Parkland County commissioned Toma & Bouma Management Consultants, in collaboration with Stantec, to address the future of agriculture within Parkland County. The primary purpose of this study is to assess the ‘types’ of agriculture that have a long term sustainable future in Parkland County and, in turn, develop a policy and planning framework that will enable Parkland County to support the presence of agriculture within the context of multiple growth and development pressures.

The findings and recommendations in the final report will be considered and incorporated in the Community Sustainability and Development Plan which is scheduled to be updated in 2016.

Three central questions provide a critical backdrop to the development of the study, as follows:

1. What types of agriculture truly have a future in Parkland County—what can work and why?
2. What is the vision for agriculture within Parkland County? In other words, what does Council with the support of citizens and landowners want to accomplish with respect to the presence and the ‘look’ and feel of agriculture in Parkland County?
3. What planning policies and tools will facilitate or, at the very least, support the types of agriculture that have the best fit with the future of Parkland County?

The purpose of this situation report is to set the stage for this important ‘visionary’ discussion to be held with Council at the beginning of Phase 2.

## 1.3 Overriding Imperative

The discussion regarding the future of agriculture needs to be considered within the context of an overriding imperative expressed in the form of a question:

- How does Parkland County plan for the future role and presence of agriculture in the face of major growth forces—some competing, some conflicting—within one of the fastest growing metropolitan regions in North America?

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## 2.0 Setting the Stage

### 2.1 Key Trends

The development of any plan requires a firm understanding of the market conditions and trends that are in motion specific to the industry in question. To this end, several major trends particular to the agri-food sector across North America, Canada and Alberta have been identified. These are based on a review of the literature and our in-depth experience within the sector itself.

The trends listed below are high level in nature but material to the planning considerations for Parkland County as it considers its future with respect to the agriculture and food industry. Indeed, there are numerous trends specific to technology, agronomy, genomics, information technology, management, product development, marketing and changes in consumer behaviour, to name some. However, many of these are subsets of the major trends listed as follows.

1. **Growing global demand for food and agricultural products:** globally the increased demand for food and agricultural producers is being driven by growing populations particularly in Asia. For example, world population is forecasted to reach 9.6 billion by 2050<sup>1</sup> – a 30% increase over current level (see Chart 2.1). In addition, countries such as India and China are experiencing a rapidly expanding middle class who in turn are demanding protein rich diets including beef and dairy products as well as high quality imported processed food products (see Chart 2.2). To quote Dwight Koops, President of a Kansas-based company called Crop Quest:<sup>2</sup>

*If the population does hit 9 billion by 2050, the demand to supply enough food, fiber and energy to supply the world will be a daunting task.*

Juxtaposed to the growth in food demand is an increasingly vulnerable (or variable) supply response system due to:

- Variable and/or extreme weather patterns—drought, heavy rains, tornados etc. and the many ramifications of climate change.
- Urbanization—growing populations in Asia and South America which in turn reduces the available land for food production<sup>3</sup>.

At the same time, there are fewer and fewer countries in the position to be a net food exporter. The CIA<sup>4</sup> identified six countries to be in this position. Canada is one of these countries. Over the course of the next thirty years, commodity prices, and accordingly food prices, are expected to rise more rapidly than the inflation rate.

**Implications for Parkland County:** The long term growing demand for food suggests that Western Canada, Alberta, and all agricultural jurisdictions within Alberta will be increasingly important sources of supply for both the domestic and global market. Thus, it can be anticipated that the outlook for agriculture—particularly the demand for grains, oilseeds, pulses and meat proteins and accordingly for prime agricultural land on which these enterprises will take place, will be strong (see Chart 2.3).

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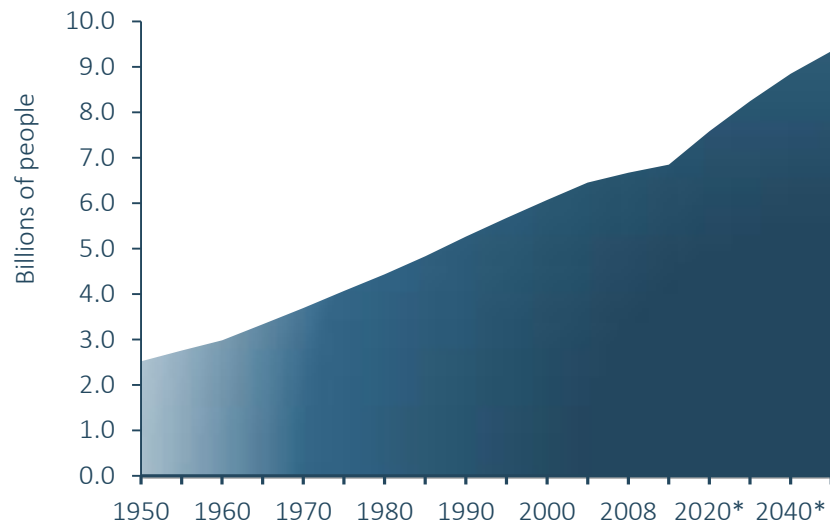
<sup>1</sup> United Nations, World Population Prospects: the 2012 Revision.

<sup>2</sup> Crop Quest is a Dodge City, Kansas based ‘innovation-driven leader in crop consulting and agricultural production management and solutions.’

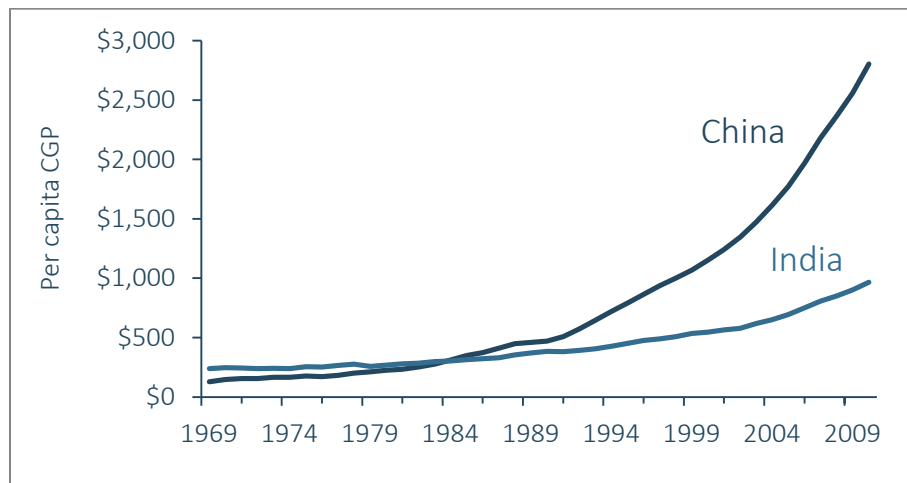
<sup>3</sup> Arama Kukuti, Managing Director for a major ag-tech investment group estimates that 100 million acres per year are being lost to urbanization and pollution.

<sup>4</sup> Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Handbook: 2011. Reference in Top Crop Manager, August 2013.

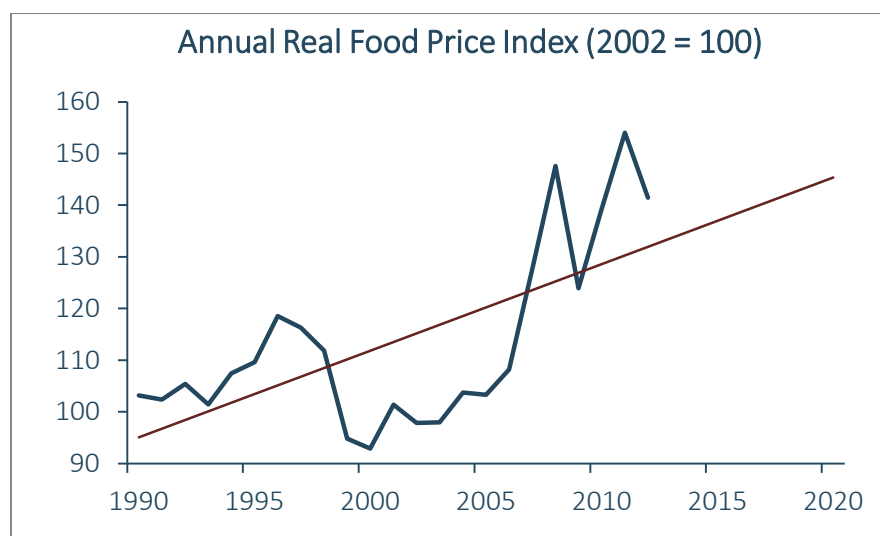
**Chart 2.1**      **Projected Growth in World Population (FAO)**



**Chart 2.2**      **Projected Income Growth for China & India (FAO)**



Source: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

**Chart 2.3      Forecasted Increases in the Food Price Index to 2020 (FAO)**

Source: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

2. **Increased Specialization and Scale of Farming Operations:** the restructuring (concentration) of the farm production sector and the accompanying processing sector continues at a rapid pace. Simply put, there are and will be fewer but larger farms. At the same time, the processing sector is dominated by a few very large corporations that are typically global in scope. For example, there are two large beef processors in Western Canada, both in Alberta; one large pork processor located in Red Deer; two major dairy processors; and a small number of grain and oilseed buyers/processors.

The drive to specialize has been underway for more than 40 years. To be clear, the standard mixed family farm operation that characterized Canadian agriculture is a phenomenon of the past. Instead, the Alberta farm industry is characterized by very concentrated segments including the intensive livestock sector which is currently comprised of 558 dairy producers, 380 hog producers, 280 poultry producers and approximately 30 major beef feedlots that account for most of the cattle being fed and marketed<sup>5</sup>.

In terms of actual farms, the largest numbers of farms are beef cow-calf farms with approximately 19,000 operations reporting beef cows on their farm; and crop operations. In total, there are also approximately 20,000 operations within Alberta that are classified as primary grain, oilseed or other crop farms. However, the crop sector is also consolidating rapidly. The 2011 Census of Agriculture reports that there are 2,800 farmers in Alberta farming more than 3,500 acres and it is not uncommon to find farmers that are rapidly expanding and farming anywhere from 10,000 to 50,000 acres. To quote one interviewee who participated in our discussions:

*If you are not farming 10,000 acres, you are a small farmer.*

The drive for specialization and scale is the result of several factors including:

- **The need to focus and simplify:** each production enterprise requires a unique set of managerial systems, skills, quality control protocols, and equipment and capital requirements. Furthermore, each sector operates in different and often unique markets.

<sup>5</sup> Farm numbers are provided by industry organizations including Alberta Milk, Alberta Pork, Alberta Chicken, Alberta Egg Producers and the Alberta Cattle Feeders Association.

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Thus in-depth sector knowledge is paramount to success—hence the drive to focus and concentrate on what are inherently complex enterprises in an effort to simplify, build critical mass and to leverage physical, financial and managerial assets.

- **Narrow, uncertain (and variable) margins:** the cost pressure coupled with variable (and uncertain) pricing in many crop/ livestock sectors drives producers to expand—the only way to achieve revenue objectives since much of agriculture production still trades on the basis of world commodity prices.
- **Technology advancement:** firstly, equipment has expanded dramatically enabling wider passes of the field and more rapid transit. Thus, a single machine (seeder, sprayer or combine) can cover large areas in a single day. In addition, there have been major technological advances in production agriculture in the areas of bio-technology; precision farming; GPS and satellite technologies; surveillance; and most recently the use of drones for measuring and monitoring crop performance. As a consequence, farmers have precise up to the minute information that enables quick response and the ability to manage ever larger acreages.
- **Advanced business management practices:** a new highly skilled class of agricultural producer has emerged – a business class of farmers who are well connected and have adopted sophisticated management systems including information, marketing, custom contracting and financial systems to run large farm businesses.

**Implications for Parkland County:** The ability for farms to grow and operate with a minimum of obstacles or nuisances is critical. Several key conditions are required: (1) access to large parcels (80 acres plus) of high quality agricultural land, either owned or leased; (2) the ability to safely move large equipment on roads and into fields; (3) a strong preference for large rectangular fields; and (4) the ability to operate (cultivate, seed, spray and harvest) with a minimum of nuisance complaints from non-farm neighbouring residents. If Parkland County wants to sustain a thriving crop production sector which is very much part of its agricultural heritage, the provision of these conditions will be critical consideration for future planning.

3. **Growing Demand for ‘Local’ Foods:** there is a strong and growing interest in local food and local food production across Canada and the USA. Overall, the ‘local’ factor has become ‘hugely’ important as all retailers and food service companies are striving to feature local product as a core marketing strategy. Significantly, the definition of local varies by organization—some have a very regional focus; others define it as sourcing national (within Canada). There is also clear recognition that local supply offers the opportunity to provide fresher, higher quality produce and thereby reduce wastage and spoiled product. However, it must be clearly stated that cost competitiveness remains a critical factor for retailers and food services alike. We received considerable affirmation that in the case of most consumers, ‘price’ will trump ‘source’ of produce assuming comparable quality<sup>6</sup>.

In response to the local food movement, many cities including Edmonton have responded by forming Food Policy Councils with the stated intentions to develop or support a local food economy. Toronto formed a Council in 1991 with an emphasis on a ‘health focused food system.’ The Vancouver Food Policy Council (formerly Organization) came into being in 1995. More recently, the City of Ottawa established a Food Policy Council as a result of the Food For All Project: a collaborative, community-based food research and action project between 2009-2012.

Interestingly, an organization in Ottawa called Just Food established a ‘local food’ incubator known as the Start-Up Farm Program to support new farmers in the Ottawa region. By

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<sup>6</sup> Findings based on a 2014 survey conducted by Toma & Bouma with major retailer buyers.

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offering access to land<sup>7</sup>, shared infrastructure/equipment, and training. The program aims to enable more people in this region to start their own successful farm business.

A study<sup>8</sup> conducted in Alberta in 2008 documented that 60% of Alberta households (847,000 households) visited a Farmers Market in that year, spent an average of \$449 per year for a total annual market size of \$380 million—an increase of 63% since 2004 when the survey was first conducted. The report also suggested however, that Farmers' Markets appear to be in the process of maturing. Since that time, there continues to be growth in the local food market with the opening of several new or expanded markets in the Capital Region (104 Street Market in Edmonton; the addition of new markets in south Edmonton; the addition of a third market in Sherwood Park), as well as a second market in Stony Plain.

The question of whether major changes in the structure and sources of food supply will occur remains unclear. For example:

- The vast majority of foods including fresh produce continue to be supplied by companies that are national or international in scale. These suppliers are capable of providing year round deliveries.
- Major retailers such as Loblaw, Sobeys' and the Overwaitea Group have already shifted to a 'local' food emphasis (or organic lines in the case of Wal-Mart).
- Consistency, quality, convenience and price are foremost requirements for the majority of consumers.

It is our conclusion that consumer buying habits would require a major 'disruption' before a significant and material shift in buying patterns toward the purchase of local foods at a different venue. Such intervention (whether this is direct or indirect) could include any or all of the following:

- A major collapse of current food supply chains which are continental or global in nature due to such factors as fuel/energy shortages.
- Massive and persistent food safety 'breaks' specific to imported vegetables—resulting in the deaths of large numbers of people.
- Major investment in marketing, storage and distribution infrastructure to provide alternative channels to market that are able to compete with existing market channels such as supermarkets.

**Implications for Parkland County:** The emergence of a local food economy and the role of Parkland County as a potential supplier present an opportunity but one that will take time, require on-going evaluation, careful planning and support. The viability of such enterprises depends on market demand, new market channels, competitive factors and production economics—all factors must be carefully evaluated in light of current purchasing patterns and the location of the majority of current suppliers. However the metropolitan Edmonton market<sup>9</sup> is looking for more local supplies and opportunities do exist for those who are able to meet volume and quality requirements. Parkland County is ideally located to meet as well as develop these opportunities.

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<sup>7</sup>Just Food leases 150 acres from the National Capital Commission which owns the land located in the 'Greenbelt' approximately 12 km from the centre of Ottawa. It is our understanding that 20 to 30 acres are currently being cultivated as market gardens by several start-up/beginning farmers.

<sup>8</sup> Local Market Expansion Project, Alternative Agricultural Markets in Alberta, 2008 and the Alternative Agricultural Markets in Alberta—An Overview, December 2004

<sup>9</sup> Sobeys has just completed the expansion of a distribution centre; Sunfresh Farms is a major local broker and distributor.

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4. **Rapidly Advancing Quality Control Systems and Traceability:** the days of producing agricultural and food products anonymously or as part of ‘bulk’ systems are coming to an end (and in many cases, have come to an end). Farmers as food producers are under immense pressure to provide full tracking and traceability information specific to what is being produced and shipped from the farm. This requirement started in the late 1990’s with several commodity groups (led by the dairy, pork and poultry sectors) who first established On Farm Food Safety Systems which are required for the receipt of product at the processing plant. The beef sector is also making immense strides to provide full traceability to the specific animal and the farm of origin.

Initially these requirements were being driven by disease management concerns—one of the fallouts of the BSE crisis that emerged within Alberta in 2003. Subsequently, there is an increased focus on ‘sustainability’ specific to animal welfare and environmental management (greenhouse gas emissions. For example, McDonalds is currently working with the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association to develop and test a Sustainable Beef Production supply system. More and more companies are marketing their products based on origin and a specific production protocol.<sup>10</sup>

The crop and horticultural sectors are also following suit. It is now possible to track the origins of any grain or oilseed shipment back to the ‘bin’ of origin using an electronic tagging system supported by a bar code marker. In the case of greenhouse production, sophisticated packaging and systems enable the tracking of produce to the actual time of packing and the precise row and location within the greenhouse should this be required.

Food processors are subject to extremely stringent food safety demands as well as the full traceability. Indeed, without fully established and verified HACCP systems, a food processor is not eligible to supply any retailer or food service company that is national in scope. Many retailers and food service companies such as Loblaw, Sobeys or Sysco require the implementation of the specific corporate protocols as part of the supplier relationship.

**Implications for Parkland County:** Efforts to develop a value added or food processing sector must recognize the food safety and traceability requirements to be met by suppliers. Currently, Parkland County has a number of small specialty producers (U-picks, berry farms, small scale greenhouses). Most are not certified to supply beyond local farmers’ markets or direct sales to consumers. Many current as well as new producers will need to upgrade (or establish) their operational practices to qualify as suppliers to the retail and food service trade.

5. **Agri-tourism as a Growing Opportunity:** Agri-tourism is cited as a significant and growing sector in the eco-tourism industry<sup>11</sup>. Many countries such as the USA, Australia, the UK, Western Europe and Canada as well as provinces within Canada, feature unique rural offerings and focus promotional efforts and resources. Some of the better known ‘tour packages’ or destinations include wine tours in places such as the Niagara Region in Ontario, the Okanogan in B.C., Napa Valley in California; or Quebec which features maple syrup festivals in the spring and autumn colour tours in the fall. Alberta is known for its Cowboy Trail which runs north south parallel to the Rockies (Mayerthorpe to Waterton); as well as the Dinosaur Trail located along the Red Deer River in the south eastern part of Alberta.

The notion of vacationing or planning a day trip in a rural area is not new. Indeed, the prospect to spending time in the country has been part of European and North American

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<sup>10</sup> Perhaps best known is the recent A&W campaign that markets both its beef and chicken as free from steroids and hormones.

<sup>11</sup> [www.eckertagrimarketing.com/articledir/eckert-agritourims-culinaryexperiences.show](http://www.eckertagrimarketing.com/articledir/eckert-agritourims-culinaryexperiences.show)



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culture for centuries<sup>12</sup>. Experiences vary from lodging in country inns, spending time on a farm, ranch or some other agriculture-oriented property, sampling the day-to-day lifestyle of the people who tend the crops or livestock there, visiting an orchard or an U-Pick berry operation, dining in a unique country restaurant, attending an event or festival and/or riding holidays, adventure, sport and health tourism.

The more recent re-attention to agri-tourism as a viable economic enterprise is the result of several converging factors: (1) a growing interest in local foods and related culinary experiences; (2) people wanting new experiences and escaping the stresses of urban living; (3) parents wanting their children to know where their food comes from; (4) the appeal and cost-effectiveness of local getaways; and (5) the opportunity for rural residents including farmers to diversify their business interests.

A publication available from Alberta Agriculture and Forestry<sup>13</sup> states the following: ‘Rural tourism has many potential benefits including employment growth, an expanded economic base, repopulation, social improvement and revitalization of local crafts... tourism can make an important contribution to rural incomes at the level of the tourism operators and more widely in the local economy.’

**Implications for Parkland County:** The basis for a Parkland County agri-tourism sector is already in place with several destinations<sup>14</sup>. Parkland County is spatially well positioned to draw from a large and growing population. It also has numerous natural areas as well as the North Saskatchewan River which runs along its southern border. The river lends itself to a potential trail system that would prove to be very attractive to the large horse owner/rider population. The trends in ‘close to home’ events and a desire by young families to experience the country provides an interesting opportunity for Parkland County to consider.

6. **Land use and the commitment to preserve agricultural lands is a ‘hot’ issue in Alberta but the political will to change has been lacking:** In Alberta, although there has been some policy favouring agriculture, there has always been a reluctance to conserve agriculture land in any meaningful way. To date, when push comes to shove, the argument in favour of ‘property rights’ has won out politically. No level of government in Alberta has been keen to take on the issue of conserving agricultural land. For example, the Capital Region Board did not address the issue in its Growth Plan, instead hoping that the Province would provide direction and take responsibility for agricultural land conservation. This is in stark contrast to some jurisdictions, such as the British Columbia Agricultural Land Reserve which was implemented in the 1970s or the more recent greenbelt instituted around the Greater Toronto Region. In addition, some American jurisdictions have long had programs to conserve significant agricultural areas.

Consequently, there is no provincial legislative framework to preserve agricultural land solely on the basis of soil quality or agricultural use alone, even though there was a commitment to do so in the 2008 Provincial Land Use Framework. However, as will be discussed later, the Province has told the Capital Region Board that it is expected that the CRB to deal with it.

**Implications for Parkland County:** While Parkland County can set its own policies on what lands to conserve as agriculture and can determine what levels of subdivision and development are appropriate, it is probably easiest to address this within a regional context. With the lack of a provincial policy with respect to agricultural land preservation, the Capital

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<sup>12</sup> A common practice in England during the Victorian period. Also common in eastern Europe. The original tourists to Banff were well-to-do Americans who would ‘summer’ in the Rockies.

<sup>13</sup> Rural Tourism – An Overview. Last revised on January 24, 2013

<sup>14</sup> Includes the Devonian Garden, the Corn Maize, Happy Acres and several U-Pick berry farms.



Region will have to forge its own set of policies and land use planning tools. This is timely as the CRB should be addressing this as part of its regional plan update. Strathcona County has recently adopted an Agricultural Master Plan that has policies with respect to advancing agricultural land conservation at the regional level. Leduc County is now embarking on completing a similar agriculture study. Therefore, it seems timely for Parkland County to address these issues, not only locally through the CSDP it is now working on, but also through the CRB's planning initiatives.

## 2.2 Statistical Review of Agriculture in Parkland County

The review of the agricultural statistics specific to Parkland County is structured to identify the major changes that have and are taking place. This discussion begins with the positive changes or increases that have occurred since 2001 (see Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1 Measure of Positive Change or Increases**

Measure	2001	2011	% Change	Implication
Average Farm Size (acres)	416	514	+23.6%	Trend to larger farms
Average Gross Receipts/Farm	\$72,000	\$125,000	+73.7%	Trend to larger farms
Farms with more than \$1 million in capital	223	374	+67.7%	Reflection of larger farms and increased value of land.
Farms over 1120 acres	85	89	+4.7%	Large farm sector is growing as smaller farms decline in number
Average Age of Farmers	50.4	56.0	+11%	Trend to older farmers
Canola Acres	19,738	36,667	+85.7%	Shift to higher value crop across province
Potato Acres	1,576	2,642	+67.6%	Favourable location for seed potatoes
Vegetables Acres	37	47	+27.0%	Very modest growth and scale. Note: the number of growers have increased (1 in 2001 to 15 in 2011)
Area of Nursery Products	271	376	+38.7%	Reasonable growth—a reflection of location
Greenhouse area (Sq. Ft.)	169,797	197,465	+16.3%	Modest growth. However since 2011 several operations have closed
Sheep & Lambs (hd)	5,531	10,422	+88.4%	Overall a small livestock enterprise in Alberta but favourable growth in Parkland County
Horses (hd)	3,840	3,923	+2.1%	Sizeable and stable horse population—the largest in the Capital Region

**Summary:** Overall Parkland County has experienced growth in farm size, average gross farm receipts, capital invested per farm and the average age of farmers—much like the rest of Alberta. Canola acreage has also grown substantially but this is the case for all of Alberta where this crop has more than doubled (128%) in the 10-year period.

One change unique to Parkland County is the growth of the number of sheep & lambs (Note overall sheep population in Alberta has declined by 50%). To a lesser extent, there is modest growth in the nursery, vegetable and greenhouse production areas. The horse population has remained steady.

