

FAQ:

Draft South Shore Area Structure Plan

The County of Stettler has found that the current Buffalo Lake South Shore Intermunicipal Development Plan (BLSSIDP) does not accommodate types of development that the County is prepared to see in the area. The approach taken for development density in the current plan does not adequately account for recreational forms of development like RV parks and campground resorts.

Agreement to change the current plan with members of the BLSSIDP has not been achieved; therefore, the County is in the process of mediating their withdrawal from the Buffalo Lake South Shore Intermunicipal Development Plan.

In withdrawing from the current Plan, the County recognizes the need to have a replacement plan to guide the future development of the area in a manner that satisfies the requirements of the larger, Buffalo Lake Intermunicipal Development Plan. The Draft ASP fulfils this role.

A Draft South Shore Area Structure Plan is available for public review until May 17, 2021 and we wish to hear your thoughts.

This document provides additional information about the Draft South Shore Area Structure Plan (ASP). It seeks to answer some of the questions that have been identified through an initial sharing of the Draft ASP with community associations located in the Plan Area. Additional questions will be addressed during the public review process.

Some Key Terms

“Buffalo Lake Intermunicipal Development Plan” or “Buffalo Lake IDP” means the intermunicipal or joint plan that has been adopted by the County of Stettler, Lacombe County, Camrose County, Summer Village of Rochon Sands and Summer Village of White Sands. This is the “senior” plan that applies to the South Shore Growth Node.

“Buffalo Lake South Shore Intermunicipal Development Plan” or “BLSSIDP” means the intermunicipal plan that has been adopted by the County of Stettler, Summer Village of Rochon Sands and Summer Village of White Sands and which applies to all lands in the County of Stettler falling within the boundaries of the Buffalo Lake IDP and the Summer Villages of Rochon Sands and White Sands.

“Density” means the number of development units within a defined geographic area (i.e. 50 development units within a 100 hectare area).

“Development Unit” has the same meaning as the term is defined in the Buffalo Lake IDP (You can find the full definition on page 34 of the Draft ASP).

“Growth Node Plan” means an intermunicipal development plan, a municipal development plan, an area structure plan and an area redevelopment plan adopted by a municipality.

“Plan Area” means lands that are included in the boundaries of the Draft South Shore ASP and will be subject to the policies it contains.

“South Shore Growth Node” means the area in the County of Stettler specifically identified in the Buffalo Lake IDP as part of the South Shore Growth Node and all of the Summer Village of Rochon Sands and all of the Summer Village of White Sands.

Relation to the Buffalo Lake Intermunicipal Development Plan and Other Planning Documents

The Buffalo Lake IDP is a joint plan in partnership with the four other municipalities around Buffalo Lake. It is a mandatory plan under the Municipal Government Act. It involves sharing decision making for land uses and development in the area of common interest. It is through the Buffalo Lake IDP that the other municipalities have an influence on planning decisions in this part of the County of Stettler and vice versa.

The Buffalo Lake IDP is not changed by the Draft South Shore ASP. The Draft South Shore ASP is a Growth Node Plan and is the “more junior” plan compared to the Buffalo Lake IDP. This means that the Draft South Shore ASP must follow the policies of the Buffalo Lake IDP. Where there is a conflict between the policies then the Buffalo Lake IDP policies override the conflicting Draft South Shore ASP policies. Where a topic is not covered in the Draft South Shore ASP the policies of the Buffalo Lake IDP continue to apply.

Planning decisions in the South Shore Growth Node must follow the Buffalo Lake IDP, the County of Stettler Municipal Development Plan, the Draft South Shore ASP (once adopted) and the County of Stettler Land Use Bylaw.

Lands included in the Draft Plan

The lands covered in the Draft South Shore ASP are the same as the lands shown in the Buffalo Lake IDP as South Shore Growth Node within the boundaries of the County of Stettler. The size of the South Shore Growth Node cannot be expanded without all five municipalities agreeing to amend the Buffalo Lake IDP.

