The County of Grande Prairie No. 1
Strategic Plan 2011-2014

Laying the Foundation for the Future
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Introduction

A gentle mix of rolling hills and prairie provide grand, breathtaking vistas in this land of endless sky and days filled with sunshine. Add to those blessings a near perfect union of wilderness, small-town life with big-city amenities, and industry to find the County of Grande Prairie.

Located in Alberta’s northwest, the County of Grande Prairie stretches east from the British Columbia border to the Smoky River, and south from the Saddle Hills to the Wapiti River. Covered partly with a lush, mixed forest, and with the rich, dark soil that makes grain farming a natural here, the County of Grande Prairie is sprinkled with small towns and hamlets. The ease and welcome of the communities of Sexsmith and Clairmont to the north, Wembley, Beaverlodge and Hythe to the west, Valhalla Centre and LaGlace to the northwest, Teepee Creek to the northeast, Bezanson to the east, and Elmworth to the southwest are found within the first-established county in Alberta. Within its borders also lies the City of Grande Prairie, that along with the County, creates a vibrant regional service centre for northwestern Alberta, northeastern British Columbia and the Northwest Territories.

The County of Grande Prairie is home to innovative farming practices, progressive industry, diverse recreational opportunities, and the small-town friendliness that makes everyone feel at home.
To introduce the 2011-2014 Strategic Plan, I’d first like to recognize the efforts of our staff. During the past several months, pretty much everyone at the County of Grande Prairie has had some level of input into its development. Our staff has given thoughtful consideration to how their jobs – and the decisions they make every day – help achieve the overall goals of the organization. Everyone who works here impacts our success.

The Strategic Plan outlines how we will continue to be a progressive, forward-thinking municipality while maintaining our values of safe, viable communities, fiscal responsibility, environmental protection, and effective regional partnerships.

Rather than a comprehensive list of our services, the Strategic Plan identifies key themes and goals – the guiding principles of our organization. It tells us what we want to achieve, but not how to do it. The more detailed business plans, developed by each department, determine how, on a day-to-day level, we take the small steps to achieve overall success.

The Strategic Plan is an overarching framework: It describes our vision, our values and the goals we expect to achieve during the next three years and beyond.

In addition to our core business of providing affordable, high quality municipal services and infrastructure, we will continue to develop partnerships and opportunities to benefit the region as a whole. We see working together with other levels of government, and that of neighbouring municipalities, as being crucial to the sustained, long-term viability of the region’s economy. We will seek opportunities, advocate, and lead in the development of the Grande Prairie Region as a regional service centre “of choice” for investors. Regional partnerships lead to diversity, spin-off, and value-added opportunities that translate into long-term economic stability and improved quality of life for residents.

That said, we remain committed to managing growth, to protecting the environment and preserving the County’s rural heritage and lifestyle.

We embrace the adventurous, co-operative, and entrepreneurial spirit that brought pioneers here a century ago. We believe the region still has much to offer.

Sincerely,

Reeve Everett McDonald
Our County

- Our area covers 5,570 sq. kms
- Our boundaries include
  - **3 Towns** (Beaverlodge, Sexsmith, Wembley),
  - **5 Hamlets** (Bezanson, Clairmont, LaGlace, Teepee Creek, Valhalla Centre),
  - and **1 Village** (Hythe)
**Strategic Planning Process**

In its simplest form, strategic planning is the process by which the County envisions its future and develops a strategic plan to achieve that future.

By going through this process, we can align our Strategic Themes and Goals with the day-to-day work of employees through the use of Departmental Business Plans. Departments develop their budgets to support their 3 year business plans and align with the County’s Strategic Plan. Defining our vision, values, and goals builds the foundation for our annual budget. Specific action-oriented goals are identified and resources allocated to provide meaningful services.

Bi-annual reports are provided to Council to measure progress toward achieving our goals in the most efficient and effective ways during the fiscal year.
Our Vision

The County of Grande Prairie No.1 focuses on people, their quality of life and diversity of opportunity while enabling success through cooperation and progressive leadership.

Values

Our values are the building blocks that guide our actions and the pillars of the service we provide.

We believe that at the centre of everything that we do are the people that we serve.

We believe that our primary purpose is to provide quality of life in safe, viable communities and recognize that this is best done through good, progressive and responsive municipal governance; effective, professional Administration; quality, affordable services and infrastructure; and, lifestyle choice.

We value clean air, clean water, our natural environment, our open spaces and our agricultural heritage and recognize that we must balance our duty to be good stewards of all these assets, with our responsibility to manage growth in our community.

We value fiscal responsibility and good financial management.