**Table 2.2 Measures of Negative Change or Decreases**

Measure	2001	2011	% Change	Implication
Number of Farms	1,144	782	-31.7%	Trend to larger farms
Total Area Farmed	475,926	401,863	-15.6%	Loss of substantial land area—mostly due to mining
Number of Farms with less than 400 acres	807	533	-48.6%	Rapid decline of small farms
Number of Farms with Gross Receipts below \$50K	797	539	-32.4%	Rapid decline of small farms
Total Crop Area	227,729	180,512	-20.7%	Loss of substantial cropping area mostly due to mining
Wheat Acres	25,547	20,976	-17.8%	Shift to canola
Barley Acres	39,851	28,335	-28.9%	Shift to canola
Oat Acres	15,698	12,106	-15.2%	Shift to canola
Mixed Grain Acres	3,675	1,317	-64.2%	Shift to canola
Alfalfa Acres	77,454	52,070	-32.8%	Loss of hay and grazing land due mostly to mining
Tame Hay Acres	39,303	20,802	-47.1%	Loss of hay and grazing land due mostly to mining
Cattle Numbers (hd)	79,084	45,353	-42.6%	Due to post BSE crisis, low prices and loss of grazing/hay land
Beef Cow Numbers (hd)	31,471	17,601	-44.1%	As above
Dairy Cow Numbers (hd)	1,781	1,661	-6.8%	On fewer farms (10 farms in 2011 vs. 21 in 2001)
Poultry numbers	188,461	n/a	-n/a	Sector consolidating in other Alberta counties
Total Fruit, Berries & Nuts	127	104	-18.2%	Reflection of risk, labour shortages

**Summary:** Parkland County agriculture has arguably experienced a state of decline over the past 10 years. While many of measures simply reflect the larger trend to fewer larger farms and a shift to growing canola at the expense of wheat, barley, oats and mixed grains, the most significant decrease is the loss of area for crops which has declined nearly 21% (or nearly 50,000 acres). Most of this loss can be attributed to the loss of tame hay and pasture areas (down nearly 40% or 40,000 acres). Not surprisingly, overall cattle numbers (and in particular beef cow numbers) have declined more than 43%.

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The decreases in the Parkland County beef herd can be explained in part by the overall provincial reduction in beef cows (declining by 27%). The decade in question (2001 to 2011) has been difficult for the beef industry starting with the BSE crisis in 2003, followed by years of low prices and low returns. Hence, many producers reduced or liquidated their herds. However, the rate of decline in Parkland County is significantly greater than the overall decline.

The number of dairy cows has remained stable, although these cows are now on fewer farms. By implication, the average dairy herd in Parkland County has doubled in size.

The poultry sector has also diminished to the extent that there are now too few farms for the Census of Agriculture to report actual numbers. It can also be seen that the Fruit, Berry and Nut sector has become somewhat smaller in terms of total acres.

## 2.3 Parkland County in the Capital Region Context

We also conducted a review of Parkland County in comparison to the four counties of Leduc, Lamont, Sturgeon and Strathcona to determine the differences (see Table 2.3). We note the following:

1. **Total Area Farmed/ Crop Acres:** Parkland County lost the most land (16%) relative to the other counties in the Capital Region. Strathcona lost 14% whereas both Leduc and Lamont grew in the areas being farmed (approximately 5%). Similarly, Parkland County experienced the greatest loss of crop acres (21% vs. little change in the other counties).
2. **Number of Farms:** Parkland County had the highest rate of loss—32%; Strathcona lost 27% and the remaining counties lost between 14 and 22%.
3. **Average Farm Size:** Lamont saw the greatest change with a growth rate of 37%. The remaining Counties experienced growth rates in the range of 20%.
4. **Gross Farm Sales per Farm:** Parkland County led the Capital Region with a 75% increase in the average gross farm sales per farm. Lamont followed with 72% growth; Leduc and Strathcona saw increases in the order of 35%.
5. **Total Cattle Numbers:** significant declines have taken place in all counties. Parkland County cattle numbers are down 55%; Sturgeon is down 47%; Strathcona is down 43%; Leduc is down 38%; and Lamont is down 33%.
6. **Pigs and Poultry:** very few hogs remain in the Capital Region. Sturgeon County is the only county that continues to have a sizable poultry sector.
7. **Vegetables:** firstly, acreages for vegetables are small (less than 100 acres per county in most cases). All counties experienced increases (up 30%). In contrast Leduc County saw a decline of 21% but had the largest acreage base overall.
8. **Fruits, Berries and Nuts:** also a small sector in terms of acres but larger than the vegetable sector. Lamont had the greatest growth rate but on a small base. Both Parkland County and Strathcona experienced small declines in the order of 20%.
9. **Area of Nursery Products:** this sector experienced the greatest growth and largest acreage relative to vegetables, fruits, berries and nuts. Both Lamont and Sturgeon more than doubled their production areas, followed by Strathcona (up 59%) and Parkland County (up 39%).
10. **Greenhouse Area:** Parkland County experienced a 16% growth in greenhouse area whereas Strathcona, Leduc and Sturgeon Counties all saw declines. Lamont saw a doubling in area but also had the smallest base. However, it has come to our attention that several greenhouses

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have closed since 2011<sup>15</sup> and we are not aware of any new additions.

**Summary:** All the counties have experienced significant declines in traditional livestock agriculture with reduced numbers of cattle, poultry and hogs. Crop agriculture remains relatively stable with the exception of two counties, Parkland County and Strathcona who have lost 21% and 14% of their total cropping areas respectively. Speciality enterprises remain small in terms of actual acreages; for the most part vegetable acreages have increased somewhat; fruit acreages have declined somewhat; greenhouse areas are relatively stable but are showing signs of decline; however, nursery areas have increased across all counties.

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<sup>15</sup> Three operations have closed recently: Inspired Market Gardens in Carvel; Grove Greenhouse and Valley Farms in the Spruce Grove area.

**Table 2.3 - Parkland County: Changes in the Capital Region**

Where "n/a" - data are confidential for statistical purposes or unavailable

Selected Indicators	2001	2011	Percentage Change
<b>Total Area of Farms (Acres)</b>			
Parkland	475,926	401,863	-16%
Sturgeon	499,567	481,583	-4%
Lamont	524,636	595,608	14%
Strathcona	256,270	220,184	-14%
Leduc	564,298	589,978	5%
<b>Number of Farms</b>			
Parkland	1,144	782	-32%
Sturgeon	1,055	823	-22%
Lamont	910	753	-17%
Strathcona	896	658	-27%
Leduc	1,464	1,255	-14%
<b>Average Farm Size (Acres)</b>			
Parkland	416	514	24%
Sturgeon	474	585	24%
Lamont	577	791	37%
Strathcona	286	335	17%
Leduc	385	470	22%
<b>Changes in Small Farm numbers (less than \$100,000 in gross proceeds)</b>			
Parkland	954	613	-36%
Sturgeon	774	545	-30%
Lamont	718	523	-27%
Strathcona	746	525	-30%
Leduc	1,137	934	-18%
<b>Changes in Larger Farm Numbers (over \$500,000)</b>			
Parkland	26	47	81%
Sturgeon	60	95	58%
Lamont	26	52	100%
Strathcona	31	33	6%
Leduc	44	82	86%
<b>Total Gross Farms Sales (total County), \$'000</b>			
Parkland	82,064	97,975	19%
Sturgeon	146,696	185,794	27%
Lamont	82,268	116,938	42%
Strathcona	87,871	90,895	3%
Leduc	142,621	162,680	14%
<b>Gross Farm Sales per Farm, \$'000</b>			
Parkland	72	125	75%
Sturgeon	139	226	62%
Lamont	90	155	72%
Strathcona	98	138	41%
Leduc	97	130	33%
<b>Total Crop (Acres, without summerfallow)</b>			
Parkland	227,729	180,512	-21%
Sturgeon	361,288	362,846	0%
Lamont	359,803	371,871	3%
Strathcona	152,850	150,138	-2%
Leduc	359,027	373,077	4%

Table 2.3 cont...

Selected Indicators	2001	2011	Percentage Change
<b>Total Cattle (Number, thsnd)</b>			
Parkland	79	45	-43%
Sturgeon	51	27	-47%
Lamont	53	36	-33%
Strathcona	33	15	-55%
Leduc	97	60	-38%
<b>Total Pigs (Number, thsnd)</b>			
Parkland	3	n/a	
Sturgeon	50	17	-66%
Lamont	10	n/a	
Strathcona	3	n/a	
Leduc	24	16	-31%
<b>Total Poultry (Number, thsnd)</b>			
Parkland	189	n/a	
Sturgeon	1,310	1,419	8%
Lamont	34	24	-29%
Strathcona	560	n/a	
Leduc	279	200	-28%
<b>Total Vegetables (Acres)</b>			
Parkland	37	47	28%
Sturgeon	71	89	25%
Lamont	13	17	33%
Strathcona	n/a	76	n/a
Leduc	200	159	-21%
<b>Total Fruit, Berries, Nuts (Acres)</b>			
Parkland	127	104	-18%
Sturgeon	172	191	11%
Lamont	23	55	137%
Strathcona	72	57	-21%
Leduc	91	163	80%
<b>Area of Nursery Products (Acres)</b>			
Parkland	271	376	39%
Sturgeon	404	909	125%
Lamont	47	146	211%
Strathcona	256	406	59%
Leduc	705	800	13%
<b>Greenhouse Area (Square Feet)</b>			
Parkland	169,797	197,465	16%
Sturgeon	364,118	344,904	-5%
Lamont	59,452	116,230	96%
Strathcona	558,421	500,756	-10%
Leduc	218,562	117,685	-46%

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## 2.4 Parkland County Soils

The project team examined several potential datasets with a view to determining to what degree soils data or other agricultural datasets could be acquired and used to estimate the suitability of a property for agriculture—and conversely, its suitability for re-zoning. Specifically, we reviewed the following:

1. Soil Landscapes of Canada
2. Detailed Soil Surveys
3. Canada Land Inventory
4. Annual Crop Inventory – this has been available since 2009.

Overall, we conclude that this information provides valuable technical data describing the agricultural capacity of a particular site or property. However, the data alone is not sufficient to determine the suitability of a property currently zoned as agriculture for re-zoning. A more robust analytical system is required to assess any proposed site relative to the contiguous nature of the agricultural activities taking place in the immediate vicinity and its suitability for development relative to the available or required services.

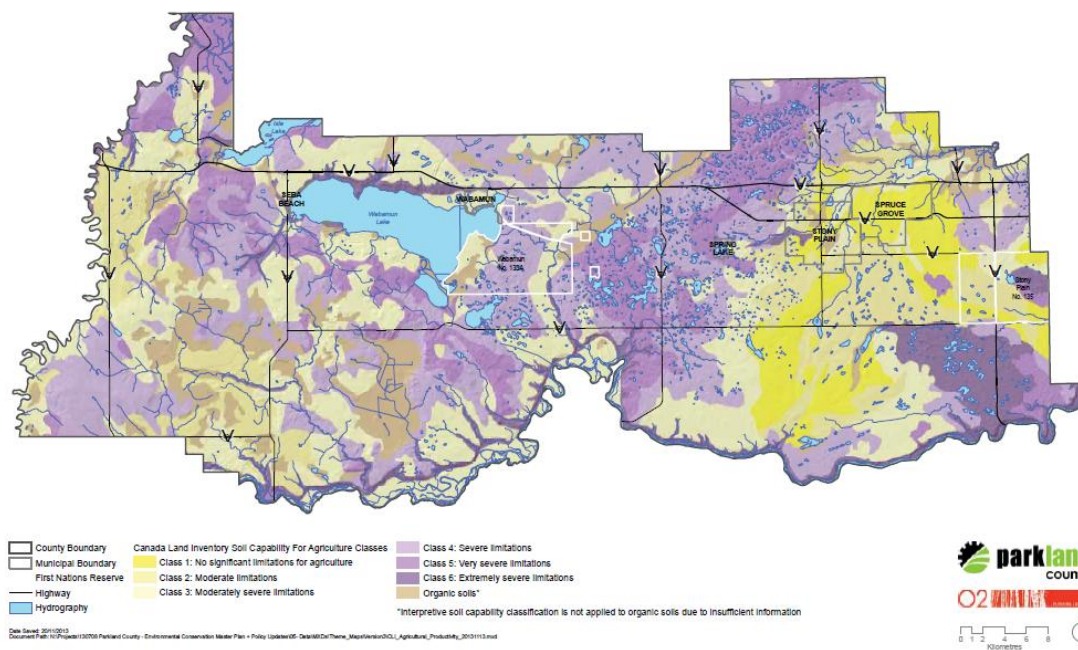
An example of this analytical approach is a system called Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) developed by Penn State University. The objective of this system is to provide a farmland evaluation assessment using GIS and related data. The system is based on the evaluation of this data in four areas:

1. **Soils:** in particular the actual quality of the soils for farming. This factor receives 40% of the weighting.
2. **Development Potential:** includes such measures as intensive development adjacent or in the immediate vicinity; intensive or extensive scattered development with a one-half mile radius as well as the degree of non-agricultural development within 1 mile. This factor receives a 20% weighting.
3. **Farmland Potential:** based on farm size and gross annual receipts including a land stewardship measure as well as a historic, scenic or environmental measure. This factor also receives a weighting of 20%
4. **Clustering Factor:** a series of measures pertaining to location relative to agricultural lands in the vicinity. Receives a weighing of 20%.

It is understood that six or more counties in Pennsylvania are either testing or using the LESA system. We look forward to discussing this area further with the Steering Committee to better understand your requirements and the decisions to be made. This will guide how we proceed regarding further review or study of potential evaluation systems relative to the data required or currently available.

In the meantime, it is useful to look at an overall map of the agricultural productivity of soils in Parkland County (from Environmental Conservation Master Plan (Phase 1 Background Technical Report)). The best lands remaining are south of Stony Plain and Spruce Grove (see Map 2.1).

**Map 2.1: Soil Productivity**





## 3.0 Stakeholder Input

### 3.1 Introduction

Our consultation process included input from the following groups and stakeholders. This is summarized in the following sub-sections and tables (see Tables 3.1 to 3.5).

### 3.2 The One-on-One Interviews

We interviewed 20 individuals representing the agriculture and food sector in Parkland County (see Attachment 1). These individuals comprised a mix of producers, Parkland County staff, agri-business personal and other individuals working in the sector.

All the interviews were done in person. The interviews were conducted in a structured manner but flexible enough to allow subjects of particular interest or relevance to the interview to be discussed in more detail. Generally speaking, our lines of inquiry fall into 6 main areas:

1. What is the current state of agriculture in Parkland County?
2. What do you see as opportunities that are of interest or unique to Parkland County?
3. What are the constraints or issues facing agriculture in Parkland County?
4. What does the ‘future of agriculture’ look to you?
5. What are some of the issues or questions that need to be considered?
6. What other comments or suggestions do you have specific to agriculture in Parkland County or to the Council?

With respect to these questions/lines of inquiries, we present a sampling of the quotations provided by the interviewees. Given the consistency of the remarks within each of the lines of inquiry, it is our opinion that the views reflected by these quotations are indeed representative of the larger populations within the industry and involved in the Parkland County agri-food sector.

#### 3.2.1 State of Agriculture in Parkland County

- *In the past agriculture was everywhere in Parkland County. Now we have a lot of subdivisions.*
- *Farming has changed—in the past Moms & Dads would be working at home on the farm—this is not the case anymore. You either have large scale farms or small specialty operations. And the farmers are getting older.*
- *Agriculture is a hidden gem in this County—the productive capacity is very high. There are great soils in the eastern part of Parkland County—opportunities to diversify with speciality crops.*
- *Agriculture—no one knows what it is! No one knows anything about agriculture.*
- *I don’t think agriculture is respected within Parkland County. The top priorities seem to be power generation and acreage development. Agriculture comes in as number 3.*
- *Agriculture for Council is down the list: the first priority is commercial development—Acheson; then acreages and residential development; followed by agriculture.*
- *Too many subdivided quarters—I would rather see one quarter divided 16 ways (each with 10 acres), than four quarters with 4 parcels each. We need to limit where subdivisions are located—can we look at transferring development rights to concentrate development?*
- *Parkland County has had successful cattle operations—there is a good foundation here but with the current drought, numbers may drop further.*
- *The country residential neighbours see us as a ‘Howdy Doody Ranch! We don’t get any respect.’ (spoken by a highly respected and long established dairy farmer).*

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- The Country Residential area is large—this has taken some agricultural land out of play including grazing areas that could be pastured.
  - Farming close to city is a problem—moving equipment; traffic; people have no patience. It is a like farming in no-man’s land—no one makes a commitment.
  - Too much good land is being developed.
  - Agriculture is very significant in Parkland County—full of cattle, crops, potatoes. But it is just assumed!
  - Parkland County has some of the more progressive producers in the region—a strong interest in environmental stewardship. It has a large area of good soils—mostly east of Highway 770.
  - There are lots of horses here—we are so close to the City. Also lots of acreages with 4 or 5 horses—it’s a quiet place.
  - There are no real obstacles to farm in Parkland County but there is nothing set up for innovation or advancement either. It is very status quo or laissez faire on the part of Parkland County.
  - I don’t see Parkland County giving agriculture much of a priority. The tax dollars from agriculture is small—their focus is on industry and residential growth.
  - The four parcels out is changing west Parkland County—we’re seeing more people but not farmers.
  - In the eastern part of Parkland County, we are getting more complaints about dust.
  - More complaints.... dust manure, smells.
  - I see a growing population, while the farmers get bigger and the number of farmers decline. Younger people don’t want to farm.
  - Farmers did not want subdivisions until they wanted subdivisions. Now more people on gravel roads—they want paved roads. More traffic, more complaints.
  - The future of agriculture?!! It’s too late—this study should have been done years ago. There are too many subdivisions—it is difficult to farm between the subdivisions. And Parkland County does not care—they just want tax money from lots and subdivisions.
  - In 2001 I had a strong pro-farming/save the farm viewpoint. Now I don’t see a future.
  - Farming in Parkland County—we are endangered species.
  - The size of farms has really changed. Every year the olds guys are leaving and the young guys who are left get bigger and bigger. Now 10,000 acres is not a big deal. Family farms are being incorporated and becoming much more business-like. Also their marketing is much more advanced and much more informed than ever.
  - Farming in Parkland County is following the general trends—fewer; bigger; more direct seeding; a shift from beef to grain farming in the west part of Parkland County.
  - Parkland County has more small farms in the west. But overall, farms are getting bigger—you see fewer but larger farms. And small independent dealers can’t survive. Not long ago, a combine cost \$100,000—now it costs \$400,000.

### 3.2.2 Opportunities For or In Parkland County

- Parkland County is a good crop producing area—it matches any other county in the region. Also very good for cow-calf and grazing.

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- There is now recognition that agriculture is a contributor to the environmental goods & services. There are two programs provided by ALUS that support these both financially and with information.'
  - Parkland County is well suited for cattle production in the west; crops in the east. Also there are opportunities in eco-tourism – the river is a jewel plus Stony Plain has great streetscapes and a great place to just slow down.
  - The grey wooded soils are ideal for grazing and cattle. There is a need to work with Trans Alta to develop pasture on the reclaimed areas – this requires fencing. But they seem to be very slow.
  - Commodity prices are good – people can make money and there are good hedging tools that can be used now.'
  - We need to leave agricultural land as agricultural land!'
  - Whole Foods is coming to Edmonton – they will be looking for local organic suppliers.
  - There is a place for horse based tourism – people who want to have a 'horse' experience without having to own one.
  - There are opportunities to deliver programs or support farmer member organizations such as the West Central Forage Association.
  - There is a lot wasted or underused land because of the power plants. Is there a way of working with Trans Alta? Could those sites be a place for greenhouses using the waste heat?
  - We could develop areas for people to ride horses – from 199 St. to the Devon Bridge along the river. This would attract a lot of people.
  - We could have lots of gardens to supply Edmonton. We tried a garden but no more – we were too busy.
  - Parkland County should focus on increasing the awareness and the importance of agriculture. Get people to understand what farmers are doing? Can this help with the road rage – I don't know?
  - With the power plants and the waste heat, why not a greenhouse industry?
  - People like the idea of Farmers' Markets. But how much are they willing to pay? And how much are they willing to go out of there way?
  - Are there opportunities to attract value added processing at Acheson? Parkland Packers has shut down, is there an opportunity to restart this?
  - Parkland County could support more agricultural research – like some counties in NE Alberta.
  - With proper management, Parkland County could support a lot more beef cows and calves.
  - Education regarding land management is key.
  - There are a lot of opportunities for cattle – ideal grazing everywhere in the west. The eastern part of Parkland County is well suited for horticulture and grains.
  - The horse industry is real tough industry – hard to make money. We are not like Calgary with lots of high paid executives looking to spend their money.
  - Perhaps the Alberta Communities Co-operative Association could find a solution for Parkland Packers.
  - There are many U-Pick and berry operations in Parkland County—perhaps the idea of a Parkland County Food Festival combined with an agri-tour.'

### 3.2.3

#### Challenges Facing Farmers and/or Agriculture in Parkland County

- Land is a problem. The four parcels policy drives up the price. Everyone's price expectations including in the west has gone up making it difficult to afford land for farming. The current policy is driving out the agricultural community – very few original land owners/farmers are left.
- Any changes in land use policy will be a real problem. A lot of farmers are looking at their land and the ability to sub-divide as their retirement package.
- Most farmers like the four parcels out policy – it gives them a chance to get some money out of their operation.
- A lot of farmland is being lost. But the current sub-division policy is an incentive that farmers can't resist. And you lose farmers. Every time a farmer goes, we lose a customer.
- It is becoming more difficult for farmers to grow – those who want to go from 2,000 acres to 4,000 or 8,000 are having problems finding the land base.
- The more residents – the more conflicts! This is a result of the four parcel policy. Plus a lot more quads, motorbikes and vandalism.
- Land fractioning is a constraint. In my area (south east), almost all the quarters are split. Acreages are too big to mow (with a lawn mower) and too small to farm.
- We need to make sure farming is worthwhile – namely people able to make a living.
- Development and parcelling is a concern – it is reducing the local agriculture base. There are also issues with access from roads into fields. (Spoken by a grain/oilseed buyer).
- Farmers and city folk/country residents are in two different worlds. The urban world does not understand farming – so many misconceptions and misinformation like the fear of GMO's.
- Overall there is a need for succession planning (a lot of older farmers with no one following them); lack of local processing – with Parkland Packers closing; and very little value added activity.
- The thinking within Parkland County agriculture department is very old school – only focused on large scale 'traditional' agriculture – mostly beef and canola. But we have a million people nearby! And a lot of high quality land in the eastern part of the City that could be used to develop a Farm to Plate program.
- A lot of horse owner/operators don't qualify for any programs because they don't meet the minimum size criteria (over \$10,000 in annual farm receipts).
- We have an issue of weeds and invasive species – weeds as a result of the mined areas and weeds brought in by construction equipment.
- The four parcels out policy is the biggest issue. And traffic is an issue – I get the finger waved at me quite regularly. I do not feel respected.
- The four parcel policy has totally increased the value of the land – for pure farmers, this is a huge disadvantage. For those who are not pure farmers – this is a huge advantage. Also great for those who know how and want to do this. I don't want to). ' There is no voice for agriculture in Parkland County (and I am not aware of the Rural Advisory Committee and what they do).'
- The only voice is the Advisory Committee to the Agriculture Services Board. And they have trouble filling these positions. Overall I would say that no-one on Council really knows agriculture.
- The price of land is \$6,000 per acre – you can't grow barley on that!

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- Agriculture has been forgotten.
  - We farm close to Spruce Grove – they are brutal when it comes to weed control (i.e. the lack of weed control).’
  - Growing potatoes is intensive agriculture – we have more and more problems with traffic, spraying, public concerns etc.
  - ATV’s are a real nuisance – people running around our fields cause a lot of damage.
  - Life on acreage is not the same a living down town. They are not living next to a 7-11. People moving out here don’t seem to understand that. Education and awareness is key!
  - Do farmers speak with forked tongues when it comes to land and subdivisions? Absolutely!!
  - Trans Alta lets the weeds build up. Also they let their lands be overgrazed. This land need to be better cared for.
  - Lot of issues resulting from the encroachment of subdivisions – dust, complaints about spraying, traffic, combines at night, road bans....etc.
  - Access to good land is key. This can be a challenge with less farmland available (spoken by a farmer who rents land and has a required rotation program).
  - The power/mining companies are very unilateral with their decision making. Their staff keeps changing; farmers have a hard time dealing with them or securing long term leases. Also water could be a big problem. And the weeds are horribly invasive.
  - The mine is a community killer. It is also so slow to reclaim land. Their rental policies seem uncertain and transitory – you get land for a year and then someone else gets it. These lands have also become a massive seed bank for weeds.

