



Strategic Plan 2014-2018



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A vibrant landscape photograph of a rural field. In the foreground, there's a field of yellow wildflowers. Behind it is a golden-brown field, possibly wheat. A line of green trees separates the fields from the background. In the distance, rolling hills are visible under a bright blue sky with wispy white clouds. A brilliant rainbow arches across the upper right portion of the sky. The bottom of the image features a decorative graphic of three overlapping, curved bands in shades of yellow and gold.

PARKLAND COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN 2014 - 2018

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INTRODUCTION

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. Our deeply rooted connection to our land brought us together as a community and, since 1969, our county has been focused on delivering a stable and effective base of core services and investing in an exciting, quality and promising future.

Today, Parkland County can proudly describe itself as a vibrant and diverse community of more than 30,000 rural residents living in a peaceful setting with access to a wide variety of the amenities. We are demonstrating leadership in re-defined rural living while purposefully and deliberately continuing to plan for and make investments in our future.

Parkland County's Strategic Plan for 2014-2018 describes our four-year commitments and 20-year visionary goals to our residents in six areas: Agriculture, Community, Economy, Environment, Governance, and Infrastructure. At the heart of these commitments and goals are our people, as it was our residents and stakeholders, by sharing their experiences and ideas, which helped the county to discover and define the most meaningful path forward. At the heart of these commitments and goals are also four principles that our residents and stakeholders described as fundamental to our success in the past and our potential for the future: diversifying our economy, protecting our natural environment and rural values, collaborating within and outside of our community, and leading the way in modern rural living.



Vision

The land is the tie that binds us. As innovative and responsible land stewards, we are progressive enablers of economic prosperity. We respect the distinctiveness of rural and urban populations. We are, at our core, a reflection of strong rural values.

Mission

Parkland County will be the rural community of choice for its progressive and strategic governance efforts to create one of the most competitive business environments in Alberta, and enhance the lives of our residents in pursuit of quality of life.

VALUES STATEMENTS

Leadership

Parkland County will create a harmonious environment, through mutual respect, trust and support, that will establish the county as a leader in the field of municipal government.

Responsibility

Parkland County will conduct itself in an open and transparent manner, and provide quality service to residents and clients through efficient and effective practices while we undertake continuous improvement.

Progressive

Parkland County will be innovative and creative by capitalizing on opportunities, embracing new technologies, adapting to change, and incorporating best practices.

Cooperation

Parkland County will build and maintain strong relationships with residents, neighbouring municipalities, First Nations communities and other orders of government through collaboration, mutual respect and open communication.

Community

Parkland County believes in the value of communities and will continue to support local groups and organizations. We will create and maintain safe, vibrant, sustainable and prosperous communities by maintaining and expanding infrastructure and services.

PROCESS

PROCESS

The purpose of Parkland County's Strategic Plan is to create a shared understanding among Council, Administration, residents and stakeholders of who we are, where we want to be in the future, and how we intend to arrive there. To achieve this understanding, Parkland County hosted three days of community conversations in Carvel, Clymont, and Entwistle between January 18 and February 1, 2014. It went a step further to host an online survey, open to residents and stakeholders between February 5 and 27, 2014, and focused on validating and building on the themes from the community conversations.

The goal of both engagement activities was to incorporate input to support Council's work to define 20-year goals for Parkland County and, more immediately, four-year commitments to make progress on achieving these visionary goals.

To identify the commitment and goals, Parkland County's Council invited participants to reflect on and discuss achievements and opportunities in six areas described in its previous strategic planning document, updated in February 2013. There were a total of 197 contributors - 58 attended community conversations and 139 shared their views online - and their input was collected, themed and presented to Council. Council worked together to deliberate on and prioritize the community contributions in context of Canadian research and best practices as well as Parkland County's relevant policies and planning documents, including its Municipal Development Plan and Environmental Conservation Master Plan.

STRATEGIC PLAN AREAS OF FOCUS:

