

Saddle Hills County
RR 1 Spirit River, Alberta
Tel 1-780-864-3760
Fax 1-780-864-3904
www.saddlehills.ca







STRATEGIC PLAN

2017-2019

"The wilderness is our back yard."

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Message to Our Residents



INTRODUCTION

Saddle Hills County Council developed the 2017-2019 Strategic Plan with the purpose of building upon the opportunities, address the challenges and mitigate potential risks for our residents and businesses. Without a plan, any municipality risks becoming occupied by only what is necessary “to keep the lights” on each day. Saddle Hills County residents deserve better than that. Therefore, councillors are committed to be the visionary leaders by planning ahead while keeping the viability of the County and its services in mind.

LOOKING AHEAD

Saddle Hills County Council understands that having a shared vision is a key way of enabling effective municipal governance. Through this Plan, Council confirms their commitment towards achieving:

- Saddle Hills County’s vision
- Saddle Hills County’s mission
- Saddle Hills County’s values

PRIORITY SETTING PROCESS

Council and staff used diagnostic tools, such as “what works well” and “what requires attention”, in evaluating our organization. This process involves discussing our internal perceptions, stakeholders’ views, and community perspectives from citizens and business. Through the strategic planning process, Council recognized and established the priorities to achieve the County’s vision for the benefit of residents and the community at large. The process focuses on the top critical priorities for the immediate future, and identifies those that will be acted upon in the future.

SADDLE HILLS COUNTY – 2017-2019 STRATEGIC PLAN

OUR COMMITMENT

Saddle Hills County Council is committed to being a transparent and accountable government. By introducing this Strategic Plan, we commit to do our Council duties and diligently work towards the best outcome for our ratepayers. We commit to providing regular updates by reporting to our ratepayers on our targets and performance through the introduction of Saddle Hills County Annual Reports, commencing in 2017.

Saddle Hills County Council:

January 10, 2017

Councillor John Moen

Councillor Lawrence Andruchiw

Councillor Cindy Clarke

Councillor Ken Titford

Councillor Willis Fitzsimmons

Deputy Reeve Kristen Smith

Reeve Alvin Hubert



Our County

Saddle Hills County is located in the Central Peace Region. The Central Peace Region is comprised of five municipalities: Saddle Hills County, Birch Hills County, MD of Spirit River, Village of Rycroft, and Town of Spirit River, sometimes referred to as “G5”. Saddle Hills County has the Peace River on its northern boundary, British Columbia on its west border, County of Grande Prairie on its south border, and MD of Spirit River on its east border.

OUR CHARACTERISTICS

Statistics Canada, 2011 Census Profile

	Saddle Hills County	Alberta
Population in 2011	2,288	3,645,257
Population in 2006	2,458	3,290,350
Percentage population change	(7)	11
Total private dwellings	973	1,505,007
Private dwellings occupied	878	1,390,275
Land area (sq km)	5,837	640,082
Population by age groups	2,285	3,645,260
0 to 4 years	150	244,880
5 to 9 years	150	218,990
10 to 14 years	165	220,920
15 to 19 years	155	238,205
20 to 24 years	95	258,475
25 to 29 years	100	288,735
30 to 34 years	120	274,390
35 to 39 years	120	260,135
40 to 44 years	160	258,515
45 to 49 years	170	280,635
50 to 54 years	215	279,705
55 to 59 years	205	233,785
60 to 64 years	150	182,160
65 to 69 years	125	125,700
70 to 74 years	100	94,775
75 to 79 years	55	76,040
80 to 84 years	40	57,725
85 years and over	15	51,485
Median age of the population	43	37
% aged 15 and over	80	81



SADDLE HILLS COUNTY – 2017-2019 STRATEGIC PLAN

	Saddle Hills County	Alberta
Marital status: 15 years and over by marital status	1,825	2,960,470
Married or common law	1,305	1,756,855
Married (and not separated)	1,155	1,484,700
Living common law	155	272,155
Not married and not living with a common-law partner	515	1,203,610
Single (never legally married)	335	823,935
Separated	35	70,860
Divorced	65	177,375
Widowed	80	131,440
Families in private households	710	999,530
Size of census family: 2 persons	390	484,825
Size of census family: 3 persons	125	213,675
Size of census family: 4 persons	110	203,800
Size of census family: 5 or more	90	97,225
Total number of census families in private households	710	999,530
Children in private households	710	1,097,320
Under six years of age	175	284,605
6 to 14 years	285	386,605
15 to 17 years	100	134,350
18 to 24 years	95	202,260
25 years and over	55	89,505
Average children at home	1	1