### 3.2.4

#### The Future of Agriculture: What will it look like?

- In the future, I would like to see what is in place today—commercial farms, maybe more smaller specialized farms and more agri-tourism like the Corn Maize.
- The trends will continue—fewer, bigger, more automated, bigger equipment. The size of the equipment and what can be done without the operator is mind boggling.
- We could see more local food producers but it needs irrigation and the infrastructure. But it is very competitive and not easy!
- Equestrian will be there; potatoes will do well. Cattle will do well but be in fewer hands. More land will be owned by syndicates.
- You are going to see a lot fewer farmers—a lot more precision farming using automation and robotics.
- We would like to see our dairy farm continue—keep the operation going for the next generations.
- Agriculture into the future is going to be more and more difficult. In 50 to 100 years all this land will be absorbed for development. (spoken by a farmer in the eastern part of Parkland County).
- More produce? Don’t know—it is hard for locals to compete since it so cheap from Mexico and California due to low wages, the labour required etc. You can’t find that here.
- People want (and like) Farmers Markets. But there are lots of seasonal limitations and very competitive retailers.
- I don’t see much of a future—that’s why I sold my dairy.

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- Overall agriculture as an industry is strong—not like the oil business which goes up and down). Is there an opportunity to attract an oil seed crushing plant?
  - See more larger farms. But some small speciality farms—they will be one offs.

### 3.2.5 Questions/Issues to be asked or considered

- We used to have distinct communities (Spruce Grove and Stony Plain). Now they are almost all together. And the only place they can grow is to the south where the best soils are.
- What defines rural? Some say Parkland County is rural. Others say it is not rural.
- Could Parkland County play more of an education or awareness role re: agriculture? Help re-build the respect for farmers?
- How do you build community when farmers are leaving? Agriculture is community and the land policy is driving out the community.
- What can we do that keeps agricultural alive—make sure that agriculture has a place in Parkland County?
- Equine/horses? No one has a finger on these guys and what could happen here.
- Is there a way of offering programs such as ALUS to country residential owners? There is interest within this group.
- Is there a way to provide incentives or tax credits or rebates back to farmers to keep them in agriculture and not sell their land for development?

### 3.2.6 Other comments

- Zoning such a large area for Country Residential (CR) is stupidity
- Agriculture is competing against big dollars!
- Parkland County needs to be more diligent with what is actually subdivided—avoid low spots, sloughs and good agricultural land.
- The government should provide clear land use guidelines. Plus there is a need for water particularly in the mined areas where the water table has changed.
- The maximum area for subdivision from a quarter should be 10 acres. That would still leave 150 acres available for farming.
- Class 1, 2 and 3 soils should be marked and preserved for agriculture.
- People want to be able to farm—we need strong Land Use Bylaws—preserve Class 1, 2, and 3 and grazing areas.
- Stay off of highly productive land—black soils and good forage areas!
- There seems to be lots of political will to preserve wetlands and environmentally sensitive areas – why not agricultural lands?
- The four parcel policy is too late to be changed—the value is built into the quarter. But the parcelling should take place on land that is not good for agriculture.
- We grow potatoes – Parkland County is very good when it comes to spraying weeds in the ditches—they know how sensitive the crop. Parkland County has some good people on top of spray issues.
- We are such a minority – real estate to Parkland County is much more important than agriculture.



- *There is a need for a greater voice for agriculture. I know little about the Advisory Committee—my concern is that the voices being heard are the niche players who might have too much influence. Or the committee members are not movers and shakers.*
- *There is no voice for agriculture.*
- *Generally Parkland County is viewed as weed enforcers or inspectors—not much more than this.*
- *Governments are notorious for being rudderless.*
- *Parkland County needs to revisit the subdivision policy—if we were to consider locations today, I am not sure we would be here.*

### 3.3 Summary of Input from Other Meetings and Interviews

We conducted the following series of meetings and interviews (see Tables 2.4 to 2.8 for summaries):

- The Agricultural and Rural Advisory Committee.
- Three Focus Group Interviews—two with commercial farmers—one in Tomahawk; one in Stony Plain; and one with the equine sector at Stony Plain.
- Interviews with 9 speciality/value added businesses<sup>16</sup>.

The highlights are presented in the following tables (more details are in the Attachments).

**Table 3.1 Agricultural and Rural Life Advisory Committee including the ALUS Committee (20 attendees)**

Area of Discussion	Summary of Comments
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very concerned about development pressures, the growth of industry and residents including the impacts of subdivisions, land fragmentation, loss of farm land</li> <li>• Concerns with cost of land, aging of farmers and where the next generation of farmers will come from</li> <li>• Need for continuing education and support for farmers</li> <li>• Lack of education, knowledge, support for agriculture from the public</li> </ul>
<b>Ideal Future</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long term land use policies that preserves agricultural land (urban growth boundaries that are clear</li> <li>• More diversity—crops as well as age of farmers (young farmers) markets, services, value added processing</li> <li>• Well balanced County—industrial in high traffic areas; farms on good quality lands; protected environmentally sensitive lands</li> <li>• Strong relationship (appreciation) between general public and farmers</li> </ul>
<b>Unique Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market gardens serving local food opportunities</li> <li>• Diversified field crops; grazing lands</li> <li>• More farm gate sales; value added opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>Issues Requiring Clarity or Direction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish land use policies to protect farm land and limit subdivisions</li> <li>• How to move equipment safely?</li> <li>• Establish new opportunities, diversification, new markets</li> </ul>
<b>Other Comments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The impacts of subdividing good agricultural land into smaller parcels (as well as the increased urban-rural conflicts arising from a growing</li> </ul>

<sup>16</sup> A focus group was originally planned for this sector, however in view of the busy season we elected to meet with these operations one on one.

	<p>non-farm population in the countryside. The challenges facing young farmers to enter farming—due mostly to the cost of land</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pressures of urbanization and growth in the industrial areas – this is pushing farmers out</li> <li>• The need to find a ‘balance’ between agriculture and development</li> <li>• New or enhanced revenue opportunities for agriculture</li> </ul>
<b>Summary</b>	<p>Concerned about development pressures; growth of industry; conflicts between farmers and rural non-farm residents. Also acknowledge the difficulty for new entrants large due to high lands costs. Would like to see stronger land use policies; more diversity; a more balanced approach to development; a stronger relationship between the community and farmers.</p>

**Table 3.2 Commercial Farm Sector: Tomahawk (8 attendees)**

<b>Area of Discussion</b>	<b>Summary of Comments</b>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trend to fewer large full time farmers in turn leads to fewer services, local markets, local dealerships, a declining farm community</li> <li>• Increased acreages/subdivisions reduces available land for farming – increased traffic, difficulties in moving equipment, more weeds, higher land prices</li> <li>• Also significant vandalism and theft on farm properties</li> </ul>
<b>Ideal Future</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See fewer larger farms – increasing automated; continuing loss of farm community</li> <li>• Also more niche small farms with direct sales – few (or no) middle sized farms</li> <li>• More and more automation enabling farmers to get larger and not depend upon hired labour which is hard to secure</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Niche artisan farms that are small – market direct</li> <li>• West Parkland County is ideal for grazing cattle but numbers are down and fencing/pens are gone. Will cattle numbers come back?</li> </ul>
<b>Issues Requiring Clarity or Direction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education for public to appreciate agriculture (food producers)</li> <li>• Incentives for start-up value added operations</li> <li>• Zoning policies that are friendly to further processing</li> <li>• Land use policy that minimizes rural living within mainstream agriculture</li> </ul>
<b>Other Comments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A general acceptance that mainstream agriculture is on the way out. Only a few large farms will be left.</li> <li>• Some small speciality enterprises will emerge.</li> <li>• Farmers are now so few, and have little or no voice politically.</li> </ul>
<b>Summary</b>	<p>See agriculture in decline; fewer farmers, loss of community, fewer services, more non-farm residents. Land for farming is becoming unaffordable; increased safety concerns due to traffic; vandalism is a concern; mining lands – a seed bank for weeds. In the future, see the trend to fewer larger farms continue; west Parkland County is ideal for grazing; some niche operations will emerge; more conflicts with non-farm residents.</p>



**Table 3.3 Commercial Farm Sector: Spruce Grove (10 attendees)**

Area of Discussion	Summary of Comments
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The growth of acreages/subdivisions restrict the ability to farm – reducing available land; increased traffic; increased land prices; land parcels are too big to look after but too small to farm</li> <li>• Roads (narrow and high) and traffic make moving equipment increasingly dangerous</li> <li>• The lack of understanding/appreciation for agriculture by Council and public at large</li> <li>• Inevitability of being displaced because of urban growth in the eastern part of Parkland County</li> </ul>
<b>Ideal Future</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farming (and Class 1 &amp; 2) farmland is protected</li> <li>• More public appreciation, education and awareness</li> <li>• Growth in small specialized operations supplying local food demand in the nearby large urban area</li> <li>• Several farmers see little or no future for big farms in the eastern part of Parkland County due to inevitable urban growth</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity to Edmonton creates opportunities for market gardens, berry farms, potatoes, vegetables, sod farming</li> <li>• Parkland County well suited to a wide range of speciality crops – pulses, lentils, corn. Well located on rail line.</li> </ul>
<b>Issues Requiring Clarity or Direction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve road safety</li> <li>• Reduce lot size and impacts of subdivisions – save agricultural land</li> <li>• Education programs targeted at school age children</li> </ul>
<b>Other Comments</b>	<p>Overall this group remains passionate about agriculture but have increasing difficulties seeing a viable future in the eastern part of Parkland County due to expansion on several fronts: Edmonton; Spruce Grove; Stony Plain; Acheson Industrial Park; transportation corridors. Other concerns include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic and the dangers with moving farm equipment</li> <li>• The availability of land to farm as operations grow in size</li> <li>• Cost of land making farming unaffordable.</li> </ul>
<b>Summary</b>	<p>Major concerns with development on two (or three sides) - the more development, the bigger the headaches! Major concerns with traffic, moving equipment safely, vandalism, trespassing! Lack of appreciation from Council and public. See a limited future agriculture; some see no future; inevitable urban growth; some specialty operations (market gardens; U-pick) will grow to meet local food demand; more public appreciation, education &amp; awareness</p>

**Table 3.4      The Equine Sector (9 attendees)**

Area of Discussion	Summary of Comments
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A strong sense the horse sector is not well known or appreciated by Parkland County Council and administration</li> <li>• Lack of public facilities and a public trail system</li> <li>• Lack of unified voice (or critical mass) on the part</li> </ul>
<b>Ideal Future</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well develop trail systems and/or a park designated specifically for horses</li> <li>• A Public Arena with both indoor and outdoor facilities capable of staging a wide range of events and differing horse interests</li> <li>• Parkland County being known as a destination for horse – riding, boarding, recreation</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New residents, increased business if a dedicated public horse facility or public trail system were to be developed</li> <li>• A wide variety of events and shows</li> <li>• Parkland County has many conveniences being close to the City but in the country – the best of both worlds – an ideal location for boarding or keeping horses</li> </ul>
<b>Issues Requiring Clarity or Direction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest and commitment from Parkland County to address opportunities for the horse sector</li> <li>• Recognize the economic (and community) impact that a horse industry can bring</li> <li>• Organize a voice (structure) that can provide input and give direction on behalf of the horse sector.</li> </ul>
<b>Other Comments</b>	<p>Overall this group was very enthusiastic about what Parkland County can offer and what can be done to support a thriving horse sector. Generally the group participants expressed the view that equine sector as an under-realized opportunity both in economic as well as recreational terms. There is a strong sense that Parkland County has overlooked the sector and a plan to establish a dedicated show facility and/or a comprehensive trails system will contribute thriving equine industry and enrich the community.</p>
<b>Summary</b>	<p>Horse/equine sector is not well known or appreciated; lack of public facilities - indoor and outdoor; sector is very fragmented - no coherent structure or voice. In the future, see opportunity for Parkland to become a centre for equine activities, events, recreation; need for a event centre and/or extensive trail system or outdoor equine park; potential for business; enhance community life and character</p>

**Table 3.5 Specialty Value Added Sector**

We interviewed nine speciality operations ranging from an agri-tourism destination (the Corn Maize) to a number of berry, vegetable and greenhouse operations. We also interviewed a honey producer and two nurseries.

Area of Discussion	Summary of Comments
<b>Advantages of Parkland County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very strong affirmation of the locational benefits of Parkland County – near to a major urban centre; excellent transportation access – highways; railways</li> <li>• Excellent land for specialty production – gardens, seed potatoes</li> <li>• County is viewed as favourable and supportive of value added/specialty operations and rural businesses</li> </ul>
<b>Disadvantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few complaints or criticisms</li> <li>• Some issues or concerns with permit requirements</li> <li>• Lack of high speed internet access</li> <li>• Growing concerns about impact subdivisions, increased traffic, impact on agriculture at large. Some operations are concerned that their sites will be sold for development</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agri-tourism given the large nearby urban market</li> <li>• More local food/berry operations but recognize the work required</li> <li>• Establish an irrigation district drawing water from the North Saskatchewan River – this would make for a clear commitment to support agriculture and food production</li> <li>• Excellent location for new value added business – County can market this</li> </ul>
<b>Constraints</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of subdivisions on agriculture over the long term</li> <li>• Lack of education – people know so little about food and what it takes to run a successful business</li> <li>• Increased traffic and associated dangers</li> </ul>
<b>Issues Requiring Clarity or Direction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the plan for agriculture? Don't forget agriculture!</li> <li>• Re-think the current sub-division policy and protecting agricultural land</li> </ul>
<b>Summary</b>	Generally this group speaks favourably about Parkland County as a great location and an administration that is easy to work with. This group would like to see a clear future for agriculture and the assurance that agriculture is a high priority for Parkland County. See opportunities in local food, agri-tourism; demand for rural 'experience.'

## 4.0 Planning Policy History and Context

### 4.1 Introduction

To understand the current planning framework, and how agriculture fits in, it is important to consider the factors, particularly provincial, regional, and municipal policy, which influenced its evolution over time.

### 4.2 Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission

The Edmonton Regional District Planning Commission was established in 1950 and first adopted a regional plan for the Metropolitan Section in 1958, which had been based on studies of agricultural land. This plan formed the basis for regional planning in the Edmonton area until 1984. This plan sought to maintain compact communities and industrial areas, prevent unwarranted fragmentation of good agricultural land and established a large open space system along the rivers and ravines. The Commission prepared a position paper on rural land use in 1974 and adopted various objectives and policies as early as 1975, which included the following:

- *The Commission aims to ensure that agriculture will remain a valuable component of the regional economic base.* The Commission shall identify prime agricultural lands and assign such area to be conserved for agricultural use.
- *The Commission opposes the unwarranted fragmentation of prime agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes.* Prime agricultural land was interpreted as CLI Classes 1, 2, or 3 as well as lands with potential of producing specialty or other crops, or of supporting land-intensive agricultural operations, none of which are considered in the CLI agricultural capability classification scheme. However, the policy provided for one subdivided parcel (either into two 80-acre parcels or with one parcel of less than three acres).

In 1979, the Commission prepared policies that stated that ‘Prime agricultural land... shall not be subdivided for country residential uses except...’ for farmstead separation parcels, unworkable farms exist, unusual circumstances exist, or a highly unique country residential attraction exists such as proximity to a major river valley.

In 1980, the Commission wrote that ‘the competition for the use of the basic land resource of the region has created major problems for the agricultural community... concerns as to the premature and unwarranted fragmentation of agricultural lands in all of the rural municipalities in the metropolitan area has necessitated a common approach.’

Following decades of regional planning, the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission’s Metropolitan Regional Plan was approved in 1984. The plan reflected a snapshot of conditions, history, policy, and municipal intentions up to that time.

The land use pattern and policies in the 1984 plan were driven by three main factors: (1) Provincial policies in favour of the conservation of ‘better’ agricultural land and other policies such as the first parcel out; (2) development patterns and their potential future expansion based on logical servicing and planning expectations fostered continued growth regardless of soil conditions; and (3) soil quality and the dividing line between Classes 1 & 2 and Class 3 in ‘rural areas’ was a major determinate. Land use policies were to minimize land use conflicts. Since this time, new initiatives have influenced the planning regime in Alberta, the Edmonton Capital Region, and Parkland County.

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## 4.3 Provincial Land Use Policies

In 1996, the Provincial Government adopted Provincial Land Use Policies (PLUPs) pursuant to the Municipal Government Act. These policies outline provincial interests and the role of municipalities in implementing them—by ensuring municipal statutory plans, land use bylaws, and planning decisions and actions are consistent with the PLUPs.

With respect to land use patterns, PLUPs generally call for an appropriate mix of agricultural and other land uses in an orderly, efficient, and compatible manner; embody sustainable development, and provide for a wide range of food and agricultural sector development opportunities.

With a goal to contribute to the maintenance and diversification of Alberta’s agricultural industry, four policies were adopted:

- Municipalities ‘are encouraged’ to identify areas where extensive and intensive agriculture and associated activities should be a primary land use.
- Municipalities ‘are encouraged’ to limit the fragmentation of agriculture lands and their premature conversion to other uses.
- Municipalities ‘are encouraged’ to direct non-agricultural development to areas where they will not constrain agriculture.
- Municipalities ‘are encouraged’ to minimize conflicts arising from intensive agricultural operations through the use of setbacks and other mitigative measures.

The policies address the issues of identifying and designating agricultural lands, discouraging their fragmentation and premature conversion, and avoiding conflicts between uses. However, they are not regulatory in these regards, only discretionary and non-binding—how do you enforce and encourage? These policies were to be incorporated into Regional Plans as they are developed under the Land Use Framework.

## 4.4 Provincial Land Use Framework and ALSA

The Land Use Framework (LUF), released in 2008, outlined a new Provincial approach to managing land and resources. The LUF established seven planning regions and called for the development of a regional plan for each.

The Alberta Land Stewardship Act (ALSA), proclaimed in 2009, established the legal basis for the development of the regional plans. The regional plans are applicable to both private and Crown lands, and contain portions that are enforceable by law, as well as sections that are intended as statements of policy to guide the Crown, decision makers, and local governments.

ALSA enables, not only regional planning, but it also provides tools for the implementation of those plans. These tools include conservation directives by the province, and potential programs for conservation easements and transfers of development credits. These schemes may be aimed at the protection, conservation, and enhancement of agricultural lands and lands for agricultural purposes. To date, these new tools haven’t been utilized to any extent.

## 4.5 North Saskatchewan Regional Plan

The Lower Athabasca Regional Plan, the first provincially approved regional plan, merely repeats the PLUPs as its agricultural policies. The second regional plan, that for the South Saskatchewan, includes general policy objectives for agriculture that address region-specific issues and concerns: (1) maintaining an agricultural base by identifying contiguous blocks and smaller areas of agricultural lands and limit their fragmentation and conversion—including the use of conservation easements; (2) supporting a diverse and innovative irrigated agriculture and agri-food sector; (3)

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maximizing opportunities for value added agriculture; (4) recognizing the local market; (5) supporting the transition to the next generation of agriculture and food producers; and (6) encouraging the use of voluntary market-based instruments for ecosystem (natural capital) services.

Parkland County is in the area to be covered by the North Saskatchewan Regional Plan. This regional plan area is large, 13% of Alberta, stretching from British Columbia to Saskatchewan. The Region has a wide variety of soil types and almost 60% of the region is used for agricultural production, including crops and tame and native pasture for grazing—about 25% of the total farmland in Alberta. The land surrounding the Capital Region has some of the most fertile soils in western Canada. Livestock is a key component of agricultural production in the region.

The Profile of the Region notes that fragmentation and conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural land remains an on-going issue throughout Alberta and, although there has been a conversion of higher-value cultivated lands used for annual crop production to non-agricultural uses, these losses have been offset to some degree by increases in the use of more marginal land—lands which often require greater crop inputs such as fertilizers and herbicides to be as productive as those soils lost.

This regional plan is currently under preparation, but the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the planning process state the plan is to ‘provide advice on maintaining a viable agricultural land base to support growth and diversification of the agricultural industry.’ In its discussion of biodiversity, the ToR notes that ‘The trade-off discussion related to the settled area revolves around the value of the land in terms of its agricultural productivity and the ecosystem services that the private land base provides versus the value of the land if used for other purposes (e.g. residential development).’ The plan is required to address the use of the various conservation tools.

In summary, the language of these Regional Plans to date have moved from the term ‘encouraged’ to ‘expected’ to limit fragmentation and the premature conversion of agricultural lands. Although there is no requirement per se in the first two regional plans, the North Saskatchewan Regional Plan may be more directive in the conservation of agricultural lands if desired by stakeholders and municipalities. The hierarchical nature of Alberta’s system requires the regional planning directions, as they are finally adopted, to be considered in the preparation of plans by both the Edmonton Capital Region Board and Parkland County. However, timing is uncertain.

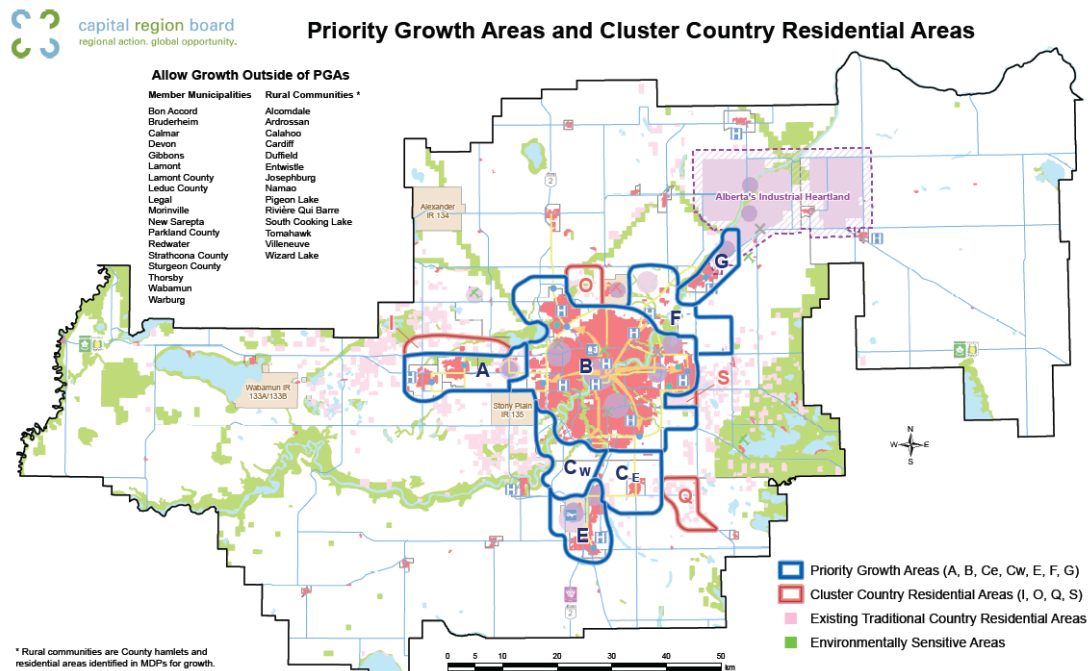
## **4.6 Capital Region Board Growth Plan**

The primary purpose of the Capital Region Land Use Plan is to manage sustainable growth in a manner that protects the region’s environment and resources, minimizes the regional development footprint, strengthens communities, increases transportation choice and supports food and agricultural sector development. The Capital Region Growth Plan: Growing Forward was approved by the Government of Alberta in 2010.

The plan defines Priority Growth Areas (PGAs) and Cluster Country Residential Areas (CCRAs). The PGAs define the areas where most of the urban development is to occur in the region. West of Edmonton, PGA A includes a general area along the Highway 16 corridor, which includes the Acheson Industrial Area as well as Stony Plain and Spruce Grove and surrounding area. CCRA I includes the area north of PGA A. The plan also acknowledges that there will also be growth outside the PGAs including other areas of Parkland County and, in particular, growth in Entwistle (a hamlet), Duffield (a hamlet), and Wabamun (a separate village).

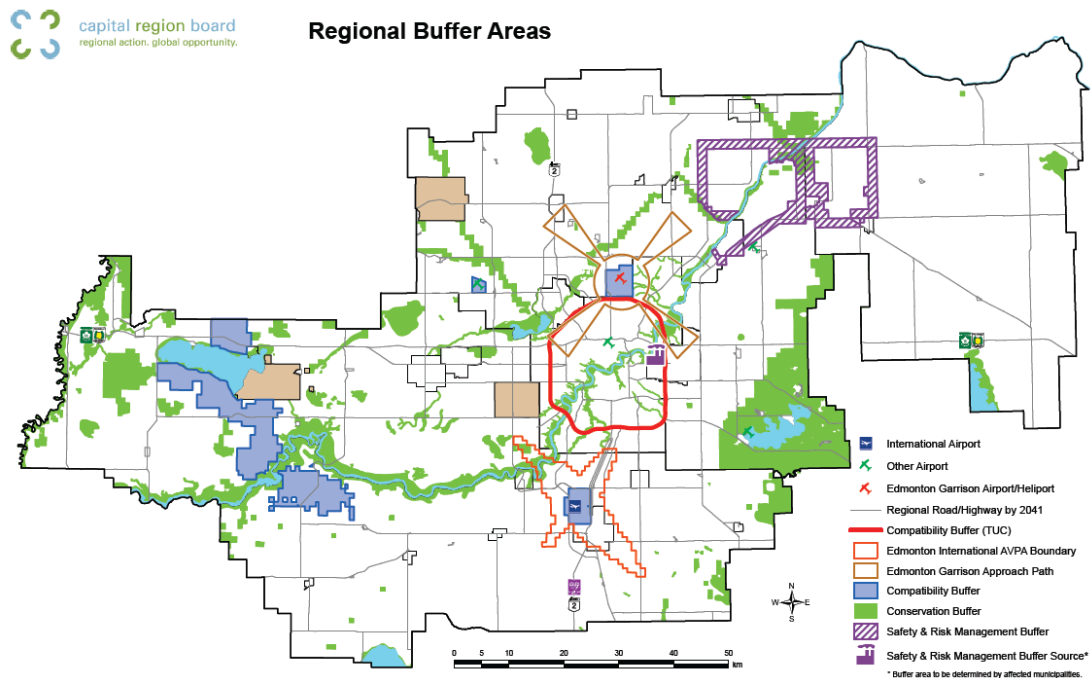


Map 4.1: CRB Priority Growth Areas



The CRB's map of Regional Buffer Areas notes the presence of numerous areas described as requiring conservation buffers: natural areas; river, stream and lake systems, and the Jack Pine Provincial Grazing Reserve. The coal mining areas north and south of Wabamun Lake are noted as having to be addressed from the perspective of compatibility buffers.

