

Topic: Future of Agriculture Study and Action Plan

Introduction:

This report provides background information on the completion of the Future of Agriculture Study and Action Plan.

Facts (Background Information):

In May 2015, Administration began work on the Future of Agriculture Study. All project phases are complete. The project was completed in 2 phases:

PHASE 1
SITUATION REPORT

PHASE 2
FUTURE OF
AGRICULTURE STUDY

WE ARE HERE

Administration is requesting that the Future of Agriculture Study be **accepted as information** and that the Future of Agriculture Study Map and Action Plan **inform future policy development and departmental workplans**.

PROJECT PHASES

Phase 1 – Situation Report - the Phase 1 Situation Report was presented to Council on December 8, 2015.

Phase 2 – Future of Agriculture Study – the Future of Agriculture Vision, Principles and Phase 2 public engagement plan was presented to Council on March 22, 2016. Council approved the vision, principles and public engagement plan at this meeting.

The Future of Agriculture Study helped define what a “successful and vibrant” agricultural community needs in Parkland County. Success needs:

- integration - departments working together on planning, entrepreneurship, and leadership development
- farms are maintained with stronger local food, specialty, and value-added agricultural sectors
- increased awareness of why agriculture is important
- policies that support land conservation, but are flexible to support new farm sectors and ag-related uses
- business and rural leadership training reflects community needs

The Future of Agriculture Study also identified **four principles** for a successful and vibrant agriculture community:

1. **Integration** – the County needs to integrate department activities in land planning, economic development and entrepreneurship, and leadership development
2. **Supportive Land Use Policies** - land policies need to minimize fragmentation of prime agricultural land, yet allow flexibility to support new agricultural sectors (i.e. special crop production, agri-tourism)
3. **Entrepreneurial Culture** - a proactive approach to economic development, business attraction, and training is needed to sustain a viable agriculture community
4. **Foster Local Leadership** - a successful agriculture community needs new leaders and development training for producers, businesses and the rural community.

Administration intends to use the four principles to inform the completion of the Growth Study and new Municipal Development Plan (MDP) in 2017.

Future of Agriculture Study Map

The Future of Agriculture Study map has been created by Council in discussions with Administration.

Administration is seeking to use the map to inform future policy development including the work on the Parkland County Growth Study and completion of the Municipal Development Plan update in 2017.

Phase 3 – Action Plan

The Action Plan has been developed around the four principles. The Action Plan will assist Administration to develop a “made in Parkland County” approach to agriculture and agricultural / rural development. The “made in Parkland approach” will focus on the unique needs and opportunities identified in the County.

Analysis:

The County’s Future of Agriculture Study is the first agriculture study completed by the County. Study findings set the groundwork for a **“made in Parkland approach”** to agriculture in the County.

Work done to date

Several County initiatives that already support a successful and vibrant agricultural community include:

- ✓ - Internal departments are collaborating on ag-related issues. This includes collaborations between Planning and Development, Agricultural Services, and Community Economic and Diversification.
- ✓ - Community Economic Diversification currently offers rural-focused workshops through SMART Parkland and supports rural conferences such as the “Success for Woman in Agri-Food” Conference
- ✓ - Community Economic Diversification enhances rural awareness through programs like the Think Local Market, Rural Café and Culinary Tours.
- ✓ - The County supports education through Alberta Open Farm Days, and the “City Slickers” Program.
- ✓ - Community Sustainability continues to coordinate the ALUS and Green Acreages programs which promotes responsible land practices for ag-producers, hobby farmers, and acreage owners.

Council acceptance of the Future of Agriculture Study, Future of Agriculture Study Map, and Action Plan **is critical at this point** for the following to support other initiatives:

1. Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan –the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan recommends completion of a regional Agricultural Master Plan. The County’s Future of Agriculture Study, future of Agriculture Study Map, and Action Plan may provide greater leverage when refining regional agricultural policies.
2. Other municipal agriculture plans – Leduc County Council accepted an Agriculture Study in July 2016. The County is also completing a new Municipal Development Plan similar. Leduc County anticipates a completion date of spring 2016 for their Municipal Development Plan. Parkland County’s work will contribute to a regional perspective on agriculture.
3. Parkland County Growth Study and MDP update – findings from the Future of Agriculture Study, Future of Agriculture Study Map, and Action Plan are needed to inform the Parkland County Growth Study and the completion of the MDP update in 2017.

The Future of Agriculture Study may also support the County in future regional growth discussions.

Conclusion/Summary:

Administration supports the Future of Agriculture Study, Future of Agriculture Study Map, and Action Plan as presented. Study recommendations identify key elements needed for a successful and vibrant agricultural community. The four principles from the Study (accepted by Council) will also form the basis for creating a “made in Parkland County approach” to agriculture and agricultural / rural development.

The Future of Agriculture Study, Future of Agriculture Study Map, and Action Plan will leverage future regional planning discussions in the Capital Region. Study and Action Plan findings will also assist in the completion of key County projects including the Growth Study and MDP update in 2017.

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