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Buffalo Lake IDP Background Information Document

The following information is sent as an overview of the Buffalo Lake Intermunicipal Development Plan (BLIDP).

The original IDP

The original Buffalo Lake IDP was created in 1997, since then several factors affecting the Plan Area have changed:

- There has been an increased awareness and understanding of the natural environment of the Lake and surrounding area which resulted in the created of a Plan by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development and Alberta Environment. This Plan was entitled the Buffalo Lake Integrated Shoreland Management Plan (BLISMP) which dealt with the Crown lands located within the Provincially owned Lake ROW that surrounds the Lake. The BLISMP was approved in 2009.
- Since 1997 there has also been a strong demand for lakeside residential property which has necessitated amendments to the current Plan in order to address land development pressures, particularly within the County of Stettler No. 6.
- Because of these changes, and the time that has passes since the original Plan was developed, the Municipalities agreed that a major review was warranted and decided that the 1997 Plan should be replaced by an entirely new IDP.

The Purpose of the Plan

There are several reasons that a new Plan was preferred over simply updating the old Plan:

- **Shoreland Coordination** – Prepare policies that are consistent with the goals and objectives as described in the Buffalo Lake Integrated Shoreland Management Plan (BLISMP).
- **Protect Natural Character** – It was identified that additional development opportunities should respect the aesthetic character and preserve the quality of the Lake. To do this, it was thought to concentrate more intensive development in defined development nodes, Growth Nodes, thereby leaving large areas where development is limited, the Limited Development Area.
- **Address Public Lake Access** – Identify existing and potential public access points to the Lake.
- **Protect the Environment** – The BLISMP was used as a guide for locating future development in an effort to safeguard the water quality of Buffalo Lake and where possible, retain, protect, and enhance riparian and environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife habitat.
- **Facilitate Municipal Cooperation and Coordination** – Provide for effective and mutually beneficial coordination of land uses, economic development, environmental protection, and growth management around Buffalo Lake.
- **Ease Communication** – Establish and maintain open communication approaches between Municipalities to resolve problems and seize opportunities of mutual benefit. One way that this will be done is by creating a Buffalo Lake Committee that will meet semi-annually.

Goals & Objectives

- Provide for additional growth within the Plan Area by requiring quality planning and diligent study for all future development prior to municipal approvals.
 - After this Plan is adopted, any multi-lot subdivision or single lot, multiple-unit development application for the purpose of residential, recreational, or commercial unit development will be supported by an Environmental Review.

- Place an emphasis on retaining much of the Plan Area in its natural state.
 - This will be done by restricting intensive development to within the Growth Nodes, preserving a 5m setback off of the ROW, and preserving 25% of the shoreline.
- Maintain or improve Lake water quality, to maintain or enhance wildlife habitat, and to protect agricultural lands.
 - By limiting multi-lot development to within Growth Nodes wildlife habitats and environmentally-sensitive areas will not be directly affected by this development.
 - Require collective servicing for multi-unit and multi-lot developments to ensure proper water and wastewater techniques are used.
 - Limit the number of confided feeding operations and request agricultural operators provide off-Lake water supply sources to ensure that any Lake pollution associated with these activities does not increase.
 - Preserve a 5m setback from the ROW as either a Municipal or Environmental Reserve to ensure there is a buffer between development and the Lake as the ROW width varies based on the high-water mark of the Lake.
 - Keep 25% of continuous shoreline undeveloped and publicly accessible based on the length of the shoreline of the application's parcel size.
- Provide residents and visitors with a positive and enjoyable Lake experience.
 - Keys to ensuring visitors and residents enjoy the Lake include ensuring public access, preserving the natural environment, and limiting the amount of development allowed. By preserving the shoreline through the 5m setback and also by the continuous 25%, adding additional public access locations, limiting the creation of new access locations to be publicly accessible, and by creating development limits, the Lake experience should remain enjoyable. Buffalo Lake turning into an over-populated and polluted, non-natural Lake is what has been identified as extremely undesirable.
- Keep intensive development within the Growth Nodes.
 - By keeping intensive development within the Growth Nodes, continuous development around the entire Lake will be avoided. This type of development was identified as being damaging to the appearance of the Lake, the environment, and also to the naturalized feeling associated with the Lake.
 - Having intensive development only within the Growth Nodes also allows for the greatest cost efficiencies in terms of sharing infrastructure by providing for collective water and wastewater systems, roads, drainage improvements, and other municipal service infrastructure.
- Identify public access locations to the Lake that are currently being used or are considered appropriate for improved Lake access.
 - 13 public access points have been identified as existing or proposed access points. After this Plan is adopted, the development of new private access points to the Lake is not permitted; all new access points must serve the public at large.