SADDLE HILLS COUNTY – 2017-2019 STRATEGIC PLAN

	Saddle Hills County	Alberta
Total population 15 years and over	2,000	2,625,140
In the labour force	1,580	1,942,820
Employed	1,525	1,859,965
Unemployed	50	82,860
Not in the labour force	425	682,320
Participation rate	79	74
Employment rate	76	71
Unemployment rate	3	4
Total experienced labour force 15 years and over	1,570	
Agriculture and other resource-based industries	710	
Construction	170	
Manufacturing	30	
Wholesale trade	40	
Retail trade	125	
Finance and real estate	20	
Health care and social services	80	
Educational services	75	
Business services	165	
Other services	155	
Population 15 years and over reporting hours of unpaid work	1,840	
Population 15 years and over reporting hours of unpaid housework	1,825	
Population 15 years and over reporting hours looking after children without pay	745	
Population 15 years and over reporting hours of unpaid care or assistance to seniors	445	
Persons 15 years and over with earnings (counts)	1,590	
Median earnings	\$21,016	
Persons 15 years and over with earnings who worked full year; full time (counts)	905	
Median earnings	\$29,377	\$43,964
Persons 15 years and over with income (counts)	1,920	2,514,655
Median income	\$21,782	\$28,896
Median income after tax	\$20,263	\$26,010
Composition of total income (100%)	100	100
Earnings - As a % of total income	81	82
Government transfers - As a % of total income	10	7
Other money - As a % of total income	9	11
Income status of all persons in private households (counts)	2,455	3,185,130
% in low income before tax - All persons	10	12
% in low income after tax - All persons	8	9
% in low income before tax - Persons less than 18 years of age	10	14
% in low income after tax - Persons less than 18 years of age	9	10



Vision, Mission & Values

OUR VISION

A thriving rural municipality with: a growing population; safe, active communities; and, a strong, sustainable, diverse economy.

OUR MISSION

To enhance our communities by providing and supporting quality services and regional initiatives.

OUR VALUES

Respect

To earn respect and be respectful while supporting each other; residents, council members, municipal employees and those working in the county.

Adaptable

To seize opportunities to grow in new directions, and approach change with creative solutions to overcome challenges.

Accountability

To deliver accountable and responsible governance through open, transparent and efficient delivery of programs and services that benefit our County.

Equality

To ensure our programs and services are delivered fairly and equitably throughout the County.

Excellence

To be innovative and creative; embracing opportunities, adapting to our environment, and leading with best practices and continuous improvement.

Collaboration

To create healthy relationships with regional communities, other levels of government and the private sector.

Community Spirit

To support programs, recreational and volunteer activities to improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life for our residents.



Core Activities & Directives

Saddle Hills County Council recognized the County’s core activities and corresponding directives as follows:



GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP

“The County will provide responsible and transparent leadership and governance.”



MUNICIPAL SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

“The County will provide quality municipal services in an organized and timely manner.”



ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

“The County will promote environmental stewardship through leadership and responsible planning.”



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

“The County will provide a framework for growth in population, business and industry.”

Top Priorities

SADDLE HILLS COUNTY COUNCIL IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING TOP PRIORITIES FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE (in order of priority):

- ↑↓ Road maintenance (*Municipal Services & Infrastructure*)
- ↑↓ Potable water strategy (*Municipal Services & Infrastructure*)
- ↑↓ Communication network (*Municipal Services & Infrastructure*)
- ↑↓ Sustainability planning (*Governance & Leadership*)
- ↑↓ Municipal service capacity (*Governance & Leadership*)
- ↑↓ Regional collaboration (*Community Development*)
- ↑↓ Progressive land use documents (*Environmental Stewardship*)
- ↑↓ Open for business (*Community Development*)
- ↑↓ Waste and wastewater management (*Municipal Services & Infrastructure*)

The following pages provide detailed explanations of the four Core Activities, associated strategic objectives, strategic priorities, and specific short term actions for the top priorities.





Governance & Leadership

“The County will provide responsible and transparent leadership and governance.”