The Draft South Shore ASP does not include the Limited Development Area lands that are also shown in the Buffalo Lake IDP. The Limited Development Area policies of the Buffalo Lake IDP already provide adequate policy direction for these lands. There is no need or benefit to repeating them in the Draft South Shore ASP.

The Draft South Shore ASP does not address lands within the Summer Village of Rochon Sands or the Summer Village of White Sands.

What does the Draft Plan mean for the Limited Development Area around the Lake?

If your land is in the Limited Development Area created by the Buffalo Lake IDP, the replacement of the Buffalo Lake South Shore Intermunicipal Development Plan (BLSSIDP) by the Draft South Shore ASP means there will be one less plan than the number that current applies to your property. The limits on the amount and type of development that can occur in the Limited Development Area are set out in the Buffalo Lake IDP. The Buffalo Lake IDP will continue to apply.

Why are some policies worded “may” or “should” and others “must” or “shall”?

The policies of the Draft South Shore ASP use the verbs “may” “should” “must” and “shall” to signify the meaning and application of an individual policy. These are common terms used in a policy plan. The terms “must” and “shall” are the strongest and means that the policy is to be applied in all cases. When preparing a plan that has to cover many different properties, varying terrain and land use activities there is a high likelihood that unique circumstances will be encountered. This is why some policies use the term “should” or “may.” These two terms provide varying degrees of flexibility for choosing to apply or choosing not to apply a policy depending on the circumstances.

The term “may” is also used to communicate scenarios that are acceptable as landowners decide if they wish to develop their property. For example, the lands marked as residential on Map A: Future Land Use and Transportation Concept may continue to be used for their current agricultural purposes (Policy 4.2.1) or the landowner may choose to change to residential use (Policy 4.2.4).

Timing of the Development of the Plan Area

The Draft South Shore ASP does not have a set time horizon and schedule for the development of the lands included in the Plan Area. The timing of individual projects will be based on the desire of individual landowners to develop their property and the economic feasibility of each project. It is expected that full build out, meaning the point where the full potential of development allowed under the Draft South Shore ASP is reached, will take 25+ years.

How has the allowable number of Development Units been allocated?

The Draft South Shore ASP allocates development units across the west part (west of Highway 835) and east parts of the Growth Node in a way that balances:

- the need to recognize existing approved plans;
- fairness between landowners;
- the ability to develop the full potential of the Growth Node; and
- having sufficient development units available to create economically viable projects and fund the required infrastructure.

The creation of additional development units will be based on a “first come, first serve” basis as projects are proposed and approved. The number of development units, and the resulting density of individual

projects, will be determined when more detailed planning, in the form of a local area structure plan, outline plan or site plan is prepared.

For most new large proposals, this means that Council will establish how many development units are in an area through the approval of the local area structure plan, outline plan or site plan. For a proposal that is being considered under the existing Land Use Bylaw designation on the property, like the Paradise Shores site, or for a smaller proposal like a single parcel subdivision, the number of development units will be established through the development permit approval or subdivision approval process.

How many Development Units are allowed in Each Area?

Map C: Allocation of Future Development Units focuses on development units to be created in the coming years. In Allocation Area A, which is Ol'MacDonald's Resort, there is overlap with the existing development units. In Allocation Area B and C there is no overlap with existing development units.

The Draft South Shore ASP allocates 990 existing and future development units to the area east of Highway 835. This is 36.5 percent of the total 2,715 development units allocated under the Plan. The area contains approximately 6.5 quarter sections.

The Draft South Shore ASP allocates 1,725 existing and future development units to the area west of Highway 835. This is 63.5 percent of the total 2,715 development units allocated under the Plan. The area contains approximately 12.5 quarter sections.

Why is the Density not defined for each Quarter Section?

