County of St. Paul / County of Two Hills Intermunicipal Development Plan

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

To meet the requirements of the Municipal Government Act, that all municipalities must adopt Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDP) with their land-based neighbouring municipalities, the participating municipalities determined that a collaborative approach would bring the most value. The group of municipalities ("the partners") involved in the Rural Multi-Jurisdictional IDP Project includes the participation of:

- County of St. Paul
- County of Two Hills
- County of Vermilion River
- Lac La Biche County
- Municipal District of Bonnyville
- Smoky Lake County

This IDP is one of eight rural-to-rural plans developed through this project. The partners' shared borders are expansive, yet have significant common features including being rural, largely agricultural in land use, and sharing ecological, utility and transportation features.

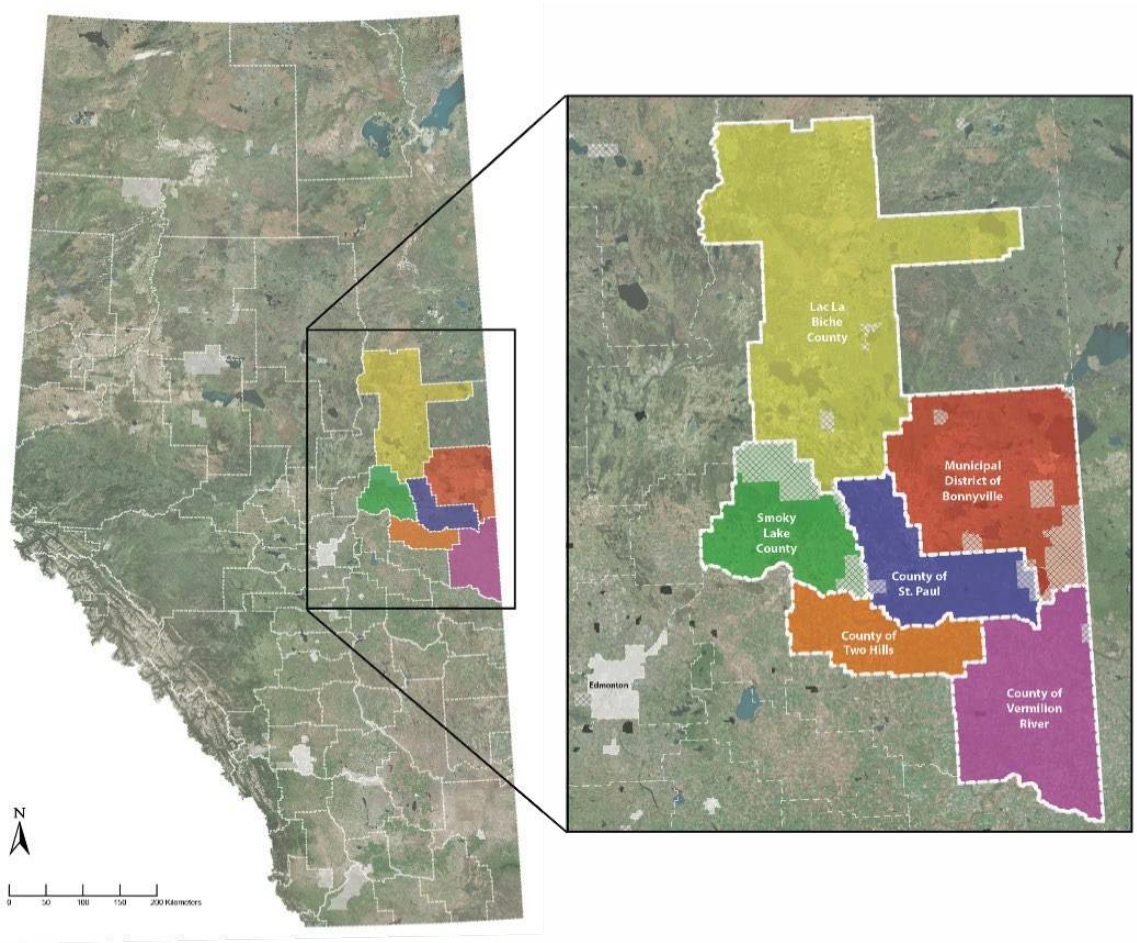


Figure 1: Regional Context Map

1.2. Vision, Shared Values and Goals

1.2.1. Vision

To fulfill the Municipal Government Act Section 631 requirements for IDPs while proactively building collaborative relationships. The purpose of an IDP is to foster an intermunicipal approach to planning issues on the lands that connect adjacent municipalities, and to establish an agreed upon development vision for the area.