Map 4.2: CRB Regional Buffer Areas



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The plan has the following acknowledgement about agricultural land:

*Agricultural land is a limited, non-renewable resource which is competing with other forms of development. If the land is not protected in the long-term for food production, the land will be converted to another use and lost forever. Agricultural land has significant value, both at the local and regional levels, beyond its pure economic capacity, including green space, aesthetics, community character, lifestyle, air quality, wildlife habitat, as well as a risk management measure in the event of future food shortages. In order to ensure agriculture lands are complementary with policies to reduce the regional footprint, further collaboration on implementing agricultural land policies is required.*

Specific to agriculture, the CRB Plan does little else other than to identify those areas that have been designated for agricultural purposes by municipalities. This is not to say it lacked complete support for agricultural conservation as it did have policies that, to a degree, sought to direct growth to priority areas and minimize the regional development footprint. However, the Capital Region Board, as a result of the potential controversy, took the position that they would wait until the Province took further policy decisions relative to agricultural land fragmentation and preservation.

Since that time, the Alberta Government wrote the Capital Region Board in August 2014, stating that the Province ‘determined that the economic, environmental and social evidence did not currently support the need for a provincial-level policy on agricultural fragmentation and conversion, though we recognize the issue as a growing concern throughout Alberta, particularly within the Edmonton-Calgary corridor.’ Most commentators noted that this probably reflected the will of the then ruling party’s political constituency. The letter goes on to state that ‘municipalities are now expected, rather than encouraged, to follow the direction provided through the PLUP on this important issue.’

The plan is now undergoing a review and update. As a result, it is opportune for Parkland County to ensure that its agriculture directions are included in the new plan and incorporated across the Capital Region so there is ‘a level playing field.’

## 4.7 **Parkland County Strategic Plan 2014-2018**

The introduction of this document says ‘Parkland County is proud to be a forward-thinking rural community and committed to leading Alberta’s resurgence of rural living. For generations, people in our locale have invested in a legacy of agriculture and environmental stewardship.’

The Strategic Plan describes four-year commitments in pursuit of visionary goals in six areas: agriculture, community, economy, environment, governance, and infrastructure.

With respect to agriculture specifically, the Strategic Plan states:

*Parkland County is a deeply rooted agricultural community. We are connected by our land and, by acting purposefully and deliberately, will lead a resurgence of modern rural living that is supported by, and benefits, local agri-business. We will invest in education, innovation and expanded operations and encourage partnerships that connect our local producers with viable markets—from local to global.*

The four-year commitments to agriculture are to ‘assess the current state of agriculture to help identify and connect to viable and profitable markets into the future’ and ‘support initiatives that provide a local food supply to the region.’ This is working towards the 20-year goal described as ‘Parkland County stewards a progressive and viable agri-business community.’



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## 4.8 Parkland County Strategic Plan 2016-2020

Parkland County updated its Strategic Plan in 2015. The plan identifies six strategic priority areas: agriculture, economic development and tourism, enhanced connectivity, environment, healthy communities, and regional strategy.

With respect to agriculture, the plan states ‘Parkland County stewards a viable agricultural community and is supporting a progressive agri-business industry.’

There are key results, which describe the actions that will be undertaken to achieve the outcomes envisioned for the priority areas. For agriculture, they are identified as follows: increase agri-business; create and expand entrepreneurial opportunities for product sales and food innovation; maintain a viable agricultural industry; and create agri-business clusters. These are consistent with key results in other priority areas such as increase numbers and length of stay of tourists in Parkland County; create a diversified economy, establish partnerships, and establishment of best management practices. It’s interesting to note that under the regional strategy area, it states the need to ‘ensure that Parkland County is well equipped to determine best use of land, resources and amenities within Parkland County and to adjacent municipalities.’

## 4.9 Parkland County Municipal Development Plan

**The 1956 General Plan** for the MD of Stony Plain (prepared by the Edmonton District Planning Commission) presents an interesting starting point from which to consider planning in Parkland County and how agriculture has fit into the mosaic of the county. It represents a relatively consistent trend to get where we are now.

The introduction to this General Plan states ‘to date this planning board has been mainly concerned with controlling the urban invasion of its territory in an orderly manner, that is, with the location and control of commercial development along highways, and of smallholding and summer cottage settlements. Planning for agricultural land has been negative and protective. A fence has been put up, but we have not yet stepped over the fence to plan for the orderly and economic development of the land within it.’

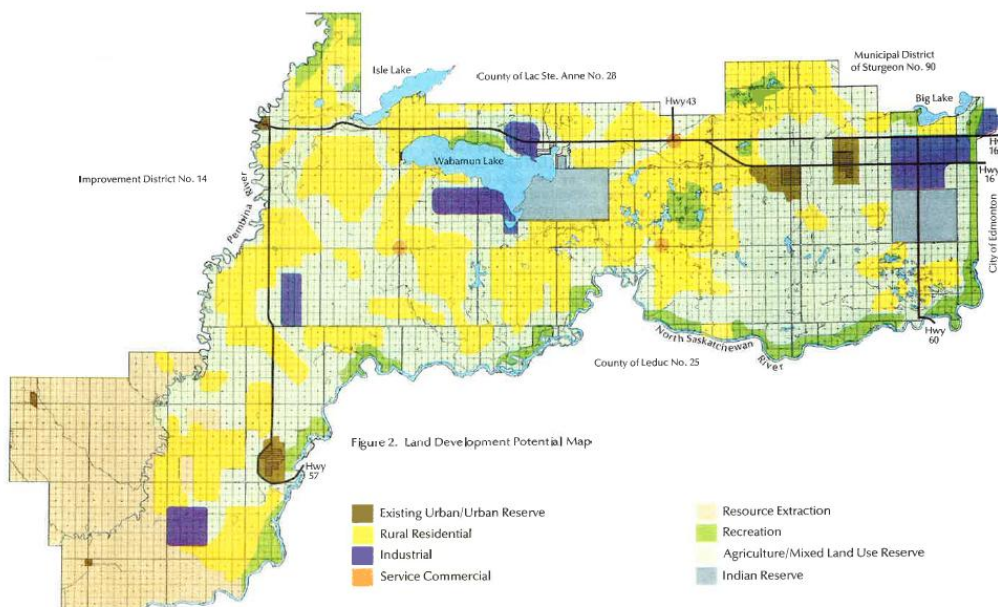
The resulting plan was based on a variety of factors, including soil type and quality, that combined with topography, greatly influenced the land use pattern and type of agriculture. The plan focused on the appropriate type of agriculture for different areas (mixed-grain, mixed-livestock, livestock-grazing, etc.). The population of the municipality was then about 8,300.

The plan acknowledged, correctly, that the metropolitan impact will create ‘an ever increasing demand for land’ for urban purposes. This included industrial development (starting in the area, such as Inland Cement and Calgary Power at Wabamun), small holdings (for small agricultural uses and country residential near Edmonton and in scenic areas), and highway commercial development. The plan includes the recommendation to ‘critically evaluate applications for non-agricultural development in the municipality—(e.g. industrial, highway commercial, institutional, etc.)—in relation to the Soil Rating map, for the purpose of discovering, before granting approval, whether the requirements of proposed developments can be met on land of lower productivity.’ The plan recommends zoning as ‘there is, in fact, no unlimited resource of productive farm land—no margin for waste.’

**The 1978 General Municipal Plan** for Parkland County states that ‘it has been the policy of the County to welcome growth of all types.’ The development strategy acknowledged that ‘the demand for industrial sites, acreages, hobby farms, building lots, weekend retreats and lakeshore lots has grown rapidly to the point where these uses are competing for land with agriculture and wildlife... therefore, all development proposals must be carefully evaluated to ensure that they are beneficial... a balanced development strategy will ensure that, where feasible, the best agricultural lands will be protected.’ *Where feasible!* ‘Development should be encouraged to

occur on lands of lower quality.’ This plan designated large areas for industrial expansion (Parkland County encourages the creation of major industrial parks) and very extensive areas designated as potential for rural residential development, with agriculture, to some degree, being the left over land. Coal mining areas are designated.

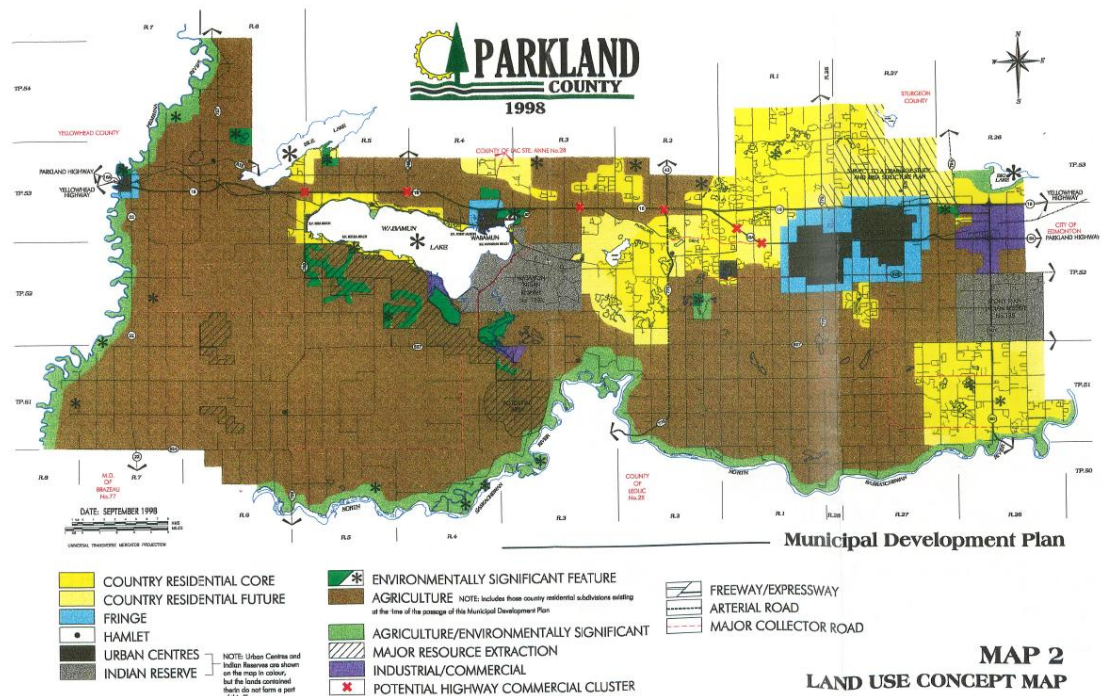
#### Map 4.3: Parkland County 1978 Plan



Agricultural policies of the 1978 plan called for the evaluation of other land uses on good agricultural land suitable for cereal or forage crops, buffers around hamlets and villages, allowing uses which support agriculture (seed sales, farm machinery repair), and limiting subdivision to one additional parcel for ‘each farming unit,’ allowing resource extraction and non-agricultural uses if no other alternative location is *practicable*. Country residential uses will be discouraged on lands that have agricultural value—should there be a question as to the value of agricultural land, the developer will be required to demonstrate that the development will not have direct or indirect impact on agricultural operations.

The **1998 General Municipal Plan** included the following strategy with respect to agriculture: ‘Parkland County desires to maintain the significance of agriculture to the economy and way of life of Parkland County, and therefore encourages the enhancement of the viability of the agricultural industry through the conservation of agricultural land, especially productive farmlands and the diversification of the agricultural industry. Minimizing rural conflicts will be important through the suitable siting of intensive agricultural activities and the allocation of non-agricultural land uses.’ However, this is to occur in a context that promotes both industrial and rural residential expansion.

Map 4.4: Parkland County 1998 Plan



The Land Use Concept provides for an agricultural area, the purpose of which is for extensive agricultural operations with minimal intrusions from non-agricultural activities while preventing the premature subdivision of agricultural lands but with a more restrictive approach to intensive livestock uses. Additional country residential subdivisions in designated agricultural areas will be permitted where an area structure plan provides for a transition of an area from agriculture to country residential. Extensive agriculture and horticultural uses are allowed in lands designated 'agriculture/environmentally significant.'

A country residential core area is designated, along with a 'country residential future' area—for development but to be staged later 'in order to delay intrusions into productive agricultural areas and the conversion of agricultural land to other uses.' The plan says these future lands may be studied to determine if some portions may revert to the agricultural designation.

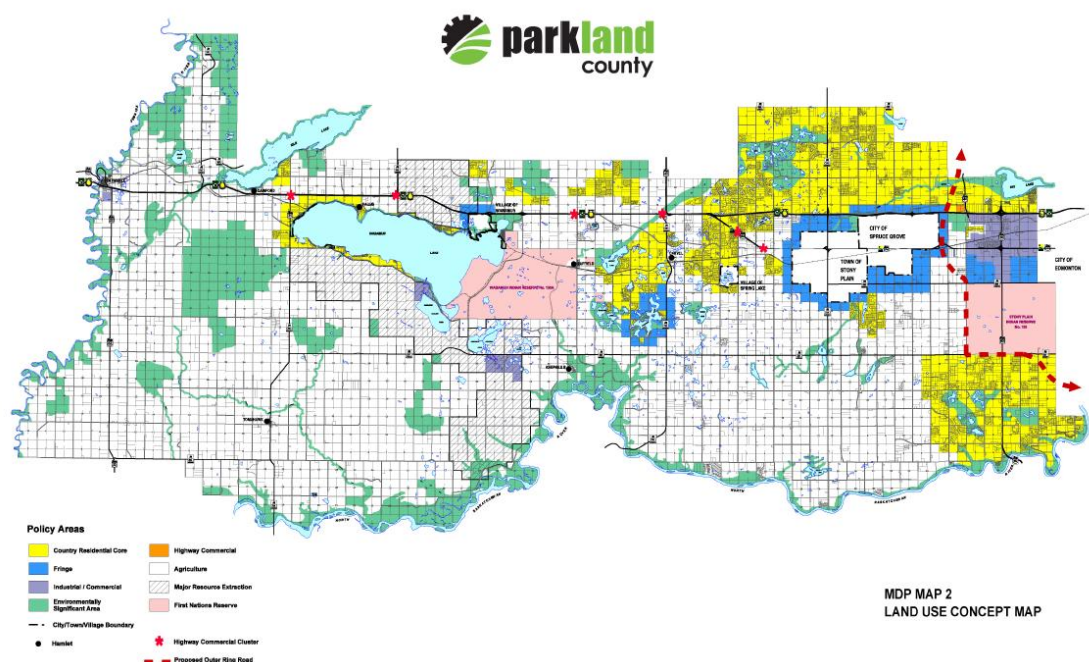
The agricultural policies of the 1998 plan are to conserve agricultural land and encourage its appropriate use, unless it is designated for another use. Parkland County is to encourage a diversity of environmentally-compatible agriculture and that the land use bylaw will provide for a range of agriculture, associated agricultural subsidiary and complementary uses. It acknowledges that agricultural uses should not be restricted if they are in accordance with generally acceptable agricultural practices. Parkland County will seek to protect the viability of agricultural areas and conserve agricultural lands 'wherever possible' by directing non-agricultural uses to other areas, restricting subdivision and development that 'prematurely' fragments or diminishes agricultural land. However, Parkland County can approve non-agricultural uses on agricultural land if the benefits to Parkland County as a whole outweigh the benefits of the agricultural use, there is not a reasonably available non-agricultural site, and that the use would not unduly impact agricultural operations in the area.

The MDP policy is to allow the subdivision of a residential parcel from a quarter-section, the subdivision of a fragmented area, and additional dwellings where they are to be occupied by someone working in an agricultural pursuit.



The **2007 Municipal Development Plan** continues with some of the previous general policy trends and land use pattern such as continued support for country residential and industrial development but, significantly, includes a strategy that ‘allows for greater flexibility for subdivision in the Agricultural District and provision for small 40 acre agricultural holding parcels. While the MDP has a policy objective to ‘conserve agricultural lands for agriculture and related uses,’ the MDP now allows for the subdivision of each quarter section into four parcels—ranging from 4 40-acre parcels, to up to three 10-acre parcels and the remnant larger parcel. In addition, further multi-parcel residential subdivisions may be considered in the agricultural area within one mile of a similar use, within one mile of a paved road, provided it has a weighted Farmland Assessment Rating of 57% or less and is not in a fringe area or close to a confined feeding operation. The plan has a robust approach to the designation of environmental and fringe areas.

#### Map 4.5: Parkland County 2007 Plan



The 2015 Community Scan and Analysis report, as background to preparing the upcoming CSDP, in its discussion of agricultural land supply, states:

*There is a limited amount of CLI Class 1 and 2 soils in Parkland County, and much of the subject lands are located primarily in the eastern portion of the County, north and south of the boundaries of Stony Plain and Spruce Grove. There are also some CLI Class 1 and 2 soils west of Wabamun Lake.*

*In the County’s current MDP, there is a misalignment between the goal and associated objectives of Section 2 (Agricultural Lands). The goal identifies opportunities for non-agricultural uses within areas designated as Agriculture on Map 2 (Land Use Concept), yet the objectives speak to the conservation of agricultural lands and expansion of value-added agricultural uses.*

*The corresponding MDP policies direct the conditions for the subdivision of agricultural land for non-agricultural residential uses. Specifically, Policy 2.7 allows for the subdivision of three*

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*separate parcels in addition to the remnant for each quarter section. This contributes to the loss in viability of the land for agricultural purposes, and the increase in value of the land due to land development speculation, resulting in the pricing out of agricultural uses from these areas. If the conservation of agricultural land is a priority for the County, revisiting this policy is necessary.*

*Policy 2.10 also encourages the consumption of lands designated as Agriculture for residential uses. It establishes that where multi-lot residential subdivisions have been approved, that these serve as a precedence when considering additional residential subdivisions. Even though the policy provides a threshold for soil quality when considering residential subdivisions, the policy does not result in the conservation of agricultural lands or support agricultural uses.*

The Community Scan and Analysis report also makes a series of recommendations about agricultural land use planning, as follows:

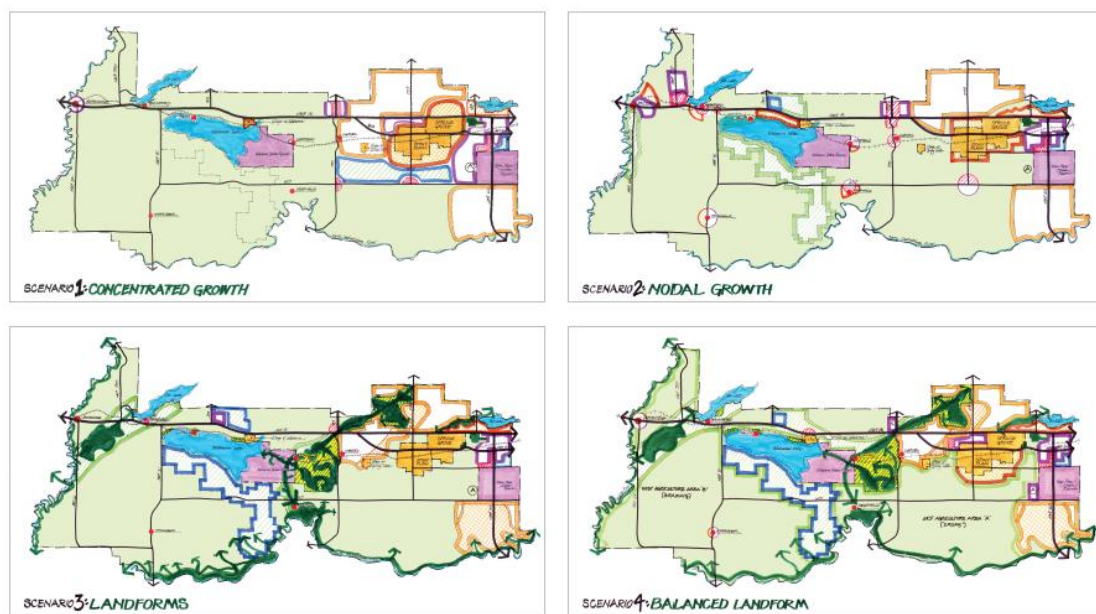
- Consider adding new classifications so that the mining activity can be determined and differentiated.
- Consider redesignating those unabsorbed country residential lands of Class 1 and 2 soils back to agriculture.
- Consider amending the protection of agriculture lands to include Class 3 soils
- Consider reducing the number of residential parcels that can be subdivided out of a quarter section
- Convert its Digital FAR (Farmland Assessment Rating) into a GIS ready format.

Parkland County is part way through the preparation of a **new Community Sustainability and Development Plan**. At this stage of the process, four scenarios have been developed for discussion and evaluation purposes. They are to be comprehensively evaluated on a variety of criteria, such as environment and climate change; agricultural lands; recreational uses and public access; retail, commercial, industrial residential; compatibility; community and quality of life; and financial. From the agricultural perspective, the criteria are to provide areas for agricultural land preservation that retains 'best classed soils (CLI classes 1-3) for agricultural related purposes, reduce potential incompatible development near best agricultural lands, and retain large, intact land parcels for grazing activities.

- **Scenario 1: Concentrated Development** - this approach concentrates growth on the east side of Parkland County and includes urban expansion for Spruce Grove and Stony Plain, significant expansion of industrial lands at Acheson and west of the Stony Plain IR, minor industrial at Highway 43, and a major potential growth area south of Stony Plain and Spruce Grove. It appears to assume the eventual redevelopment of agriculture on the coal extraction areas.
- **Scenario 2: Nodal Development** - this pattern disperses growth and focuses it on developing new lands around the existing hamlets while accommodating more limited expansion of Stony Plain and Spruce Grove (it does not have the growth area south of there that was included in Scenario 1. It also has less expansion of Acheson Industrial and the country residential area west of Spruce Grove. It shows recreation uses for the coal extraction areas.
- **Scenario 3: Landforms** - this scenario appears to provide for less development opportunities in Parkland County as well as Stony Plain and Spruce Grove, although the country residential areas west of Stony Plain have a similar expansion as Scenario 1.
- **Scenario 4: Balanced Landform** - this combines various features of the other scenarios, including various degrees of expansion of the urban centres and industrial areas. It introduces the concept of two different agricultural areas: East Agriculture Area 'A' to focus on crops and West Agriculture Area 'B' that focuses on grazing.

These scenarios, at this stage, are very broad. This 'Future of Agriculture' study is to provide input to the Community Sustainability and Development Plan and will be part of the evaluation and comprehensive shaping of the new plan into a final scenario and land use policy document that provides direction for the incorporation and enhancement of agriculture in Parkland County.

#### Map 4.6: Potential Land Use Scenarios



### 4.10 Parkland County ASPs

Over the years, Parkland County has adopted several area structure plans that are consistent with the overall MDP policy directions are reflected in its existing and proposed future land use pattern.

The area structure plans do not cover all of Parkland County, but tend to be focused on areas of non-agricultural development. This includes primarily country residential (Glory Hills, Woodbend Graminia, Big Lake, Lake Isle, and Jackfish Lake), industrial (Acheson), and urban development (Entwistle).

Work has been done to determine end use plans for the coal extraction areas (Highvale End Land Use ASP, Whitewood Future Land Use Study).

With respect to the Whitewood area, the Environmental Conservation Master Plan (Phase 1 Background Technical Report) states *The TransAlta Wabamun power plant at the Whitewood coal mine was fully retired on March 31, 2010, whereby the mine ceased coal processing... Reclamation has advanced progressively since 1962 and more than 95 per cent of the lease area has been reclaimed to a state equivalent or better than its original land use. The reclaimed land can support agriculture, woodlands, wildlife habitat and recreation but most of the land has been reclaimed for agricultural purposes or wildlife habitat.*

Highvale Mine, south of Wabamun Lake, is a TransAlta-owned surface coal mine. It is Canada's largest surface strip coal mine, covering more than 12,600 ha. TransAlta states, that since 1970, they have reclaimed 3595 ac (1,455 ha) of the 14,495 (5,865 ha) of land that have been mined at Highvale to a state that is equivalent to or better than it was before our mining activities, or restore it for other uses. When complete, the reclaimed land supports a variety of land uses such

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as agriculture, woodlands, wildlife habitat, recreation and wetlands. Pit 9, the last to be done, is not scheduled to be fully mined and reclaimed until about 2060.

