

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Summer Village of Whispering Hills



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INTRODUCTION

The Summer Village of Whispering Hills is a seasonal residential community located approximately 20 kilometers northwest of the Town of Athabasca via Highway 2 on the East side of Baptiste Lake. Its primary attraction is a recreational lifestyle for the many residents that make Whispering Hills their vacation home or their principal residence.

The Municipal Development Plan provides policy statements that clarify the context in which both public and private decision making will occur. Council can therefore assess development proposals as they arise within an overall, long-range plan, which will allow Council to maintain slow, high quality growth, as well as ensuring basic municipal services continue to be made available.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Municipal Development Plan (MDP) is to set policies for the use of land within the Summer Village of Whispering Hills. The general area dealt with in this plan is shown on Map 1. Also, the location and the existing boundary of the Summer Village and surrounding lands are shown on Map 1.

This plan is intended to be consistent with the Baptiste Lake Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP), and if the two documents conflict, the Baptiste Lake IDP prevails until amended.

This MDP has been prepared on behalf of the Summer Village of Whispering Hills and together with the current Land Use Bylaw (LUB) provides guidance for future land use and development within the Summer Village. The policies contained within this MDP address what type of community the Summer Village wishes to be and provides potential developers and current landowners and residents with a vision or guide for future development and growth.

This MDP has been prepared in collaboration with a steering committee comprised of the Summer Village Council and Chief Administrative Officer/Development Officer. Review and adoption of the MDP will be based on community consultation with residents and property owners in the Summer Village of Whispering Hills and in accordance with the provisions of the *Municipal Government Act*.

VISION

The Municipal Development Plan sets out the future for the community for future years. The vision statements are used to facilitate a common understanding of the community in terms of what elements are important to the residents.

The following are community statements that define the Summer Village of Whispering Hills:

- We are primarily a low density community consisting of both seasonal and full time residents
- We are committed to being good and effective stewards of the environment and will act accordingly
- We are committed to providing municipal services that compliment a simple approach to community living
- We are committed to a community that respects and shows pride with regard to public and private spaces
- We will endeavour to communicate, cooperate and work towards creating a better lake environment with all municipalities surrounding Baptiste Lake

The means of achieving these vision statements is expanded by the goals and policies contained in this plan.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The *Municipal Government Act (MGA)* provides the legislative basis for the preparation of the MDP. This MDP has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Section 632 of the *Municipal Government Act (MGA) (Statutes of Alberta, 2000)*. The Act requires that all Alberta municipalities, no matter their population, must create a Municipal Development Plan.

Section 632 of the MGA states that;

A municipal development plan

(a) Must address

- i. The future land use within the municipality,
- ii. The manner of and the proposals for future development in the municipality,
- iii. The co-ordination of land use, future growth patterns and other infrastructure with adjacent municipalities if there is no intermunicipal development plan with respect to those matters in those municipalities,
- iv. The provision of the required transportation systems either generally or specifically within the municipality and in relation to adjacent municipalities, and
- v. The provision of municipal services and facilities either generally or specifically,

(b) May address

- i. Proposals for the financing and programming of municipal infrastructure,
- ii. The co-ordination of municipal programs relating to the physical, social and economic development of the municipality,
- iii. Environmental matters within the municipality,
- iv. The financial resources of the municipality,
- v. The economic development of the municipality, and

- vi. Any other matter relating to the physical, social or economic development of the municipality,
- (c) May contain statements regarding the municipality's development constraints, including the results of any development studies and impact analysis, and goals, objectives, targets, planning policies and corporate strategies,
- (d) Must contain policies compatible with the subdivision and development regulations to provide guidance on the type and location of land uses adjacent to sour gas facilities,
- (e) Must contain policies respecting the provision of municipal, school or municipal and school reserves, including but not limited to the need for, amount of and allocation of those reserves and identification of school requirements in consultation with affected school board,
- (f) Must contain policies respecting the protection of agricultural operations, and
- (g) May contain policies respecting the provision of conservation reserve in accordance with section 664.2(1)(a) to (d).