2013

2014 - 2018

Agriculture

AGRICULTURE

Quality of Life

COMMUNITY

Economic Development

ECONOMY

Environment

ENVIRONMENT

Governance

GOVERNANCE

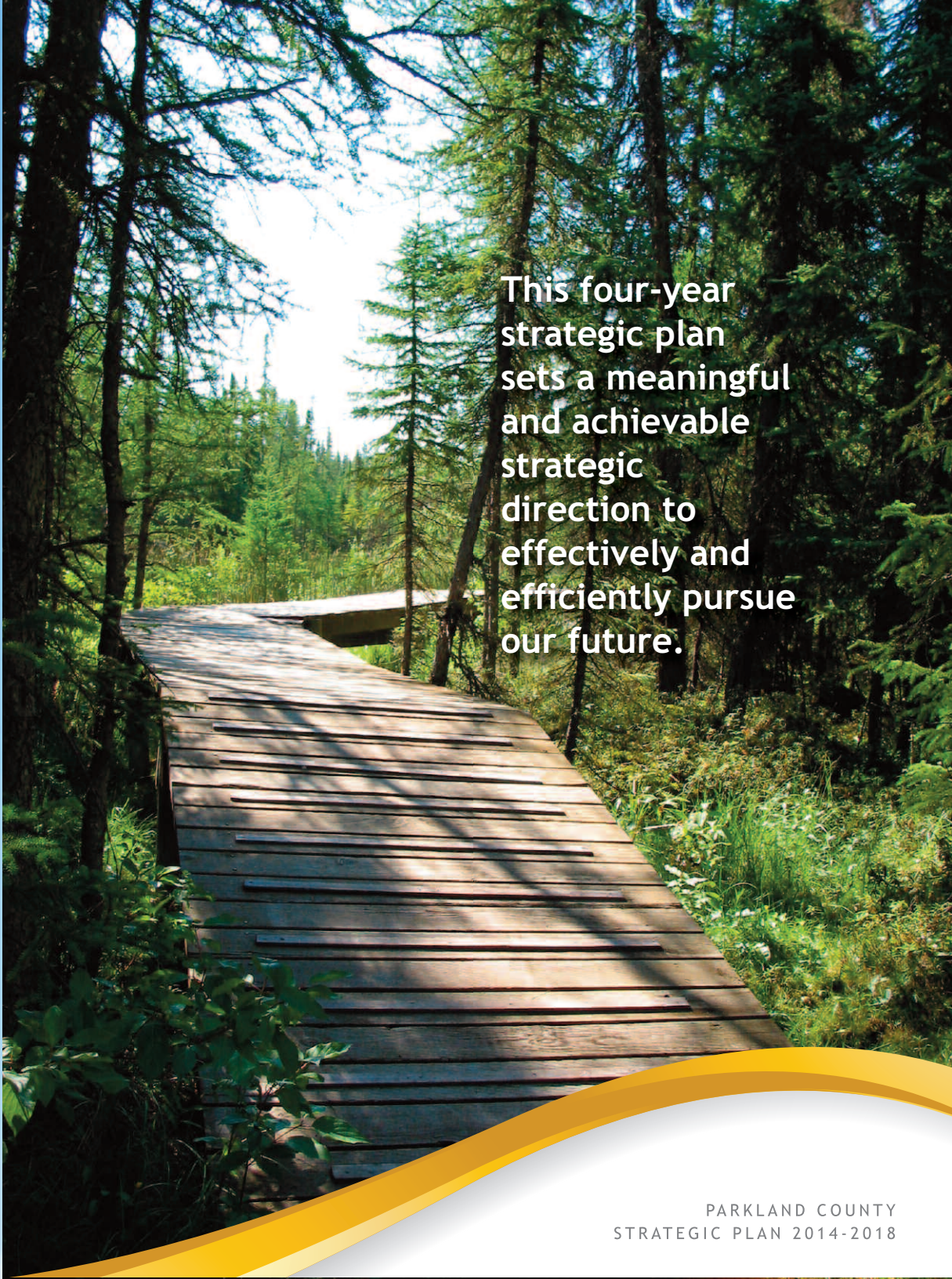
Infrastructure

INFRASTRUCTURE

The 139 contributing community members told Council that Parkland County's primary accountability is to deliver excellent core services, followed closely by upholding four principles that have been fundamental to our success in the past and are equally critical to our future opportunities. These four principles were reflected as: *diversifying our economy, preserving our natural environment and rural values, collaborating within and outside of our community, and leading the way in modern rural living.*

As a result of this input, Council updated two of the six areas of strategic focus. It changed *Quality of Life to Community*, reflecting residents and stakeholders' desire to invest in a safe and healthy community to achieve a high quality of life. It also changed *Economic Development to Economy*, reflecting greater diversity in both Parkland County's role and its accountability to diverse economies, including its employees, residents, and businesses.

This four-year strategic plan sets a meaningful and achievable strategic direction to effectively and efficiently pursue our future. The commitments are actions that we will undertake in the next four years to demonstrate progress and actively work toward our goals and, ultimately, the vision for our community. The six 20-year goals align directly with Parkland County's vision, mission and values.



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AGRICULTURE

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.

FOUR-YEAR COMMITMENTS:

- Assess the current state of agriculture to help identify and connect to viable and profitable markets into the future.
- Support initiatives that provide a local food supply to the region.

20-YEAR GOAL: Parkland County stewards a progressive and viable agri-business community.

COMMUNITY

First and foremost, Parkland County is a community. We are the product of our people, our natural environment, the choices we make in our built environment and our investment in our economies, culture and infrastructure. Parkland County is accountable for providing excellent core services that reflect our community's needs - now and into the future. We are committed to engaging with our residents and stakeholders to make choices and investments that reflect and balance their values.