With respect to the Highvale Future Land Use Study, from 1997, it states the plan goal is to manage the study area in terms of sustainable land use, re-established drainage systems, transportation linkages, recreational opportunities and subdivision of land. The plan states ‘while the overall end land use will in all probability be agriculture there are some opportunities that will allow other land uses to be established provided they meet the policies and development criteria established in this Area Structure Plan.’ Further, the study states ‘As most of the mined area will be subject to subsidence and re-contouring both as the land is reclaimed and as subsidence occurs over the next 20 to 30 years, it is proposed that reclaimed mine land be designated as an Agricultural Mixed Use District allowing a return to the agricultural activity.’ It is a policy to re-establish the original section and quarter section system of survey and subdivision within the area.

Parkland County has initiated a review and update of the Highvale End Land Use Area Structure Plan (ASP) (1997). The updated plan is intended to reflect current provincial and municipal planning policy, as well as the current and proposed operations and reclamation plans for the TransAlta Highvale Mine lands. The ASP will set policy for future land use planning and development including residential density targets, recreational opportunities, environmentally sensitive areas and transportation links. The ASP will come into effect after being approved by County Council, with the majority of implementation happening once pit operations cease and the land has been reclaimed. The Highvale Mine lands are currently subject to regulations of the Alberta Energy Regulator and Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development.

#### 4.11 Employment and Industrial Strategy

The 2014 Employment and Industrial Strategy report makes several recommendations on industrial lands that may have some bearing on agricultural lands in Parkland County. The report states that, over the forecast period to 2044,

- *Parkland County’s industrial and employment lands are expected to accommodate 83% of total forecast employment growth, or 15,475 total jobs. Based on a review of market demand, an estimated 91% of that employment is expected to be accommodated in the Acheson area, with 6% and 1% accommodated in the Fifth Meridian and Entwistle areas respectively. An estimated 3% of total forecast employment will locate on industrial lands in the rural area.*
- *Based on the existing supply of developable vacant industrial land, Parkland County, as a whole, has an insufficient supply of industrial lands to meet long-term needs to 2044. Based on the land needs analysis, a minimum of 1,089 net acres (441 net hectares), 186 net acres (75 net hectares) and 19 net acres (8 net hectares) of additional vacant industrial land is required within Acheson, Fifth Meridian, and Entwistle, respectively, to accommodate forecast employment growth to 2044.*
- *The land needs analysis also identifies that there is demand for rural industrial land within the County totaling 130 net acres (53 net hectares) over the forecast period.*
- *Considering longer term vacancy adjustments and allowances for internal infrastructure (but not necessarily environmental take-outs), the estimate of land need rises to a minimum requirement of 1,977 gross acres (800 gross hectares) in the Acheson area, 338 gross acres (137 net hectares) in the Fifth Meridian area, 34 gross acres (14 gross hectares) in the Entwistle area, and 236 gross acres (96 gross hectares) in the rural area. The majority of additional demand is expected to be accommodated in reserve lands within the Acheson area. With a gross developable area of approximately 1,997 acres (808 gross hectares), Acheson will continue to play a key role in accommodating demand over the longer term. Outside of the Acheson area, the municipality has strategic opportunities to accommodate additional employment and industrial lands in a number of other areas (e.g. Fifth Meridian, Entwistle, TransAlta lands, strategic rural*



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*transportation corridors), based on new policy or process approaches that build relationships to explore opportunities, or improve alignment of available lands with likely types of demand.*

## 4.12 Parkland County Land Use Bylaws

Up until its Land Use Bylaw in 1989, Parkland County had only interim development controls with minimal control over agricultural development. Development for agriculture, on parcels larger than 20 acres, was deemed approved unless it was within 125 feet of the centre line of a surveyed road.

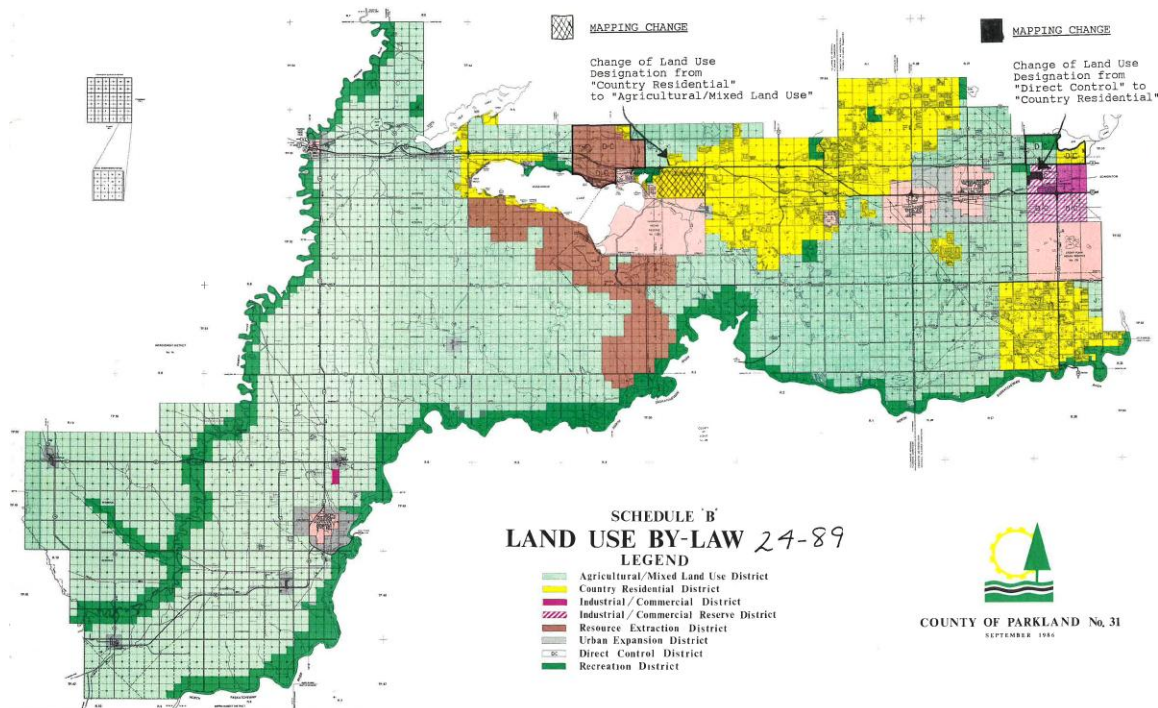
The **1989 Land Use Bylaw** didn't have a definition of 'agriculture,' but did have a definition of intensive livestock facility, which defined the minimum number of animals to be considered in either open feedlots or in confined buildings.

The Bylaw had an 'Agricultural Mixed Land Use District.' The primary purpose of it 'is to permit farming and agricultural activities associated generally with the production of crops, livestock, dairy products and pastureland.' It list permitted uses: cereal crop farming, forage crop farming, pasture and grazing, single family dwelling or mobile unit, and an apiary or intensive livestock facility where the lot is larger than 40 acres and hives are farther than 305 m from a multi-parcel subdivision. Permitted uses were classed as 'deemed approvals.' Discretionary uses included an extensive list of uses such as an abattoir, kennels, fur-bearing farm, commercial greenhouse, rabbit farm, some highway commercial uses in selected locations, golf courses, campgrounds, and mobile home parks. In addition, the Bylaw allows for a second dwelling unit on a parcel at least 32 ha provided it was to be occupied by a person occupied on the parcel full time for at least six months each year. Parcel sizes for discretionary uses were as required by the Municipal Planning Commission.

The Bylaw limited the 'subdivision of better agricultural land, as defined in a Regional Plan affecting the land, shall be the maximum permissible in the said Regional Plan subject to the applicable provisions in the Subdivision Regulation. Subdivision of lands not defined as better agricultural land shall be at the discretion of Parkland County or in accordance with any Direct Control District or other statutory plan adopted for that area.'

The Bylaw also included a 'Country Residential District.' Primarily for residential uses, it also included discretionary approval for commercial greenhouses, tree farming, and market gardens, among other uses. The Bylaw also provided an 'Urban Expansion District' that had a limited range of uses, including cereal and forage crop farming. As well, the Bylaw had a range of commercial, industrial, and resource extraction districts.

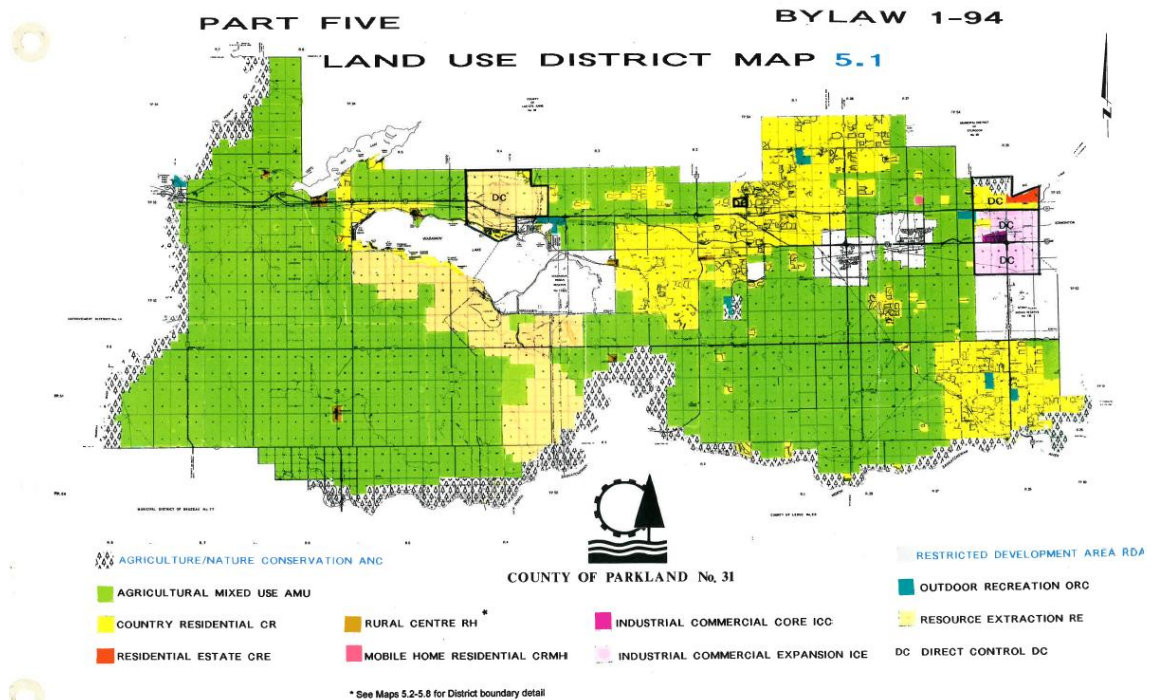
By this time, the basics of Parkland County's land use pattern was enshrined in the Land Use Bylaw—vast areas of agriculture, with specific areas for industrial at Acheson, the two major country residential areas, the environmentally sensitive areas along the rivers, and the resource extraction areas north and south of Wabamun Lake.

**Map 4.7: Parkland County's 1989 Land Use Bylaw**

The **1994 Land Use Bylaw** follows the same structure as its predecessor. It includes definitions for agricultural support services, small holdings agriculture (between 4 and 16 ha), and better agricultural land (as defined in the Regional Plans), extensive agriculture development, extensive livestock development, intensive agriculture use, intensive livestock development, etc. It also added in more regulations on animals, birds and livestock. Permitted and discretionary uses within the 'AMU-Agricultural Mixed Use District' were organized using the new definitions. A maximum of two 32 ha (80 ac) parcels may be created from a quarter section of better agricultural land and, on land not considered to be better agricultural land, four 16 ha (40 ac) parcels could be created. A maximum of one single residential parcel (between 1 ac and 3 ac) could be created from a quarter section of better agricultural land; two from a quarter of land not considered better agricultural land. The Municipal Planning Commission maintained discretion on parcel sizes for other uses. Lands districted for Country Residential retained permitted and discretionary agricultural uses. An additional country residential zone was included to allow a higher density of residential uses when it was at least partially serviced. The 'ANC-Agriculture/Nature Conservation District' was introduced to all compatible extensive agriculture and recreation uses while still protecting unique and sensitive environments—essentially the lands along the rivers.

The overall zoning pattern remained basically the same as the previous Bylaw:

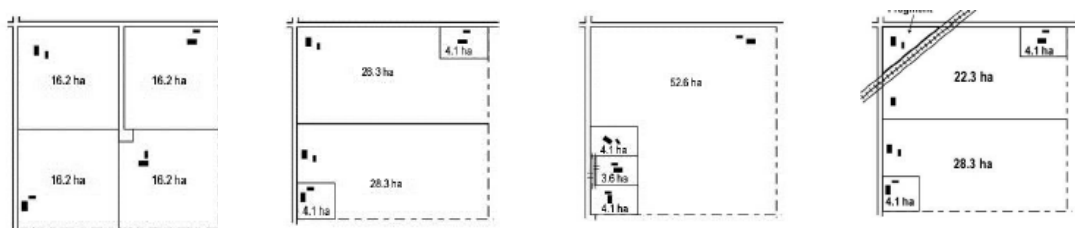
Map 4.8: Parkland County's 1994 Land Use Bylaw



The **2000 Land Use Bylaw** made changes such as the introduction of the 'AGR-Agriculture Restricted District' which has only relatively minor differences from the 'AGG-Agricultural General District.' Parkland County continues its policy of allowing some discretionary uses to specific land parcels only within the overall district.

The **2009 Land Use Bylaw** does not introduce much significant change except for implementing the MDP policy to increase the number of lots that can be created in the AGG district. Essentially, this doubles the amount of subdivision that can occur in the agricultural areas of Parkland County. This allows twice the number of lots than could be created in agricultural areas, for example, as is the case in Strathcona County.

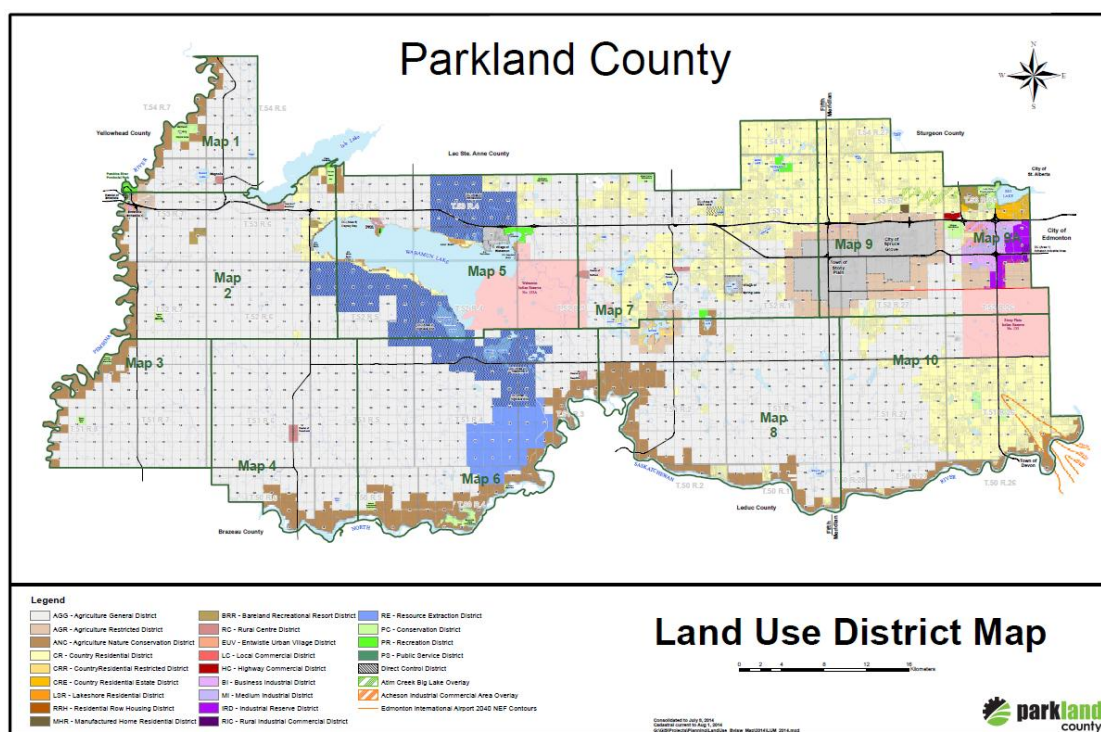
There can now be a maximum of three new subdivided parcels created, in addition to the remnant parcel (for a total of 4 titled areas), in a variety of formats: 4 40-acre parcels for extensive agriculture and extensive livestock; two residential parcels, with each being created out of an 80 acre parcel; or three new residential parcels of between 2.0 ac and 10 ac where at least two share a common approach unto a municipal road; as well as a parcel fragmented from the parent parcel by a creek or highway, etc. These subdivision patterns are illustrated in the following sketches from the Land Use Bylaw.





It should be noted that this level of subdivision is not provided for in the ANC (primarily adjacent to the rivers) and AGR (primarily around the urban communities and Acheson) districts that allow only one additional residential parcel per quarter section, otherwise to be retained in quarter sections.

### Map 5.9: Parkland County's Current Land Use Bylaw



According to the 2015 Community Scan and Analysis Report, 62.1% of Parkland County is zoned Agriculture General, 3.1% is Agriculture Restricted, and 6.9% is Agriculture/Nature Conservation. Of the lands zoned for country residential, there are significant undeveloped lands that create a long term inventory for this type of use.

Parkland County Council passed a moratorium on redistricting lands from AGG (Agricultural General Lands) to CR (Country Residential). This will be reconsidered in conjunction with preparation of the new CSDP.

## 4.13 Land Use Conversion and Subdivision

The Community Scan and Analysis Report stated, 'To date, only 4% of the County's Suitable Agricultural Land has been consumed by non-agricultural development.' Of the 4% consumed, 3.3% was for residential. However, it is important to note that the Community Scan and Analysis Report only included Classes 1 and 2, but **not** Class 3, as lands being Suitable Agricultural Land. The rationale put forward is that 'Parkland County's current MDP has an agricultural policy that states multi-lot country residential subdivisions may occur on lands with a FAR (Farmland Assessment Rating) of 57% or less. This rating translates to Class 1 and Class 2 within the CLI agricultural soil suitability classification system.'

Further, it says 'An additional 7.3% of the County's Suitable Agricultural Land is threatened for conversion to non-agricultural development as a result of past planning decisions that gave these land owners development rights for uses other than agricultural activities.' Of the lands

designated for non-residential which are not developed, its 7.2%. In other words, the threat for agriculture is almost 100% from country residential, with just 0.1% designated for industrial.

Table 19A (in Appendix A) of the Community Scan and Analysis Report documents the creation of new parcels by year by subdivision, their total area by year, and the average parcel size per year. This table is below.

Table 19A: Land Absorption through Plan Registration by Year (with numbers of subdivision column added)

Year of Plan Registration	Subdivisions	Total Parcels	Total Area (ha)	Average Area (ha)
pre-1975		4,066	8,346.1	2.1
1975		444	1,164.4	2.6
1976		939	1,491.3	1.6
1977		765	1,629.8	2.1
1978		1,153	2,823.0	2.4
1979		670	1,060.2	1.6
1980		996	1,563.5	1.6
1981		571	749.0	1.3
1982		275	527.8	1.9
1983		121	296.1	2.4
1984		24	127.7	5.3
1985		18	141.3	7.9
1986		25	76.9	3.1
1987		16	124.6	7.8
1988		28	121.9	4.4
1989		39	250.3	6.4
1990		70	319.6	4.6
1991		63	446.5	7.1
1992		98	365.7	3.7
1993		62	513.6	8.3
1994		63	349.8	5.6
1995		183	945.3	5.2
1996		74	486.4	6.6
1997		116	307.0	2.6
1998		190	696.9	3.7
1999		157	451.9	2.9
2000	60	115	471.2	4.1
2001	69	212	691.1	3.3
2002	74	150	493.6	3.3
2003	86	342	520.0	1.5
2004	69	259	363.2	1.4
2005	78	171	471.2	2.8

Year of Plan Registration	Subdivisions	Total Parcels	Total Area (ha)	Average Area (ha)
2006	115	310	715.0	2.3
2007	125	218	623.2	2.9
2008	125	199	816.6	4.1
2009	73	300	1,220.7	4.1
2010	75	211	735.6	3.5
2011	56	393	1,054.3	2.7
2012	61	176	1,056.2	6.0
<b>Total 1975 to 2012</b>		<b>10,216</b>	<b>26,262.4</b>	<b>2.6</b>
<b>Annual Average</b>		<b>269</b>	<b>691.1</b>	<b>2.6</b>
2013		89	480.4	5.4

Before 2007, an owner could only take one parcel out of a quarter-section. After 2007, this was increased to three parcels (in addition to the remnant, so a total of four parcels per quarter section). It has been estimated by Parkland County that around 75% of the subdivisions in a year are AG zoned (with a combination of one parcel out, two-three parcels out, 80 splits or any combination).

#### 4.14 Parkland County Agricultural Governance

Parkland County is empowered by Alberta legislation to exercise the typical powers of municipalities such as preparing and adopting statutory plans and bylaws. With respect to its plans, Parkland County's plans must be consistent with the Capital Region Board's land use plan.

Under the provision of the Agricultural Service Board Act, Section 8(1), Parkland County Council has appointed an advisory committee with respect to any matter related to agriculture. The Agricultural and Rural Life Advisory Committee appointed under this section shall act in an advisory capacity to Parkland County's Agricultural Service Board. The Committee shall consist of one resident from each of the electoral divisions as well as up to two public members-at-large that may include youth members who shall be appointed by resolution of Council, along with the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Agricultural Service Board or his/her designate.

The Committee is to provide advice on issues and concerns arising from existing or proposed County agricultural and rural programs and policies; rural and agricultural development; implementation of Provincial and Federal legislation, policies, and guidelines related to the agricultural industry; mediate complaints related to agricultural practices.

Council acts as the Agricultural Services Board.

The Alternative Land Use Services Partnership Advisory Committee is an advisory committee to the Mayor and Council. It is to provide advice and community input into the decision-making process that shapes how alternative land use services are delivered in Parkland County. The ALUS program is an incentive based program aimed at helping to assist farmers and landowners protect environmentally sensitive land to allow the benefits of ecological services to be realized. It is aimed at programs like riparian enhancements, wetland restoration/ wildlife friendly fences, etc.

Parkland County has a Municipal Planning Commission that is to advise and assist the Council with regards to planning and development matters within Parkland County, act as the Development Authority pursuant to some provisions of the Land Use Bylaw, and act as the Subdivision Authority pursuant to the provisions of the Land Use Bylaw.

## 4.15 Land Ownership

Outside of the Indian Reserves (IRs), Acheson, and the country residential areas, most land remains in a quarter section format, with a moderate amount of land consolidation. There are some large agriculture operations, such as the Tomahawk Cattle Ranch Ltd. The Province is a major landowner, particularly the large Jack Pine Provincial Grazing Reserve, and various parks, natural areas, and reserves. TransAlta has very extensive holdings north and south of Lake Wabamun related to its power plants and the former and current coal extraction areas. Parkland County also owns land in various locations, often as wildlife habitat.

## 4.16 Land Use Structure

The land use structure of municipalities reflect a variety of influences from topography and soil types to planning policies, transportation and servicing systems, ownership and jurisdictional influences. Parkland County's pattern, both proposed and existing, while relatively complex, can be summarized into the following key components:

1. It is primarily agriculture, except for areas developed or proposed for other uses.
2. There are environmentally sensitive areas along the Pembina and North Saskatchewan Rivers and scattered throughout Parkland County based on localized physical features.
3. There are two Indian Reserves—Stony Plain IR in the east and Wabamun IR at the east end of Wabamun Lake.
4. There are four separate urban municipalities within the perimeter of Parkland County: the City of Spruce Grove, the Town of Stony Plain, the Village of Wabamun, and the Village of Spring Lake. There are also some smaller communities (hamlets): Entwistle, Tomahawk, Keephills, Fallis, Gainford, and Duffield. There are five summer villages at Lake Wabamun: Point Alison, Lakeview, Kapasiwin Beach, Seba Beach, and Betula Beach.
5. There are two major areas of country residential development—the area south of the Stony Plain Indian Reserve and the area north of Highway 16 and west of the Town of Stony Plain.
6. Industrial development is primarily in Acheson, adjacent to the City of Edmonton between the Stony Plain Indian Reserve and Highway 16.
7. There has been, and will be more, resource extraction around Wabamun Lake.