- Ensure intensive development is respectful of environmentally sensitive areas, habitat areas, shorelands, and uplands areas to avoid encroachment and negative impact.
 - The BLISMP was used to map the areas around the Lake that are environmentally sensitive. Using this information, Growth Nodes were specifically located in order to avoid negative impacts on the sensitive areas. There is also 5m of reserve land required adjacent to the ROW that ensures that development is located at least 5m from the high water mark of the Lake.

Growth Nodes

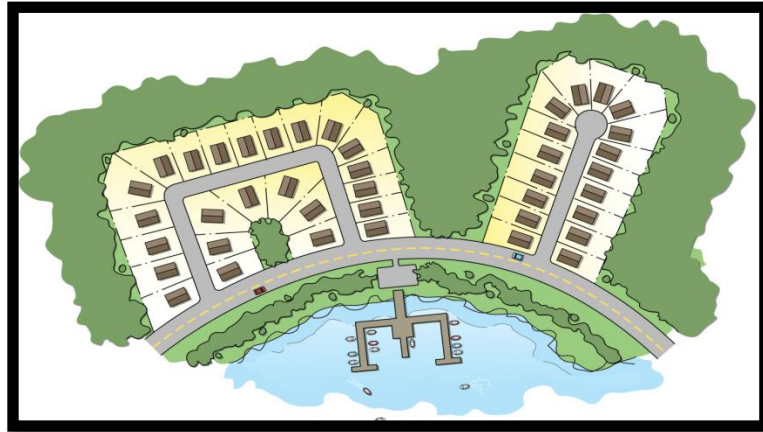
1. **North Shore** (*Camrose County*)
2. **Bashaw Bay** (*Camrose County*)
3. **Lake Bend** (*Lacombe County*)
4. **The Narrows** (*Lacombe County*)
5. **South Shore** (*County of Stettler No. 6, SV of Rochon Sands, SV of White Sands*)

The Growth Nodes were chosen based on the following ideas:

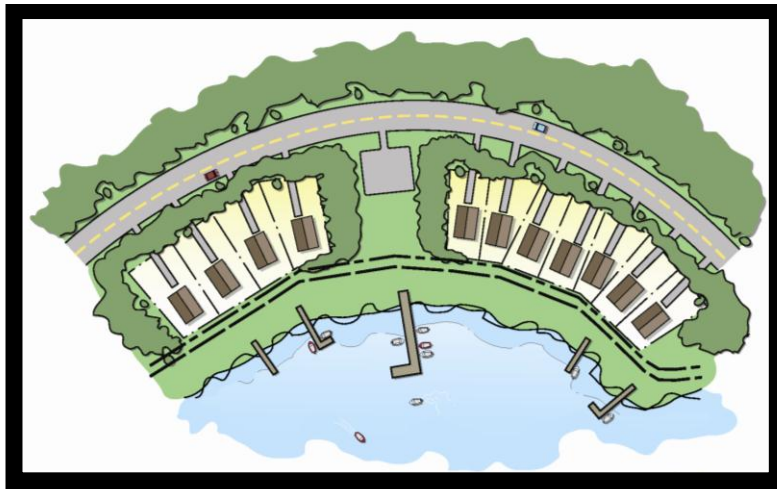
- preservation of agricultural land
- proximity to Buffalo Lake
- established road networks
- existing public access points
- existing/future water and wastewater systems
- proximity to existing residential developments, approved area structure plans/outline plans, land that has been rezoned and/or subdivided for development
- impact on wetlands, habitat, and biodiversity - how the adjacent Provincially owned Lake ROW has been zoned within the BLISMP
- potential to create a new public access point
- confining the physical area of proposed Growth Nodes so as not to exceed the upper limit (threshold, target) for development around the Lake;
- principles of 'orderly' planning and development
- provision of Growth Node development opportunities for all member municipalities.

