



County of  
Grande Prairie No. 1

# County of Grande Prairie

2020 Annual Report



[countygp.ab.ca](http://countygp.ab.ca)

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## Message from the Reeve



In a tradition of open and transparent reporting, I am pleased to present the 2020 Annual Report. Bringing a municipality through an economic downturn and global pandemic involves leading from the heart and mind. Council and staff faced flooding, wildfires and COVID-19 head-on, seizing opportunities for learning, improvements and progress.

We pivoted to connect with citizens in new ways. The County shifted processes online, livestreamed Council meetings, launched a new, more accessible website, and connected citizens with mental health supports. We also launched assistance programs and forged partnerships for businesses and individuals to provide security, stability and financial support.

Despite the pandemic, we announced major transportation developments, opened a new fire station, offered free and safe recreation activities, and contributed over \$6 million to local groups.

Building strong relations with the Province and our municipal neighbours is a continued priority. 2020

marked completion of six of our required seven Intermunicipal Collaboration Frameworks. Working with the City, we successfully identified several areas of further collaboration. We are now moving forward with mandated arbitration on outstanding issues.

By refreshing our Vision and Strategic Plan for 2020-2025, we created a roadmap that balances community building with fiscal responsibility, speaking to a vision of the County that is vibrant and resilient. The Plan establishes seven key strategic themes: Economic Development is the top priority. We're growing our economic base, helping keep municipal taxes low, and engaging with potential investors. And we continue to lobby the Province to ensure existing businesses are equipped for growth and success.

These past months, I've been inspired by the kindness and solidarity of people across the County. With you, I celebrate our successes. What we have accomplished was made possible by a collective dedication to working together to build a livable, resilient community.

Leanne Beaupre, Reeve

## Message from the CAO



Last year was a year of building on successes and embarking on new ones. Guided by our new multi-year Strategic Plan, the County worked diligently to continue to provide exceptional services that contribute to our unrivaled quality of life.

The year proved that our organization (Council and staff) and our entire community are resilient when faced with adversity. Empathy and perseverance have made us stronger.

Every County department made changes to remain safely open and ensure continuity of services. We've built:

- a healthier and more inclusive workplace;
- a culture of innovation where staff can reach their full potential;
- service excellence while leveraging expertise across the County through increased relationship building;
- an enhanced commitment to County values – assessing all we do through the lenses of transparency, accountability, collaboration and trust.

Staff continually seek new ways of doing things so our communities can evolve and citizens can thrive. We're focused on finding savings and efficiencies, and increasing our fiscal responsibility. Given the uncertain financial impact and duration of the pandemic, the County's investments during 2020 were smart and strategic.

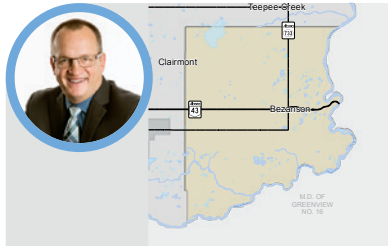
I thank our staff for their resilience and County Councillors for their support equipping and resourcing staff to take care of residents and business. A sincere thank you to residents and businesses for your support and understanding this past year.

For a community to grow, it must be a place of options and opportunities. The following pages present the County's progress toward the County's strategic priorities that support our community's growth. This report illuminates our accomplishments, which build on a foundation of citizen input and community values.

Joulia Whittleton, CAO

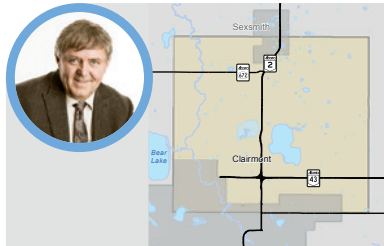
# County Divisions & Area Councillor Contact Information

Find out what division you live or do business in, as well as which Councillor represents you and how to reach them. To learn what boards and committees they serve on, visit [www.countygp.ab.ca/committees](http://www.countygp.ab.ca/committees).



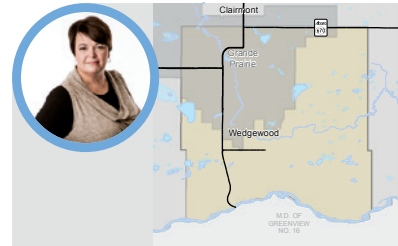
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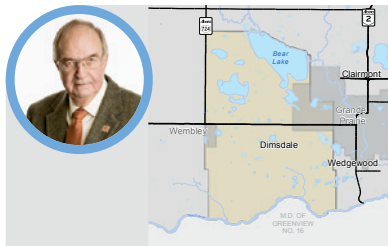
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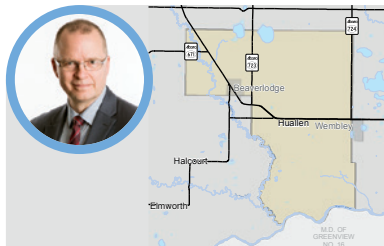
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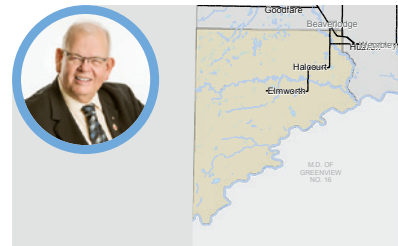
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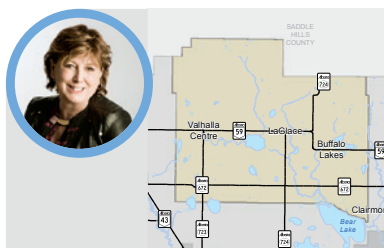
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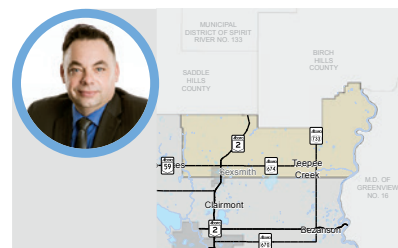
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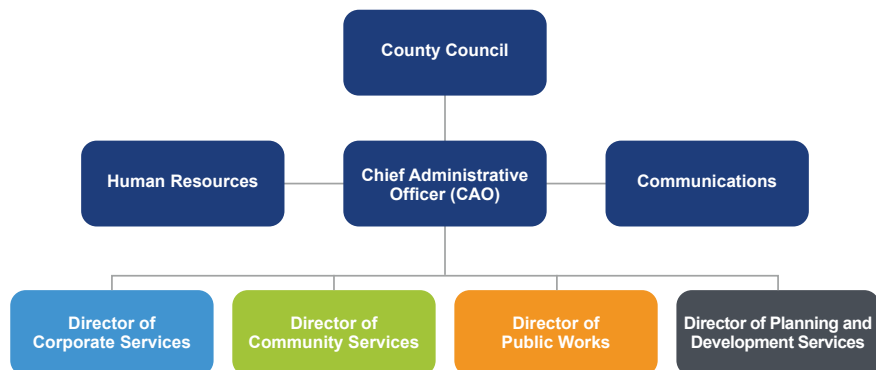
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# Organizational Chart