CORE OBJECTIVES

- The County will have a fiscally responsible program
- The County will have effective communications with our ratepayers
- The County will commit to transparency
- The County will commit to building an exemplary organizational culture
- The County will build healthy inter-municipal relationships

WHAT WORKS WELL

- The new Council agenda set-up
- Communications have improved (both internal and external)
- Implementation of Public Service Requests system
- Policy and bylaw review committee and process
- Having our Council agenda and draft minutes on our website
- Having our bylaws and policies on our website
- Electronic agendas
- Budgeting process
- Scheduling of events
- Presenting and discussing all information at a regular council meeting contributes to informed decision making
- Providing direction by motions, avoiding misunderstandings
- Not shying away from topics, good discussion at council meetings
- Good Chair, everybody gets a chance to speak (provide information and express opinions)
- Staff’s willingness to adapt and to accommodate
- Public consultation (our open houses are well attended and well received), people feel comfortable attending open houses
- Public members-at-large involved in our decision making (Agriculture Service Board, Community Development Advisory Committee)

WHAT REQUIRES ATTENTION

- More follow-up and reporting for Public Service Requests system (what is our average time for addressing a request?)
- Advise a councillor when major work to be undertaken in his/her ward
- Need to review/develop service levels and standards
- More planning, measurable targets/results
- Follow through on our commitments or adjust to what would be a reasonable expectation
- Consider changing our council meeting times to evening time to make it more workable for people
- Consider reestablishing the committee of the whole
- Consider podcasting of our council meetings
- Public consultation and information (surveys, brochure, annual report or County newsletter)



SADDLE HILLS COUNTY – 2017-2019 STRATEGIC PLAN

EMERGING TRENDS/OPPORTUNITIES/THREATS

- Municipal government act review
- New federal and provincial policies
- Upcoming municipal election
- Inter-municipal collaboration
- New Federal and Provincial funding programs

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (in order of priority)

- **Municipal services capacity review (2017)**
- **Sustainability planning (2017)**
- Effective policies
- New Council orientation
- Review of inter-municipal documents/relations
- Increased communication to ratepayers (transparency)
- Internal communications

SHORT-TERM PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS

PRIORITY & WHAT DOES OUR SUCCESS LOOK LIKE	STAKEHOLDERS	ACTIONS – WHO, WHEN, HOW, WHAT, WHY	\$\$
<p>Municipal services capacity</p> <p><i>We provide effective and efficient services through optimum utilization of resources.</i></p>	Council Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop terms of reference – 1st Quarter 2017 • Engage facilitator – 2nd Quarter 2017 • Conduct review - 3rd Quarter 2017 • Bring the results to strategic planning for services review – 4th Quarter 2017 	2017 Budget (OP)
<p>Sustainability planning</p> <p><i>Balancing plans to meet the needs & vision of the present without compromising the needs & vision of the future.</i></p>	Council Administration Ratepayers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the existing sustainability plan - May 2017 (Council & Admin) • Consider any possible regional initiatives in support of regional sustainability – December 2017 (Council) • Update the existing sustainability plan (2018) 	2018 Budget (OP)





Municipal Services & Infrastructure

“The County will provide quality municipal services in an organized and timely manner.”

CORE OBJECTIVES

- The County will provide and maintain quality road infrastructure for all users
- The County ratepayers will have access to potable water
- The County residents will have access to effective communications networks
- The County will provide effective services (e.g. waste management, protective services, agricultural services, recreation and culture)
- The County will provide efficient and respectful administrative services (Public Service Request system, planning and development services, access to information)

WHAT WORKS WELL

- Public Service Request system
- Communication Towers
- Good team of employees
- Winter road maintenance
- Road use agreements program
- Implementation of bylaw enforcement (Peace Officer)
- Expansion of water system
- Waste management system/recycling
- Good volunteer base
- Agriculture Service Board – ongoing relevance
- Inter-municipal services

WHAT REQUIRES ATTENTION

- Public Services Request system - reporting
- Identify services and levels (e.g. road maintenance)
- Plans (e.g. roads, capital)
- Communication between departments (although it was expressed that council has little knowledge on this subject – it may be working)
- Expansion of water systems
- Proactive planning based on weather forecasts
- Sustainability (all departments/services)
- Consistency of service delivery through the County



EMERGING TRENDS/OPPORTUNITIES/THREATS

- Economic/tax base
- Provincial regulations
- Aging population
- Acreage owners – increased expectations
- Geography/topography of the County
- Climate change
- Evolution of equipment – agriculture/industry/personal
- Impact of online services
- Crime watch
- New Federal and Provincial funding programs

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (in order of priority)

- **Road maintenance (2017)**
- **Potable water strategy (2017)**
- **Communication networks (2017)**
- **Waste & wastewater management (2017)**
- Recreation and culture
- Public engagement
- Emergency services infrastructure