As per *Section 692 of the Municipal Government Act*, before giving second reading to a proposed bylaw to adopt a municipal development plan, or a proposed bylaw amending a statutory plan, a council must hold an appropriate public hearing after having given proper notice.

The Municipal Development Plan is a policy document that provides guidance to the Summer Village's Council and the community concerning future development. As per *Section 632 of the Municipal Government Act*, the plan must be consistent with the land use policies established by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and future municipal policy documents – such as an Area Structure Plan, an Area Redevelopment Plan, an Outline Plan, or a Land Use Bylaw – or amendments to current policy documents should conform to the vision expressed herein.

PROVINCIAL LAND USE POLICIES

Pursuant to *Section 622 of the Municipal Government Act*, the Province of Alberta developed the Land Use Policies to help harmonize provincial and municipal policy initiatives at the local land use planning level. This MDP has been prepared in the spirit and intent of the Provincial Land Use Policies.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There is significant research showing that the quality of development improves, along with an improvement in attitudes towards development, when the public is strongly involved in the process of decision making.

Council is fully committed to participation of the residents in the planning and development of Whispering Hills. In order to ensure that local residents are able to contribute to the development process, the summer village website will be updated frequently with any information requiring input.

1.0 GROWTH MANAGEMENT

1.1 Location

The Summer Village of Whispering Hills is a residential community that seeks to maintain the quality of life they currently enjoy, seasonal and permanent residents alike, and is not considering annexation or economic diversification. Its attraction is its recreational and open space atmosphere and basic amenities. The consumer needs of the community are met by the Town of Athabasca and the County of Athabasca.

The study area of this Plan includes the lands contained within the Summer Village of Whispering Hills. Map 1 shows the location of the study area in relation to the existing boundary of the Summer Village.

1.2 Population

Population projections are difficult to predict in a Summer Village community. For many residents, this is their 2nd or vacation home. A Census done by Statistics Canada in 2016 showed a permanent population of 142 residents, a rise from their 2011 census showing 108 permanent residents.

This shows that over the past 5 years there has been a slight increase in the permanent population due to the development of previously vacant lands and conversion of seasonal dwellings to permanent residences.

As the summer villages still has a large area of unsold and undeveloped lots, this number will likely increase in the coming years as this area is developed.

1.3 Location of Growth

The Proposed Land Use Concept (Map 1) generally outlines the location of existing land uses within the Summer Village and indicates where future settlement may be appropriate. The development pattern reflects the desires of the existing residents yet makes provision for new residents wishing to locate in the community. The boundaries are conceptual only and the actual road locations and land use patterns will be determined at the appropriate subdivision and development stages and through the land use redesignation process.

Lots 1 and 2, plan 1026373 may be subdivided and offered for sale within the next few years.

GOALS:

To ensure that growth is appropriate and complementary to the existing surrounding uses.

To ensure that growth is measured to mitigate impacts on the environment, and quality of life for existing residents.

POLICIES:

1.3.1 *The Land Use Concept (Map 1) divides the Summer Village into the following land use areas:*

- a) Residential District*
- b) Community District*
- c) Natural District*

1.3.2 *The Municipal Cooperation Area is concerned with lands outside the municipal boundary and therefore the policies established in this plan are the subject of intermunicipal planning agreements between the County of Athabasca, the Town of Athabasca and the Summer Village of Whispering Hills.*

1.3.3 *Any subdivision of lots shall require an outline plan approved by Council before an application for subdivision may be considered.*

2.0 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Residential use is the exclusive permitted land use within Whispering Hills (Map 1). It is the intention of Council and the wishes of the residents that the community retains the character of a seasonal residential community. It is also their desire to promote a high standard of residential development and open space both within the existing built areas and in any future development areas.

GOAL:

To encourage high standards for new and existing development that complements and protects the existing character of the Summer Village of Whispering Hills.