The Draft South Shore ASP focuses on the overall density in the County portion of the Growth Node rather than prescribing a set density for each individual landowner. The density of development in the Growth Node will be limited to the 0.9 units per acre identified in the Buffalo Lake IDP. The intent is to provide flexibility and give the ability to create "peaks" and "valleys" of development intensity based on the unique aspects of individual projects. This means that the density for any particular project or subdivision will be allowed to vary on a case by case basis.

How does the Draft ASP manage pressure on the Lake and general quality of life/rural character?

The Draft South Shore ASP manages pressure on Buffalo Lake by following the requirements of the Buffalo Lake IDP regarding the overall amount of development allowed in the Growth Node. The Buffalo Lake IDP establishes thresholds for the future amount of development based on available lake capacity. The analysis of lake capacity and future growth is found in the Buffalo Lake IDP.

For residential uses, the Draft ASP requires a "cluster form" of subdivision layout, a minimum parcel size of 0.2024m² (0.5 acre), the use of communal water and wastewater systems, and the preservation of

the open space areas shown on Map A: Future Land Use and Transportation Concept. These policies have the effect of encouraging new lots to be concentrated in a part of a quarter section to be able to economically provide roads, water lines and wastewater lines.

While there is no maximum number of development units per quarter section, each quarter section in the Plan Area contains some natural features that are to be retained as open space and must provide a 10% open space dedication. The net effect is that future residential developments are expected to have a rural look more like the existing Scenic Sands subdivision compared to the Buffalo View Estates subdivision.

Are there Detailed Plans for the Boat Launch/Vehicle Access Points?

With the exception of some preliminary drawings for the Buffalo View Estates marina, the County has not undertaken detailed planning for the nature of the future improvements at the three identified locations (Buffalo View Estates, Scenic Sands and Buffalo Lake Meadows/Range Road 211). These plans are expected to be prepared after the Draft South Shore ASP has been adopted so that they are in place before much more development is approved in the Plan Area. The process to prepare the detailed plans for each location will involve public consultation and review.

What additional planning is expected before a major project is approved?

The term “major project” refers to a development or subdivision that involves 2 or more new parcels or 3 or more new development units. The requirement to undertake additional planning is laid out in Section 4.10 Plan Implementation Policies of the Draft South Shore ASP.

The additional planning includes a local area structure plan, outline plan or a site plan and all of the related supporting studies.

A local area structure plan or outline plan is best suited for major projects that will create new lots through the subdivision approval process. This type of plan is expected to provide a detailed subdivision layout showing land uses, all new lots, roads and access routes, parks and open space areas (environmental reserve and municipal reserve) and public utility lots (e.g. storm water management pond). It is expected to provide much more detail than the land use concept of the Draft South Shore ASP (e.g. all local roads and sizes of individual lots being created). For major projects that do not involve subdivision, the site plan is expected to provide similar information.

Policy 4.10.3 describes the content expected in a local area structure plan or outline plan. Policy 4.10.6 describes the content expected in a site plan. The County’s Municipal Development Plan, Land Use Bylaw and Planning and Subdivision Guidelines provide further expectations including requirements for public review.

Policy 4.10.7 lists types of supporting studies that may be required before a Land Use Bylaw amendment to allow a major project to proceed is approved. Most major projects will require a change in the current Land Use Bylaw designation, typically going from the Agricultural District to a residential District. The list includes traffic impact assessment, storm water management plan, servicing design briefs for water and

wastewater systems, wetland assessment, biophysical assessment required by the Buffalo Lake IDP, water supply report and historical resources impact assessment. This list may be expanded to other studies as needed by the particular proposal.

Finally Policy 4.10.8 allows the County to require all the same studies in the event that a major project does not require an amendment to the Land Use Bylaw designation on the subject property.

Can more detailed plans deviate from the Draft South Shore ASP?