## Former Organizational Chart





## 2020 and COVID-19

### The Year the County Learned What it Meant to Be Truly Resilient

2020 will always be remembered for the COVID-19 pandemic, an event that has impacted each of us in so many ways. As the “COVID-19 storm” hit our communities last March, this microscopic virus penetrated our sense of safety and security.

The first priority for County Council and Administration was the safety of the public and our staff. Together Council and staff sifted through information asking: What are the most urgent and greatest needs? Who are the most vulnerable?

Customer service took on new meaning as we looked at new ways of reaching out to the community.

#### Protecting Lives and Livelihoods

We set out to look at options to provide immediate and longer-term economic relief measures, and support and protection for residents, businesses and organizations across the County and the region, as well as County staff. How did we reach out?

- We’ve been unwavering in our commitment to provide essential and high quality municipal services – ensuring staff and public safety.
- Council reversed a proposed 1 per cent municipal tax increase for 2020 and implemented a 1.2 per cent decrease.
- Council extended the deadline to pay property taxes from June 30 to October 30.
- We adjusted and innovated to look at new ways of reaching out to the community.
- We implemented new virtual and online tools so citizens can continue to engage with us.
- We continue to provide mental health supports and information on resources.
- In partnership with GPREP (Grande Prairie Regional Emergency Partnership) and other partners, we addressed emergency needs of residents and businesses across the region.



## A Coordinated Response

More than ever, the coordinated approach the County has taken to address COVID-19 across the region has shown us that resiliency grows from cooperation and partnerships.

Since March 2020, **GPREP** put the following supports and programming in place for residents and businesses in the GPREP service area:

The **COVID-19 Community Care Program: Food & Pharmacy** ensured vulnerable residents had access to essential items like food and medication.

The **Essential Service Resource and PPE4Biz programs** provided businesses and other local organizations with access to essential items like masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, and other equipment when safety supplies were scarce during our economic reopening last May.

The **Business Ambassador Program** has connected over 3,300 businesses throughout our region with supports to meet provincial COVID-19 regulations.

Today, the program has expanded to align with the **Business Resiliency Taskforce**, a partnership between the County of Grande Prairie, City of Grande Prairie and the Grande Prairie & District Chamber of Commerce. Together we provide a unified approach to supporting local businesses during these unprecedented times. Initiatives include digital training for businesses, a **#LoveLocalGP** Facebook contest and more.

The County and City partnered to implement a **Voluntary Mask Wearing Campaign** to support health and safety across the region.

## Cost of Covid Response

True to its pre-pandemic commitment, since the earliest days of COVID-19, County Council has continued to balance fiscal responsibility and safe delivery of quality municipal services. In 2020, the County spent \$2.2 million on COVID-19 related expenses. All of these expenses were covered by a provincial Municipal Operating Support Transfer (MOST) grant. These grants were directed to Alberta municipalities to help offset financial difficulties linked to the pandemic. A sincere thanks to the Province for its support.

## How Are We Moving Forward Towards a Sustainable Future?

- **With vision!** We have been very deliberate in setting up processes so in difficult times, like 2020, the County will continue to earn on investments, which generates revenue.
- Today, Council and Administration continue to plan and **be responsible stewards of County finances**. Operationally, we are focused on finding internal efficiencies and new streamlined innovative ways of working.
- We're very community focused. We're **making strategic investments and leading strategic projects and initiatives** that will grow and diversify our economy, and drive prosperity and community well-being.



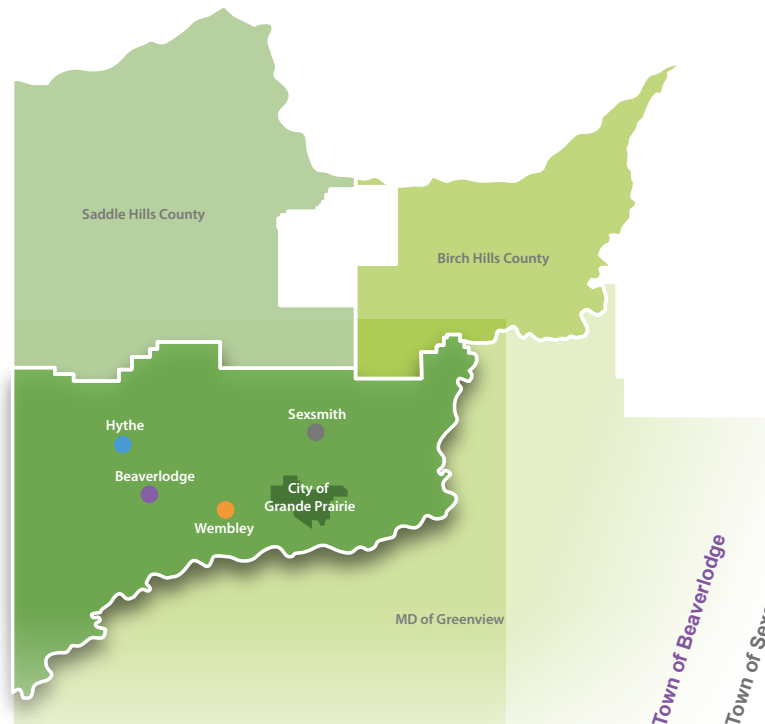
# Intermunicipal Collaboration

The County has a long history of successful cooperation and cost-sharing in the delivery of services in the region. We have many successful agreements with our neighbouring municipalities, each of those tailored for the particular needs of our communities. By harnessing the power of working together, intermunicipal partnerships help our communities thrive.