## 4.17 Development Pressures

The Environmental Conservation Master Plan (Phase 1 Background Technical Report) has a succinct description of development pressures facing Parkland County. It states:

*There are a variety of existing and future development pressures facing Parkland County. Population within the County proper is approximately 30,600 people, and has been growing steadily, with a 4.6% growth rate observed between 2006 and 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2011). According to recent population numbers approved by the Capital Region Board (2013), the County is projected to grow to 42,700 residents (low case scenario) to upwards of 50,000 (high case scenario) by 2044 (Capital Region Board, 2013).*

*In addition, urban municipalities embedded within Parkland County are experiencing extremely high growth rates, with population increases of 22% in the Town of Stony Plain and 34% in the City of Spruce Grove over 2006- 2011. Population growth drives development pressures tied to the balance of land uses within the County. Map 4: Development Pressures highlights specific areas of the County targeted for certain key development pressures. The key development pressures identified within Parkland County include:*

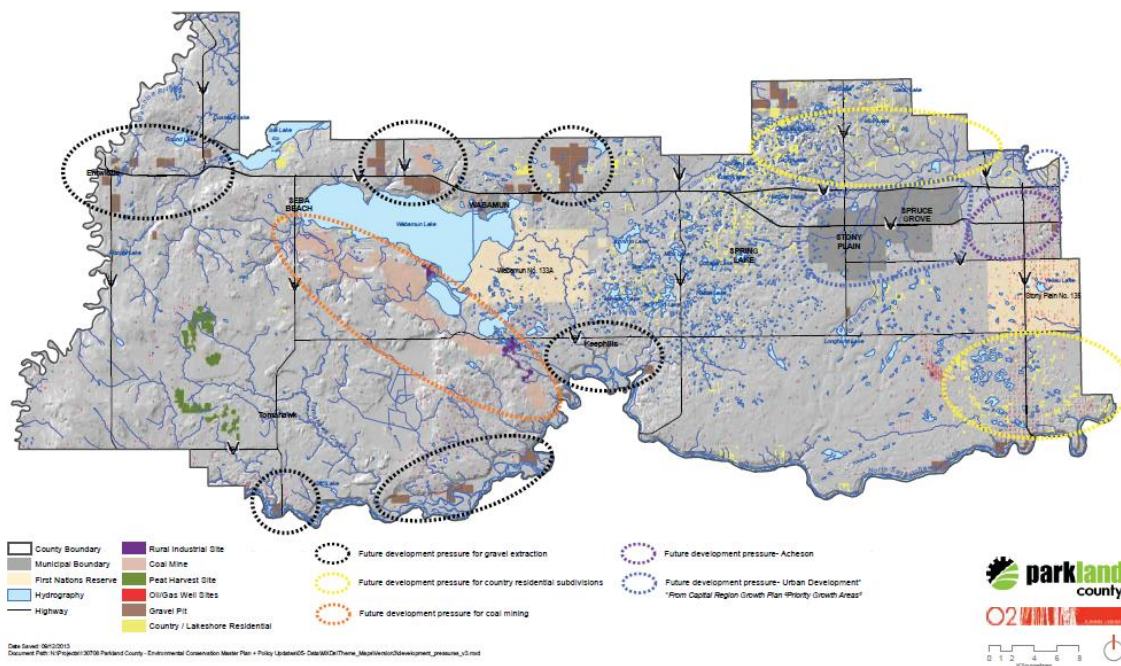
- The Acheson Industrial Area
- Country residential and lakeshore developments
- Sand and Gravel extraction
- Peat harvesting



- Coal mines and power plants (outside the jurisdiction of Parkland County)
- Oil and gas developments
- Large livestock operations

These pressures are summarized on the following diagram from the Environmental Conservation Master Plan (Phase 1 Background Technical Report).

#### Map 4.11 Development Pressures in Parkland County



While this list above was identified from the perspective of pressure on the natural environment, they too have impacts on agriculture. The overall level of development from continuing country residential development (including the four parcels out policy and potential redistricting of lands with FAR greater than 57% as per policy 2.10 of the MDP) creates more difficulty for agriculture. This concern is across Parkland County, although more intense in the eastern part of Parkland County closer to Edmonton/Spruce Grove/Stony Plain. Although several farms continue to operate in and around this area, the large areas of country residential in the eastern part of Parkland County, for all intents and purpose, spell the end of commercial farming there. The general message from farmers in the early stages of the consultation process is ‘farming has a limited future.’ Farmers are of two minds – they like the option as a means to generate dollars, but hate the increasing conflict with non-ag neighbours, traffic, vandalism etc.

There are significant conflicts between farmers and the urban industrial areas: Acheson in the east; in the areas of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain. The biggest issue is moving equipment. As farms grow in size, so does the need to move large equipment. This is becoming increasingly hazardous in these areas (people have no patience!!!). The consultation process revealed that farmers on or near a major highway are having more and more difficulty moving equipment.

There are many questions about the future of the mined/Transalta lands—large areas that are slow to be reclaimed, and some not to be reclaimed until 2060. Currently, there are complaints that they are large scale weed generators. And, there is the longer term question of eventual land use and how agriculture will be accommodated on these lands.

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## 5.0 Implications for Parkland County

### 5.1 Understanding the Current State

We present the following conclusions and implications based on our review of the trends, statistics, the consultation input and the planning environment.

1. The global demand for agriculture and food products appears strong due to two central drivers: (a) a growing population projected to grow 30% over the next 35 years; and (b) a growing middle class particularly in China and India demanding protein rich higher quality foods. Furthermore, within the next 10 to 15 years, Canada is forecasted to be only one of six countries in the world that will be in a net export position specific to food and agricultural products. At the same time, there is a very strong interest on the part of consumers as well as major retailers and food service companies for local food supplies.

By implication, the demand for food and agricultural products for the next 20 to 50 years will be strong while the agricultural (land) base diminishes in size. Thus, Parkland County should have little or no concern that the products it is able to produce will find a market.

2. Agriculture within Parkland County is undergoing rapid change. The most significant changes pertain to the structure of the farm sector itself—namely the overriding emergence of fewer but larger farms. This is particularly the case within the crop sector as farmers adopt larger equipment, automation as well as scalable management and marketing systems. A relatively few number of highly-focused business minded farmers have emerged and will soon be able to cultivate the majority of the crop acreage located within Parkland County.

While the interest in local food supplies is evident and several smaller vegetable and fruit (berry) are located in Parkland County, it is not yet clear how significant or substantive this local food sector will develop. It is generally agreed that competition from large scale speciality operations located elsewhere in North America, combined with the lack of available labour at the local level are limiting factors. Thus, the local food sector will require both operational and marketing support if it is to thrive.

3. Several opportunity areas are identified as well suited to Parkland County:
  - Large scale field crop agriculture—namely the production of canola, wheat, barley, alfalfa as well as other crops such as peas, lentils and the recent emergence of corn. Note: we also include dairy production which still has a significant presence in the eastern part of Parkland County.
  - Grazing, hay and accordingly the beef cow-calf sector.
  - Specialty crops including potatoes, vegetables and fruits combined with a growing interest in local foods.
  - Agri-tourism including destinations and events including the equine sector.
  - Other enterprises included value added agriculture such as food and agricultural processing.
4. Agriculture has not been considered or seen to be a priority within Parkland County. Many of the interviewees felt strongly that Parkland County's focus has been on attracting industry and expanding the residential base in order to expand the tax base. However, several interviewees also indicated that the current Council appears much more amenable to agriculture and is looking for ways to support it commenting that this study is a testament to that interest and commitment.

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5. Most groups and stakeholders value and support the continued presence of agriculture, within Parkland County and speak of the great soils, climate, location and opportunities to respond to the growing interest in local food. However, many full time commercial farmers are resigned to the position that large scale agriculture in its present form has a limited future in the County. In response, some of these farmers, particularly those in the eastern part of Parkland County, have already begun transitioning their operations and land base beyond Parkland County's borders.

Farmers in the western part of Parkland County, while experiencing less development pressure, also question the future. We heard for example, that there are relatively few full time farmers remaining. Many farmers have supplemented their incomes with off farm employment – the result of low beef prices and perhaps the ready opportunity to find opportunities in the energy sector (which has now entered a period of uncertainty).

6. The subdivision policy and its impacts are the foremost issues raised in the consultation and input process. The impacts are identified as follows:
  - Increased non-farm residents in the countryside leading to increased traffic and conflicts between farmers and non-farm neighbours.
  - Increasing land prices.
  - Increased land fragmentation and accordingly smaller fields which stands in contrast to the drive for larger more efficient farms.

Most significantly, the policy sends a signal that agriculture is a secondary consideration and may have a limited future in Parkland County.

7. Parkland County has been losing farmland at a relatively rapid rate - almost 75,000 acres between 2001 and 2011 according to the Canada Census of Agriculture. For the same period, this 16% decrease is slightly larger than that of Strathcona at a 14% loss or Sturgeon at a 4% loss. This is contrasted with an increase in Lamont of 14%. Parkland County has been losing land faster than the other rural counties in the Capital Region—from a variety of factors, such as subdivision for commercial, industrial, and country residential as well as lands expropriated for coal extraction. Existing policy will lead to continued loss of agricultural land, primarily to future country residential development.
8. The major issue impacting the future of agriculture which Parkland County can control is land use policy. Specific to agriculture, the current policy (which allows each quarter to be subdivided into four parcels) has an inherently conflictive set of impacts:
  - On one hand, it provides the opportunity for many farmers to capitalize on the value of a portion of their land—an opportunity that is strongly supported by those farmers who are considering or approaching retirement.
  - On the other hand, it creates a situation whereby agriculture is seen as secondary in importance to development interests making it more difficult for those wishing to farm and expand their farming operations. In effect, the policy creates for smaller agricultural parcels, higher land costs, increased traffic and difficulties moving equipment, more nuisance complaints—all factors that are seen as limiting to commercial farmers.

Nevertheless, changes to the current land use policy, whether it is to the numbers of subdivisions allowed on agricultural land or a change to the areas that are allowed to convert especially to country residential, will be controversial and difficult since the majority of agricultural landowners have now built in a set of price expectations that includes development potential. Thus, any change in policy that impacts this negatively, will not be well received and is likely to have significant opposition.

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9. Another major factor impacting the future of agriculture in Parkland County in the minds of many farmers is the future of the lands that have been mined and are yet to be reclaimed. To be sure, the impact of the mining/power sector on the agricultural sector has already been profound—large areas of land have been lost; many farmers have been displaced; and to quote one interviewee: ‘communities have been killed.’ The recent announcement to close the Keepphills School is the latest reverberation of this negative dynamic.

Many interviewees expressed strong views about the potential for this area in terms of grazing lands, recreational areas with extensive trails for horses, or even a site for a large scale greenhouse enterprise. At the same time, they vented frustrations with the power companies specific to how available farm lands under their control are being managed and the speed at which mined lands are being reclaimed.

10. While non-traditional agricultural enterprises such as equine operations, market gardens, horticultural, specialty crops or agri-tourism offer potential in view of Parkland County’s location within the Capital Region, considerable economic and market development (both public and private) will be required before sustainable business models emerge and are assured.
11. Parkland County’s *Community Scan and Analysis Report* states, ‘To date, only 4% of the County’s Suitable Agricultural Land has been consumed by non-agricultural development.’ Of the 4% consumed, 3.3% was for residential. However, it is important to note that the Community Scan and Analysis Report only included Classes 1 and 2, but not Class 3, as lands being Suitable Agricultural Land. The rationale put forwards is that ‘Parkland County’s current MDP has an agricultural policy that states multi-lot country residential subdivisions may occur on lands with a FAR (Farmland Assessment Rating) of 57% or less. This rating translates to Class 1 and Class 2 within the CLI agricultural soil suitability classification system.’ The definition of better agricultural land needs to be clarified.
12. In August 2014, the Alberta Government wrote a letter to the Capital Region Board, stating the Province’s position that ‘municipalities are now expected, rather than encouraged, to follow the direction provided through the PLUP on this important issue. The plan is now undergoing a review and needs to address issues like agricultural land fragmentation and conservation. In addition, Parkland County has started a process to prepare a new Community Sustainability and Development Plan. As a result, it is opportune for Parkland County to ensure that any new agriculture directions are included in its own upcoming CSDP. It is also a good time for Parkland County to attempt to have its agricultural policies addressed at the CRB and incorporated across the Capital Region so there is a comprehensive policy that addresses agriculture in the context of metropolitan growth and considers the creation of ‘a level playing field’ across the region.
13. It’s generally been accepted, for decades, in the context of the Edmonton region that better agricultural land is generally (a) land that has been that designated by the Canada Land Inventory as Classes 1, 2, and 3 and (b) land with potential of producing specialty or other crops, or of supporting land-intensive agricultural operations, none of which are considered in the CLI agricultural capability classification scheme. Preliminary work on concepts for Parkland County’s new Community Sustainability and Development Plan speaks to the criteria to provide areas for agricultural land preservation by referring to the best classed soils (CLI classes 1-3) for agricultural related purposes. Ultimately however, agricultural land will only be preserved if there is a strong political will supported by clear land use policies.
14. Parkland County’s Strategic Plan 2014-2018 stated that “Parkland County is a deeply rooted agricultural community... proud to be a forward-thinking rural community and committed to leading Alberta’s resurgence of rural living.” The updated Strategic Plan 2016-2020 states

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with respect to agriculture, ‘Parkland County stewards a viable agricultural community and is supporting a progressive agri-business industry.’ There are key results, which describe the actions that will be undertaken to achieve the outcomes envisioned for the priority areas. For agriculture, they are identified as follows: increase agri-business; create and expand entrepreneurial opportunities for product sales and food innovation; maintain a viable agricultural industry; and create agri-business clusters. In addition, the future development of scenarios for agriculture in Parkland County will need to be carefully reviewed and vetted against the four growth scenarios that have been developed as a part of Community Sustainability and Development Plan. This report should play a key role in shaping a final recommended scenario.

## 5.2 Opportunity Areas (A Preliminary Discussion)

Our analysis and the input we received would suggest that the following areas of agriculture are the best fit for Parkland County:

1. **Large field scale agriculture:** large scale cropping operations growing canola, wheat, barley, oats are already the predominant form of agriculture in eastern areas of Parkland County.
2. **Grazing/beef cow-calf operations:** well suited for the western part of Parkland County with the location of grey wooded soils.
3. **Specialty crops and operations:** the basis for a variety of specialty production operations including potatoes, seed potatoes, vegetables, fruits, greenhouses, bedding plants, horticulture as well as small livestock enterprises (sheep, goats, poultry, bees etc.).
4. **Agri-tourism featuring destinations and events including the equine sector:** Parkland County’s proximity to a large urban area, large horse population combined with a growing demand for ‘experience’ presents an opportunity.
5. **Other Enterprises:** includes value added agriculture including food, beverage and agricultural processing. Parkland County is well situated to large population base and has access to excellent transportation services.

These are discussed further in the following sub-sections.

### 5.2.1 Large Scale Field Agriculture

**Premise:** There are approximately 180,000 acres suitable for cropping. As well, large contiguous cropping areas are located in Parkland County. Thus large scale crop agriculture can continue for the foreseeable future particularly in those areas that are not under immediate development pressure.

**Requires:** Long term (stable) agricultural land use policy. This is critical not only to minimize speculative land holdings but also to provide the necessary conditions for farmers themselves to invest in their farm businesses including the long term care of land.

New tools - transfer of development credits including the designation of defined sending and receiving areas wherein development is concentrated. This mechanism would reduce development pressure on agricultural lands and mitigate the loss of ‘opportunity’ to current agricultural land owners and maintain contiguous areas of cropland.

Attention to roads (width and height) - consideration to designating specific rural roads to accommodate large scale slow moving farm equipment. The decision ‘not to pave’ selected rural roads is also important. Safety is a primary concern both to farmers and users.



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Ensure field access; minimum nuisance measures (buffers and right to farm) - farmers need to be assured that they can easily enter fields that they own or rent with large equipment as well as perform necessary operations (cultivation, seeding, herbicide applications and harvesting) without fear of nuisance complaints from nearby residents.

## 5.2.2 Grazing/Beef Cow-Calf Operations

**Premise:** Parkland County has traditionally been a major cattle producing region. The western part of Parkland County with the location of grey wooded soils is particularly well suited.

**Requires:** Large areas suitable for grazing cattle. These areas need to be fenced and have good sources of water as well as shelterbelts to provide protection from severe weather (wind, cold).

Support of all efforts focused on improving and/or increasing the grazing practices and overall capacity.

Requires land for the production of forages (hay and/or silage) for winter feeding.

Positive long term outlook for cattle – this is perhaps the most critical factor. Note: this has not been the case for the 2003 to 2013 period. However, the convergence of several factors such as drought in the western USA, the growth in demand for beef in the Pacific Rim, the overall reduced beef cows numbers both in Canada and the USA, has created a very robust market. Prices are at historical highs and are forecasted to be strong for the next 10 years.

## 5.2.3 Speciality Operations

**Premise:** Early stage but represents an opportunity. There is considerable interest in local food, food related businesses and food experiences. Parkland County is well positioned to explore and facilitate opportunities within this sector as market signals strengthen and successful business models emerge.

**Requires:** Emphasis by Parkland County as a priority area. Parkland County would need to take a leadership role in local food initiatives within Capital Region. This emerging sector will require economic and market development support. Advocacy and expertise within administration to work with interested parties and proponents to facilitate opportunities and overcome perceived barriers such as regulatory requirements. Continual, ongoing substantive promotions and communications as well as education to create local awareness and demand.

## 5.2.4 Agri-tourism including the Equine Sector

**Premise:** Represents an opportunity in view of several already established destinations, proximity to a large urban market as well as a large equine sector. The market for 'experience' is growing. Parkland County lies within 30 minutes of 1 million people.

Parkland County has the opportunity to work with other partners (specialty operations within Parkland County, Spruce Grove, Stony Plain, University of Alberta –the Devonian Garden, and the Province of Alberta (Ministries of Agriculture and Forestry as well as Alberta Tourism and Community

Development) to develop tour packages and events. Particular attention could be directed toward families and targeted cultural groups within the Capital Region who are seeking opportunities to experience the ‘country.’ Parkland County has a significant horse population and is home to several horse organizations and associations. It is noted that many current horse owners are currently attending events in other areas of the province.

**Requires:** Commitment to develop Parkland County as an agri-tourism destination with an array of offerings and dedicated to developing opportunities within the equine sector. Would require a public facility to produce and/or host a wide range of equine centered events to serve as a ‘centre’ or stage for the Parkland County equine community. Or a trail system that could attract multi-day rides, outdoor events and camping could be a consideration.

### 5.2.5 Other Enterprise including Value Added Agriculture

**Premise:** Parkland County is well located to attract and support new business growth. Further they may be opportunities to attract and/or develop new businesses targeted to supply interest in local food as well as align with the Province of Alberta’s goal to grow the food processing sector.

**Requires:** Emphasis by Parkland County as a priority area.

This emerging sector will require economic and market development support as well as the development of business attraction strategy.

Alignment with several key institutions and development agencies such as Alberta Agriculture and Forestry the Faculty of Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences (University of Alberta) the Food Product Development Centre located in Leduc, the Alberta Food Processors Association and TEC Edmonton should be a consideration for the strategy.

## 5.3 Implementation Issues

The identified areas of opportunity (best fit) will require clear direction from Council to actualize and implement subject to the approval of the **Future of Agriculture Plan**. Currently, there is a perception that agriculture has been a low priority for Parkland County.

To offset these perceptions, Parkland County will need to strongly assert its commitment to agriculture and that agriculture will continue to be an integral part of Parkland County—both economically as well as the major land user. This will require a clear political strategy supported with a strong business development, communications and land use plan.

A key challenge facing any plan for agriculture will be the need to deal with owners of agricultural land who are expecting these lands to be used for non-agricultural purposes at some time in the future. Accordingly their expectations with respect to the value of these lands vastly exceed their agricultural value.

Specific to this issue of value (or lost opportunity), a key tool that could be considered is the Transfer of Development Credits. This requires the clear designation of the ‘Sending Area (land to be protected) and a Receiving Area (land to be developed). Such a program would require that development credits be purchased and transferred from the sending area to the receiving area. In effect, an owner of agricultural land would be able to sell their development rights as defined by the number credits allocated to the property. In turn, a developer who has purchased land for development but without the required zoning would be required to purchase the zoning rights in the form of development credits. This tool has been enabled by the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act*. We will examine this in more detail in Phase 2 of this project.



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Another key area revolves around the interest in local food and the nurturing of local food businesses and related services. Currently there is no clear blue print for success in this emerging sector. Nevertheless, Parkland County is well positioned, particularly in view of its proximity to a large population, to develop this opportunity.

Finally, agriculture continues to be the major user of land within Parkland County. While the nature of agriculture is changing nevertheless it continues to create jobs and economic wealth; it may offer local food security; it provides an alternative lifestyle; it helps establish community character; and it contributes a set of environmental goods and services.

However, it is important to understand that ‘agriculture’ is more than just land and the subject of agricultural land conservation—it must include a broader range of strategies and policies for agriculture to flourish. Communities need to assert their commitment to agriculture with a clear political strategy supported by viable governance structures, strong economic development, communications, land use plans, and infrastructure policies.

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## 6.0 Next Steps

We are in the process of completing Phase 1, further to input and direction from the Steering Committee.

Phase 2 will begin in early September with the following steps as outlined in our proposal:

1. **Analysis, Options and Interactive Session with County Council:** Further to the review of the Situation Report with the Steering Committee, we will develop a working draft vision for agriculture that reflects the opportunities, conditions, realities and desires of Parkland County. We will then meet with County Council with a threefold purpose:
  1. Develop a vision for agriculture including the ‘what’ – namely the outcomes or ‘picture of the future’ that Council wants to accomplish specific to the presence and role of agriculture in Parkland County;
  2. Agree to a set of principles that will guide the planning process; and
  3. Identify a set of potential scenarios and options that potentially fit this vision and are opportunistic and realistic for Parkland County.

This meeting is scheduled for September 15<sup>th</sup> 2015.

2. **Finalize the Vision and the Principles:** The input and interaction with Council in the previous step will form the basis for the final draft vision and principles. This will be critical to the directions, recommendations and scenarios that will be explored in more detail.
3. **Develop Recommendations and Scenarios:** The trends, analysis, vision and principles will provide direction regarding ‘what fits’ in Parkland County. Several scenarios will be identified and analyzed further with a view to assess which are most opportunistic, realistic and sustainable over the long term. Each scenario will be examined in the light of two additional frameworks, namely:
  1. **Alternative Policy Approaches:** We will identify and describe the alternative policy directions that can be used to achieve the desired outcomes for each scenario. As part of this task, we will describe how best to develop a strategy for implementing policy and how it is incorporated in Parkland County, from inclusion in the MDP to area structure plans, zoning, and other policy documents. There may also be administrative, program development, governance, regulatory, or servicing directions. This is a stepping stone from the vision and principles to developing the tools for implementation.
  2. **Alternative Implementation Approaches:** For each scenario, we will identify and describe the alternative implementation strategies that are best suited to implement and achieve Parkland County’s draft vision. Implementation considerations will range from policies that will encourage investment, promote appropriate land use interfaces, changing land use and subdivision controls to overcome regulatory hurdles and permit appropriate flexibility for agriculture to thrive through farm gate sales, best management practices, education, and programs such as farmers markets. Some of the priorities will have been discussed with stakeholders in Phase 1, but this task will focus on those that best respond to the current and future circumstances in Parkland County and that are feasible within the legislative context of Alberta.
4. **Open Houses:** Because of the importance of this Study to agriculture and other affected land owners it is important to have public meetings to provide the general public an opportunity to review, comment, and discuss the plan. Given the scale and diversity of Parkland County we propose three public meetings. The precise location of these meetings will be determined in discussion with Parkland County. The meetings would be comprised of a number of

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information panels that are set up in advance; a brief greeting and meeting period; a presentation and an open discussion.

5. **Web-based Consultation:** Once the priority scenarios are identified and analyzed, a feedback process will be set up. To this end, we would activate the MindMixer website which will provide a user-friendly interface with the ability to, amongst other things, generate ideas, state preferences, vote, leave comments, upload visual content and enter into discussions between participants and with proponents. Notice for the information session will also be provided online to increase the public awareness of the event.
6. **Develop the Final Draft Study including Policies, Tool and Incentives:** Based on the feedback, a draft plan incorporating the preferred vision, principles, policy, and implementation strategies will be prepared by the consultant. It will be well-structured and provide enough discussion and background to demonstrate it is based on a consultative approach and grounded in technical analysis, yet concise enough to be user friendly and clear in direction. It will include a recommended action plan for implementation with clear targets, deadlines, and responsibilities. Future action will be described in terms of priorities: what needs to be accomplished in the short term, the medium term, and the long term.
7. **Revised Plan:** Based on the discussions in Step 6, we will revise the plan as required.
8. **Final Report to Administration, Agricultural Services Board, and Council:** We will present the final Future of Agriculture Study to these three bodies for review, discussion, and eventual adoption. In addition, we would expect to present to other key stakeholder groups as directed by Council and Administration. This is the final step of the project. It is anticipated that the Study will be presented within the context of the findings and directions forthcoming from the detailed consultation process. We would expect that the level of public support for the plan will be evident as well as any contentious issues that may arise.

