

## **SECTION 10: ECONOMIC RESILIENCE**

To support long-term economic resilience, the MD of Willow Creek will continue to promote economic diversification that complements the County’s agricultural strengths and encourages the growth of manufacturing, servicing, industrial, and commercial development that meets the needs of the agricultural community, local residents, and the general public.

### **10.1 AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES**

The Agricultural Sector within the Municipal District of Willow Creek No. 26 supports a broad range of related industries that contribute to the Municipality’s economic vitality. These include agricultural service providers such as custom seeding, spraying, harvesting, and agronomic consulting; equipment sales, leasing, and repair businesses that support local farming operations; and transportation services that facilitate the movement of agricultural inputs and products throughout the region and to broader markets. The sector also supports value-added activities within and around the MD, including grain handling and storage, feed processing, livestock-related services, and agri-food production. Together, these industries strengthen the local economy, create employment opportunities, and reinforce the importance of agriculture as a key economic driver within the Municipal District.

#### **Objectives:**

- To recognize and support the broad range of agricultural service industries that contribute to the success and efficiency of local farming operations.
- To encourage the growth and retention of agricultural support businesses
- To support transportation and logistics services that enable the efficient movement of agricultural inputs, livestock, and products within the region and to broader markets.

#### **Policies**

- 10.1.1 The MD of Willow Creek will continue to promote employment growth and economic diversification through agriculture and agriculture-related industries.
- 10.1.2 Agricultural operators and business entrepreneurs will be encouraged to investigate and pursue value-added agricultural development, including grain handling, storage, feed processing, livestock services, and agri-food production in areas of the municipality in which adequate transportation exists and in accordance with any adopted statutory plans, including Intermunicipal Development Plans.
- 10.1.3 Council will endeavour to provide opportunities for agricultural businesses and related industries in appropriate locations through the Land Use Bylaw and municipal planning policies with the goal to

strengthen the long-term viability and competitiveness of the agricultural sector through supportive land use planning, infrastructure, and investment readiness.

- 10.1.4 All development proposals shall demonstrate that an adequate and sustainable water supply is available to support the proposed development without negatively affecting existing users or long-term regional water sustainability.

## **10.2 INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Industrial and commercial activities in the MD of Willow Creek are fundamental to the local economy. Industrial development includes manufacturing, fabrication and uses that may have impacts beyond the property line (i.e.: factory, seed cleaning plants, contractor yards). Commercial development includes businesses that sell goods and services (i.e. Service station, retail store, equipment sales).

In the future, industrial and commercial uses will be encouraged in appropriate locations, including rural industrial parks, established hamlets, and areas adjacent to highway and secondary road systems, while recognizing that some developments may require site-specific locations to serve the rural community. All development must be compatible with surrounding uses and must not compromise the safety, convenience, or functional integrity of the Municipal District's transportation network.

### **Objectives:**

- Expand and diversify the local economy to build long-term economic resilience and create a positive municipal environment that encourages business investment, growth, and retention.
- Support existing businesses and attract a diverse range of new commercial and industrial enterprises to the MD of Willow Creek.
- Promote commercial and industrial development in environmentally suitable and strategically located areas.
- Ensure commercial and industrial development occurs in a manner that minimizes conflicts with existing and future land uses and direct development to locations where necessary infrastructure can be efficiently provided.

### **Policies:**

- 10.2.1 The MD of Willow Creek will support opportunities for business retention, expansion, innovation, and economic diversification by enabling a range of industrial and commercial land uses that are compatible with the rural character and long-term development objectives of the municipality.

- 10.2.2 The Municipal District of Willow Creek will maintain provisions within the Land Use Bylaw to regulate industrial and commercial subdivision, development, and redevelopment in a manner consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of this Plan. Single isolated industrial or commercial development should continue to be supported through policies found in the Land Use Bylaw.
- 10.2.3 The MD of Willow Creek may explore the preparation of an **Industrial Commercial Master Plan** which would identifies issues and opportunities related to the development of industrial and commercial lands, current and future, within the municipality and provide strategic directions to support economic opportunities while respecting the principles of managed growth.
- 10.2.4 All industrial and commercial proposals shall demonstrate that an appropriate level of municipal or private servicing can be provided, including potable water supply, wastewater management, stormwater management, fire protection, and emergency response access, to the satisfaction of the Municipal District.
- 10.2.5 Industrial and commercial development should be directed to planned nodes, business parks, hamlets, highway commercial areas, and other suitable locations where infrastructure can be efficiently provided, and cumulative land use impacts can be effectively managed as identified in this plan or an adopted Intermunicipal Development Plan.
- 10.2.6 Clustering of compatible industrial and commercial uses is encouraged where feasible to support efficient servicing, shared infrastructure, coordinated access, reduced land use conflict, and a stronger employment base. Multi-lot, clustered, or comprehensively planned industrial and commercial developments shall be required to provide or contribute to shared infrastructure and services.
- 10.2.7 In evaluating proposals for industrial and commercial development, the Municipal District shall consider, at minimum, the following:
- (a) compatibility with existing and planned surrounding land uses;
  - (b) separation distances, buffering, screening, and opportunities to mitigate nuisance impacts such as noise, odour, dust, vibration, glare, and lighting;
  - (c) impacts on environmentally sensitive features, watercourses, wetlands, drainage patterns, and natural landscapes;
  - (d) demands on municipal emergency, protective, and community services;
  - (e) impacts on agricultural operations, fragmented farmland, and normal farm practices;
  - (f) effects on local roads, bridges, intersections, and the provincial highway network;
  - (g) site suitability, topography, geotechnical constraints, and hazard lands; and
  - (h) the availability, capacity, and long-term sustainability of required infrastructure and utilities.

