

Municipalities play a large role in the planning for the responsible use of land, both within their boundaries and regionally. Planning and development involves the appropriate use and management of land resources, provision of services and infrastructure, orderly development of new growth, management of risks, and proper decision-making models for land-related issues.

What is the AAMDC's position on the importance of having a municipal perspective in development and planning?

- With 86.5% of Alberta's land mass located within rural municipalities, the critical role that rural municipal governments play in both planning and development cannot be understated.
- Planning and development are core municipal functions. Each municipality has a fundamental interest in land-use planning within their own and neighbouring communities.
- Rural municipal perspectives on growth and planning are diverse. Depending on their location within Alberta, some rural municipalities may be dealing with the challenges of rapid growth, while others may be examining ways to stimulate encourage new economic development in rural and remote areas.
- It is imperative that jurisdiction for local land-use planning remains with municipalities.
- Municipalities operate with significant autonomy as outlined in the *Municipal Government Act* (which is guaranteed in the MGA); however, the Government of Alberta has recently assumed an increased role in planning and development, especially relating to high-growth areas, regionalization, and cumulative effects as identified in the Land-use Framework.
- Municipalities must be given appropriate tools and resources to enable the development of intermunicipal collaboration frameworks, municipal development plans, and to comply with regional plans, and the cumulative effects approach.

What financial considerations do rural municipalities have with respect to planning and development?

- The development of intermunicipal collaboration frameworks and intermunicipal development plans, both of which will be mandatory for municipal neighbours through the revised *Municipal Government Act*, will result in increased costs for municipalities. Financial support should be made available to enable municipalities to develop sound agreements with their neighbours.
- Growth results in significant pressure for the addition of services and infrastructure to newly developed areas. Municipalities would like to examine alternatives to address who should pay for the related costs.
- In high-growth areas, rural municipalities periodically face annexation bids. Issuing a response to the bid is often very labour-intensive and costly. Through the ongoing review of the *Municipal Government Act*, the AAMDC seeks clear principles that outlines when an annexation bid is reasonable. through the *Modernized Municipal Government Act*.
- Successful annexations can result in a loss of taxation revenue for the annexed municipality.
- Planning and development processes need to be adaptable and address changing priorities, shifts in available grants and the potential for absorbing dissolving municipalities.
- The funding provided through the Alberta Community Partnership supports the municipal viability process but additional supports are required to ensure municipalities inheriting dissolved municipalities are not inheriting unnecessary risk.
- To enable sound planning, promote sustainability and minimize liability, the province should provide municipalities on the receiving end of a dissolution with information regarding the state of infrastructure in municipalities that are at risk of dissolving, and access to proper funding to address the infrastructure costs inherited as a result of the dissolution process (ex. aging water and wastewater infrastructure).

What collaborative relationships are essential to rural municipalities in planning and development?

- Planning and development requires municipalities to have clear bylaws and statutory plans. To create those plans municipalities must engage with citizens and local business owners. Such regulations should be easily understandable to residents, developers and industry.

- Intermunicipal collaboration frameworks and intermunicipal development plans, both of which will be mandatory for municipal neighbours through the revised *Municipal Government Act*, are effective tools to ensure that appropriate services and infrastructure are being funded regionally, while preserving local autonomy in reaching these decisions.
- As Alberta's large urban centers continue to grow, the AAMDC and impacted rural municipalities look forward to being involved in the development of specialized governance agreements (such as city charters). The impacts of decisions made for one municipality often spill beyond municipal boundaries with unforeseen impacts. Involving all impacted municipalities will create healthy and collaboratively-focused regions.
- Subdivision appeal boards and the Municipal Government Board play key roles in handling disputes related to planning and developments.
- The Government of Alberta requires municipal plans to conform to regional plans under the Land-use Framework. Therefore, it is vital that municipalities be actively involved in the development of regional plans, and that regional plans respect the local decisions reached in existing municipal and intermunicipal plans.

How does the work of the AAMDC support the sustainability of municipal planning and development?

- The AAMDC has produced a position paper outlining the detrimental effects of forced regionalization and highlighting the importance of municipal autonomy (and voluntary collaboration) in intermunicipal land-use planning.
- The AAMDC participates in a number of initiatives related to planning and development including the overarching provincial Land-use Framework and the associated regional plans.

What current planning and development-related issues are impacting rural Alberta?

Intermunicipal Collaborative Frameworks and Intermunicipal Development Plans

- The AAMDC is concerned about the restrictive timelines for municipalities to negotiate intermunicipal collaborative frameworks and intermunicipal development plans. Completing these agreements within two years will require significant municipal staff capacity and resources, especially for those rural municipalities required to negotiate upwards of ten separate agreements, compared to urban municipalities who may only complete one.
- In some cases, ICF negotiations will require municipalities to collaborate who have struggled to do so in the past. The AAMDC believes that for intermunicipal

collaboration frameworks to be effective, all involved municipalities must negotiate in good faith and respect varying levels of capacity and priorities that all partners may have.

Annexation/Dissolution

- Inter-municipal development plans should be required between two municipalities before one of the partnering municipalities pursues the annexation, amalgamation or dissolution process.
- Annexations and dissolutions are important tools to allow municipal structures to adapt to changing economic and demographic realities. However, it is vital that both of these processes consider the potential impacts on all involved municipalities and the region, not only those initiating the process.
- As non-contiguous additions to First Nations reserves will often impact municipal land use planning and may transfer municipally-controlled land to First Nations, impacted municipalities should have a strong voice in the reserve granting process.

Cost of Development

- The expanded use of offsite levies (also known as development levies) through the revised *Municipal Government Act* should be expanded to provide greater flexibility to municipalities and ensure that municipalities are able to cover the capital costs of new facilities in new development areas.

Disaster Mitigation

- All land-use planning at the municipal level should consider possible environmental impacts, including the potential for flooding, wildfires and drought.
- Unprecedented flooding has resulted in legislative changes for land-use planning in flood prone areas. Most municipalities recognize the importance of avoiding flood-prone areas, these formalized changes need to be monitored for impacts and unintended consequences. These legislative changes have yet to be incorporated into the existing land-use framework.
- Municipal land-use bylaws must be amended to address legislative changes for planning in floodways.
- Flood mitigation efforts are timely and needed but must involve local governments and comprehensive consultation, and consider both environmental impacts and agriculture considerations.
- Flood mitigation planning should also address drought mitigation planning.

- Municipalities work with government, residents and landowners through programs such as FireSmart to plan and mitigate risks of wildfire.

Land-use Framework

- Regional plans under the Land-use Framework will have an impact on municipal planning and development plans, and municipalities should be thoroughly consulted and engaged in the development of these plans.

For more information, visit www.aamdc.com for **reports** and an online, searchable **Resolution Database** which includes information on all active resolutions and emerging issues related to planning and development.

AAMDC reports specifically related to the position statements identified in this document include:

- ***Finding Local Solutions: Examining the Impacts of Forced Regionalization***

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