1.2.2. Shared Values

A set of shared values were developed to guide the development of this Plan, and are expected to be used as a framework for interpreting the IDP policies:

(1) Strong, proactive communication and safe discussion;

(2) More awareness of all our neighbours;

(3) Respect for our neighbours;

(4) Inclusivity; and

(5) Equal partners.

1.2.3. Goals

The goal is to meet the Municipal Government Act's requirements by:

(1) Identifying future land uses for the Plan Area;

(2) Facilitate intermunicipal communication and coordination of planning and development within the Plan Area based on the shared values and policies;

(3) Address the transportation systems;

(4) Collaborate on relevant intermunicipal programs relating to the physical, social and economic development of the Plan Area;

(5) Address environmental matters through a focus on water bodies, watersheds and environmentally significant areas within the Plan Area;

(6) Establish direction for joint collaboration on issues beyond the municipal jurisdiction; and

(7) Provide administrative provisions for dispute resolution, amendments and repeals.

1.3. Statutory Framework

In addition to recently becoming a requirement for municipalities, as per section 631 of the Municipal Government Act, the IDP has also become the highest order of municipal statutory plan and requires all other statutory plans to align with its policies.

The Municipal Government Act also requires the IDPs to be consistent with any approved regional plans. The County of St. Paul and the County of Two Hills fall within the North Saskatchewan Regional Plan area. Although the creation of the regional plan is still in progress while this IDP is being developed, the Municipalities have taken steps to incorporate regional planning considerations in this IDP that are consistent with the Terms of Reference for Developing the North Saskatchewan Regional Plan.

1.4. Policy Interpretation

The IDP uses specific language to indicate the level of support required for each policy. The following words are to be interpreted as follows:

Shall, require, must, or will: explicitly apply to all situations without exception.

Should: always applies to the situation unless it can clearly be identified to the agreement of Council or the Approving Authority that in the given situation, the policy is not reasonable, practical or feasible.

May: acknowledges support in principle and indicates that Council or the Approving Authority has the discretion to determine the level of compliance that is required.

1.5. Mapping Interpretation

The maps contained within this IDP are intended to provide support and aid in the interpretation of the policies. Boundaries, areas shown, and locations denoted by symbols are approximate and are not intended to define exact locations except where they coincide with clearly recognizable physical features or fixed boundaries such as property line and roads. Since the maps are not absolute, and will be interpreted as such, the precise location of these boundaries will need to be determined by the relevant Approving Authority at the time of evaluating any proposed development application.

Map legends may include items not represented on the map. Mapping was undertaken as part of the inventory of current services, and lack of representation on the map indicates a service was inventoried, but no service exists in the area.

1.6. Public Engagement

This IDP was developed through a collaborative process that included a series of intermunicipal discussions in conjunction with community engagement that collected public input at several points in the process. Guided by an advisory committee consisting of elected officials and members of administration from each of the partner municipalities, the IDP endeavoured to include key stakeholders such as land owners, adjacent First Nations and Métis communities, industry representatives and recreation groups.

The process had two community engagement phases that ran concurrently with the development of the IDP prior to the public hearing and approval process:

Engagement Phase 1 – Discover & Vision:

A targeted stakeholder meeting was held to inform the stakeholders about the IDP, collect information about the Plan Area context, and to identify potential opportunities and issues. An online questionnaire was also available for stakeholders unable to attend, presenting and collecting the same information as the stakeholder meeting.

Engagement Phase 2 – Preliminary Policy Direction:

Using input collected in Engagement Phase 1, preliminary policy statements were developed and presented to the public at an open house and via an online survey. Feedback collected provided direction for the draft IDP.

