

South Peace Comprehensive Development Plan BACKGROUND ON GUIDING PRINCIPLES & CONSIDERATIONS

Guiding Principles

The following six guiding principles were utilized in the decision making process for allocating land to meet future demand. Following a description of the guiding principle, some questions are posed as an evaluation checklist that was used in considering if the options that have been developed meet the intent and spirit of the principle.

1 Safeguard the Natural Environment

The first principle is to safeguard the natural environment. The South Peace CDP study area contains several significant natural environmental features. These include the Pouce Coupe, Dawson Creek and South Dawson Creek riparian areas and wetlands such as McQueen Slough and other smaller wetlands elsewhere. These areas provide important habitat and are home to blue-listed endangered species in the Provincial Register. This principle seeks to avoid allocating new development in areas with environmental values, and to protect existing natural areas to the greatest extent possible. This principle also directs future development away from sites where there may be greater potential for erosion, flooding or unstable slopes.

Evaluation Checklist

- Are newly designated areas located a suitable distance away from environmentally sensitive areas or areas with high environmental values?
- Are new areas a suitable distance away from existing watercourses, respecting the new Riparian Areas Regulation?



- Are areas where endangered species are identified protected?
- Are wetlands avoided where possible?
- Is property protected from potential erosion, flooding or unstable slopes?

2 Support Growth and Economic Development

One of the most important objectives of the South Peace CDP is to ensure that there is sufficient land allocated to support the region's growth and development. This principle comprises two parts. The first is to designate a long-term, 15 year land supply to meet anticipated growth. The second part of this principle is to recognize that a sufficient land base will allow the South Peace to take advantage of the unprecedented, significant resource-based growth in the area. Rather than economic growth occurring in the Grande Prairie, Alberta area and beyond, Dawson Creek and area would like to capture the residential, commercial and industrial growth here, and provide employment and income closer to where resource development is occurring.

Evaluation Checklist

- Is sufficient land allocated to meet anticipated demand?
- Is sufficient land reserved to meet unanticipated demand so that the South Peace can participate in significant new development opportunities?
- Do newly designated areas support economic development?
- How would the areas be perceived from the standpoint of an investor?

3 Maintain Agricultural Integrity

Much of the South Peace CDP study area consists of productive agricultural lands and has been referred to as the 'Breadbasket of British Columbia'. Most of these lands lie within the Agricultural Land Reserve and are characterized by high agricultural capability (most of the lands are Class 2). While the designation of land for urban development has come from agricultural use in the past, and will likely come from agricultural use in the future, the designation of future land can



be accomplished in a way that maintains the agricultural integrity of the resource base. All future land use designations should consider ways of minimizing any impacts to agriculture and protecting the agricultural base.

Evaluation Checklist

- What level of agricultural integrity would exist if new developments were to be established?
- What is the viability of existing farming operations if an adjustment were made?
- Has the agricultural productivity and intensity of farm use been considered?
- What is the potential for urban-farm land use conflict?

4 Promote Conservation

The principle of promoting conservation does not only apply to agriculture but extends to the entire approach of the comprehensive development planning exercise. Promoting conservation means utilizing our land base in a wise and efficient way. It is not a wise use of resources to extend infrastructure services long distances, for example, if it is uncertain they will ever be utilized. While land may be allocated as part of the plan, the utilization of new lands for urban development may occur when demand materializes. For this CDP, conservation implies avoiding significant infrastructure upgrades that in turn will involve significant capital costs, expenditure of energy and consumption of raw materials.

Evaluation Checklist

- Is land use allocation commensurate with expected demand?
- Does the preferred future land use pattern promote compact development?
- To what extent are new developments encouraged in areas where there are existing services or areas where services can readily be made available?
- Is the preferred future land use pattern supportive of energy conservation?



5 Employ a Regional Planning Approach

This CDP is unique in that it involves the participation and co-operation of three local governments: the Peace River Regional District, the City of Dawson Creek and the Village of Pouce Coupe. All three jurisdictions' interests and unique attributes will be considered, but planning decisions—including land use allocations—will be based on what makes sense from a regional perspective. This approach will facilitate a strategic and comprehensive approach as aspects such as the natural environment, agricultural use and transportation are best considered at a regional (or in this case sub-regional) rather than a local scale.