The local area structure plan, or outline plan, or site plan that is required is expected to take its lead from the Draft South Shore ASP. That said these plans will involve much more detailed evaluation, level of effort and resources on a particular and smaller area of land compared to the broad concepts of the Draft South Shore ASP. There is latitude for adjustments and refinements so long as major concepts are reflected in the more detailed plans. For example, if the Draft South Shore ASP calls for a road connecting to the adjacent quarter section then the more detailed plan may shift the location of the road but could not remove the road altogether.

Since there is possibility of refining the concepts of the Draft South Shore ASP, the more detailed planning that is expected for each project also includes review and input opportunities for adjacent landowners and the public. In addition, County planning staff evaluates the proposed detailed plans based on the ability to achieve the overall direction of the Draft South Shore ASP and consistency with all applicable plans including the Buffalo Lake IDP. This includes consideration of the implications for other landowners and the overall community.

How will growth in the area be monitored?

The amount of growth that has taken place or has been approved in the Plan Area will be monitored. This will happen in two main ways: first through the periodic review and update of the Plan; and, second, as individual major projects are brought forward for approval. The review of the Plan is expected to occur at least every 10 years though Council may review it earlier if a need arises. Policy 4.3.10 requires the County Planning Department to set up a monitoring system to keep track of how many new development units have been created through approvals. A current count of the number of development units in the Plan Area must be presented to Council prior to approval of any major project that would add 50 or more new development units.

How will required connection to regional water and wastewater be managed?

Water Reservoirs required as the result of new development will be located along existing infrastructure and aimed to service multiple subdivisions. Depending on service availability, new subdivisions may require new reservoirs, or may require upgrades to existing reservoirs with extensions to the distribution lines.

Wastewater collection points will likely need to be located within each subdivision to keep costs down, and eventually utilize lift stations at collection points to pump wastewater to a centralized treatment system.

If the County has the opportunity to develop water and wastewater systems through existing subdivisions, Council will need to consider whether hooking up will be mandatory, and whether local improvement taxes will be levied. These decisions are largely funding based, but along the lake concerns about effluent escaping private sewer systems will also inform Council's decision.

How will road improvements and offsite levies be managed?

Council will need to consider the fully developed state of off-site infrastructure, estimate the costs for that infrastructure, and then develop an offsite levy bylaw to manage the expectation for new developers to contribute to these improvements.

Additionally, local residents of existing developments can petition to implement a local improvement tax to fund capital projects in existing subdivisions.

Relation to the Paradise Shores Development and Paradise Shores Area Structure Plan

This plan facilitates future development of the former Paradise Shores site in a way that meets all requirements of the Buffalo Lake Intermunicipal Development Plan (BLIDP).

The Draft South Shore Area Structure Plan removes the requirements for a local area structure plan for proposed developments that do not involve the subdivision of land. The Draft ASP allows for a development like Paradise Shores to obtain Land Use Bylaw designation and development permit approval subject to the approval of an overall site plan and submission of all required supporting studies. Therefore, the existing plan which intended to allocate 750 units across two parcels of land to Paradise Shores may be rescinded upon adoption of the new plan.

One of the challenges of the current Buffalo Lake South Shore Intermunicipal Development Plan (BLSSIDP) is that some key policies assumed that subdivisions would always occur as lands in the area were developed. For example, preserving environmentally significant features through dedication of an environmental reserve parcel requires a subdivision approval to be granted. The Draft ASP instead speaks to the preservation of environmental features through environmental reserve dedication as well as through more traditional subdivision mechanisms.

Additionally, though not specifically enabled by the SSASP, current permits have expired and any opening of the site will require new approvals regardless of the plan in place. Land Use Bylaw amendments have also been enacted by County Council to require greater oversight of all works, including preliminary dirt work. Where the Paradise Shores site was largely developed prior to planning approval under Section 16 of the Land Use Bylaw, it has now been amended so this kind of work cannot be undertaken prior to approval. Therefore, a complete and approved plan would be required prior to shovels hitting the ground for any subsequent permit at any site.