FOUR-YEAR COMMITMENTS:

- Promote and advance health and wellness opportunities for residents.
- Elevate the sense of community among residents.
- Enhance recreational and cultural opportunities and experiences for residents and visitors.
- Create a viable and resilient community by empowering residents.

20-YEAR GOAL: Parkland County is a safe, inclusive, and healthy community that residents are proud to call home.



COLLABORATING WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OF OUR COMMUNITY: A REGION OF MUNICIPAL ACHIEVEMENTS

In Parkland County we know that it's our people and relationships that allow us to dream and achieve big. We have a proud history of community involvement, including 28 community associations, six playschools, countless sport and recreation organizations and a committed volunteer base. More than this, we have demonstrated the benefits of building strong and collaborative relationships outside our community through our partnership with Stony Plain and Spruce Grove as the Tri-Region Municipalities.

"Our success working in and outside of our community stems from a fundamental belief that everyone's ideas have merit and we are stronger together," explains Mayor Rod Shaigec. "Whether it's opportunities to invest in infrastructure, pursue grants, explore funding models, learn new ways of doing things or to plan for the future by talking, imagining and deliberating together, Parkland County will only be successful if the people in our area and around us are as well."

Parkland County has a strong track record on delivering opportunities through its partnerships with neighboring municipalities, organizations and agencies.

In the past, the Tri-Municipal Region achieved the opening of the TransAlta Tri Leisure Centre, the launch of a regional tourism website, and the distribution of a local amenities map.

"We've learned that our collective efforts allow the tri-region to invest in capital projects and deliver services that would be difficult if not impossible to resource on our own," explains Mayor Shaigec. "We take pride in our status as provincial leaders in rural quality of life, and our strong relationships have a lot to do with our successes."

Parkland County's more recent accomplishments include:

- a Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Sustainability Initiatives and Planning between the Tri-Region Municipalities to combine resources on initiatives that benefit the region;
- securing a Regional Collaboration Grant from the Government of Alberta to develop a Regional Emergency Response Plan; and
- a partnership with the Town of Stony Plain, Alberta Health Services and the Government of Alberta to construct a 14,200 square foot, 10-bay ambulance station in Stony Plain.

community

DIVERSIFYING OUR ECONOMY: STANDING PROUD AS ONE OF ALBERTA'S BEST COMMUNITIES

For the last two years, Parkland County has stood proud as one of Alberta's Top 25 Best Communities for business. This follows its position as one of Alberta's Top 10 communities in 2010. These recent accolades say as much about the county's success in honouring its past as it does about its key to the future.

"We're an inspired community with strong agriculture roots, all the charm that comes with rural living, and a strong vision for a progressive living and investment in agriculture, residential, commercial, industrial and recreational opportunities," says Tom Koep, Manager of Economic Development and Tourism for Parkland County. "We're positioned just outside Edmonton, a strong economic centre, with three industrial areas that are among the most rapidly expanding in Canada."

Year after year Parkland County has been noted for its ability to balance high-growth development opportunities with the protection of its environment, agricultural community, and rural culture.

"Leadership is top of mind for us," says Mr. Koep. "We know that it takes courage and commitment to do things differently and it's paying off for us in dividends."

In addition to being a top Alberta community, Parkland County is a Canadian leader in adopting green energy, transparent and diligent financial reporting, workplace safety, and standards and practices for emergency communications.

ECONOMY

Economy is more than economic development - it also takes into account diverse populations, values, history, geography, natural resources and much more. Parkland County recognizes that shifts, from local to global, are impacting the viability of our local economies, including our organization, our residents, and our commercial, industrial and tourism sectors. We are actively investing in new, differentiating economic infrastructure to support our unique community, and we are actively working to attract and retain businesses that complement our vision.

FOUR-YEAR COMMITMENTS:

- Actively explore partnerships and potential revenue streams that will enhance our future growth and reduce our reliance on property taxes.
- Establish an environment that attracts businesses and allows them to succeed.
- Ensure residents benefit from local employment opportunities that help them achieve personal success.

20-YEAR GOAL: Parkland County benefits from its prosperous and sustainable economy.



economy

ENVIRONMENT

Parkland County is committed to leading Alberta's resurgence in rural living, which is tied to preserving a peaceful and nurturing natural environment while providing a base of infrastructure, amenities and development opportunities available in urban centres. We recognize that strongly embedded principles of environmental stewardship are part of our legacy, and that choosing environmental protection and committing to sustainable practices are critical to our future.

FOUR-YEAR COMMITMENTS:

- Provide environmental education for residents and businesses - either directly or through partnerships.
- Implement measures to protect natural features and resources.
- Ensure development respects the environment.