POLICIES:

- 2.0 Single detached dwellings will be the main form of housing permitted within the Summer Village of Whispering Hills.*
- 2.1 The Summer Village is not zoned for commercial use with the exception of Council approved home based businesses.*
- 2.2 All development shall conform to the provisions set forth in the Summer Village of Whispering Hills Land Use Bylaw.*
- 2.3 Council supports the policy that the edge between lake and private property be kept as natural as possible for the lake to maintain its natural ecosystem.*

3.0 OPEN SPACE AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The majority of residents of Whispering Hills have chosen the community because of the recreational lifestyle that the Baptiste Lake area offers. Although the current municipal owned land generally is left natural, it is Council's desire to provide an Open Space system that provides a variety of experiences for the residents.

GOALS:

To maintain the privacy of all residents and ensure that negative impacts of non- resident users are mitigated.

To maintain and enhance the environmental integrity of the open spaces and provide a greater variety of passive recreational activities.

To ensure that the provision of open space and reserve land is in balance with the demands of the residents.

To ensure that public areas do not become an economic burden on local ratepayers.

POLICIES:

3.0 *Open Space uses are generally expected to occur in accordance with the plan’s Land Use Concept (Map 1).*

Open Space within the Summer Village will be designated as:

- (a) Community District; or*
- (b) Natural District*

3.1 *The following primary purpose shall guide the management of each designation of Open Space:*

- (a) Community District: environmental management, open play, and recreation;*
- (b) Natural District: protection of the natural environment, low-impact trails and landscape appreciation;*

3.2 *Council will discourage proposed developments that may have undesired environmental impacts.*

3.3 *Public trails and natural green spaces are acceptable uses of municipal reserves in the Summer Village of Whispering Hills.*

3.4 *Tree cutting and pruning is prohibited on any open space areas, including but not limited to municipal reserves, environmental reserves (and environmental reserve easements), and undeveloped road allowances without the prior approval of the Summer Village Council.*

3.5 *The open space areas are meant for the enjoyment of residents and visitors, not for storage or parking.*

- 3.6** *The Summer Village of Whispering Hills shall not dispose of lakefront reserves, and disposition of other reserves may only occur under exceptional circumstances and after the careful consideration of Council.*
- 3.7** *Council will ensure that all development complies with the provisions of the provincial Land Use Policies regarding the protection of, and consideration for, the natural environment.*
- 3.8** *Surveyed and undeveloped road allowances throughout the Summer Village are considered a part of the Open Spaces system for the purpose of this plan. These road allowances are:*
- (a) to be left in their natural condition as much as possible;*
 - (b) to provide pedestrian access to the lake shore;*
 - (c) to provide access to, community docks where permitted by the Summer Village;*
 - (d) to be kept in a reasonable state of repair by the Summer Village.*

4.0 COMMERCIAL

The Summer Village of Whispering Hills does not currently have any commercial development with the exception of some permitted home base business.

GOALS:

To maintain the community minded aspect of the Summer Village.

To minimize incompatibility with adjacent uses.

POLICIES:

- 4.0** *Ensure that the lakeside character of the community is maintained.*

5.0 UTILITIES AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES

It is the intention of Council to maintain Municipal services currently contracted for the Summer Village. They are snow removal, ditch mowing, police, fire, and general maintenance. There are contracts for the operations of the Summer Village Office, as well as the continued services of the administrator and other support staff.

Historically the Summer Village of Whispering Hills was a minimally serviced, seasonal residential community. Over the years, as environmental concerns over lake water quality were raised, Council and ratepayers have chosen to implement solutions that address sewage disposal methods that respect the natural lake environment. To this end, Council approved a sewage bylaw in 2008.

GOALS:

To regulate the treatment and disposal of sewage generated on properties within the Summer Village on terms as set out in the Sewage Bylaw 96-08.

POLICIES:

5.0 Sewage Bylaw

6.0 TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

The Summer Village of Whispering Hills is essentially served by Whispering Hills Road which can be directly accessed from highway 2. From this one road, access is provided to all of the residential parcels.

While the Summer Village of Whispering Hills is in many ways reliant on automobiles, it is recognized that an effective transportation system considers not only automobiles, but also pedestrians, cyclists, and other alternative forms of transportation.

GOALS:

To establish and maintain an effective and safe road system for the movement of vehicles and pedestrians in Whispering Hills.