1.7. Definitions

The Municipal Government Act, RSA 2000 shall define all terms included in the IDP unless defined below:

"Area Structure Plan (ASP)" means a statutory plan in accordance with the Municipal Government Act for the purpose of providing a framework for subsequent subdivision and development of an area of land in a municipality. The ASP typically provides a design that integrates land uses with the requirements for suitable parcel densities, transportation patterns (roads), storm water drainage, fire protection, and other utilities across the entire Plan Area.

"Aggregate operations" means the activities, process and/or extract used to aggregate materials including gravel, rock and sand typically used in the construction of roads, buildings and other infrastructure.

"Council" means the Council of County of St. Paul and the Council of County of Two Hills in the Province of Alberta.

"Discretionary Use" means the use of land or a building in a land use district for which a development permit may be approved at the discretion of the Development Authority with or without conditions.

"Plan Area (Intermunicipal Development Plan Area)" means the extension of land identified by both municipalities that encompass areas of importance and/or concern to which the policies of this document pertain.

"Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP)" means a statutory document between two or more municipalities, adopted by bylaw in accordance with section 631 of the Municipal Government Act, which is used by municipalities as a long-range planning tool to address joint planning matters.

"Municipal Government Act (MGA)" means the Municipal Government Act, RSA 2000 as amended.

"Non-Statutory Plan" means a municipal planning document or conceptual scheme or conceptual plan that is endorsed or approved by resolution of Council, typically to guide future land use development or subdivision of a specified area within a municipality, but does not include a municipal development plan, area structure plan, or area redevelopment plan adopted under the Municipal Government Act.

2. Plan Context

2.1. Defining the Intermunicipal Development Plan

The County of St. Paul and County of Two Hills share a common geography, similar demographics, and economic base offered by their location northeast of Edmonton, Alberta's capital city, and south of Alberta's oil sands. In order to determine the extent of the Plan Area, the partners reviewed the key features along the boundary and adjacent area including:

- current and future land uses;
- environmental considerations;
- transportation networks;
- utility and infrastructure servicing;
- community services infrastructure; and
- recreation and tourism assets.

2.2. Municipal Profiles

2.2.1. County of St. Paul

The County of St. Paul has an area of 3,309 km^2 and a population of 6,468 people (2017 Municipal Census). The County surrounds the towns of Elk Point and St. Paul and the Summer Village of Horseshoe Bay. Ten hamlets and several other unincorporated communities are located within its boundaries. The County is bordered by five rural municipalities and five First Nation Reserves. The local economy is primarily supported by the agriculture, forestry and resource extraction lands which generate a large portion of employment. More recently, oil and gas has provided economic growth to the region. The County also has an abundance of outdoor recreation opportunities which draws both local residents and tourists. Highways 41 and 28 are both high load highways that serve the County and provide connections to adjacent communities. Growth projections for the County as a whole are likely to be consistent with the trend of 5% increase over the last five years. Little of this population growth is expected to occur in the Plan Area. The County encourages future residential development to occur within existing hamlets and/or existing multi-lot country residential areas.

2.2.2. County of Two Hills

The County of Two Hills has an area of 2,637 km^2 and a population of 3,641 people (2016 Statistics Canada Census). The County surrounds the Town of Two Hills, and Village of Myrnam, and is bordered by five rural municipalities and one First Nation Reserve. Several hamlets and other unincorporated communities are located inside the County boundaries. The major contributors to economic growth within the County include oil and gas, agriculture, tourism, and transportation. Lakes, trails and the North Saskatchewan River provide numerous opportunities for outdoor recreation which attract both residents and visitors from across the region. Highways 36 and 41, two of the provinces high load transportation corridors, traverse the County north-south, in addition to Highway 45 connecting to the greater region east-west. Population growth has been steady in the County, 0.5% year-over-year, and 2.50% in the last five years. The County of Two Hills directs future growth to existing community areas with the intent of preserve agricultural lands.

3. Plan Policies

3.1. Plan Area

Context – The IDP area covers an area of predominantly agricultural land, with a small extent of Country Residential.