- 10.2.8 The MD of Willow Creek may require the preparation and adoption of an Area Structure Plan, Concept Plan, servicing study, water availability study, traffic impact assessment, environmental evaluation, or other supporting studies for proposed industrial or commercial development where necessary by Council to ensure orderly and efficient growth.
- 10.2.9 The MD of Willow Creek shall consult with provincial transportation agencies, utility providers, neighbouring municipalities, and other relevant authorities when evaluating proposed land use redesignations, subdivisions, or developments that may affect highways, major roads, infrastructure networks, or intermunicipal interests.
- 10.2.10 The storage, handling, transportation, and disposal of hazardous materials, goods, or wastes associated with industrial or commercial activities shall comply with all applicable federal and provincial legislation, municipal bylaws, environmental approvals, and recognized industry standards.
- 10.2.11 All development proposals shall demonstrate that an adequate and sustainable water supply is available to support the proposed development without negatively affecting existing users or long-term regional water sustainability.

#### **Subdivision and Development Considerations**

- 10.2.12 Industrial and commercial development should be located and designed to avoid or minimize adverse impacts on established residential districts. Where adjacency cannot be avoided, appropriate transitions, buffering, setbacks, screening, site design, and operating measures shall be required.
- 10.2.13 The Municipal District shall establish minimum subdivision and development standards provisions through the Land Use Bylaw to manage land uses adjacent to existing industrial and commercial areas in order to protect ongoing operations and reduce future compatibility conflicts.
- 10.2.14 When evaluating subdivision applications, the Municipal Planning Commission shall consider the potential impact of the proposal on existing industrial and commercial operations, including opportunities for future expansion, access requirements, and long-term viability.
- 10.2.15 The MD of Willow Creek may require the preparation and adoption of area structure plans for areas of major highway commercial or industrial development.

### **10.3 RESOURCE EXTRACTION**

The MD of Willow Creek contains significant natural resources that contribute to the economic prosperity, infrastructure needs, and long-term sustainability of the region and Province. While many natural resource activities are regulated by the Province of Alberta, the Municipality remains committed to advocating for

responsible land use planning, protection of agricultural lands, stewardship of water resources, and consideration of cumulative effects associated with resource extraction activities. The MD of Willow Creek supports the planned, orderly, and responsible development of natural resources, including sand, gravel, and stone, in a manner that balances economic opportunity with environmental stewardship, infrastructure capacity, and compatibility with surrounding land uses and rural community character.

### **Objectives**

- To support the responsible development of aggregate resources in a manner that balances economic opportunity with environmental stewardship and agricultural preservation.
- To protect the long-term productivity and continuity of agricultural lands by minimizing fragmentation and land use conflicts associated with gravel extraction activities.
- To ensure that gravel extraction and associated infrastructure are planned and operated in a manner that protects water resources, transportation systems, and rural community character.
- To encourage the consideration of cumulative effects associated with aggregate extraction, including impacts related to traffic, noise, dust, water, and the concentration of industrial activities.
- To encourage progressive reclamation and the timely return of disturbed lands to productive agricultural, environmental, or compatible post-extraction uses.
- To guide municipal participation in the Provincial approval referral process.

### **Policies**

- 10.1.1 Lands proposed for natural resource extraction and/or processing shall be redesignated to the appropriate resource-based land use district prior to subdivision approval or the issuance of a development permit.
- 10.1.2 The Municipality supports aggregate extraction activities where they can be demonstrated to be compatible with surrounding land uses and where adverse impacts can be appropriately mitigated.
- 10.1.3 Resource (Gravel, sand, clay, etc.) extraction proposals should avoid or minimize impacts to high-quality agricultural lands, environmentally sensitive areas (Environmentally Significant Areas in the Oldman River Region: Municipal District of Willow Creek, (*Cottonwood Consultants, 1989*), riparian features, wetlands, and significant wildlife habitat.
- 10.1.4 The Municipality shall encourage proponents to demonstrate how water resources, including groundwater and surface water systems, will be protected throughout the life of the operation and during reclamation.
- 10.1.5 Resource extraction proposals should address cumulative effects associated with existing and proposed industrial activities in the surrounding area, including traffic generation, road degradation, dust, noise, and visual impacts.

- 10.1.6 The Municipality supports the coordinated planning of transportation and utility corridors associated with aggregate extraction activities. In consultation with the MD of Willow Creek, new and expanding natural resource extraction operations shall be required to use designated haul routes to minimize impacts on municipal roads and transportation infrastructure. Where appropriate, haul routes should provide the most direct and efficient connection to the provincial highway network and shall be addressed through a Heavy Haul Agreement, Development Agreement, or other agreement satisfactory to the Municipality.
- 10.1.7 Proponents shall be required to prepare traffic impact assessments where extraction activities have been deemed to affect municipal roads, intersections, or transportation safety.
- 10.1.8 Proponents shall be required to prepare vegetation management plans and emergency management plans in order to ensure appropriate management of the extraction site.
- 10.1.9 The MD of Willow Creek supports progressive reclamation and site management practices that reduce long-term impacts and facilitate the timely return of lands to productive and usable conditions.
- 10.1.10 The Municipality encourages meaningful engagement and communication between proponents, affected landowners and relevant government departments or agencies throughout the planning and operational phases of aggregate developments.
- 10.1.11 Where provincial legislation limits municipal decision-making authority respecting aggregate extraction developments, the Municipality shall continue to advocate for local input, responsible land use planning, protection of agricultural lands, and consideration of cumulative effects in provincial approval processes.