

Regional Agriculture Master Plan Regional Context Statement Project**Recommendation:**

1. That the Regional Agriculture Master Plan Regional Context Statement be received for information, as presented.
2. That Administration be directed to submit the Regional Agriculture Master Plan Regional Context Statement to the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board.

Introduction:

The Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Board (EMRB) completed a Regional Agriculture Master Plan (RAMP) in December 2022. Each partnering municipality has one year to advise how their Municipal Development Plan (MDP) aligns with or will align with the RAMP policy through an amendment. This advisement is done through providing the EMRB with a Regional Context Statement (RCS). At this time, Administration is in the progress of updating the MDP, which will satisfy the requirements of the Regional Context Statement.

Background:**Regional Agriculture Master Plan**

The Regional Agriculture Master Plan was created by the EMRB to meet and support the objectives of Policy Area 6 (Agriculture) in the EMRB Growth Plan (2017). These objectives are:

- 6.1:** Identify and conserve an adequate supply of prime agricultural lands to provide a secure local food source for future generations
- 6.2:** Minimize the fragmentation and conversion of prime agricultural lands for non-agricultural uses
- 6.3:** Promote diversification and value-added agriculture production and plan infrastructure to support the agricultural sector and regional food system.

To meet the above objectives, the RAMP has created policy area maps, policy definitions, and policies for each of the RAMP's four policy areas. These tools will assist partner municipalities in aligning their agricultural preservation and development objectives, ensuring that each municipality is meeting the same goals and standardizing language for agriculture throughout the region.

As part of the RAMP's implementation process, Section 9 of the RAMP requires EMRB member municipalities to complete a Regional Context Statement within one year of RAMP approval by the Government of Alberta.

Regional Context Statement

A Regional Context Statement is a document that outlines how MDP policies for each partner municipality align with the EMRB Regional Agricultural Master Plan. In this instance, the RCS will provide information on how municipal policies through their MDP align with the RAMP. The RCS is not intended to make decisions on the direction of specific policy at this time, but will:

1. Identify if action is required to align with RAMP policies; and
2. Share that the detailed analysis and implementation of the RAMP policies will be reviewed and considered during the MDP Update Project.

RAMP RCS Project | Update

Regional Agricultural Master Plan Regional Context Statement

The RAMP RCS Project is being completed by Administration to meet the regional deadline of December 20th, 2023.

The RAMP RCS Project's main objective is to provide the EMRB confirmation regarding how the County will approach bringing the MDP into alignment with the Regional Agricultural Master Plan. The last MDP update occurred in 2017 before the RAMP was created and work will be required to align the MDP with the intent of the RAMP.

The County's approach to how it will align to the RAMP is at a high level. This approach provides the EMRB with Parkland County's commitment to addressing the definitions and policies in the RAMP within our MDP but not describing exactly what those definitions and policies are, leaving opportunity for Council and public input. The EMRB sets goals and objectives with policies in the RAMP and Council decides how policies and regulations will be drafted to meet those goals. These policies and regulations will be created as a part of the MDP Update and Land Use Bylaw (LUB) ReDesign Projects.

Relationship to MDP Update Project

Section 9 of the RAMP gives partner municipalities two years after the RAMP's approval to bring a MDP into alignment. Administration has confirmed with the EMRB that two separate submissions will not be required. This approach allows Parkland County to complete the MDP Update Project currently underway and submit all of the changes under one Regional Evaluation Framework (REF) process. The MDP Update Project is reviewing each of the County's existing MDP policies, and will update, remove, or add policies to align with Parkland County's growth and development needs for the next 30 years. These needs include aligning with the RAMP. The MDP Update Project is scheduled to be submitted to the EMRB for referral by Q4 2024, with completion in Q1 2025 if needed. This timeline meets the EMRB's expectations.

Please note that the RCS Project's scope does not include aligning the RAMP's Agriculture Policy Area Maps with the mapping of agricultural lands in the County's MDP. This work is currently being completed by O2 Planning + Design as a part of the MDP Update Project. The mapping being completed through the MDP Update Project will integrate the RAMP's mapping requirements. The mapping in the MDP Update Project will consider a range of factors including soil classification, development patterns, existing and future land uses, economic growth projections, and environmentally significant areas, among others. This work will address the Motion that was brought forward and passed by Council on October 10th, 2023, requesting that Administration be directed to adopt the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Board's work on the Regional Agricultural Master Plan by adopting the soil classification mapping in Parkland County's statutory documents.

Relationship to LUB ReDesign Project

The MDP Update Project is being carried out concurrently with the Land Use Bylaw ReDesign to ensure that the policies and land use regulations are aligned with one another. Any RAMP related policies in the MDP will be reflected in the related regulations of the LUB. It is not a requirement of the RAMP to integrate the policies within the RAMP with the regulations in a municipality's LUB, but it is best practice to do so.

Key Dates

The following dates are critical milestones for the RAMP RCS Project:

December 20th, 2022: RAMP adopted by the EMRB.

August 2023: Project Kick-off and Information Gathering

September - October 2023: Analysis of existing MDP policies in comparison to the RAMP, proposed implementation of RAMP policies into the MDP Update Project, and drafting of RCS response.

November 21st, 2023: RAMP RCS Project presented to GPC.

December 12th, 2023: Present RAMP RCS Project to Council with motion to send RCS to EMRB for information.

December 20th, 2023: Deadline for submitting RCS to EMRB.

Policy Framework Review

The policy frameworks relevant to the Regional Agriculture Master Plan Regional Context Statement Response are:

1. **Regional Agriculture Master Plan (RAMP):** Section 9 of the RAMP requires EMRB member municipalities to complete a Regional Context Statement within one year of RAMP approval by the Government of Alberta.
2. **Parkland County Strategic Plan 2022-2025:** The proposed motion is consistent with the pillars of the Parkland County Strategic Plan 2022-2025, including Pillar C: Respected Environment and Agriculture.

Alternatives

1. Upon Administration presenting this report on December 12th, 2023, Council may choose to defeat the two above recommendations and request that changes be made to the attached Regional Agriculture Master Plan Regional Context Statement Response.

Next Steps / Conclusion

Administration finds the attached Regional Agriculture Master Plan Regional Context Statement Response to be in alignment with the Regional Context Statement requirements of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board, and supports the two presented motions. If these motions pass, Administration will then send the completed Regional Context Statement to the EMRB for their information.

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Attachments

1. Regional Agriculture Master Plan Regional Context Statement Response - Final
2. Regional Agriculture Master Plan Regional Context Statement Project Presentation – Council – December 12th, 2023