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## **Attachment 1: List of Interviewees**

### **One on One Interviews**

1. Duncan Martin, Parkland County
2. Gabriel Clark, Parkland County
3. Andy Haarsma, Crop Producer
4. Allan Shenfield, Dairy Producer
5. Gord Wilson, Acreage Owner, Horse Owner, former President of Canadian Thoroughbred Society, former President of Northlands
6. Ken Lewis, Lewis Farms
7. Keith and Kevin Porter, Porter Farms
8. Mark Cardinal, Agriculture Manager, Parkland County
9. Dave Haarsma, Wedgewood Farms (potatoes)
10. Pat Brennan, Former Councillor, Former Chair of Horse Race Alberta
11. Carla Rhyant, Rhyant Rock Farms and Executive Director of the West Central Forage Association
12. Gerry Taillieu, Tomahawk Ranch
13. Dwight Lutz, Crop Producer
14. Scott Jespersen, Crop Producer
15. Dave Schoor, ISL
16. Tom Kurlovich, Viterra
17. Margurite Thiessen, Alberta Agriculture & Forestry
18. Vanessa Heit, Parkland County
19. Tom Keop/Scott Kovatch, Parkland County
20. Bill Leonard, National Capital Commission
21. Stan Topola, Agriterra
22. Spruce Grove Farmers Market – site visit and informal conversations with vendors
23. Stony Plain Farmers Market – site visit and informal conversations with vendors.

### **Commercial Farm Group – Tomahawk**

1. Jeff Androshuk,
2. Adrian Vanderwell,
3. Lawrence Strocher,
4. Trevor Weiss,
5. Dean Harrison
6. Frank Maddock
7. David Bank
8. Eric Vanderwell

### **Commercial Farm Group – Stony Plain**

1. Curtis Webber
2. Gary Tappauf
3. David Henning
4. John Hrasko
5. Melissa Haarsma
6. Darren Frank
7. Gilbert Jespersen
8. Kevin Schenfield
9. Graham Jespersen
10. Alan Wild

**Equine Group – Stony Plain**

1. Larry Niblock
2. Kevin David
3. Nadia Nixon
4. Corrie Lewis
5. Colin Kuehnemuth
6. Jean Kuehnemuth
7. Artye Darline
8. Cindy Hanas
9. Gail Haldane

**Speciality/Value Added Operations**

1. The Corn Maize – Jesse Kray
2. TPRL Honey – Tim Townsend
3. Parkland County Seed Cleaning Co-op – Blair Peregrym
4. NBW Greenhouses – Nellie and Rob Hagtegaal
5. Cannor Nurseries – Deborah Bodine
6. Dunvegan Gardens – Brock Fraser
7. Spruce Berry Farm – Carol Jones
8. Sandhills Potatoes – Tony Kirkwood
9. Shaken Hive Honey – Roy Bohn
10. Home Grown Foods – Tim Wilson
11. Roy's Raspberries – to be completed (initial conversation to date)

## Attachment 2: Agricultural and Rural Life Advisory Committee plus ALUS

Area of Discussion	Key Comments
<b>Most Significant Challenges</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The encroachment of the City of Edmonton, industrial parks and the mining areas in the Keephills area</li> <li>2. Education – people need to be made aware current situation and give correct information</li> <li>3. Water supply in the mined out areas for ranchers</li> <li>4. Chemical applications of various kinds (both positive and negative)</li> <li>5. Access to processing and travel times and the costs involved</li> <li>6. High input costs</li> <li>7. Fragmentation</li> <li>8. Planning for agriculture – need to consider sub-division constraints; population growth pressures; land zoning for agriculture; tools and incentives; economic development facilitation and promotion</li> <li>9. Competition for land amongst various industries and demands</li> <li>10. Lack of new entrants/continuation through generations</li> <li>11. Degradation of land quality</li> <li>12. Land fractioning – acreages are too small; first parcel out splits up properties</li> <li>13. Aging farmers – how is the next generation going to take over?</li> <li>14. Loss of environmental sensitive areas – need to find a balance</li> <li>15. Urban growth</li> <li>16. Identifying opportunities/lack of experience</li> <li>17. Development – industrial, residential, mining, sub-dividing</li> <li>18. Cost of land</li> <li>19. Fragmentation (sub-division)</li> <li>20. A myopic view of agriculture: green revolution farming as the only way to go</li> <li>21. Subdivision of prime agricultural land</li> <li>22. Not enough prime/County support to keep Ag lands as Ag + support for local producers</li> <li>23. Lack of education of general public – food comes from farms not Walmart</li> <li>24. Subdivision approvals</li> <li>25. Provincial government involvement. Need support to change some regulations</li> <li>26. Young people (lack of) seeing farming or agriculture as a viable career option</li> <li>27. Residential growth must be stopped on high quality land</li> <li>28. (Lack of) processing facilities for meat but also value added processing for produce and meat</li> <li>29. Aging farm base; cost of farm land; cost to start up</li> <li>30. Development pressures</li> <li>31. Access to processing facilities</li> <li>32. Regulations that accommodate for diversity in the types and size of agricultural operations</li> <li>33. Subdivision of land</li> </ol>

	<p>34. Increased population</p> <p>35. Increased industrial growth</p> <p>36. Price of land where the best soils are the places next to the growth areas (Stony; Spruce)</p>
<b>Picture of the Future</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More prime agricultural lands have been reclaimed</li> <li>2. More agricultural diversity – crops; fields of diversified crops grown by mother nature (not high inputs)</li> <li>3. Residential corridor along the Yellowhead (without the Agriculture Plan)</li> <li>4. 80 acre ag. Parcels intermingled with Parkland County eco-conservation</li> <li>5. Value added processing areas</li> <li>6. Livestock grazing on productive grassland with grass up to their bellies</li> <li>7. Markets and services throughout Parkland County</li> <li>8. Defined land use zones for agriculture that act as de facto urban growth boundaries</li> <li>9. Agriculture &amp; food is the focus of economic development with officers/department in the Capital Region</li> <li>10. Agriculture is defined and promoted as a land use &amp; commercial/industrial zoning is #1 in rural and urban areas</li> <li>11. Diversity of producer age, products, size</li> <li>12. Lack of 'idle' productive land (not buy a quarter and leave unused which is a large fire hazard</li> <li>13. TransAlta land reclaimed PROPERLY – back into ag production to a variety of producers</li> <li>14. Land trust for conservation/large tracks of ag land with ecological zones.</li> <li>15. Processing and value added that is accessible to producers</li> <li>16. Proximity to Edmonton provides a huge opportunity for local market access</li> <li>17. Greater education for producers to improve management practices</li> <li>18. Agriculture (in the future) would have a strong local connection with non-agricultural residents buying directly from the farm</li> <li>19. Implementation of agricultural practices that incorporate and identify natural systems on the land rather than trying to 'break' the land</li> <li>20. On the east side of Parkland County, development has not reduced the acreages to farm; on the west side- a healthier and more robust forage based ag industry</li> <li>21. Greater diversification throughout Parkland County (what was once unique is now fairly common)</li> <li>22. A mix of viable large and small agricultural operations</li> <li>23. A robust and supported value added industry</li> <li>24. Continued viability of the agricultural sector</li> <li>25. 'Diverse Agriculture – in terms of types of uses/products and land sizes</li> <li>26. County imitative programs – to keep ag producers and ag land as ag</li> <li>27. Agri-tourism and education – people know where there food is</li> </ol>



	<p>coming from and respect it</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>28. Diverse array of farm size as well as wide variety in types of farms</li> <li>29. An easy to navigate place where you can find where you can purchase local foods – eggs, beef, etc.</li> <li>30. Sub-division numbers staying the same</li> <li>31. Young families on the farm without having full time jobs off the farm to pay for the land</li> <li>32. A well balanced county – industrial in high traffic areas; farms on good quality land, environmentally sensitive areas protected</li> <li>33. Young people staying on the land both because they can afford it and make a living</li> <li>34. A wide variety of crops + speciality crops, livestock and exotic animals – basically diversity – increase the money paid per acre. Also with value added products</li> <li>35. An agricultural community that consists of large operations supplying global markets with primary products</li> <li>36. Smaller operations supply local and niche markets</li> <li>37. Land for agriculture is designated as such under the MDP and no other uses are permitted for this land</li> <li>38. A strong relationship between farmers and the general public; education and access to food produced in Parkland County</li> <li>39. A vibrant year round market open 7 days.</li> <li>40. Happy farmers</li> <li>41. Balance between farms ‘green’ mixed with homes and industry</li> <li>42. Fresh grown local food available wherever I go at a fair price</li> </ol>
<b>Unique Opportunities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Farm gate sales</li> <li>2. Speciality crops?</li> <li>3. Market gardening in appropriate areas</li> <li>4. Ranch land to the west half of Parkland County</li> <li>5. Cropland in the better soil class zones – diversity is a strength</li> <li>6. Grass produced livestock – no big feedlots</li> <li>7. Processing plants for crop &amp; livestock</li> <li>8. Agri-tourism</li> <li>9. Stop or greatly reduce 1<sup>st</sup> parcel outs and further sub-division of land</li> <li>10. Implement strict top soil removal &amp; deposition bylaws</li> <li>11. Parkland County’s fruit/berry and horticulture producers maximize agricultural economic development opportunities</li> <li>12. Eco-certification opportunities for agriculture and food products and services</li> <li>13. Mixed farming practices on our diverse landscape</li> <li>14. While land prices may be high compared to other areas in the province, the productivity to price ratio be reasonable</li> <li>15. Educate producers – there are many successful and intelligent producers. Continue to provide education and applicable information to producers through co-operative efforts of the many groups already thriving in Parkland County</li> <li>16. Access to large urban market with broad ethnic diversity</li> <li>17. Good quality land suited to primary production</li> <li>18. More value added – how can Parkland County support improving</li> </ol>

	<p>value added opportunities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>19. Supporting the next generation of farmers/education</li> <li>20. There is a large local market</li> <li>21. Proximity to a large population allows for growth in farm gate sales and for more positive interaction between rural and urban lifestyles</li> <li>22. Our climate allows for fairly rapid rejuvenation of soils</li> <li>23. Direct farm gate sales</li> <li>24. Agri-tourism and food hubs</li> <li>25. A competitive advantage derived from environmental responsible production techniques</li> <li>26. Diversification of crop types – speciality food crops</li> <li>27. Agri-tourism development</li> <li>28. Proximity to Edmonton (large population)</li> <li>29. Agri-tourism targeted to Edmontonians – farm gate sales; destination farming</li> <li>30. Good soil (for the most part)</li> <li>31. Look into speciality areas for both crops and livestock</li> <li>32. Look at new and unique ways to market produce and/or meat – farmers markets; virtual markets; co-ops</li> <li>33. Look at utilizing areas of poor land for revenue producing – greenhouses, recreation (tourism) areas. Etc. Utilize waste heat out of the power plants for greenhouses etc.</li> <li>34. Small acreage operations that can supply local (County; City of Edmonton; Province)</li> <li>35. Demand for primary &amp; value added products</li> <li>36. Access to a large population</li> <li>37. Opportunities for processing facilities to locate and service the local producers</li> <li>38. The nearby opportunity to sell to many people; CSA or local deliveries</li> <li>39. Proximity to urban areas</li> <li>40. Summer fair/events/Farmers Markets</li> <li>41. West part of Parkland County has less growth and more land – preserve farmland in that direction?</li> </ol>
<b>Top Issues that Require Clarity, Direction or Policy</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Movement of equipment on roads</li> <li>2. Chemical application – what has it done?</li> <li>3. Need a soil use bylaw to oversee stripping and grading</li> <li>4. Cooperative movement to open up Parkland Packers – don't smother them with regulations</li> <li>5. Agriculture food system policies</li> <li>6. Public consultation that are targeted to include both ag and non-ag.</li> <li>7. Agriculture as an industry has the greatest ability to coexist and improve the environment</li> <li>8. If agriculture is important to Parkland County, it needs to preserve and improve agricultural land, policies and steps need to begin. (otherwise 10 years from now, we have the same discussion.</li> <li>9. Make sure to include groups such as ALUS and WCFA who are already successful in improving agriculture</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Land use – limit fractioning; limit sub-divisions to only poor land</li> <li>11. Industrial reclamation (mines) – what about water?</li> <li>12. On farm businesses opportunities – make this possible</li> <li>13. What kind of support should Parkland County be giving to producers?</li> <li>14. Support young farmers and new farms</li> <li>15. Eliminate the competition between farming and development (current this drives the price of land up)</li> <li>16. Support agricultural innovation and niche markets.</li> <li>43. Council support + ‘buy-in’ to support Ag producers</li> <li>44. No development of any kind on high quality farm land – must have policy/MDP changes</li> <li>45. Study to determine processing needs and processing opportunities</li> <li>46. Establish markets to assist producers to sell their products (farmers markets, co-op, whatever)</li> <li>47. Talk to farm youth – why are they leaving and what would it take to stay?</li> <li>48. Investigate best practices in other areas.</li> <li>49. Areas where agriculture is the only acceptable use</li> <li>50. Producers/ag operations need to be identified as the businesses that they are rather than be treated as a land use</li> <li>51. Support agriculture as a business and integrate it into business development strategies</li> <li>52. How do we protect farm land</li> <li>53. Do we allow Ag land to be subdivided?</li> <li>54. Policies for Ag (balance growth)</li> </ol>
<b>Other Comments</b>	<p>In summary, the Agricultural and Rural Advisory Committee expressed the following concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The impacts of subdividing good agricultural land into smaller parcels (as well as the increased urban-rural conflicts arising from a growing non-farm population in the countryside. Note: specific to the 4 parcels out per quarter, the comment was made that the ‘developers are cashing in, not the farmers!’</li> <li>• The challenges facing young farmers to enter farming – due mostly to the cost of land</li> <li>• The need to recognize and value the ecological benefits of farmland</li> <li>• The pressures of urbanization and growth in the industrial areas – this is pushing farmers out.</li> <li>• The need to find a ‘balance’ between agriculture and development</li> <li>• New or enhanced revenue opportunities from agriculture or agri-business</li> <li>• Ensuring that agriculture lands and riparian areas are maintained and/or improved</li> <li>• Land reclamation on mined lands – when will this take place and will it be made available for agriculture</li> <li>• The continuing need for education and the supply of information to farmers (West-Central Forage Association was cited as a good example of how a producer focused organization can be an</li> </ul>

	effective vehicle).
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### Attachment 3: Commercial Farm Sector – Tomahawk

Area of Discussion	Key Comments
<b>Most Significant Challenges</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Significant vandalism and theft with no convictions (non-responsive police); crime</li> <li>2. Roads that are not designed for big modern farm equipment/moving equipment</li> <li>3. Need for common road regulations across all counties in the province (different rules by different jurisdictions).</li> <li>4. Too much sub-dividing – sends the wrong message.</li> <li>5. Encroachment of acreages and subdivisions – leads to weed problems and raises land prices (hard for farmers to compete); loss of land to non-farm uses (acreages/gravel).</li> <li>6. Segmentation of land by subdivisions</li> <li>7. Surface Rights</li> <li>8. Lands held by Trans Alta – what is going to happen? These lands are also a major source of weeds</li> <li>9. Distance from key suppliers – parts, dealers are getting few and farther away; markets and services are quite distant</li> <li>10. Lack of local markets – too concentrated , hard to access; no place to market cattle; machinery dealer are farther and farther away</li> </ol>
<b>Picture of the Future</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Wide diversity of sizes of operations – small operations with direct sales plus large mainstream operations</li> <li>2. Mix of agriculture and recreation</li> <li>3. Would like to see farm families being able to make a living on a section of land but this is never going to happen again</li> <li>4. Fewer and fewer farmers. Once the farming community had a 100 people to farm an area of land. Now you only need 2?</li> <li>5. More and more automation – GPS; self driving vehicles</li> <li>6. See more smaller niche/artisan type farms</li> <li>7. You will either see bigger farms or small ones – no room for the middle sized farmer</li> <li>8. In areas of good land, you'll see 'mega' farms – big guys who will rent the land with equipment all powered by automation</li> </ol>
<b>Unique Opportunities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Niche markets – organic products</li> <li>2. Opportunities for natural habitat</li> <li>3. The west part of Parkland County is ideal grazing area. But the infrastructure (fences, pens etc.) is gone. A lot of people got out of cattle after BSE</li> <li>4. Opportunities for enhanced grazing</li> </ol>
<b>Top Issues that Require Clarity, Direction or Policy</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Education for the public to appreciate agriculture</li> <li>2. Incentives for new start-up operations/more incentives for value added agricultural facilities and businesses.</li> <li>3. Zoning policies that are friendly to further processing etc. Make it easier for them to operate</li> <li>4. Land use – need to minimize the desire for rural living vs.</li> </ol>

	<p>mainstream agriculture</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Uniform regulations for all counties for trucking</li> <li>6. More support for groups that are supporting agriculture within Parkland County such as the West Central Forage Association</li> <li>7. Reclamation of mining lands needs to be a higher priority – hold Transalta accountable. Turn their land into an area for quads!</li> <li>8. More enforcement re: weed and pest control</li> <li>9. Can Parkland County allow for the zoning for an abattoir?</li> </ol>
<b>Other Comments</b>	<p>The Tomahawk group expressed a number of concerns about the long term future of agriculture. The comments included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The handful of full time farmers that are left in the western area of Parkland County (fewer larger farms) and many other farmers taking off-farm employment. ‘You have to get bigger or you can’t compete!’</li> <li>• The high level of vandalism and theft that is taking place (originating from Drayton Valley) and the non-response from police</li> <li>• The general lack of respect non-farm people have for farmers – both in terms of how they farm (use of chemicals) and slowing traffic when moving equipment</li> <li>• Increasing number of acreages. To quote: ‘a good quarter is turned into 4 pieces of junk – all weeds and no production.’</li> <li>• Dangers in moving equipment</li> <li>• A sense the farmers are such a small minority that they have little or no voice politically</li> <li>• If you call Parkland County office, it is hard to get answers – you get the run around – I needed a wider access to get into my field.</li> <li>• With the many acreages, there are too many weeds – the weed inspectors are not doing a good job</li> </ul>

#### Attachment 4: Commercial Farm Sector – Stony Plain

Area of Discussion	Key Comments
<b>Most Significant Challenges</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Acreage people restrict what we can do as farmers</li> <li>2. Continually making fields smaller by allowing one now three subdivisions per quarter</li> <li>3. Fragmentation of farmland into smaller parcels – more acreages restrict what we can do?</li> <li>4. County is encouraging this (subdivisions) – we should not allow 5 or 10 acre parcels</li> <li>5. Agricultural land is considered a holding zone for development – it should not be this way.</li> <li>6. The number of people living in proximity to the farm/amount of traffic/too many non-farm residents</li> <li>7. Urban encroachment with no consideration for the quality of land – it is destroyed for ever</li> <li>8. Our ability to expand (whether purchasing or renting land) due to the expansion of acreage development</li> <li>9. Too many big land parcels are being underused - they are too big to cut lawn but too small to farm</li> <li>10. Our biggest issue? The land parcels for subdivision are too big – these are not being looked after – it's not good for anyone.</li> <li>11. How can we expand when everything around us is zoned country residential?</li> <li>12. Everything we used to farm is under pavement</li> <li>13. Traffic and traffic noise</li> <li>14. Acreage prices puts land prices out of reach for farmers</li> <li>15. Availability of land that is farmable</li> <li>16. Road maintenance and consideration for the importance of agriculture</li> <li>17. Moving equipment down the road/roads are narrow and unsafe</li> <li>18. Dangerous to move around – unsafe; impatient drivers</li> <li>19. The transportation of farm equipment is extremely difficult</li> <li>20. Acreage owners do not understand or appreciate what good the farmers do.</li> <li>21. Require permits, permission to do anything on your land</li> <li>22. Introduction of weeds (kochia, scentless, chamomile) due to road construction equipment</li> <li>23. Illegal dumping of garbage on our land</li> <li>24. The dust from Acheson is killing us</li> <li>25. County Councils lack of policy regarding agriculture – they have no concept of what is going on</li> <li>26. Our Ag. Service Board does little to help agriculture</li> <li>27. We are 1% of the population – we are low on the totem pole</li> </ol>
<b>Picture of the Future</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Farmers would be respected</li> <li>2. Farming becomes the first and foremost use of land</li> <li>3. Land freeze of Class 1 &amp; 2 lands</li> <li>4. Zoning areas throughout Parkland County to agriculture (permanently)</li> </ol>



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Would like to see Parkland County like Fraser Valley (where agricultural land is frozen)</li> <li>6. There would be value added industries in our Industrial Parks i.e. biodiesel, pasta plant etc; more finished product</li> <li>7. Gov't would pay for every student to attend a farm school – 1 week per year</li> <li>8. See more small agriculture holdings – berry farms, vegetables, operations to service Famers' Markets</li> <li>9. More acreages, more people, more development</li> <li>10. Land is too pricey to farm</li> <li>11. My crystal ball is cloudy – I don't see a picture.</li> <li>12. As far as I am concerned, keep the public out of the country</li> <li>13. It's time to leave – get out of Dodge!!</li> <li>14. We can't stop Edmonton, Spruce Grove and Stony Plain from growing! But why not? Toronto has not annexed more land since 1980 and they have four times the population</li> <li>15. Edmonton is the same size as London, England which has 16 times the population! Why doesn't it grow up!</li> </ol>
<b>Unique Opportunities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Close to urban centres for speciality crops and intensive livestock</li> <li>2. Good location to large market</li> <li>3. Market gardens, potatoes, sod farming, intensive rotations</li> <li>4. Value added. Finished products being processed</li> <li>5. Specialty crops, pulses, canola, corn? The markets and railways are here</li> <li>6. Lifestyle – our location near a big city is an advantage. My kids like farming here for that reason</li> </ol>
<b>Top Issues that Require Clarity, Direction or Policy</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What can be done about the roads for safety? Keep the country roads as gravel.</li> <li>2. Right to farm/no more rules to restrict us</li> <li>3. Political will of county, province and federal government to support agriculture and save agricultural land</li> <li>4. Work with school system to set up educational programs on the farm – currently we have a class that spends 1 week at our place. The learning is incredible. We need to work with Parkland County and then young people so they know where their food comes from</li> <li>5. Is it possible to allow two residents on the same farm yard? A lot of people would like their other family/parents to move onto the property. Currently you can't get permits or subdivide to allow for this.</li> </ol>
<b>Other Comments</b>	<p>The Stony Plain group expressed many concerns about farming in the shadow of urban development which includes expanding Edmonton, Spruce Grove, Stony Plain, the Acheson Industrial Park as well as expanded transportation corridors. The following comments were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crossing 4 lane highways is becoming very dangerous. Some of the overpasses are very narrow for the equipment</li> <li>• There are more and more small holdings , making it more</li> </ul>

	<p>difficult to farm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parkland County seems more interested in developing acreages to generate taxes – not farming!</li> <li>• I don't think Parkland County has any idea what a real farm is and what it requires. Do I need a permit for a pole shed?</li> <li>• Moving equipment is getting harder – no shoulders; higher roads; impatient drivers</li> <li>• We farm in 5 counties – Parkland County is the most difficult. It has the highest taxes and staff don't understand the workings or needs of an intensive livestock operation</li> <li>• There are more and more sub-divisions. This is both a blessing and a curse. It drives the price of land up (this is good if you want to sell or cash in; but this makes it difficult to farm.</li> <li>• Expansion is getting difficult – more traffic; dealing with people; the price of land</li> <li>• Once a road is paved, it gets really dangerous. We would rather see Parkland County stick with gravel roads.</li> <li>• We farm close to the Edmonton line – for us the farming in this area is over. Not a case of if but when we move.</li> <li>• Overall, we don't not have a plan for agricultural land – we don't do anything – we have a wasteful land use plan.</li> <li>• Overall, agriculture has not been considered in county planning.</li> <li>• Stop looking at agriculture as only being 1% of the population but look at it as representing 33% of the employment/economy in Parkland County.</li> <li>• Don't forget agriculture – it is important. We will need 60% more food by 2050. And 1 out of every 8 jobs is related to agriculture &amp; food</li> <li>• The Agriculture Department is the 'end of the hall' – it is the bottom of the barrel</li> </ul>
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## Attachment 5: Commercial Farm Sector – Equine Group

Area of Discussion	Key Comments
<b>Most Significant Challenges</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parkland County needs to identify that the horse industry contributes to Parkland County and a reason why people move to Parkland County. Parkland County has got by without having to do anything for the horse industry</li> <li>2. Lack money, land and the will of Parkland County to do something for the horse sector</li> <li>3. Access to the river system is a challenge</li> <li>4. Lack of political will to do something</li> <li>5. Equine sector does not have a unified voice or a lack of voice</li> <li>6. More and more development (restricts access to the North Sask River)</li> <li>7. Parkland County is more interested in serving residents in Spruce Grove and Edmonton – not people with horses</li> </ol>
<b>Picture of the Future</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An ‘Evergreen Park’ (Grande Prairie) on reclaimed Trans Alta land</li> <li>2. A ‘Horse Park’ with trails, obstacles etc./expanded trail facility</li> <li>3. A Public Arena with both indoor and outdoor facility (like Thorsby)/public indoor arena for equestrian activities; public arena for timed events and horse shows – combination of indoor and outdoor facilities plus a race track for chuck wagons, quarter horses</li> <li>4. Marked public trails that provide access to the river including staging areas that can accommodate more than 4 units.</li> <li>5. 30-50 miles of park equine trails with hills, water, sand (no horse shoes required)/designated public trails marked and maintained and advertised in Parkland County – new sand at other places for riding. Note: we have requests from time to time for occasional winter riding</li> <li>6. Public trails along the North Sask River for trail riders</li> <li>7. Great staging area, camping facilities, a park suitable for various disciplines</li> <li>8. 2-3 facilities with camping for people and horses that is centrally located, low cost and affordable</li> <li>9. Facilities where different disciplines – performance, show jumping, gymkhana</li> <li>10. Areas in Parkland County for trail rides with staging areas, maps where people want to ride</li> <li>11. Public trails that are marked and maintained with parking spaces at the trail head, picnic facilities, outhouses, camping areas</li> </ol>
<b>Unique Opportunities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More people would move to Parkland County if a major facility was available for use like a Whitemud Equine Centre</li> <li>2. Ability to host events for all equine groups – jumping, roping etc.</li> <li>3. Opportunity for more business that would drive income</li> <li>4. Income from more events/camping</li> <li>5. An active horse sector with facilities would attract people to</li> </ol>