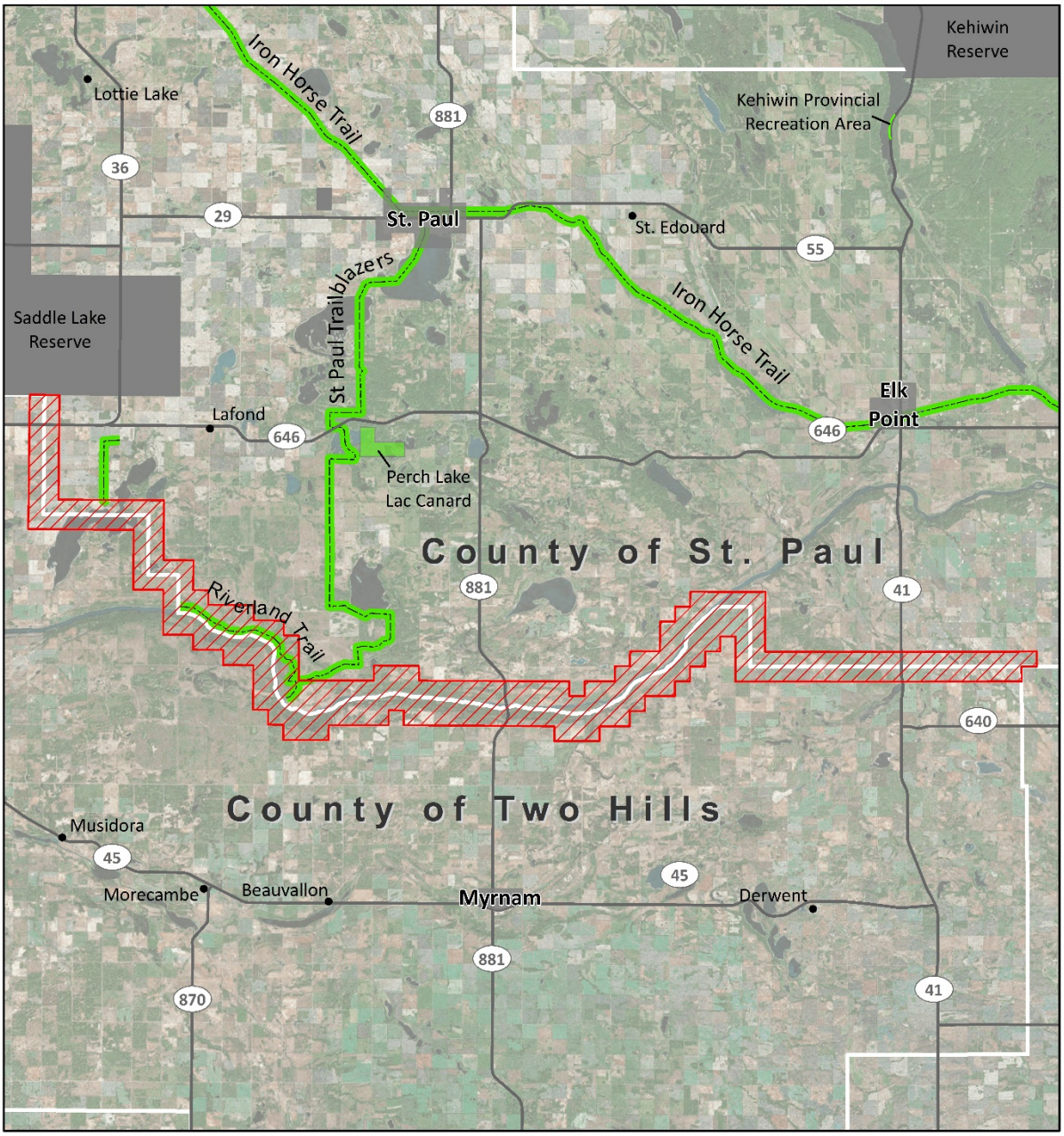
3.1.1. Objective

(1) To establish the Plan Area in which all IDP policies apply.

3.1.2. Policy

(1) The County of St. Paul / County of Two Hills IDP encompasses all of the lands within 1 quarter section (0.5 miles) on both sides of the shared boundary as defined on Map 1. Lands within the adopted IDP area (known as the Plan Area) are subject to the IDP objectives and policies.