SADDLE HILLS COUNTY – 2017-2019 STRATEGIC PLAN

STRATEGIC ACTIONS FOR 2017

PRIORITY & WHAT DOES OUR SUCCESS LOOK LIKE	STAKEHOLDERS	ACTIONS – WHO, WHEN, HOW, WHAT, WHY	\$\$
<p>Road maintenance</p> <p><i>The County has quality roads.</i></p>	<p>Council Administration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grader operating training – Summer 2017 (Budget & Admin) Review road maintenance policy – January 2017 (Council) Review methods of delivery (in-house vs. contract) – April 2017 (Council & Admin) Review internal operations protocols – April 2017 (Admin) Review of road maintenance operations – April 2017 (Admin) 	<p>2017 Budget (OP)</p>
<p>Potable water strategy</p> <p><i>Building and sustaining our communities through fair and equitable access to potable water.</i></p>	<p>Council Administration Ratepayers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of Raw Water Intake from Peace River Study (inter-municipal) - May 2017 (Council, Admin, G5 municipalities) Solicit and prepare a Plan for utilizing the existing and new infrastructure for establishing potable water distribution systems for all County – April 2017 (Council & Admin) Savanna – supply potable water to Savanna, subject to evaluation of the existing and new infrastructure projects (to be presented to Council for decision) - project commencement – Summer/Fall 2017 Distribution Water Line from Bonanza to Bay Tree (trickle systems) - Feasibility Assessment and Engineering Plan, including a proposed routing (to be presented to Council for decision) – March 2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a policy/bylaw for distribution/transmission lines, including estimated connection fees and allowing monthly installments - April 2017 Open House for the Bay Tree Area to reaffirm people’s commitment to connect prior to project commencement - April 2017 Develop a financial plan for the potential of phasing in all new potable water infrastructure and future replacement reserve (based on above studies) – June 2017 Communication Plan for the Potable Water Strategy - January 2017 	<p>2017 Budget (OP)</p> <p>2017 Budget (CAP)</p> <p>2017 Budget (CAP)</p>
<p>Communication network</p> <p><i>Utilizing communication infrastructure, provide quality high speed internet services, mobility services as well as maximizing value added services.</i></p>	<p>Council Administration Ratepayers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure mobility service providers to supply reliable coverage – December 2018 Develop a plan for the installation of equipment on communication infrastructure to monitor environmental conditions – 3rd quarter 2017 Expand communication network by adding two towers – Spring 2018 installation Develop program to ensure all residents have access to high-speed internet services (difficult to service areas) – December 2017 	<p>2018 Budget (OP)</p> <p>2018 Budget (CAP)</p>
<p>Waste & wastewater management</p> <p><i>A sustainable, self-sufficient, accessible waste management.</i></p>	<p>Council Administration Ratepayers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a landfill plan that is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost effective now and in the future (user fees?); addresses environmental considerations; recycling; responsive to users’ needs – incentives for delivering to the landfill; recognizes expectations Review and select model of operations for the landfill – May 2017 Consult with the Central Peace Waste Commission Develop/establish a vision for waste water - February 2017 Develop a long term plan for waste water – December 2017 	





Environmental Stewardship

“The County will promote environmental stewardship through leadership and responsible planning.”

CORE OBJECTIVES

- The County will have effective communications with ratepayers
- The County will work with residents and industry to develop effective/relevant land use policies
- The County will develop policy that aligns with federal and provincial programs/ regulations
- The County will promote effective and responsible environmental stewardship
- The County will demonstrate commitment to environmental stewardship through our own operations

WHAT WORKS WELL

- New Area Structure Plans – communication process
- Land Use Bylaw – organized and consistent development
- Transparent and strong communication of planning steps
- Learn from feedback and respond
- Agriculture Service Board extension programs
- Weed control & public education
- Recycling opportunities

WHAT REQUIRES ATTENTION

- Land Use Bylaw – amendments to be incorporated
- Inform public about grant opportunities re: Green Development
- Inform public about Land Use Bylaw development opportunities (i.e. subdivisions)
- Definition of better agricultural land (Rural Farmland Assessment)
- Wetland Policy tools – understanding & implementing
- Agricultural services extension programs (value-added, promote small farms and other agriculture; training/workshops)
- Upcoming MGA* changes – Inter-municipal Development Plans
- Land Use Framework – Regional Plans



SADDLE HILLS COUNTY – 2017-2019 STRATEGIC PLAN

EMERGING TRENDS/OPPORTUNITIES/THREATS

- MGA* review
- Land Use Framework
- Wetland Policy
- Grant availability for Green Development for landowners
- Communication towers – use to measure wind, solar (weather stations) [improve information available to support County and residents for grant applications/programs
- New Federal and Provincial funding programs

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (in order of priority)

