

COMMUNITY GUIDE 2026



Municipal Development Plan

MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF WILLOW CREEK NO. 26

**Planning Today for
Tomorrow's MD of Willow Creek**

INSIDE THIS GUIDE



What the MDP is

A roadmap for the future of our community.



Why it matters

How it protects what we value and supports responsible growth.



What it means for your property

Understanding how planning guides land use decisions.



How planning decisions are made

Everyone has a role in building our future.



The community vision for the future

A shared commitment to future generations.

The Municipal Development Plan is the community's long-term vision for the future. This guide explains what it is, why it matters, and how it will help shape the MD of Willow Creek over the next 25 years.



What is a Municipal Development Plan?

A ROAD MAP FOR THE FUTURE

The Municipal Development Plan (MDP) is the Municipality's long-term planning document.

It provides a framework for future growth, protects agriculture, supports responsible economic development and guides Council when making decisions.

While the MDP establishes the vision and policy for the future, it does not approve individual developments or change land use or zoning. Those decisions continue to be made through the Land Use Bylaw and other statutory planning processes.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The MDP helps the Municipality:



Protect productive agricultural land.



Plan for future infrastructure and services.



Encourage responsible economic growth.



Protect natural landscapes and water resources.



Ensure consistent and transparent planning decisions.



HOW THE MDP WORKS



COMMUNITY VISION

A shared picture of the future for Willow Creek.



GOALS

Broad priorities that guide our direction.



OBJECTIVES

Specific outcomes we want to achieve.



POLICIES

The rules and guidelines that direct future decisions.



LAND USE BYLAW

Applies the policies to land uses and sets development standards.



DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS

Council and the Municipal Planning Commission make decisions using the MDP and other bylaws.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Municipal Government Act requires every Alberta municipality to adopt a Municipal Development Plan.



**THE MDP LOOKS
25 YEARS
INTO THE FUTURE.**



Our Community

ROOTED IN HERITAGE.
FOCUSSED ON THE FUTURE.

The MD of Willow Creek is one of southern Alberta's most diverse rural municipalities.

From the forested slopes of the Porcupine Hills to the open prairie grasslands, our landscapes provide breathtaking beauty, rich natural resources, and opportunity.

Agriculture remains the foundation of our local economy and way of life. Vibrant hamlets, strong community connections, and a spirit of independence define who we are.

As our community evolves, the Municipal Development plan will help us protect what we value most while creating opportunities for future generations.



“

A strong rural community is built on land, people and partnerships.

”

COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS



DIVERSE LANDSCAPES

From the Porcupine Hills to the prairie grasslands, our natural beauty is second to none.



AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE

Generations of farming and ranching have shaped our communities and continue to drive our economy.



STRATEGIC LOCATION

Highway 2 and Highway 3 connect us to markets, services, and opportunities across the region.



VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Five hamlets and many rural neighbourhoods create a strong sense of community and belonging.



NATURAL RESOURCES

Productive land, clean water, healthy forests, and wildlife habitat are a legacy we are committed to protect.



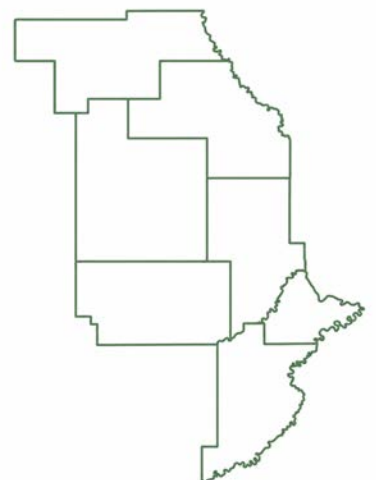
EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

Renewable energy, tourism, and small business bring new opportunities for a resilient future.



DID YOU KNOW ?

The MD of Willow Creek covers more than **4,400 km² (440,000 hectares)** - an area larger than some provinces!



A place where prairie meets foothills—and opportunity meets community.





Our Vision

A SHARED VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE MD OF WILLOW CREEK

This vision reflects what our community values most and where we are heading together over the next **25 years** and beyond.

A resilient rural community that preserves, enhances and enriches our evolving rural way of life for all generations to live, work and prosper as members of this farming and ranching community.

OUR COMMUNITY VALUES



RURAL CHARACTER & COMMUNITY

We value the rural lifestyle, peaceful landscapes, and close-knit communities that make Willow Creek a great place to live.



Support vibrant hamlets and neighbourhoods.



Strengthen community connections and local partnerships.



Preserve the rural character and quality of life we all value.



AGRICULTURAL & NATURAL LANDSCAPES

We are committed to protecting productive farmland, healthy watersheds, native grasslands, and wildlife habitat for current and future generations.



Protect and support our agricultural heritage and working landscapes.