Policy examples

- Within the Growth Nodes is the only place where multi-lot developments are allowed.
- When residential and recreational development in the Growth Nodes take the form of multi-lot subdivision: low impact, cluster developments should be considered the preferred option wherever possible. These developments are to be compatible with surrounding development, both in architectural character and scale, in the manner in which it incorporates naturescaping, and the retention of open spaces (comprised of natural vegetation).



- *The governing Municipality shall require the protection of a minimum of 5 meters adjacent to the Provincially owned Lake ROW in the form of an Environmental or Municipal Reserve.*
- *The governing Municipality may require the protection of additional land adjacent to the 5 meter strip of reserve land should the developments open space requirements allow for additional open space..*



- Residential units may include a variety of permanent dwelling unit types for both seasonal and year round occupancy depending upon the applicable provisions in the governing Municipality's Land Use Bylaw.
- Architectural types are envisioned to range from smaller cottages and cabins to larger, more substantial single detached houses.
- An overall average density of approximately 0.9 dwelling units per gross acre for each Growth Node shall be required and identified through the preparation of a Growth Node ASP. This density shall apply to the Growth Node ASP as a whole; it is envisioned that the Growth Nodes will have areas of higher and lower density development.

- All multi-lot subdivisions and single lot developments comprised of multiple dwelling units, excluding those multiple dwelling units intended for agricultural use, must be serviced by collective water and wastewater supply, distribution, collection, and disposal systems.
- Except for home-based businesses, commercial land uses within the Growth Nodes should be lake-related and intended to provide services to residents as well as the seasonal and tourist populations of the Lake.

Limited Development Areas

Development within the Limited Development Area is characterized by agriculture where agriculture is the predominant land use and some single lot development on dispersed sites in a rural setting. Uses shall be restricted to what may be considered under the Agricultural District of the governing Municipality’s Land Use Bylaw.

Policy examples

- No multi-lot subdivisions shall be allowed in the Limited Development Area.
- Land use decisions shall reflect the desire to maintain viable agricultural operations in the Limited Development Area by minimizing land fragmentation and land conversion to other uses wherever possible.
- Within the Limited Development Area, individual private water wells shall be allowed.

Development Limits

The Density unit capacity calculations refer to the Growth Nodes only. Any form of dwelling unit development (residential or recreational) within the Growth Nodes shall be counted against the maximum development capacity. Development within the Limited Development Area shall not count against the maximum development capacity.

Units per Municipality:

SV of Rochon Sands	334 units
SV of White Sands	393 units
Camrose County	1,636 units
Lacombe County	1,912 units
County of Stettler No.6	2,995 units
<i>Total</i>	<i>7,270 units</i>

Units per Growth Node:

North Shore	1,227 units
Bashaw Bay	409 units
Lake Bend	1,281 units
The Narrows	631 units
South Shore	3,722 units
<i>Total</i>	<i>7,270 units</i>

7,270 is a slight change from the 1997 Plan which established an overall limit of 6,690 total units.