POLICIES:

- 6.0 The Summer Village transportation system shall consist of local roads, which provide legal and physical access to the residential lots, and safe and effective highway access at the existing location.*
- 6.1 In order to ensure the safety of all road users, the Summer Village shall provide traffic calming measures where warranted.*
- 6.2 All main municipal roads shall be developed to a standard determined by the summer village:*
- 6.3 The Summer Village shall ensure that adequate maintenance of the existing roads is provided by suitable general contractor.*
- 6.4 Whispering Hills shall provide on-going maintenance for existing trails within the Summer Village.*
- 6.5 For the purposes of this plan, undeveloped road allowances are considered open space and are addressed in Section 3.0 Open Space and the Natural Environment.*

7.0 MUNICIPAL COOPERATION

The Summer Village of Whispering Hills recognizes the mutual benefits of a consultative and cooperative planning approach with regard to land uses, common infrastructure, economic growth, and environmental concerns.

GOAL:

To establish and maintain open dialogue with adjacent municipalities for the coordinated approach to matters of mutual interest.

POLICIES:

- 7.0** *The Summer Village supports consultative approaches with adjacent rural and urban municipalities regarding but not limited to the following matters:*
 - (a) environmentally significant areas;*
 - (b) subdivision and development of adjacent lands;*
 - (c) transportation and utility linkages;*
 - (d) economic development; and*
 - (e) communication and issue resolution processes.*
- 7.1** *The Summer Village does not intend to annex the lands around the Summer Village Limits but the development of these lands should not materially or aesthetically impair the quality of life for the residents of Whispering Hills, therefore consideration should be given to ensure compatible land uses.*
- 7.2** *The Baptiste and Island Lake Management Plan: May 2019 prepared for the Baptiste Lake area, is the principal tool for the implementation of policies that are envisioned for the residents and public users of the lake as a whole.*
- 7.3** *The Summer Village supports intermunicipal planning initiatives for the integrated planning of Baptiste Lake's shoreline, and the planning of the wider watershed in general.*
- 7.4** *Insofar as it is beneficial to residents and other municipal interests, the Summer Village of Whispering Hills may enter into utility and/or service agreements for:*
 - (a) road maintenance;*
 - (b) protective and emergency services;*

*(c) administrative, recreation, social, cultural services; and
(d) any other services deemed necessary.*

7.5 *The Summer Village of Whispering Hills will seek to collaborate with the Town of Athabasca, County of Athabasca, and other Summer Villages around Baptiste Lake to ensure compatible and mutually acceptable land use and development policies.*

8.0 IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

As the overall planning document that provides direction for the subdivision and development, land use, and road patterns within the Summer Village, Council's primary role is to administer the goals and policies of the Municipal Development Plan.

GOAL:

To promote the use of the Plan by policy implementation.

POLICIES:

8.0 *Council may require the preparation of an area structure plan or outline plan to provide the details of land use, utility servicing, road patterns, open space, storm drainage, and any other matters deemed necessary, prior to the consideration of any re-designation (zoning) proposal, or subdivision or development application. Council will require the preparation of an outline plan for proposed subdivisions that create more than two (2) lots, or that require the dedication of a public road allowance.*

8.1 *This Plan shall be interpreted with flexibility having regard to its purpose, objectives and policies. The Council's decisions on interpretation shall be final.*

8.2 *Council will observe the effect of this Plan after adoption and implementation, and if new ideas or changing circumstances warrant, will bring forward amendments to satisfy public concerns and aspirations.*

8.3 *Council will conduct a review of this Plan whenever it considers it no longer expresses the long-term goals of the*

Summer Village and in any event, within ten (10) years. The Plan will be amended in accordance with the procedures established in the Municipal Government Act (as amended).

- 8.4** *Council will consider a Capital Works Plan in support of the policies of this plan for the future municipal improvements, including costs.*
- 8.5** *Council will undertake a review of the Land Use Bylaw within one (1) year of adopting this Plan.*
- 8.6** *The subdivision authority is instructed by Council to require the applicant for subdivision to submit a plan of survey for all subdivisions requiring endorsement, with the exception of boundary adjustment applications.*