Steward our water resources and natural areas.



Conserve biodiversity and the beauty of our landscapes.



RESILIENT & PROSPEROUS ECONOMY

We value a strong, diverse economy built on agriculture, innovation, and responsible investment that creates opportunities for all.



Diversify and grow our rural economy.



Encourage innovation, renewable energy, and local business.



Invest in infrastructure and connectivity that support growth.



Every planning decision should support one or more of these values.





What We Heard

YOUR IDEAS. OUR PLAN. OUR FUTURE.

Throughout the development of the MDP, we listened to residents, landowners, businesses, and community partners. Your feedback helped shape the policies and priorities in this plan.



Community Survey

Residents shared their thoughts and priorities.



Public Open Houses

Conversations and ideas from across the municipality.



Project Website

Information, updates, and resources online.



Stakeholder Meetings

Valuable input from agencies, industry, and community groups.



Council Workshops

Ongoing discussions to guide the planning process.



Educational Videos

Short videos to explain the MDP and invite participation.

“

The MDP reflects the voices of our community and provides a roadmap for a strong, sustainable and vibrant future.

”

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES



Protect Agriculture



Protect Water Resources



Preserve Rural Character



Support Farmers and Ranchers



Protect Natural Landscapes



Encourage Responsible Economic Growth



Improve Transportation and Infrastructure



Strengthen Regional Partnerships



DID YOU KNOW?

Public engagement is a key part of the planning process. It helps ensure the MDP reflects local needs and community values.





Agriculture: Our Foundation

ROOTED IN OUR PAST. FUELING OUR FUTURE.

Agriculture is more than an industry in the MD of Willow Creek - **it is our heritage, our economy, and our way of life.**

The Municipal Development Plan recognizes the important role agriculture plays and sets policies that protect productive farmland, supports farmers and ranchers, and encourages innovation and diversification.

By supporting the agricultural community and reducing land use conflicts, the MDP helps ensure agriculture remains strong for generations to come.



“Protecting productive farmland today means food security, economic stability, and opportunity for tomorrow.”

THE MDP SUPPORTS AGRICULTURE BY:



PROTECTING FARMLAND

Directing growth to appropriate areas and minimizing the loss of productive agricultural land.



SUPPORTING FARM FAMILIES

Encouraging a strong agricultural community and recognizing the importance of farm operations of all sizes.



ENCOURAGING INNOVATION

Supporting agricultural diversification, technology, value-added opportunities, and new ideas that strengthen the industry.



REDUCING LAND USE CONFLICTS

Promoting compatible land uses and clear setbacks to support agriculture and the rural way of life.



SUPPORTING AGRICULTURAL BUSINESSES

Recognizing and supporting businesses and services that provide essential support to the agricultural community.

AGRICULTURE DRIVES OUR LOCAL ECONOMY



Farm Families
and Operations



Agricultural
Businesses
and Services



Processing,
Marketing and
Distribution



Local Jobs
and Community
Well-being



Strong Rural
Economy and
Resilient Future



DID YOU KNOW?

Agriculture remains the largest contributor to the MD of Willow Creek's local economy.



Planning for Responsible Growth

**GROWTH IS IMPORTANT -
WHERE AND HOW IT HAPPENS MATTERS.**

The Municipal Development Plan supports growth that is thoughtful, well-planned, and in the right places. Our goal is to ensure development happens in a way that respects our rural character, protects farmland, and supports strong, vibrant communities

The MDP encourages development that:

- | | |
|---|---|
|  Respects surrounding land uses and the rural landscape. |  Supports the growth and vitality of our hamlets and communities. |
|  Makes efficient use of existing infrastructure and services. |  Protects productive agricultural land for future generations. |
|  Is financially responsible and sustainable. |  Considers the long-term well-being of our community. |

“Not every piece of land is suitable for every type of development. The MDP helps guide decisions that balance private property rights with the broader interests of the community.”

DID YOU KNOW?

Directing growth to appropriate locations helps protect agricultural land, reduces costs for infrastructure, and strengthens community resilience.



THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



A landowner or developer submits a proposal for a development or land use change.

The proposal is evaluated for alignment with the goals, objectives, and policies of the MDP.

The proposal must comply with the Land Use Bylaw, which sets land use districts and regulations.

Administration and relevant agencies review the proposal for technical requirements.

Council or the Municipal Planning Commission reviews the proposal and makes a decision.

The decision is issued and, if approved, the applicant proceeds with the next steps.



Public input is an important part of many applications. Opportunities for notification and feedback depend on the type of application and the requirements of provincial legislation.





Protecting Our Environment

HEALTHY LAND.
CLEAN WATER.
STRONG COMMUNITIES.