How we got this Number (Appendix A, B, and C)

Boating Capacity

- This development limit method was used within the 1997 Buffalo Lake Intermunicipal Development Plan.
- First the lake was divided into areas based on where boating would be environmentally feasible. Different types of boating were identified along with the size of area needed to perform each type of activity. Estimations were then made about how many boats could be on the Lake at a time and how many of these boats would likely be from residents.
- When applying the Lake's calculated boating capacity, it was determined that the number of dwelling units that the Lake could safely support is approximately **7,533** dwelling units.

Lifestyle Densities

- Through public consultation with Lake users and residents of Buffalo Lake, the Steering Committee determined that the primary reason for limiting development within the area is to maintain the "Lake lifestyle". The overall consensus expressed by the public was that future lot sizes, density, and ultimate population were factors most affecting their sense of community, with the overall guiding factor being the size of future lots. The public strongly voiced a preference for larger lots of up to two acres in size, with the smallest lot desired being 0.5 acres in size.
- County land was divided into 'developed' and 'undeveloped' land and then based on the areas held by each Municipality, it was determined how many lots could fit into each county using the approved density of 0.9 du/acre.
- When applying the Plan Area's "lifestyle" lot size calculations, the number of dwelling units that could be developed within the Growth Nodes is 7,007 units.

Next Steps

- With the adoption of this Plan, the Municipalities shall establish a Buffalo Lake Intermunicipal Committee as an active standing Committee with equal representation from each of the five Municipalities who hold municipal jurisdiction over the lands within the Plan Area. The Committee shall meet on an ongoing basis as often as may be required, but at a minimum, the Committee shall meet semi-annually.
- Upon the adoption of this Plan, a Growth Node Area Structure Plan shall be completed by the governing Municipality for the North Shore, Bashaw Bay, Lake Bend, Narrows, and South Shore Growth Nodes. A Growth Node ASP shall be completed and adopted by the governing Municipality prior to the approval of any new plan; rezoning bylaw; or subdivision application for multi-lot residential, recreational, or commercial unit development.
- Any multi-lot subdivision or single lot, multiple unit development application for the purpose of residential, recreational, or commercial unit development shall be supported by an Environmental Review.
- Any multi-lot subdivision or single lot, multiple unit development application for the purpose of residential, recreational or commercial unit development shall be required to provide a public access plan with details showing how motorized boat and/or beach access to the Lake would be provided from the proposed development.

Areas of Concern as Identified by the Public

1. Protection of the Lake

Throughout the process the number one concern for both the public and the Steering Committee has been the protection of the Lake from any outside influence that would have the potential to negatively impact its health. The IDP has been crafted in an effort to manage growth around the Lake in a manner that will maintain the area's ecological integrity while still allowing for appropriate development opportunities. Specific sections and individual policies within the IDP have been included in the Plan to assist in the protection of the Lake.

A major effort to support the protection of the Lake within the Plan is limiting multi-lot development to within identified Growth Nodes. The selection of the Growth Node locations were done in consultation with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development in an attempt to locate this future multi-lot development in locations that not only would give equal development opportunities to each Member Municipality, but also to locate them where the development would have less impact on wetlands, habitat, and biodiversity. All lands outside of the Growth Nodes are subject to restrictive development policies as outlined in Section 3.2 – Limited Development Area Policies.

Other examples of how the Plan has been shaped by the concern for Lake protection are as follows:

- The series 3 figures within the Plan show environmentally sensitive areas as identified by Alberta SRD in the Buffalo Lake Integrated Shoreland Management Plan (BLISMP). This Plan has been referenced throughout the planning process for the IDP and can be used as a tool for each Municipality when reviewing potential developments.
- Identified development thresholds for the Lake area have been calculated using both lifestyle and lake capacity for boating as outlined in the appendices of the Plan in order maintain control over the amount of development around the Lake.
- Sections 3.1.7/3.2.7 - Environmentally Sensitive Lands, 3.1.8/3.2.8 – Reserves, 3.1.9/3.2.9 - Historic and Archaeological Resources, and 3.1.10/3.2.10 – Development Standards have been developed in an effort to protect environmental land. These sections contain several policy statements that set forth protection expectations.
- Servicing within the Growth Nodes is required to be collective in nature to protect the Lake from any potential negative aspects related to the servicing of lands surrounding the lake.
- In consultation with Alberta SRD, potential public access locations have been identified which will minimize the overall negative impacts that may occur as a result of this use.