## Shared Service Agreements with neighbouring municipalities

Long before the provincial government required formal agreements between municipalities that share borders (Intermunicipal Collaboration Frameworks), the County has had long-standing agreements in place to provide and/or share services with our neighbours for more efficient and effective delivery, to the benefit of both communities.

### Agreements for Services in Place with our Neighbours



	<i>Town of Beaverlodge</i>	<i>Town of Sexsmith</i>	<i>Town of Wembley</i>	<i>Village of Hythe**</i>	<i>MD of Greenview</i>	<i>City of Grande Prairie</i>	<i>Saddle Hills County</i>	<i>Birch Hills County</i>
Animal Control			✓	✓				
Assessment and Geographic Information Systems	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Economic Development					✓*	✓*		
Emergency Services (varies by municipality)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Family and Community Support Services (FCSS)	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Joint Home Support Program Services			✓					
Pest Control							✓	
Regional Public Transit	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Road Maintenance	✓		✓					✓
Safety Codes Services	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Solid Waste Services							✓	
Subdivision and Development Appeals and Assessment Appeals	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Weed Inspections	✓	✓	✓	✓				

\*Tri-Municipal Industrial Partnership paused May 2020 \*\*Hythe became a hamlet of the County in 2021



## Intermunicipal Collaboration Frameworks

During 2020, the most notable achievement for the County was the completion of three more Intermunicipal Collaboration Frameworks (ICFs) with our neighbours, for a total of six of our required seven ICFs successfully completed. ICFs are a tool to facilitate cooperation between neighbouring municipalities to ensure efficient and cost effective municipal services.

The County completed ICFs with Beaverlodge, Sexsmith and Wembley that solidify agreements already in place for shared services, detail how those services are funded and delivered, and outline how the County will contribute to each community for the use of services and facilities by County residents, keeping in mind the unique needs of each municipality.

All current agreements include annual funding increases of up to three per cent, depending on the service/facility. The ICFs also identify terms for a committee of equal representation from both municipalities that will meet regularly to develop recommendations on strategic direction and cooperation on matters affecting residents.

### Town of Beaverlodge

The County-Beaverlodge ICF lists services currently provided by both municipalities, and information on how these services are funded and delivered. It also sets out the terms and conditions on which the County will support recreation funding to the Town for facilities and programming provided by the Town to County residents. During 2020, the County contributed \$499,000 in recreation funding to Beaverlodge, including:

- \$24,000 to maintain greenspace and playing fields
- \$350,000 towards the indoor pool and gymnasium
- \$125,000 to operate the indoor ice arena

The County will also pay 50 per cent of the cost to repair the roof of the indoor arena, up to \$175,000.

### Town of Sexsmith

The County-Sexsmith ICF formalizes existing agreements that were already in place with Sexsmith, including how shared services are funded and delivered, and outlines two new agreements for Community Services and Capital Replacement.

Under the Community Services agreement, the County will provide annual community services funding to Sexsmith. The agreement sets out the terms and

conditions for the funding, which is to be directed to recreation services in community facilities owned or operated by the Town that are open to County residents.

In 2021, the County will pay \$107,884 in recreation operational funding to the Town of Sexsmith, which includes:

- \$24,000 to maintain greenspace and public parks in the Town
- \$4,508 to support operations at the Town's Community Centre and \$4,779 for the Civic Centre
- \$74,597 to operate the indoor ice arena

The agreement also addresses the ongoing financial need for repairs and maintenance of existing facilities. Over a period of five years, the County will contribute up to \$369,585 towards these facilities, proportionally with the Town.

The Capital Replacement agreement outlines that the County will share proportionate construction costs for the replacement of community facilities, benefitting residents of Sexsmith and the County.

### Town of Wembley

The County-Wembley ICF lists services currently provided by both municipalities, and information on how these services are funded and delivered.

During 2020, the County contributed funding to the Town of Wembley and to the local Agricultural Society, including:

- \$24,000 to the Town to maintain greenspace and playing fields
- \$6,000 to support recreational programming through the Town that is offered to County residents
- \$70,000 to the Wembley & District Agricultural Society to operate the indoor ice arena

### Other ICFs

The County signed ICFs with the MD of Greenview, Saddle Hills County and Birch Hills County in 2019. Our ICF with the City of Grande Prairie has been referred to arbitration. All ICFs and service agreements with our neighbours are available on the County website.

## Community grants

Visit Page 11 to read about the County's contribution to community groups across the region.



## Advocacy Update

Through mutual cooperation and building strategic partnerships, the County is able to enhance our reach, resources and impact.

### Advocacy Priorities

The County of Grande Prairie continually reviews and updates our advocacy plan to ensure it is current and best reflects the most pressing needs and priorities of our residents, businesses and stakeholders. We advocate to the provincial and federal governments on a number of issues that impact community well-being and quality of life.