Our natural environment is one of the MD of Willow Creek's greatest assets. From our headwater streams and native grasslands to our forest and wildlife, these landscapes support agriculture, recreation, and the quality of life we all value.

The Municipal Development Plan promotes responsible stewardship of the land, water and wildlife so future generations can continue to enjoy and benefit from the natural beauty of our region.



“When we care for our environment today, we build a stronger, more resilient community for tomorrow.”

OUR COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP



WATERSHEDS & WATER QUALITY

Protecting our rivers, creeks, and wetlands ensures a reliable water supply for agriculture, ecosystems, and communities.



NATIVE GRASSLANDS & HABITAT

Native grasslands and habitat areas support biodiversity and play a vital role in soil health and ecosystem resilience.



WILDLIFE & BIODIVERSITY

Healthy habitats support wildlife populations and maintain the natural balance of our landscapes.



RIPARIAN AREAS & WETLANDS

Protecting riparian areas and wetlands helps filter water, reduce flooding, and support wildlife.



DID YOU KNOW?

Healthy ecosystems provide natural services that benefit us all—clean air and water, productivity for agriculture, wildlife habitat, and places for recreation.



FORESTS & WOODLANDS

Forested areas provide wildlife habitat, protect watersheds, and add to the natural beauty of our region.



ENVIRONMENTAL RESERVES

Environmental reserves conserve sensitive lands and provide long-term ecological benefits.



HAZARD AREAS & RISK MANAGEMENT

Planning responsibly in areas prone to flooding, steep slopes, and other natural hazards keeps our communities safe.



SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Encouraging best management practices supports a healthy environment and a strong rural economy.



PLANNING WITH NATURE IN MIND

The MDP encourages development that respects the natural landscape, minimizes impacts, and protects the environmental features that make Willow Creek a great place to live, work, and raise a family.



Supporting a Strong Rural Economy

**DIVERSE. RESILIENT.
BUILT FOR THE FUTURE.**

The MD of Willow Creek's economy is rooted in agriculture and strengthened by a diverse mix of industries, businesses, and natural resources.

The Municipal Development Plan supports responsible economic development that creates jobs, attracts investment, and enhances the quality of life for residents - today and for generations to come.



"A strong economy creates opportunities for current and future generation while maintaining the rural character and values we all share."

THE MDP SUPPORTS A DIVERSE AND RESILIENT ECONOMY



AGRICULTURE & AGRI-BUSINESS

Protecting productive farmland and supporting farming, ranching, and value-added agricultural businesses.



RENEWABLE ENERGY

Supporting wind, solar, agrivoltaics, and other renewable energy projects that contribute to a sustainable future.



INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Encouraging responsible industrial growth in appropriate locations with efficient use of infrastructure.



TOURISM & RECREATION

Promoting tourism and recreation opportunities that highlight our natural landscapes, heritage, and rural lifestyle.



TRANSPORTATION & LOGISTICS

Leveraging our location along Highway 2 and Highway 3 to support transportation and logistics.



SMALL & HOME- BASED BUSINESSES

Supporting local entrepreneurs and home-based businesses that provide services and create jobs.



NATURAL RESOURCES

Managing natural resources responsibly to support long-term economic and environmental health.



DID YOU KNOW?

A diverse economy helps communities adapt to change, attract investment, and create more local opportunities for residents.



BENEFITS OF A STRONG RURAL ECONOMY



MORE JOBS

A variety of industries creates stable employment opportunities.



ECONOMIC GROWTH

Investment and innovation support business growth and community prosperity.



COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

A healthy economy helps maintain services and a high quality of life.



RURAL VITALITY

Strong local businesses and industries keep our communities vibrant and resilient.



LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

Responsible economic development balances opportunity with environmental stewardship.



By working together, we can build a strong, diverse, and resilient economy that supports our rural way of life and prepares us for the future.





Our Hamlets. Our Communities.

SMALL PLACES. BIG VALUE.

Hamlets are the heart of rural life in the MD of Willow Creek. They provide a sense of community, local services, and a place to call home. The Municipal Development Plan supports sustained growth in our hamlets while protecting the rural character and agricultural land that surrounds them.

“ Our hamlets and communities are places where people live, work and connect. Supporting them helps build a strong and caring rural municipality. ”



OUR RECOGNIZED HAMLETS



ORTON

A vibrant hamlet with strong agricultural roots and a welcoming small-town feel.



PARKLAND

A close-knit community surrounded by productive farmland.



WOODHOUSE

A peaceful hamlet with a strong sense of community and rural lifestyle.



WOON RIVER ESTATES

A modernist hamlet along the Oldman River in a scenic setting.



GRANUM

A growing hamlet that provides services and opportunities for residents and visitors.



KEY OBJECTIVES FOR OUR HAMLETS



Encourage growth that reflects the scale, needs, and unique character of each hamlet.