	<p>Parkland County – also driven employment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Annual horse shows – 4H; performance; jumping, eventing</li> <li>7. A venue for all disciplines and events – jumping, gymkhana, eventing, dressage, trail riding, pony club, mounted games. Also for public education, horse industry</li> <li>8. Camping facilities for trail riding</li> <li>9. Agricultural fair/Ag days</li> <li>10. Drawing people in with specific events</li> <li>11. Recognition/showcase Parkland County</li> <li>12. Arena events create employment opportunity</li> <li>13. Trail events and pleasure riding in the River Valley – a trail system from Devon to Fort Saskatchewan</li> </ol>
<b>Top Issues that Require Clarity, Direction or Policy</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The horse industry is here – we need to be heard. We live here.</li> <li>2. Zoning – how does a remote control race track next to horses and acreages get approved?</li> <li>3. Lack of direction; recognition of needs from County.</li> <li>4. Recognize the presence and impact of the horse industry in Parkland County</li> <li>5. Knowledge of the potential that exists</li> <li>6. Need an advocate to voice issues and speak to the positives</li> </ol>
<b>Other Comments</b>	<p>Overall this group was very enthusiastic about what Parkland County can offer and what can be done to support a thriving horse sector. Comments included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parkland County has a lot of ‘open’ countryside, and an outstanding river valley</li> <li>• It has many conveniences being close to the City but in the country – the best of both worlds – an ideal location for boarding or keeping horses</li> <li>• Good pasture for horses, water and good footing</li> </ul> <p>However there are limitations such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have an equine sector in spite of Parkland County – there is no facility like Thorsby (Leduc County) or Evergreen Park (Grand Prairie). Note: Drayton Valley has a well-developed trail system along both sides of the Pembina River</li> <li>• Limited access and/or public trails along the river</li> <li>• The Chickakoo area is not well suited for horse – trail is stony and limited staging area (can only accommodate 4 trailers)</li> </ul>

## Attachment 6: Specialty Sector (Individual Interviews)

Area of Discussion	Key Comments
<b>Background</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Corn Maize – established 15 years ago; busy season is a period of 8 to 10 weeks (mid-August to late October)</li> <li>2. TPRL Honey – started when young; in this location for 25 years ago. All product is being exported</li> <li>3. Stony Plain Seed – started in 1954; has 220 shareholders and is now the largest business of its kind in Alberta. Has expanded beyond seed cleaning to exporting commodities (feed to Japan)</li> <li>4. NBW Greenhouses – started in 1997; market direct and at various Farmers Markets. Sees more people interested in where food comes from and who is growing it.</li> <li>5. Cannor Nurseries – purchased operation about 20 years ago</li> <li>6. Dunvegan Gardens – established in 2002</li> <li>7. Spruce Berry Farm – established 2006</li> <li>8. Sandyhill Potatoes – third generation operation</li> </ol>
<b>Advantages of Parkland County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location viz. Highway 60 – close to Edmonton (spoken by an agri-tourist destination operator)</li> <li>• Good land – we have never had a bad crop</li> <li>• Proximity to Edmonton – we are close to the railways for shipping to the west coast; also close to suppliers</li> <li>• Parkland County has been very good to work with</li> <li>• Close to Edmonton – rail yards, highways to B.C. Parkland County is very good area – our location is ideal</li> <li>• We are well located – close to Edmonton and the main highways. We also have beautiful soil</li> <li>• Location is very good – with the opening of the Henday, more people from Edmonton do business with us</li> <li>• Location; taxes are better than if we were in the city; Parkland County likes our kind of operation</li> <li>• Great location – we have the potential to serve 1 million customers</li> <li>• This area is prime agricultural land - #1 and #2 soils. We used to be called the Greenbelt. Ideal for potatoes and the location is ideal for seed potatoes – removed from the major production areas in southern Alberta (for disease management)</li> </ul>
<b>Disadvantages of Parkland County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access from a provincial highway is a problem; no signs allowed on provincial road but not issues with County</li> <li>• There was a very restrictive by-law limiting where we could locate our hives but that has been changed.</li> <li>• More and more subdivisions – more and more traffic. More people – the more complaints about bees.</li> <li>• In the past, agriculture was forgotten – but current Council is ‘way more agriculturally minded!’</li> <li>• I have had issues with irrigation and where we run our pipes – Parkland County has been challenging to work</li> </ul>

	<p>with. Also finding manpower and getting people to work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting permits for water from our dugout has been an issue; allowing soil to be hauled here has been an issue as well. In both cases the first response is 'No!'</li> <li>• Internet access is limiting – we are lucky to have a satellite operator/service nearby</li> <li>• Road bans can be very disruptive and costly</li> <li>• Some concerns about the residential development – how will it affect us? More customers on one hand; more pressure to move on the other.</li> <li>• Most of our issues (environment, roads, signs) are with the Province not Parkland County</li> <li>• Our concerns are with a new pipeline coming through our property – this will affect us</li> <li>• Too many subdivisions – this is not for us. There are so many acreages – roads are being paved.</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agri-tourism is starting to begin; aware of Tri-Region initiative (Parkland County, Spruce Grove, Stony Plain) but not that involved; we would be happy to be part of a Parkland County Agri-tour if this happens</li> <li>• Would like to see more speciality operations but the price of land is high; labour is a problem to find and afford; marketing is always a challenge. Vegetable growers often pay the lowest wages</li> <li>• There are opportunities to attract more agri-food/value added business. Parkland County needs to focus on its advantages – not lead. Businesses need to decide for themselves</li> <li>• Parkland County has beautiful soils – a great place to grow a wide range of crops and vegetables</li> <li>• If Parkland County were to establish an irrigation district, this would be a powerful action signifying the importance of agriculture – our climate is getting drier and water is an issue.</li> <li>• Agriculture is important to the community and building community – for many young people, it is their first job</li> <li>• We see a growing interest in local food. But what do we have to offer re: current supplies? Labour is an issue.</li> <li>• People love to get out – take strawberries. They love to come and pick – not to feed the family but for the experience</li> <li>• The opportunities for local food are endless – a lot of young people are coming out.</li> <li>• Put in irrigation!! This would send a powerful message – we are not far from the river and you could have a whole area that intensifies production – potatoes, vegetables, field crops, livestock</li> </ul>
<b>Constraints/Pressures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See tensions between farming and development; not sure how long we will be here – all the land is likely to be developed. It is tough to compete against the developers</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability to sell lots for retiring farmers may be a good idea for retiring farmers but I don't like it. I won't let my employees go north of Highway 16 – it is too dangerous.</li> <li>• Subdivisions are a real problem – creates traffic problems; safety. Farmers are re-thinking their future.</li> <li>• Where do we grow?</li> <li>• No issues.</li> <li>• Lack of education – people know so little about food. And no education for those who want to grow it or start a business</li> <li>• Our business is very labour intensive – time for young people to take over – we are ready to retire. But people know so little and the work ethic of today's youth is not aligned with what it makes an operation like this successful</li> <li>• Need central collection and distribution to make local food work</li> <li>• Increased traffic – we can't drive without getting the finger</li> <li>• This is a farming community but we have lost this – the area (development) has gone too far</li> </ul>
<b>Top Issues that Require Clarity, Direction or Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall, we are a happy business – no issues with Parkland County. But there is a need to protect agricultural land – if this is not done, it will be lost</li> <li>• Don't forget agriculture!! That is what built this County – we need to know that we have a place! (This Council is good)</li> <li>• Parkland County has to re-think where they allow subdivisions</li> <li>• The big question that we need to face: how do we keep our farmers here? Every time a farmer leaves, you lose a business – and the businesses that serve that farmer loses a customer.</li> <li>• Parkland County needs to limit subdivisions on prime farmland – it is being stripped and beautiful farmland is being mutilated.</li> <li>• Keep more farmland available – protect it</li> <li>• What is Parkland County doing with respect to land reclamation in the mined areas?</li> <li>• Make irrigation available or easier to set up – an Irrigation District would be fantastic</li> <li>• Agriculture needs to be a higher priority for Parkland County</li> <li>• County opposition to the proposed minimum wage bill would be appreciated – this will affect a lot of small businesses like ours</li> <li>• Any efforts to grow value added will require an inter-governmental approach. Parkland County can play a coordination role</li> <li>• With more subdivisions, it is harder to find land to farm</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need someone from Parkland County that understands this type of agriculture – no one has ever visited</li> <li>• What is the plan for agriculture – we need to have a future and be able to plan as well!</li> </ul>
<b>Other Comments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘People love coming out and experiencing the country – in September and October, they love that country experience</li> <li>• The previous Council ignored agriculture – this Council sees our business as an asset to Parkland County</li> <li>• Be prepared for change</li> <li>• Any decisions that Council makes must take into account the impacts at the broader level. For example, the more subdivisions, the more fragmentation, the more traffic, the more farmers start thinking about relocating</li> <li>• A lot of people think they are going to make a million dollars growing vegetables – then they find out how much work it is and it’s not that way at all</li> <li>• Small business needs water, communications (high speed</li> <li>• I don’t want to limit someone’s opportunity to sell land at high prices. But we need a wiser land use policy</li> <li>• Any support for promotion or marketing that features Parkland County as a source of local food would be welcomed</li> <li>• We just as soon not see roads being paved – more pavement means more traffic , more people, more danger in moving equipment</li> </ul>

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**Attachment 7: Selected Agricultural Statistics**

**Parkland County and Alberta Agricultural Statistics**

Where "n/a" - data are confidential for statistical purposes or unavailable

Physical attributes group	Parkland County				Province of Alberta		
	1996	2001	2006	2011	2001	2006	2011
Total Area of Farms, acres	482,786	475,926	455,677	401,863	52,058,898	52,127,857	52,706,563
Number of Farms	1,196	1,144	979	782	53,652	49,431	43,234
Average Farm Size, acres	404	416	465	514	970	1,055	1,219
Total Land in Crops (acres)	219,423	227,729	206,235	180,512	24,038,861	23,775,509	24,102,289
Summerfallow (acres)	8,288	11,541	9,464	3,640	3,053,214	2,239,633	1,263,051
Total Pasture Land (acres)	198,685	192,768	180,556	173,840	22,016,574	22,273,008	21,823,780
All Other Land (including Christmas trees)	56,390	43,888	59,422	17,754	2,950,249	3,839,707	3,309,714
Farm Size							
< 10 acres	61	55	35	30	1,118	1,063	879
10-239 acres	592	588	515	412	17,472	16,633	14,585
240-399 acres	181	164	114	91	7,299	6,386	5,395
400 to 759 acres	201	171	149	105	9,586	8,188	6,911
760 to 1119 acres	76	81	67	55	5,625	4,807	3,997
Over 1120 acres	85	85	99	89	12,552	12,354	11,467
Farm Type							
Dairy	46	21	15	10	776	605	485
Cattle	503	514	418	219	22,939	20,494	12,022
Hog	16	8	4	-	848	598	193
Poultry and Egg	16	9	8	9	446	416	339
Wheat	13	16	12	4	3,718	2,809	2,083
Grain (except wheat)	102	87	86	102	9,327	9,753	10,609
Hay and Field Crops (except grain and oilseed)	85	97	70	157	4,725	4,486	7,948
Fruit and tree nut farming	6	5	9	8	73	227	151
Vegetables	3	1	4	15	70	286	277
Miscellaneous and other (includes equine)	250	262	245	258	10,730	9,757	9,127
Total Classified	1,044	1,020	871	782	53,652	49,431	43,234
Farms with Vegetables	17	20	25	20	509	508	445
Farms with Fruits, Berries and Nuts	32	27	25	19	545	593	532
Farms with Nursery Products	29	30	29	22	586	573	502
Farms with Greenhouse Products	30	28	21	23	569	522	441

Physical attributes group (cont.)	Parkland County				Province of Alberta		
	1996	2001	2006	2011	2001	2006	2011
<b>Crop Acres</b>							
Total Wheat	17,647	25,547	24,711	20,976	6,852,596	6,467,628	6,703,703
Oats	23,785	15,698	17,656	12,106	1,364,674	1,269,229	891,580
Barley	59,629	39,851	33,582	28,335	4,902,090	4,094,689	3,610,111
Mixed Grains	2,478	3,675	4,406	1,317	404,174	373,005	201,511
Canola	16,618	19,738	31,659	36,667	2,660,509	4,068,511	6,071,744
Potatoes	1,793	1,576	2,739	2,642	58,341	54,759	53,440
Dry Field Peas	2,343	2,623	808	n/a	608,217	587,263	706,726
Alfalfa	56,636	77,454	56,227	52,070	3,915,607	3,935,022	3,657,114
All Other Hay	36,780	39,303	30,242	20,802	2,279,767	2,060,967	1,466,557
Total Vegetables	56	37	185	47	14,194	13,193	10,716
Total Fruit, Berries, Nuts	125	127	154	104	2,517	2,934	2,610
Area of Nursery Products	238	271	365	376	6,642	8,955	9,755
Greenhouse Areas (Square Feet)	177,422	169,797	127,744	197,465	11,029,753	12,582,590	12,861,869
Total Dairy Cows	3,937	1,781	1,426	1,661	84,044	78,875	80,694
Total Beef Cows	7,932	31,471	28,343	17,601	2,099,288	2,035,841	1,530,391
Total Cattle and Calves	27,977	79,084	68,709	45,353	6,615,201	6,369,116	5,104,605
Total Pigs	12,338	3,312	1,700	n/a	2,027,533	2,052,067	1,397,534
Total Sheep	2,201	5,531	4,597	10,422	307,302	222,340	202,903
Horses/Ponies	2,657	3,840	4,697	3,923	159,962	155,533	139,410
Goats	808	1,101	818	736	42,270	29,113	28,920
Bison	n/a	1,948	1,332	1,360	79,731	97,366	57,483
Colonies of Bees	8,353	11,908	12,832	11,742	209,821	230,894	235,951
Total Hens/Chickens	n/a	188,461	114,022	n/a	12,175,246	11,757,860	11,956,949

<b>Financial attributes group</b>	<b>Parkland County</b>				<b>Province of Alberta</b>		
	<b>1996</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2011</b>
Number of Farms	1,196	1,144	979	782	53,652	49,431	43,234
Under \$25,000	712	621	544	425	19,654	18,511	15,569
\$25,000 to \$49,999	171	176	152	114	8,335	7,170	6,051
\$50,000 to \$99,999	139	157	120	74	8,526	7,448	5,934
\$100,000 and Over	174	190	163	169	17,137	16,302	15,680
Average Gross Farm Receipts per Farm, \$'000	67	72	87	125	185	200	265
Net Farm Operating Income, \$'000	8	10	8	16	19	22	40
Farm Operating Expenses, \$'000	58	65	79	109	166	178	225
<b>Farm Capital</b>							
Total Farm Capital, \$'mln	666	897	1,219	1,466	55,256	71,781	95,572
Less than \$499,000	857	658	361	150	24,373	16,173	8,697
\$500,000 to \$1 million	199	263	328	258	13,774	13,776	11,966
Over \$1million	140	223	290	374	15,505	19,482	22,571



Operator Profile attributes group	Parkland County				Province of Alberta		
	1996	2001	2006	2011	2001	2006	2011
Number of Farmers, operators		1665	1,460	1,145	76,195	71,660	62,050
Sole Proprietorship, farms		667	574	469	30,409	27,815	24,459
Partnership, farms		365	300	199	16,147	13,920	10,947
Corporation, farms		111	103	111	6,857	7,411	7,592
Other, farms		1	2	3	239	285	236
Age of Farmers:							
Under 35		165	95	45	8,900	6,290	4,550
35-54		880	710	495	40,430	35,935	26,720
Over 54 (55+)		615	655	600	26,875	29,440	30,785
Paid Agricultural Labour (# weeks)							
Year Round		12,160	7,628	8,813	805,212	709,025	657,073
Seasonal or Temporary		4,286	4,157	4,539	279,640	250,206	241,379
Total Paid Labour		16,446	11,785	13,352	1,084,852	959,231	898,452
Farm Work and Non-Farm Work							
Operators Reporting No Paid Non-Farm Work		720	590	490	38,720	32,560	29,805
Operators Reporting Paid Non-Farm Work		945	870	655	37,475	39,100	32,245
Operators With Average Hours of Farm Work per Week							
Less than 20 hours		535	500	385	18,965	20,465	19,660
20-40 hours		530	450	400	21,935	19,970	18,905
More than 40 hours		605	525	355	35,290	31,225	23,480
Operators With Paid Hours of Non-Farm Work per Week							
Less than 20 hours		145	130	120	7,380	7,560	5,860
20-40 hours		355	335	275	14,750	14,190	13,520
More than 40 hours		445	405	260	15,345	17,355	12,865

**Parkland County in comparison with other Counties: 2011**

Where "n/a" - data are confidential for statistical purposes or unavailable

	Parkland	Sturgeon	Lamont	Strathcona	Leduc	Rockyview	Lethbridge	Alberta
<b>Physical attributes group</b>								
Total Area of Farms (Acres)	401,863	481,583	595,608	220,184	589,978	967,828	705,508	52,706,563
Number of Farms	782	823	753	658	1,255	1,271	933	43,234
Average Farm Size (Acres)	514	585	791	335	470	761	756	1,219
Total Land in Crops (Acres, without summerfallow)	180,512	362,846	371,871	150,138	373,077	503,427	514,337	24,102,289
Average Gross Farm Sales per Farm, \$'000	125	226	155	138	130	212	1,134	265
Average Capital per Farm, \$'000	1,874	2,635	1,665	2,081	2,024	4,185	3,389	2,211
Total Gross Sales (all farms), \$'000	97,975	185,794	116,938	90,895	162,680	269,454	1,058,080	11,436,181
Farm Size, number of reporting farms								
< 10 acres	30	30	12	34	34	27	47	879
10-239 acres	412	402	289	447	601	670	415	14,585
240-399 acres	91	96	121	66	191	150	117	5,395
400 to 759 acres	105	124	130	52	240	121	133	6,911
760 to 1119 acres	55	51	79	21	78	81	76	3,997
Over 1120 acres	89	120	122	38	111	222	145	11,467
Farm Type (based on NAICS)								
Dairy	10	7	2	5	57	5	55	485
Cattle	219	132	132	106	258	355	230	12,022
Hog	-	6	-	-	4	1	11	193
Poultry and Egg	9	23	2	6	12	5	24	339
Hay and Field Crops (except grain and oilseed)	157	127	109	155	246	225	98	7,948
Wheat	4	32	54	22	48	35	88	2,083
Grain (except wheat)	102	263	314	103	291	219	237	10,609
Vegetables	15	12	4	4	11	5	11	277
Fruit and tree nut farming	8	10	2	8	8	2	4	151
Miscellaneous and other	118	107	89	108	185	179	116	5,132
Equine	140	104	45	141	135	240	59	3,995
Total Classified	782	823	753	658	1,255	1,271	933	43,234
Farms with Vegetables								
Farms with Fruits, Berries and Nuts	20	18	8	7	14	7	21	445
Farms with Nursery Products	19	25	9	16	28	12	14	532
Farms with Greenhouse Products	22	26	7	32	34	40	11	502
Farms with Greenhouse Products	23	18	7	23	13	18	9	441

	Parkland	Sturgeon	Lamont	Strathcona	Leduc	Rockyview	Lethbridge	Alberta
<b>Crop Acres</b>								
Total Wheat	20,976	97,666	98,972	43,456	74,621	111,214	157,045	6,703,703
Oats	12,106	12,318	14,089		17,982	10,663	6,027	891,580
Barley	28,335	44,883	58,110	13,602	58,694	134,726	115,228	3,610,111
Mixed Grains	1,317	2,244	2,109	1,147	2,616	11,157	n/a	201,511
Canola	36,667	130,518	137,199	48,540	95,746	112,343	101,032	6,071,744
Potatoes	2,642	1,294	n/a	n/a	357	572	1,366	53,440
Dry Field Peas	n/a	8,400	7,870	4,357	4,247	3,244	16,045	706,726
Alfalfa	52,070	40,459	36,821	22,264	88,495	76,567	41,233	3,657,114
All Other Hay	20,802	20,784	15,323	8,706	25,649	32,828	20,731	1,466,557
Total Vegetables	47	89	17	76	159	n/a	807	10,716
Total Fruit, Berries, Nuts	104	191	55	57	163	48	64	2,610
Area of Nursery Products	376	909	146	406	800	1,065	401	9,755
Greenhouse Areas (Square Feet)	197,465	344,904	116,230	500,756	117,685	280,988	719,058	12,861,869
<b>Livestock Inventory</b>								
Total Dairy Cows	1,661	1,719	232	587	5,706	700	8,840	80,694
Total Beef Cows	17,601	9,293	14,954	5,127	21,137	41,780	16,066	1,530,391
Total Cattle and Calves	45,353	27,184	35,703	14,781	60,388	134,798	427,602	5,104,605
Total Pigs	n/a	16,979	n/a	n/a	16,274	17,182	65,673	1,397,534
Total Sheep	10,422	3,187	460	1,126	2,688	4,463	13,853	202,903
Horses/Ponies	3,923	2,444	1,182	2,859	3,702	6,078	1,876	139,410
Goats	736	718	699	150	1,329	397	3,606	28,920
Bison	1,360	654	1,521	130	683	n/a	n/a	57,483
Colonies of Bees	11,742	11,111	4,243	897	n/a	286		235,951
Total Hens/Chickens	n/a	1,270,204	23,794	n/a	193,486	172,633	1,329,855	11,956,949

**Financial attributes group**

	Parkland	Sturgeon	Lamont	Strathcona	Leduc	Rockyview	Lethbridge	Alberta
<b>Gross Farm Receipts</b>								
Number of Farms	782	823	753	658	1,255	1,271	933	43,234
Under \$25,000	425	351	304	401	565	582	212	15,569
\$25,000 to \$49,999	114	103	122	72	194	168	94	6,051
\$50,000 to \$99,999	74	91	97	52	175	168	123	5,934
\$100,000 and Over	169	278	230	133	321	353	504	15,680
Average Gross Farm Receipts per Farm, \$'000	125	226	155	138	130	212	1,134	265
Net Farm Operating Income, \$'000	16	40	23	22	19	26	89	40
Farm Operating Expenses, \$'000	109	186	132	116	111	186	1,045	225
<b>Farm Capital</b>								
Total Farm Capital, \$'mln	1,466	2,168	1,254	1,369	2,540	5,319	3,162	95,572
Less than \$499,000, farms	150	125	210	111	201	96	119	8,697
\$500,000 to \$1 million, farms	258	247	234	244	361	256	209	11,966
Over \$1million, farms	374	451	309	303	693		605	22,571

**Operator Profile attributes group**

Number of Farmers, operators	1,145	1,190	1,010	990	1,850	1,850	1,315	62,050
Sole Proprietorship, farms	469	479	516	378	726	702	426	24,459
Partnership, farms	199	200	157	180	357	325	179	10,947
Corporation, farms	111	143	78	99	172	241	322	7,592
Other, farms	3	1	2	1	-	3	6	236
<b>Age of Farmers:</b>								
Under 35	50	60	60	45	105	90	125	4,550
35-54	495	500	375	385	770	730	650	26,720
Over 54 (55+)	600	640	575	560	975	1,025	535	30,785
<b>Paid Agricultural Labour (# weeks)</b>								
Year Round	8,813	15,463	4,579	8,590	13,378	19,320	50,563	657,073
Seasonal or Temporary	4,539	7,117	2,257	6,979	4,319	6,273	8,226	241,379
Total Paid Labour	13,352	22,580	6,836	15,569	17,697	25,593	58,789	898,452
<b>Farm Work and Non-Farm Work</b>								
Operators Reporting No Paid Non-Farm Work	490	520	470	420	810	885	730	29,805
Operators Reporting Paid Non-Farm Work	655	675	540	565	1,035	965	580	32,245
<b>Operators With Average Hours of Farm Work per Week</b>								
Less than 20 hours	385	470	310	460	645	735	425	19,660
20-40 hours	400	350	360	325	590	570	310	18,905
More than 40 hours	355	385	340	205	620	545	580	23,480
<b>Operators With Paid Hours of Non-Farm Work per Week</b>								
Less than 20 hours	120	110	75	90	180	160	125	5,860
20-40 hours	275	300	230	260	455	400	230	13,520
More than 40 hours	260	265	235	215	400	405	225	12,865