#### 2020 advocacy priorities:

**Priority 1** – Increased Economic Development

**Priority 2** – Critical Transportation

**Priority 3** – A New Health Facility for Beaverlodge

**Priority 4** – Provincial Support for the Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum

**Priority 5** – Combating Rural Crime

**Priority 6** – Increasing the profile of the County of Grande Prairie within the Government of Alberta

### Moving forward: Advocacy Update

The following are highlights of advocacy achievements in 2020:

- Cost-sharing with the Province and MD of Greenview: Highway 40 twinning and improvements. County investment - \$10 million.
- Cost-sharing with the Province: Paving 10 km of Highway 724 north of La Glace. County investment - 25 per cent to a maximum of \$2 million.
- As a member of the Mountview Health Complex Committee with the Grande Spirit Foundation, Alberta Health Services and the Town of Beaverlodge, the County is helping steer advancement of a new health facility in Beaverlodge. In early 2021, an RFP was issued seeking an operator or capital partner to supply capital and expertise.
- The County and the RCMP are exploring a partnership to build an RCMP Rural Detachment in Clairmont and bring County Regional Enforcement under the same roof. Beaverlodge would still retain a detachment.
- In February 2020, we hosted the United Conservative Party (UCP) caucus retreat in the County of Grande Prairie. This was a chance to bring local priorities and issues to the attention of the Province.

# Flooding in our Backyard: Protecting People and Property

## Road repairs and rebuilding for readiness

Flooding over the past several years has meant rising costs for the County of Grande Prairie to repair flood damage, restore the environment and mitigate future damage. In 2020, spring flooding and wet conditions caused extensive damage to County roads and infrastructure, as well as to private property in the County. Managing surface water is a key priority for the County.

In 2020 alone, County Council approved an estimated \$1.015 million to address flooding issues on County property and private land. In some areas, roads were completely flooded over or washed out. This work also included measures to help reduce the risk of future flooding.

This funding is over and above the existing \$2 million budget Council had previously set aside for road repairs due to wet conditions, as well as \$515,000 for a Ditch Cleaning Program for 2020 (see below).

## Planning and partnering to protect our communities

As issues with flooding become a growing challenge for the County, our ability to adapt to more frequent extreme weather events will be key to ensuring long term social and economic stability.

In addition to the road and infrastructure work by Public Works, a new County Surface Water Management Policy is being developed. The policy is a tool to ensure we are proactive in our efforts to address surface water issues, and will serve as a guide for those efforts to help prevent future flooding.

The County is also working with Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) around roles and responsibilities for flooding and erosion protections and responses. We are required to follow the Alberta Water Act and Provincial process for approvals, including for flood and erosion mitigation and repair work. Open communication with AEP allows for proper planning and clarity.

## Collaborating with farmers to prevent flood damage

Over the years, heavy rain, snowmelt or a combination of both has led to flooding in the County. In 2020, unusually heavy spring run-off and flooding conditions, and extremely wet conditions in years prior, caused eroded topsoil to clog ditches along County roads and restrict the flow of water.

The County's annual Ditch Cleaning Program aims to clean up the topsoil and return it to farmers' fields to help mitigate further flooding. Our Public Works

department works closely with farmers to coordinate clean-up activities.

In 2020, the County applied for financial assistance through the Province's Disaster Recovery Program. Funding has since been approved to cover the costs of the flood mitigation efforts in 2020 – approximately \$2.8 million. In addition, 26 residential and 6 small business property owners applied for funding.





# 2020-2025 Strategic Plan

## Vision

The County of Grande Prairie No. 1. First in building sustainable, prosperous and safe communities.

## Mission

The County of Grande Prairie builds on its natural environment and the entrepreneurial spirit of its citizens to provide an unmatched quality of life and opportunity for all.

## Values & Operating Principles

### Our Values

The County of Grande Prairie Council commits to the following values. We will maintain high standards of ethical and professional conduct by being:

- Trustworthy in our decision-making and interpersonal relationships.
- Transparent in our communications.
- Respectful of others.
- Collaborative in achieving our goals.



### Our Operating Principles

We will use these principles to guide the decision-making and service delivery of our County. We will:

- Place the people we serve at the centre of our work.
- Be good stewards of our land, air and water.
- Demonstrate fiscal responsibility and good financial management.
- Provide programs and services in an effective and efficient manner.
- Foster an entrepreneurial spirit and encourage sustainable agriculture, industry and tourism pursuits.
- Be a good neighbour to our surrounding municipalities.
- Practice good governance and respect each other's roles.
- Create a work environment that contributes to employee health and well-being.

## Strategic Priorities

These seven themes will shape the foundation of the County's work and planning over the next five years. Look through the report to see examples of how the County is driving each of these priorities.



**Fiscal Sustainability**



**Safe Communities**



**Governance and Leadership**



**Economic Development**



**Technology Infrastructure**



**Density and Service Standards**



**Effective Transportation Networks**

To learn more about our Strategic Plan, visit [www.countygp.ab.ca/stratplan](http://www.countygp.ab.ca/stratplan).



## Community Contributions

Every year, the County of Grande Prairie contributes millions of dollars to support community organizations across the County and the region.

<b>Total community contributions and grants</b>	<b>\$6.015 million</b>
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Community Assistance Grants	\$1,449,860
Major Capital Grants	\$597,175
Capital Assistance Grants	\$495,719
Cemeteries Grants	\$46,500

<b>Community Grants</b>	
Beaverlodge Pool	\$350,000
6 Arenas	\$368,600
7 Curling Rinks	\$81,200
17 Community Halls	\$78,880

<b>Recreation Boards</b>	
Grande Prairie Area	\$34,400
Clairmont-Bezanson Area	\$35,430
Sexsmith-La Glace-Teepee Creek Area	\$33,430
Beaverlodge-Elmworth-Huallen Area	\$29,120
Hythe-Demmitt Area	\$26,090
Wembley-Saskatoon Lake-Dimsdale Area	\$28,000

## FUNDS AT WORK IN THE COMMUNITY

### Beaverlodge Area Cultural Society (Beaverlodge Art and Culture Centre)

*\$7,500 for upgrades and \$5,000 in operating assistance*

“ We are grateful that the County recognizes the value of the arts. Patrons and visitors come to our Centre from across the County – it’s become a destination for the arts. We’re very appreciative of the operational grant from the County – it’s been really tough during COVID and the grant helps enormously. With the Capital funding we received for retrofitting our building with LED lighting, we can now rest assured that our permanent art collection and monthly art exhibits are protected from harmful fluorescent rays, and that our artists and artisans work under state-of-the-art lighting. It’s made a world of difference for us. — Cathrine Gabriel ”