20-YEAR GOAL: Parkland County respects its natural environment and actively identifies opportunities for environmental protection to act as a steward for future generations.

PRESERVING OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL VALUES: THE POWER BEHIND PARKLAND COUNTY'S RESPECT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

In 2011 and 2012, Parkland County put some power behind its commitment to environmental protection.

It is widely accepted that increasing energy consumption, and particularly the consumption of fossil fuels, is contributing to environmental degradation. As proponents of modern rural living sustained by a healthy ecosystem, Parkland County wanted to offset its energy consumption by investing in renewably sourced energy.

"In 2011, Parkland County purchased 539.04 MWh in Renewable-Energy Certificates and in 2012 another in 506.00 MWh," explains Pat Vincent, Chief Administrative Officer for Parkland County. "These certificates, while not technically electricity, support investments in new and existing renewable energy facilities."

Parkland County purchased its renewable energy from TransAlta, a Canadian company with local ties and electricity production that is 24 per cent renewable. TransAlta owns and operates nearly one-third of Canada's wind capacity, and also generates hydro and geothermal energy.

"By purchasing Renewable-Energy Certificates, we are ensuring that TransAlta supplies over 500 megawatt hours of clean electricity each year," says Mr. Vincent. "More than this, we're actively encouraging TransAlta to make further investments in renewables and we're sending a clear message that Parkland County and all of its residents are standing behind our natural resources and at the forefront of efforts to green our county."

Parkland County residents also have the opportunity to purchase 100 per cent renewable energy through companies like Bullfrog Power or, as an even greater investment in eco-friendly rural living, contribute energy to the grid by generating solar or wind energy.





GOVERNANCE

Parkland County equates governance with leadership. We will provide strong and effective leadership that is built on a foundation of trust through an open and transparent governance model. We believe our success depends on the quality of our relationships and opportunities for collaboration. This includes providing meaningful ways for our residents and stakeholders to affect positive change through engagement opportunities. Excellent governance will position us as the leading rural municipality in Alberta and to deliver exceptional services to our residents and stakeholders.

FOUR-YEAR COMMITMENTS:

- Form strong and meaningful partnerships.
- Deliver quality services in an efficient and economical manner that enables development and growth.
- Ensure resident satisfaction with municipal service delivery.
- Ensure Council policies are effective, responsible, and aligned with its goals and vision.
- Develop effective communications strategies that advance the interests of the County, its residents, and its stakeholders.
- Establish key performance indicators that are clear and measurable with respect to the delivery of municipal services.

20-YEAR GOAL: Parkland County delivers excellent municipal services through open, transparent and collaborative governance.

governance

INFRASTRUCTURE

Parkland County recognizes the importance of providing and maintaining high-quality infrastructure, both horizontal (e.g. roads, bridges, underground power supply) and vertical (i.e. buildings, telecommunication towers, above-ground transmission lines), required for residents' quality of life and to ensure business viability. It also recognizes that capital projects are high-cost investments and will strive to protect the interests of current and future residents.

FOUR-YEAR COMMITMENTS:

- Ensure infrastructure keeps pace with growth.
- Preserve, maintain, and upgrade existing infrastructure to maximize its life expectancy.

20-YEAR GOAL: Parkland County is a powerfully connected community with quality infrastructure.

...one of the world's
**21 Intelligent
Communities
for the year...**

infra
structure

LEADING THE WAY IN MODERN RURAL LIVING: SMART21 INTELLIGENT COMMUNITY OF 2014

Standing on the world stage with five Canadian urban counterparts as the most decorated country for 2014, Parkland County accepted its place as one of the world's 21 Intelligent Communities for the year.

"This is no small feat," explains Mayor Rod Shaigec. "Parkland County is a world leader in embracing and making use of broadband technology – we've been recognized for having the foresight and commitment to step up and embrace the incredible opportunities that internet technology can provide our residents."

Parkland County was recognized for completing a core network of 18 communications towers in the area, and embracing the opportunities associated with a knowledge-based workforce, innovation and digital inclusion.



"We're committed to strong infrastructure – it's the foundation for our success," says Mayor Shaigec. **"And we're equally invested in enabling people to use the technology to improve their lives, careers, business and communities."**

Parkland County's commitment is to leverage broadband to build vibrant rural communities centered on agriculture. The county is working with Green Hectares, an Alberta-based nonprofit that delivers tech-based education, mentorship and knowledge sharing, to bring all elements of an Intelligent Community to life. Part of this work includes making the most of free wifi in community halls, while another focus is e-government – such as online applications and live streaming of County Council meetings.

Although in the early stages of pursuing its aspirations, Parkland County is one of the few rural Intelligent Communities around the world and an excellent example of how new technology can both support and modernize time-honoured ways of living.



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