2. Adequate public access to the Lake

Residents and visitors to Buffalo Lake have identified a need for increased public access to the lake for boating, swimming, and the use of Lake shorelands for passive and active recreation activities.

In response to this request by the public, the IDP contains specific policies that relate to public access. Five new public access locations have been identified within Section 3.3.2. The Plan outlines expectations regarding where access will be located as well as sets out development policies related to public access. Section 3.3 – Public Access and Shoreland Development Policies contains most of the policies as they relate

to public access and Section 4.3.2 (a) (vii) – Content of Growth Node Area Structure Plans identifies that specifics to public access will be determined upon the development of Growth Node ASPs.

3. Densities

Another major concern by the public was the size of lots and how much more development would be allowed around the Lake. By keeping intensive development confined to within the Growth Nodes, the amount of development around the Lake is limited.

The IDP sets a development threshold of 7,270 total units within the Growth Nodes. The density within the Growth Nodes has been set as a maximum of 0.9 du/acre. Within Growth Nodes there may be places of higher or lower density, but as a *whole*, the density is to be 0.9 du/acre.

4. Land Use

There was some concern over where development would be allowed around the Lake. The general consensus by the public was to limit development and where development *was* allowed, to have it clustered. The identification and development of Growth Nodes was adopted as the preferred approach for allowing future development in the Plan Area as outlined in Section 2.2 – Growth Nodes. Also within Section 2.2 is an explanation of how the Growth Node boundaries were chosen.

5. Servicing Expectations

While not a major concern of the public, the servicing of the land was a major topic of discussion at the Steering Committee level. It was determined early on that collective servicing should be required of all new development to not only create infrastructure efficiencies for the Municipalities, but also for environmental protection of the Lake. Specific policies in regards to servicing expectations are outlined in sections 3.1.11/3.2.11 – Water Servicing, 3.1.12/3.2.12 – Wastewater Servicing, 3.1.13/3.2.13 – Drainage and Storm Water Management, 3.1.14/3.2.14 – Solid Waste Management and 3.1.15/3.2.15 – Other Municipal Services

6. Not enough detail / My concern is not referenced within the BLIDP

Early in the process we identified that this IDP was a high level planning document and was going to focus on subject matter that was appropriate and necessary for Intermunicipal cooperation around the project area. However, though the IDP process, various items have been identified for discussion by both the public and members of the Steering Committee that would require topic exploration and development of policies that are more site and municipal specific than would be appropriate for this IDP.

However, to better respond to the various topic requests that are not appropriate for an IDP - the Steering Committee has developed Section 4.3 – Future Planning within the BLIDP to assist in reviewing all topics of discussion. The timing of the Growth Node Area Structure Plans (ASPs) are outlined in Section 4.3.3 – Timing of Growth Node Area Structure Plans. This group of policies set forth a requirement for the ASPs to be developed for each of the Growth Nodes prior to any further plans, rezoning bylaw or subdivision application being considered. What this means is that while the IDP was not able to consider all detailed requests, the IDP has been developed with a mechanism in it that requires a more detailed level of planning

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(ASPs) to occur prior to development. These ASPs will be a more appropriate forum for most of the subject matter not caught by the IDP to be discussed.

In essence, it is required that an ASP shall be completed prior to any development occurring in the Growth Nodes with little exception as outlined in Section 4.3.

END OF SUMMARY

Should you have any other questions or comments or need clarification of any part of the IDP document we would welcome your thoughts and input.

Please forward any comments or questions to:

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