Support local businesses and services that enhance the quality of life.



Plan for reliable infrastructure and servicing to support sustainable growth.



Enhance parks, open spaces, and community assets.



Foster strong, connected communities where people want to live and stay.

HOW THE MDP SUPPORTS OUR HAMLETS



DIRECTS APPROPRIATE GROWTH

Promotes development that is compatible with the scale and character of each hamlet.



PROTECTS RURAL CHARACTER

Maintains the small-town feel and surrounding agricultural land base.



SUPPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE

Encourages efficient use of services and infrastructure to support growth.



BUILDS STRONG COMMUNITIES

Invests in amenities and services that strengthen community well-being.



CREATES OPPORTUNITY

Supports local businesses and attracts investment for the future.



DID YOU KNOW ?

Strong hamlets contribute to a healthy rural municipality by supporting economic growth, providing local services, housing, and fostering a sense of belonging.



By working together, we can ensure our hamlets remain vibrant, resilient, and an important part of the MD of Willow Creek.





Infrastructure That Supports Our Future

CONNECTED. RELIABLE. READY.

Strong infrastructure is essential for safe, prosperous communities and a growing rural economy.

The Municipal Development Plan supports the responsible provision, maintenance, and expansion of infrastructure and services to meet the needs of residents, businesses, and future generations.

“Investing in infrastructure today helps build safe, connected and resilient communities tomorrow.”



KEY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES



TRANSPORTATION NETWORKS

Maintaining and improving roads and bridges to support safety, mobility, and economic growth.



WATER SUPPLY & MANAGEMENT

Ensuring reliable and sustainable water resources for homes, businesses, and agriculture.



WASTEWATER SERVICES

Supporting safe and effective wastewater systems that protect public health and the environment.



SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Encouraging efficient waste reduction, recycling, and responsible disposal practices.



ENERGY & UTILITIES

Working with utility providers to ensure reliable and efficient energy and utility services.



COMMUNICATIONS & BROADBAND

Supporting expanded digital connectivity to improve access to services, education, business, and emergency information.

OUR INFRASTRUCTURE PRINCIPLES



Plan and invest in infrastructure that is safe, reliable, and cost-effective.



Support infrastructure that enables responsible growth and development.



Protect the environment and natural resources through smart infrastructure planning and design.



Collaborate with regional partners, service providers, and other governments to maximize resources and opportunities.



Consider long-term affordability and asset management in all infrastructure decisions.



DID YOU KNOW?

Infrastructure planning helps reduce costs over time, supports businesses and agriculture, and improves quality of life for residents.



The MDP encourages the efficient use of existing infrastructure and the coordinated planning of future infrastructure to support healthy, resilient, and vibrant communities.





Working Together for Tomorrow's MD

SHARED VISION. A STRONG FUTURE.

The Municipal Development Plan provides a long-term vision and a clear framework to guide decision that shape the future of the MD of Willow Creek.

Its success depends on all of us – Council, Administration, residents, landowners, businesses and community partners – working together to build a resilient, prosperous, and sustainable municipality.



“The future of the MD of Willow Creek is shaped by the choices we make today – together. By respecting our land, supporting our communities, and planning ahead, we create a legacy for generations to come.”

IMPLEMENTING THE MDP

The MDP is brought to life through consistent application, partnership, and ongoing commitment.



GUIDE DECISIONS

The MDP provides the framework for Council, the MPC, and Administration to evaluate proposals and make informed decisions.



COLLABORATE

We work with residents, businesses, neighbouring municipalities, and other partners to achieve shared goals and opportunities.



MONITOR & REPORT

We will monitor progress and report on key outcomes to ensure the MDP remains relevant and effective.



UPDATE & ADAPT

We will regularly review and update the MDP to respond to change, new information, and emerging opportunities.



APPLY & ENFORCE

The MDP is implemented through the Land Use Bylaw, statutory plans, policies, and day-to-day municipal operations.



BUILD COMMUNITY

We invest in services, infrastructure, and facilities that support vibrant hamlets and a strong rural way of life.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED



STAY INFORMED

Visit our website and sign up for project updates to stay informed about MDP activities.



SHARE YOUR IDEAS

Your feedback helps shape the future of our municipality. Get involved and have your say.



PARTICIPATE

Attend public events, open houses, and engagement opportunities.



SPREAD THE WORD

Talk with your neighbours, family, and friends. Strong communities start with conversation.



BE PART OF THE FUTURE

Together, we can ensure the MD of Willow Creek continues to be a great place to live, work, raise a family, and grow.



Let's build tomorrow's
MD of Willow Creek – together.

Learn more. Get Involved. Have your say.

Visit: <https://whatshappening.mdwillowcreek.com>

Email: development@mdwillowcreek.com

Call: 403-625-3351



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