### Grande Prairie Disc Golf Club

*\$6,250 towards constructing a course at Evergreen Park*

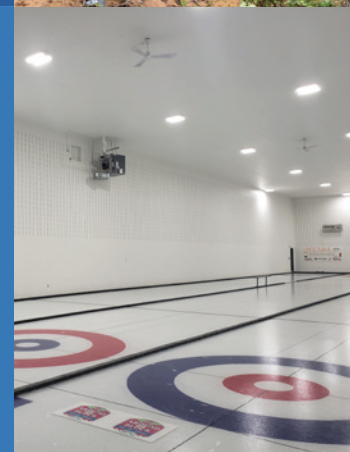
“ The popularity of disc golf is on the rise – it’s inexpensive, it’s easy to social distance, it attracts all ages and abilities, and you don’t have to be organized to play. You can just show up. The new course we’ve built is designed for both beginners and more advanced players. The course has also had a positive environmental impact – our volunteers picked up about 1,300 pounds of garbage before building the course. Today, people are really taking care of the area. — Phil Duffy ”



### Beaverlodge Curling Club

*\$45,991 for building improvements and \$11,600 in operating assistance*

“ Our facility is used year-round by residents of Beaverlodge and the surrounding area. People of all ages gather here. Prior to COVID, we rented out the facility for meetings and get-togethers, and when the ice is out, people come here to play pickleball. In the past, local students came to learn to curl, and we are working to start up the youth Learn to Curl program again. It’s a great little community hub that brings people into Beaverlodge, which in turn helps support the town and the area. — Michelle Hambly ”



### Sexsmith & District Museum Society

*\$50,000 for historic grain elevator preservation*

“ To celebrate our future, we must be able to celebrate our past. The elevator has long been the centre of community in Sexsmith, and in 2020, was designated a municipal historic site. One of only four elevators remaining in northern Alberta, it symbolizes our history: Sexsmith was once the Grain Capital of the British Empire from 1938-47. It pulled us together and was a meeting place for farmers. Today, it will be used for education and as a museum, highlighting stories from the community. — Florence Blais ”



PHOTO CREDIT: Laurie Sandboe



### **Dimsdale Recreational Society (Dimsdale Hall)**

*\$45,647 for building repairs and \$4,640 in operating assistance*

“ This past year our hall area floor sunk in, and we had major repairs to complete. We received a County grant for half of the repair cost. Our strong base of volunteers donated the remaining expenses with labour, equipment and supplies. The hall is important for community-building as it's a place that brings people of all ages together. We have missed hosting regular activities due to COVID, but we've held outdoor “drive by” Easter and Halloween activities to keep the community safe and connected. 2021 marks the 75th year of incorporation for our society. — Kim Tissington ”



### **Wembley & District Agricultural Society**

*\$75,000 for operating assistance*

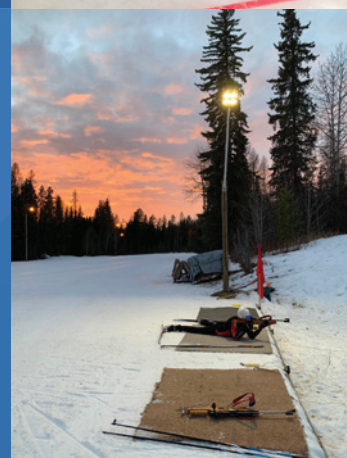
“ Our society has served the community for over 40 years. We really appreciate the funding support – we are able to extend the longevity of the building, which allows us to continue to provide for our community. The facility is used for a wide range of activities – sports and recreation, community events, graduations, birthdays, programs, fundraisers and more. — Natasha Boileau-Byrne ”



### **Wapiti Nordic Ski Club**

*\$4,825 for biathlon lighting and \$5,000 in operating assistance*

“ With the grant we installed lighting at the biathlon firing line and down range, enabling athletes to practice shooting weekday evenings when it's dark, as well as on weekends. That's important as it extends the training time for the biathlon teams. Our trails are used by cross country and biathlon teams as well as recreational cross country skiers, from children to adults. This year our club saw a dramatic increase in memberships – over 1,000 – as people looked for safe outdoor physical activity. Some new members said they just learned about the facility, others were trying out the sport, and some spoke of the physical and mental health benefits of this winter activity. — Michael Morgan ”



# Key Service Responsibilities

## MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT COUNTY OF GRANDE PRAIRIE

-  • Road Maintenance (excluding highways)
-  • Regional Fire Service
-  • Regional Enforcement Services
-  • Disaster Services
-  • Waste & Recycling Management Facilities & Services
-  • Property Taxes (municipal portion)
-  • County Campgrounds, Parks, Playgrounds & Trails
-  • Family and Community Support Services
-  • Utilities (water, wastewater\*)  
\* Residents in the County are serviced by the County, and/or Aquatera Utilities Inc. and/or septic/well.
-  • Libraries (Elmworth, La Glace & Valhalla)
-  • Animal Services
-  • Agriculture Services & Programs (roadside mowing, weed control)
-  • Land Use Planning, Zoning & Development
-  • Economic Development

## PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT ALBERTA

-  • Highways
-  • Schools
-  • Hospitals (Alberta Health Services)
-  • Social Services
-  • Supports for Employees & Employers
-  • Public Health (Alberta Health Services)
-  • Justice
-  • Post-Secondary Education
-  • Property Taxes (Provincial portion for education, senior's foundation, and designated industrial properties)
-  • Provincial Parks & Campgrounds

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CANADA

-  • Income Tax
-  • Employment Insurance
-  • RCMP
-  • Airlines & Airports
-  • Rail
-  • International Trade
-  • Postal Service
-  • Banking
-  • National Parks
-  • National Defence

# Running the Municipality

Through mutual cooperation and building strategic partnerships, the County is able to enhance our reach, resources and impact.



## FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

We strive to continually improve operational efficiency and effectiveness for time and cost savings. New processes also ensure doing business during COVID-19 is safe for the public and our staff.

**Improved assessment request for information process.** By applying innovation to property assessment requests for information forms, residents have the option to submit assessment information about their property virtually, by mail or by telephone. The improved process is safer and more transparent.

**Implemented a new electronic procurement platform.** The new platform allows for a more streamlined and efficient process for staff and vendors.

**Redeployed County staff during COVID-19.** By redeploying available staff to seasonal positions, the County is able to create savings that support fiscal sustainability.

mobile friendly, more accessible, and has new and updated content and features.

**Conducted virtual County Council and committee meetings.** Agendas, minutes and live streams accessible on our new online portal ensure Council decisions are readily available to the public.

**Conducted telephone townhalls.** When face-to-face is not possible, telephone townhalls support continued public participation during the pandemic.

**Created virtual workspaces and improved technology infrastructure.** New technology across the County, implemented in response to COVID-19, improved operational efficiencies and effectiveness, and ensured staff and Council were accessible to the public.

**Launched digital weed inspection process.** By applying technology, we have transformed our weed inspection process.



## TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE

By harnessing new innovations and technologies, we are able to apply new and better ways of doing things. Technology is improving the way we inform, engage and work with the public.

**Launched our new [www.countygp.ab.ca](http://www.countygp.ab.ca).** Developed with public input and user testing, our new website is

**Implemented online fire pit and fireworks permits.** A new online process, implemented in 2020, is much simpler. Applications, reviews and approvals can now be conducted virtually, resulting in a record number of permits issued. While many requests are made online, the permits are issued through County fire guardians online, by phone or in-person



**50%**  
LESS STAFF TIME  
SPENT WRITING WEED  
INSPECTIONS  
DUE TO NEW  
TECHNOLOGY



**67%** RESPONSE  
RATE TO PROPERTY  
ASSESSMENT REQUESTS  
FOR INFORMATION  
DUE TO NEW  
VIRTUAL PROCESSES



**80% MORE  
FIRE PERMITS  
ISSUED**  
(attributed to provincial  
isolation protocols)





## GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Effective leadership of a municipality starts with developing a shared understanding of the challenges to be faced and the priorities to be pursued.

### Transparency & Accountability

**Enhanced and defined processes for County Boards and Council Committees.** The goal is a consistent and transparent process for appointing public members and increasing public engagement and participation in County decision-making.

**Added 8 new positions for public members on Council Committees.** Currently a total of 44 public members participate on 13 Council Committees.

### Workplace Safety, Diversity and Well-being

**Created new policies.** A *Fit for Work Policy* furthers the County's commitment to protecting the health, safety

and well-being of our employees and the public in a substance free workplace.

An *Anti-Racism Policy* demonstrates and drives our commitment to ensuring County programs and practices respect the diversity of all people we serve and work with.

**Achieved 85% employee engagement.** The average engagement score on our annual Employee Engagement Survey was very high. This score highlights that our employees care about their work and are highly invested in going above and beyond for residents.

**Caring about the communities we serve.** Staff donated to the food bank, United Way Tools for School, and Orange Shirt Day (Council matched staff donations to the Grande Prairie Friendship Centre's Mamewpitaw Family Preservation Program).



## COUNTY STAFF SUPPORT FOOD BANK

**STOCKED 3 COUNTY VEHICLES WITH DIAPERS  
FOR THE SEXSMITH AND AREA FOOD BANK**



# Effective Transportation Networks

Effective transportation networks are a priority for the County – safe and well-maintained roads drive economic development and support communities across the region.

## Transparency & Accountability

2020 Investment into the County's transportation network

\$69.7 million

### Maintaining Roads and Ditches

Roads and sidewalks upgraded	37 km
Dust control applied	117 km
Gravel applied	1,215 km
Ditches rehabilitated	46 km
Culverts installed	75
Culverts inspected	2,715
Roadside cleanup	283 km
Problem wildlife removed as needed to protect people and infrastructure	

### Government Grants

**Received \$9.1 million** in provincial/federal grants for road and bridge projects.

**Spring Creek Road Rehabilitation project.** A slumping slope during summer 2019 prompted the need for road and bridge repair work, caused by repeated wet spring seasons, as well as repaving – which will take place in 2021. The County invested \$5 million into the project.

[READ MORE](#) about County-Province partnerships to complete essential highway projects on Page 8.

[READ MORE](#) about flood mitigation projects, and building and rebuilding initiatives to ensure safe well-maintained transportation infrastructure across the County on Page 9.



INVESTED  
**43.3%**  
OF THE 2020  
BUDGET IN COUNTY  
TRANSPORTATION  
NETWORKS



INVESTED  
**\$24.2 million**  
IN CAPITAL ROAD  
AND BRIDGE  
PROJECTS



INVESTED  
**\$17.9 million**  
IN ROAD AND  
BRIDGE  
MAINTENANCE



# Safe Communities

The County's commitment to high standards has shaped the safe and friendly communities that residents and businesses enjoy today.

## SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS

### FCSS Programs

From March to June, Community School Liaison Counsellors connected with students via phone and online, shifting to support the entire family unit as students studied from home. In September they resumed in-person contact.

Although the Home Support program was suspended for 16 weeks, staff continued to connect with clients until they were able to resume home visits. Early Childhood programs were suspended March to June, but resumed in September.

	2019	2020
Students supported by Community School Liaison program	412	230
Parent support sessions by Community School Liaison program	70	405
Playschool enrolment	158	117
Home Support visits	4,532	2,675

*"The [change in school program delivery] was one of the most difficult times my children and I have ever faced. Our counsellor reached out almost immediately to check in. . . . Our family was extremely grateful for this outreach and our son was much better mentally because of it." — Parent*

### Parks and Recreation

Many people took advantage of the outdoors, not only with more stays at campgrounds, but more extended stays.