- **Progressive land use documents (2017)**
- Expanding Agriculture Service Board extension programs
- Monitor environmental conditions using communications towers to support green initiatives
- Monitor and evaluate grant programs for ratepayers and municipal opportunities
- Recognize regional collaboration opportunities to enhance environmental stewardship

STRATEGIC ACTIONS FOR 2017

PRIORITY & WHAT DOES OUR SUCCESS LOOK LIKE	STAKEHOLDERS	ACTIONS – WHO, WHEN, HOW, WHAT, WHY	\$\$
<p>Progressive land use documents</p> <p><i>Saddle Hills County has progressive land use documents that foster economic development.</i></p>	<p>Council Administration Ratepayers Neighboring municipalities Industry Development Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the County’s land use documents consulting with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Agriculture Service Board & Community Development Advisory Committee ○ County’s departments (community development, planning & information systems, corporate services, environmental services, operations/infrastructure) ○ Municipal Development Plan update – October 2017 • Align land use documents to MGA* and other legislation/issues (water, indigenous communities, environmental, etc.) - 2018 • Community engagement communications (ongoing) • Develop a framework for inter-municipal collaboration (add to the next G5 agenda for discussion) 	<p>2017 Budget (OP)</p>

*Municipal Government Act





Community Development

“The County will provide a framework for growth in population, business and industry. “

CORE OBJECTIVES

- The County will build family friendly communities
- The County will provide adequate recreational and cultural opportunities which will attract people
- The County will have effective means of ensuring our municipal services respond to the needs of our communities
- The County will support partnerships with industry and business
- The County will build partnerships with our municipal neighbors

WHAT WORKS WELL

- Money in the budget (availability of financial resources)
- Family and Community Social Services programs
- Communication towers (tenants)
- Grants to non-profits programs
- Recreation halls
- Visibility in the community
- CARE (small business cooperative initiative)
- Community Development Advisory Committee – visioning process

WHAT REQUIRES ATTENTION

- Senior/home care programs (food bank, northern medical travel bursary, etc.)
- Communication towers (in-fill)
 - Internet service quality and affordability
 - Mobility service quality and affordability
- Feasibility & needs assessment (halls, facilities)
- Volunteer recruitment drive
- Economic development (population growth - water, housing)
- Communication of current/reliable information
- Potable water availability



SADDLE HILLS COUNTY – 2017-2019 STRATEGIC PLAN

EMERGING TRENDS/OPPORTUNITIES/THREATS

- Economic development – develop a plan, recognizing the economic realities
- Industrial diversity
- Area structure plans are in place
- Measurable targets (not having measurable targets is a threat)
- Taxes
- Cost of living
- Carbon tax
- Oil industry decline
- Linear assessment decline
- Diversified industrial opportunities
- Recycling – end-use opportunities
- Partnership with college re: ticketing equipment operators, utility operators
- “Cottage” industry marketing
- Crime watch
- New Federal and Provincial funding programs

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (in order of priority)

- **Regional collaboration (2017)**
- **Open for business (2017)**
- Meet with industry and business
- Review the results from Recreation Study
- Community building
- New attraction study
- Effective community input
- Communication strategy



STRATEGIC ACTIONS FOR 2017

SADDLE HILLS COUNTY – 2017-2019 STRATEGIC PLAN

PRIORITY & WHAT DOES OUR SUCCESS LOOK LIKE	STAKEHOLDERS	ACTIONS – WHO, WHEN, HOW, WHAT, WHY	\$\$
<p>Regional collaboration</p> <p><i>An aligned region, where communities & organizations work together to enhance services, prosperity and capacity.</i></p>	<p>Council Central Peace Region municipalities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurture positive relationships through communication, interactions, while considering each other’s needs (ongoing) • Open information sharing with the greater peace region (ongoing) • Develop a regional vision (add to the next G5 agenda for discussion) 	
<p>Open for business</p> <p><i>A positive & innovative environment conducive to fostering growth.</i></p>	<p>Council Administration Public Business Community Industry Community Development Advisory Committee (CDAC)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify, develop/adjust policies/plans to empower growth – April 2017 (Council and Admin) • Marketing Strategy that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supports diversification of local business community ○ Supports innovation & entrepreneurship ○ Communicates to target audience <p><i>The Marketing Strategy to be developed by Community Development department while working with the CDAC</i></p> • Provide business friendly services (i.e. roads, internet, mobility, water, planning, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meet with industry and businesses - Spring 2017 (Admin and CDAC) • Provide opportunities for housing which meet the needs of industry (<i>to be included in the Marketing Strategy</i>) 	





Success is just ahead...