Evaluation Criteria

- Has consideration been given to regional considerations such as the natural environment, agriculture and transportation?
- Are decisions being made on a regional basis?
- Are the attributes unique to the Peace River Regional District, the City of Dawson Creek and the Village of Pouce Coupe considered?

6 Support Effective Land Use Planning

The final principle is to support effective land use planning. Proximity and connectivity to existing services such as transportation, schools, parks and shopping is desirable. In a similar way, areas which are readily serviced by infrastructure and utilities, in terms of their capacity and condition, are preferable than areas which require new and more costly facilities. It is also desirable that new areas are connected to or are logical extensions of existing neighbourhoods and business sectors rather than 'leapfrog' developments that require greater expenditures and consumption of resources. Indeed, it is hoped that this CDP will inform and provide direction to localized planning efforts of the Regional District, City and Village once this exercise is completed.

Evaluation Criteria



- For residential uses, is there good connectivity to existing services such as schools, parks, recreation and shopping?
- Are newly designated areas well connected to or logical extensions of existing districts?
- Are any potential negative external impacts minimized (e.g. visual, noise, air)?
- To what level are graduated land use patterns applied which would reduce the potential for conflicts between different land uses?

Considerations

In developing options for long-term land use allocation, the following eight considerations were taken into account. These considerations have been entered into a geographic information system model as layers to assist in decision making.

1 Environmentally Sensitive and Hazardous Areas

Most of the environmentally sensitive and hazardous areas consist of riparian areas, including the Pouce Coupe River, Dawson Creek and South Dawson Creek. There are also a number of wetlands which provide habitat for wildlife and waterfowl. Wetlands locations were identified using data provided from the Ministry of Environment's Conservation Data Centre and air photo interpretation. Most of these areas can be avoided or mitigated for future land use allocation.

2 Ownership

Another consideration is ownership. It is preferable to have multiple owners providing land to promote choice and a more competitive market. More sellers of land translate into a more competitive market. While this consideration applies to commercial and industrial properties, it should be most importantly considered for residential uses where an uncompetitive market now exists.



3 Agriculture

Agriculture can be considered in a number of different ways. The ALR boundary provides a starting point as agricultural land protected by provincial legislation. Soil capability classifications for agriculture provide a good indication of the relative range of crops the land can produce. Beyond these two mapped indicators, we can look at topography (flatter is better for the cereal and oilseed crops the South Peace produces), size of parcel, intensity of farm use, visual impact and adjacent uses. The sum of these considerations may help us evaluate how well the Plan maintains agricultural integrity.

4 Official Community Plan Designations

Official Community Plan designations are indicators of preferred future land use patterns. Adopted as bylaws, they have been endorsed by either Board or Council. The land use requirements discussed above consist of land that is needed beyond and in addition to that already designated by Official Community Plan. Yet Official Community Plan designations in the vicinity of new allocations of land for more intensive land uses can be considered. For example, it is generally desirable to have a gradient of the intensity of land uses than an abrupt change from one land use to another. Thus, taking into account Official Community Plan land use designations and policies enables us to make wise land use allocation decisions.

5 Servicing

Servicing as a consideration refers to the ability to provide infrastructure and utility services to greenfield locations. These services include water, sewer, drainage, roads, hydro and telecommunications. It is preferable to allocate future land uses to areas that can be readily serviced by infrastructure. Typically, these are locations that are close to existing trunk services where there is sufficient capacity to make extensions.



6 Proximity to Transportation

An important consideration is proximity to major transportation routes, particularly for commercial and industrial uses. Most of these uses need good road access to arterial routes which provide good mobility and access to Provincial Highways. Uses that may bring negative externalities such as noise and dust are often not compatible with residential uses. For industrial and some commercial uses, access to the CN Rail Line is advantageous for the storage and transport of goods.

7 Aspect

Dawson Creek could be described as a winter city at a high northern latitude. There is only one other city with a larger population than Dawson Creek at a higher latitude in British Columbia. Energy and heating costs are significant in the winter time, made even more significant by retail natural gas prices. Parcels that have southern exposure or are level are preferable to north facing slopes.

8 Air Quality

Future industrial development, especially heavy industrial development, may emit smoke, dust and odour, which in turn may contribute to relative air quality. The community of Dawson Creek rests in a valley and is surrounded by hills to the north, south and west. The direction of maximum hourly wind speed measured at Dawson Creek Airport is from the southwest and west. This would seem to indicate that, for Dawson Creek, preferable locations for heavy industry would be more toward the north and east.