Pipestone Creek Campground reservations	1,674 (2019)	2,145 (2020)
Residential area greenspace maintained		81.7 hectares
Sports fields and ball diamonds maintained		6
Cemeteries maintained		29



## NEW RECREATION AREAS EVERGREEN RIDGE RECREATION AREA

Nonmotorized, on-leash 99 acre natural day use area for year-round hiking, cycling and horseback riding.

### BEAR HILL PARK

Day use park with a separate area that can be booked for group overnight camping.

## PIPESTONE CREEK CAMPERS



**28% INCREASE  
FROM 2019**



## EMERGENCY SERVICES

### Regional Fire Service

COVID-19 led to a reduction in calls, especially medical response; however, medical calls did make up 1/3 of all responses.

	2019	2020
Calls for service regionally	1,891	1,589
Record fire permits issued	1,460	2,653
Fire investigations conducted	86	78

### Regional Enforcement Services

The County has had great success on achieving compliance of all bylaws through education, resulting in a low rate of bylaw charges.

Provincial Statute related	98.5% of all charges and 66% of all occurrences
Municipal Bylaw related	1.5% of all charges and 34% of all occurrences

	2019	2020
Calls for Service	11,654	10,954
Regional Animal Pound intakes	1,213	830

## PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES: SAFE ACTIVITIES/EVENTS HOSTED IN 2020

### Family Fun

Sidewalk games  
Family Scavenger Hunt  
Winter Family Frostival  
Community art to beautify Clairmont Adventure Park  
**SOLD OUT!** 3rd annual Kids Can Catch event at the County Sportsplex Pond – 65 families participated

### Online Education

Weed of the Week educational videos  
Virtual farm tours  
Shelterbelt workshops  
Environmental Farm Plans  
Non-Profits in a New Reality webinar

### Youth

Regional Fire Service online and social media programming for youth and residents  
Mega Awesome New Year's Youth Program  
Wellington Resource Centre

### Safe Celebrations

Senior's Week celebrations and deliveries  
Four 100 Years of Farming Awards  
2020 Farm Family – Ray and Dunnigan families  
Five Kind Heart Awards

## AGRICULTURE

Number of weed inspections including on County-owned land	29,737 (2019)	30,416 (2020)
Pest and disease inspections	538 (2019)	554 (2020)
Ditches mowed (covered the County 1.25 times in km)		8,616 km
Ditches spot sprayed - a more environmentally friendly and cost-effective method than blanket spraying (approximately 1/3 more km than in 2019)		12,143 km

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### Crosslink County Sportsplex

The facility was open most of 2020 in line with provincial guidelines. Sportsplex management went out of their way to keep team and individual recreation as accessible as possible during the pandemic.

### Libraries

The County of Grande Prairie Library Board operates **3** libraries. Although fewer items were circulated due to COVID-19, operations continued with curb-side pick-up options and in-person when restrictions allowed.

Library Items Circulated	2019	2020
Valhalla	7,739	6,318
La Glace	7,518	5,697
Elmworth	2,586	2,134

### Recycling and Waste Management

The County operates **11** community recycling sites and **5** landfill and transfer stations.

Clairmont Centre for Recycling & Waste Management	2019	2020
Waste accepted	41,149 tonnes	37,886 tonnes
Waste diverted	6,212 tonnes	4,837 tonnes

West Grande Prairie Regional Landfill	2019	2020
Waste accepted	9,525 tonnes	10,313 tonnes
Waste diverted	782 tonnes	781 tonnes

**AWARD** — Received an Alberta Recycling Management Authority award for the County's annual Recycling Roundup. Kudos to our residents!



### NEW RECYCLING PILOTS IN 2020

Twine and grain bags recycling  
Expanded electronic recycling

From 2015-2020, the County accumulated **13,500 tonnes of concrete** for crushing to use for future road base — reusing a product that would otherwise go to waste.

## CREATING SAFER COMMUNITIES

### A Leader in Digital Weed Inspection

Since moving to digital weed inspections, the County has doubled inspections conducted since 2015. The process is faster, more efficient, thereby saving taxpayer dollars. The County's success has sparked so much interest, we have been invited to present to several Alberta municipalities.



### New County Fire Station at La Glace Operational

The new \$2 million facility has improved the station's capacity to serve the area. Twice as large as the old station, it includes more space for training, public education, meeting, maintenance and office needs, as well as equipment and apparatus storage. A dedicated area for equipment to be decontaminated increases safety. Additional space also makes it easier to service and maintain equipment.



### New PWPSD School Construction Planning

Peace Wapiti Public School Division is collaborating on a design for a replacement Harry Balfour School to be located at the Five Mile Hall site — provided by the County of Grande Prairie. Provincial funding for the school was announced in March 2020. The County is developing water, wastewater, electricity and natural gas services at the construction site.



### New Tenders

Three new tenders were put into service in early 2020. Regional Fire Service saw huge benefits with significant fire events taking place immediately after the tenders were put into service.



### Bioswale

Bioswales are a natural system to manage runoff in an urban setting. Educational signage about bioswales was installed in 2020 near Lakeview Seniors Housing in Clairmont.



# Economic Development

The County helps drive sustainable and managed growth – from planning and delivering growth opportunities and infrastructure to fostering economic prosperity.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Through strategic initiatives and partnerships, and a personal approach with business and investors, our Economic Development Department supports continued growth, economic diversification and the creation of investment opportunities.

**Named best place to invest.** Featured on the cover of Western Investor magazine, the County earned the title as the top place in the western provinces to invest. “This northwest Alberta county is resource-rich and economically diversified with high incomes, a growing population, low real estate prices and a pro-business climate.” Western Investor

Conducted a comprehensive **Regional Labour Market Needs Assessment** in partnership with the Grande Prairie & District Chamber of Commerce, City of Grande Prairie, MD of Greenview and Alberta Labour and Immigration. The study provides an in depth understanding of the labour market, identifies gaps and challenges, and highlights labour market opportunities. A Regional Workforce Development Strategic Action Plan is now underway.