We recognize that we as a municipality do not and cannot exist in isolation of our neighbour municipalities and believe that a key to our success lies in ongoing communication, cooperation and collaboration with them.

We also believe that ongoing communication, cooperation and collaboration extend to other orders of government, public sector agencies and the private and volunteer sectors.

We believe that our region has much to offer and that through sound planning and good policies we can create the conditions that will foster an entrepreneurial spirit and encourage sustainable agriculture, industry and other economic development and tourism pursuits as cornerstones of our prosperity now and into the future.

We hold ourselves to a high standard of conduct and are committed to acting in the best interests of the community as a whole.

Above all else, we value integrity in all things.
The Strategic Themes are in essence, the strategic pathways that lead to the accomplishment of the Vision.

They are:

1.0 – Thinking Regionally;
2.0 – Providing Quality Municipal Services and Infrastructure;
3.0 – Encouraging Community Development Across the Region;
4.0 – Managing Economic Development Across the County; and
5.0 – Promoting Environmental Stewardship.

The first four of these Strategic Themes also align with the main themes of the County’s Municipal Sustainability Plan (MSP).

1.0 THINKING REGIONALLY
The County sees itself as an active collaborator and leader in the development of the area as the regional service centre of choice. Strong cooperation is critical to achieving success as a region; to this end the County has strong relationships with all of the communities that are within its boundaries. As the area continues to develop, these relationships will become increasingly important in the context of the County’s goals and vision.

Goals:

1.1 Enhance effective working relationships with other orders of government, other municipal governments and other agencies, organizations and groups;
1.2 Monitor and respond to the Provincial Land Use Framework and Water for Life Strategy;
1.3 Continue to seek out new and renew existing partnerships and opportunities with external stakeholders (where effective).
Strategic Themes

2.0 PROVIDING QUALITY MUNICIPAL SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Providing services and infrastructure is at the heart of the basic function of a municipality and is important to achieving the County’s Vision. As the area continues to grow, the County will be placed under increasing demand to provide additional services and infrastructure traditionally more urban in nature. Providing these in a logical and sustainable manner is crucial to the long term success of the region.

Goals:

2.1 Ensuring adequate staffing and resources are provided to achieve desired service levels;

2.2 Enhance purchasing practices;

2.3 Encourage and attend different meetings and open houses (internal and external) to promote efficient and effective municipal government through open and transparent communications;

2.4 Promote training and education for staff and Council to enhance the professionalism of staff and Council;

2.5 Maintain and enhance community safety;

2.6 Encourage and promote recreation, culture and related services;

2.7 Review and update current service levels;

2.8 Develop and maintain high-quality infrastructure to ensure sustainable growth;

2.9 Research new technology and innovation that will benefit the County.
Strategic Themes

3.0 ENCOURAGING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACROSS THE REGION

The County has identified a number of strategic areas throughout its borders where the majority of growth and development will be directed. As growth has occurred in the area, the County has been challenged to deal with issues traditionally more urban in nature. County residents live in urban and rural communities. Urban areas are intended to be focal points for major subdivision and development activity. By concentrating growth in these areas, the County encourages the preservation of rural areas for rural based land uses. As residents have continued to locate in the County’s urban areas, the County has identified the need for additional community facilities and programs, and expanded opportunities for recreation.

Goals:

3.1 Support communities’ vision with technical and physical resources;

3.2 Support our communities and organizations.
4.0 MANAGING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACROSS THE COUNTY

The County of Grande Prairie is open for business and is committed to managing growth in a manner that promotes sustainable economic development and preserves the region’s quality of life and environment. The need to pursue opportunities to diversify the economy is critical to achieving the County’s vision however; the County recognizes that this must be done in a sustainable manner conscious of the environment.

Goals:

4.1 Fostering an economic climate where quality investment opportunities are welcomed and enable the County to be the preferred choice for investment opportunity;

4.2 Promote responsible and sustainable economic development and explore new business opportunities;

4.3 Balance economic development with quality of life;

4.4 Diversify our economy.
5.0 PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

The County of Grande Prairie is a strong supporter of promoting environmental stewardship through the research and implementation of economically viable policies. This balanced policy approach is an effective instrument for guiding development and future growth in an ecologically sustainable direction, while preserving the economic vitality within the region. The County recognizes the need to partner with adjacent municipalities and regional neighbours to develop strategies for protecting watersheds, habitats and biodiversity and to establish ecological networks that benefit the region as a whole.

Goals:

5.1 Research and implement economically viable sustainability “best practices”;

5.2 Increase environmental awareness and minimize our footprint on the environment;

5.3 Protect our natural and agricultural environment;

5.4 Encourage balanced and achievable environmental policy development.
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