Hosted the 12th annual and 1st virtual **Growing the North economic development conference**, in collaboration with several other partners. Over 235 attendees heard from 25 industry experts and took in the virtual networking opportunities.

**Business Retention and Expansion project.** The County conducted a Business Retention & Expansion Survey (BR+E) survey with businesses in 2019 to understand future plans, needs, and satisfaction doing business in the County. In 2020, face-to-face interviews were conducted. The Economic Development team is applying the results to help address the priorities and challenges of County businesses. This information also informs the County’s monthly **Business Support Network** sessions.

**READ MORE** about the County Economic Development team’s COVID support for local businesses on Page 5.

## WATER AND WASTEWATER IMPROVEMENTS

### Bezanson Water Treatment Plant Upgrade

The upgrade replaces aging infrastructure and brings a new well online. The County received a provincial grant to support the upgrade for 75 per cent of the project cost.

**County investment:** \$98,750 for plant upgrades and \$28,500 for Well 4. Our investment is 25 per cent of the total costs of \$395,000 and \$114,000, respectively.

### Bezanson Wastewater Innovation

The Bezanson Lagoon has reached capacity. The County partnered with the National Research Council of Canada and a local engineering firm on an innovative pilot project to treat sewage wastewater. The Biological Electro-chemical Anaerobic Sewage Treatment (BEAST) is predicted to be more effective and cost efficient, and has been commissioned for the one-year pilot ending May 2022.

### Clairmont Regional Lift Station

Replacement of three existing sewage lift stations with one regional lift station and new sewer trunk lines, accommodating long-term growth in the north and east areas of the hamlet. Expected completion: 2022.

**County investment:** \$4 million. Funds from the Province and Aquatera contribute to the \$26.7 million project cost.

### Dimsdale Bulk Water Station

Aquatera opened a new 24-7 station in Dimsdale with many modern features, including a heated concrete pad.

**County investment:** approximately \$200,000 for paving

### New Booster Station (at the Dimsdale Bulk Water site)

New infrastructure supports water distribution to the Town of Wembley from Aquatera.

**County investment:** \$450,000 for transmission line oversizing and \$680,000 for station construction (total \$1.13 million investment)

### La Glace Community Water System Water Treatment Plant

System upgrades to address aging infrastructure.

In 2020, the County received a provincial grant for 75 per cent of the project build cost, up to \$750,000.

**County investment:** \$100,000 to evaluate the system and \$250,000 to support the project build





# Density and Service Standards

The County wants development to happen in the best and most appropriate locations. Sound planning and community engagement are key to the process.

## CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

Throughout the pandemic, safety codes inspections and permit processing continued, focusing on safety and priority inspections using virtual communication tools.

Inspections	1,693
Non Residential Building Permits issued	43
Residential Building Permits issued	349
Residential Construction Value	\$49,119,835
Non Residential Construction Value	\$22,808,248

## LAND USE PLANNING

The County's **Municipal Development Plan (MDP)** – a county-wide strategic growth and development plan that establishes future growth patterns and development policies.

An **Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP)** addresses development at a regional level, specifically the area around the border between two (or more) municipalities.

**Area Structure Plans (ASPs)** – provide a framework for the development of lands for commercial, community, industrial and residential purposes. ASPs also ensure that development is consistent with County goals, objectives and policies.

**County of Grande Prairie and City of Grande Prairie IDP** – the two municipalities have been working to update our IDP. Parameters for a growth study were established over 2020. The IDP is on hold until after the Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework is completed.

### Area Structure Plans underway in 2020

#### Tradesman ASP

*192 hectares of future industrial + current industrial property*

**Land use:** Coordinate industrial development and future industrial land.

#### NW Clairmont ASP

*Approximately 1,651 hectares*

**Land use:** Rail-associated industrial development, using the existing rail line

#### SW Clairmont ASP

*Approximately 384 hectares*

**Land use:** Residential development with complementary commercial uses along Highway 43 and Range Road 63

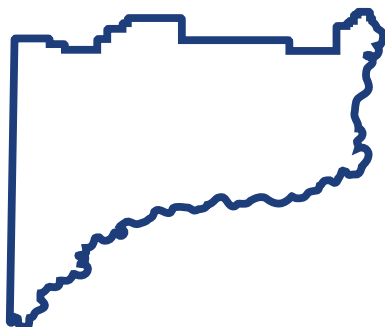
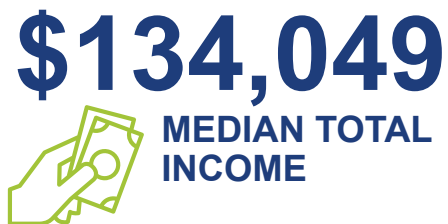
#### NE Clairmont ASP

*Approximately 1,350 hectares*

**Land use:** Residential development compatible with agricultural and recreational uses



## The County of Grande Prairie by the Numbers



No. of Parcels in the County  
No. of Residential Parcels  
No. of Commercial Parcels

**20,998 parcels**  
**8,976 parcels**  
**1,031 parcels**

## 2020 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

How Was the Municipal Portion of  
Your 2020 Tax Dollars Invested?

**15.66%**

RUNNING THE  
MUNICIPALITY

**49.02%**

TRANSPORTATION  
NETWORKS

**4.19%**

TECHNICAL  
SERVICES

**14.44%**

RECREATION,  
PARKS AND  
CULTURE

**13.39%**

PROTECTION OF  
PROPERTY AND  
PEOPLE

**3.31%**

PLANNING &  
DEVELOPMENT

For the detailed County of Grande Prairie 2020 Financial Statements, please visit the County website at [www.countygprairie.ab.ca/budget](http://www.countygprairie.ab.ca/budget).



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Grande Prairie No. 1

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