Map 1: Plan Area and Referral Area



Legend

- Plan Area
- Urban Municipalities, Reserves and Settlements
- Hamlets
- Parks and Protected Areas
- Trails
- Arterial Roads

0 2.25 4.5 9 13.5 18 Kilometers

1:300,000

3.2. Land Use

Context - Land uses within the Plan Area are largely not expected to change within the short- and medium-term planning horizon.

3.2.1. Objective

(1) To respect the rural character of the Plan Area and to preserve both agricultural lands and significant natural environmental features.

3.2.2. Policy

(1) The preservation of agricultural land uses shall be required.

(2) All current land uses are deemed to be the future land uses (Map 2: Land Use), unless approved through the appropriate amendment processes.

(3) Resource extraction, including aggregate operations, and energy projects in accordance with provincial regulation are acceptable in agricultural land use.

(4) Lac Sante ASP will direct any future growth for the areas outlined in those specific ASP Boundaries (Figure 2).

(5) Historically significant sites will be identified, and policy will be developed to address these sites on an as-needed basis.

(6) Municipalities are encouraged to discuss any proposed or forthcoming Statutory Plans, Land Use Bylaws or amendments that impact the Plan Area with one another.

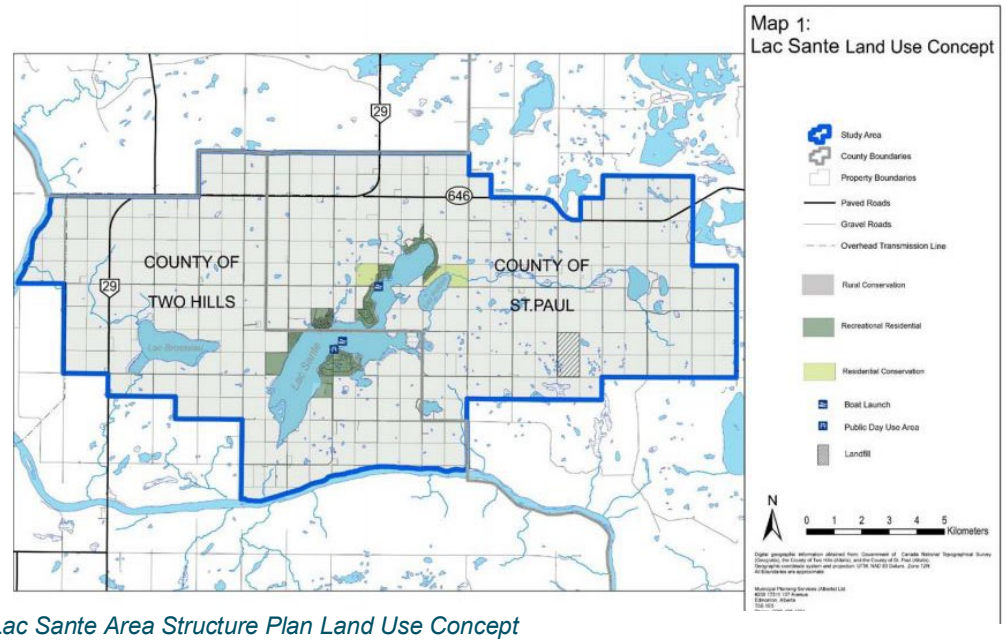
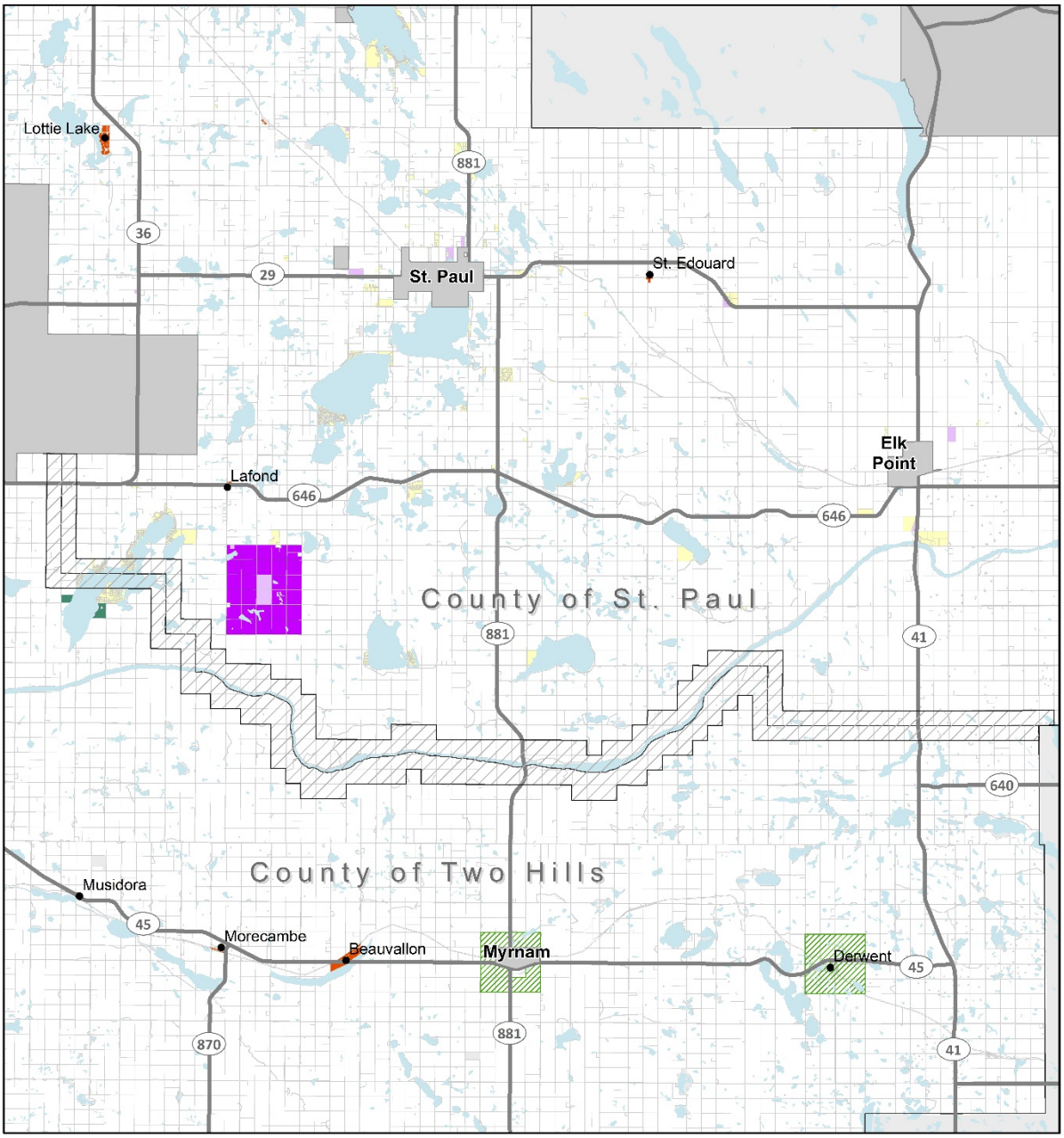


Figure 2: Lac Sante Area Structure Plan Land Use Concept

Map 2: Land Use



Legend

- Plan Area
- Agricultural
- Country Residential
- Other Residential
- General Urban
- Industrial
- Direct Control
- Open Space and Recreation
- Urban Reserve
- Land Uses not mapped
- Urban Municipalities, Reserves and Settlements
- Hamlet
- Arterial Roads

0 2 4 8 12 16 Kilometers

1:300,000

3.3. Environment

Context - Both municipalities share environmentally sensitive and important natural features within the Plan Area (Map 3). The Plan Area includes significant water bodies including Lac Sante and the North Saskatchewan River. Both municipalities have jointly adopted an existing ASP for Lac Sante which will continue to inform the planning and development of the area. Both municipalities recognize the importance of maintaining the health of natural systems to the quality of life in the region and the overall health of the watershed.

3.3.1. Objective

(1) To promote environmental stewardship in the region.

(2) To protect the long-term health of the watershed and water bodies.

3.3.2. Policy

(1) A set of public education materials regarding shoreline health; respectful use of recreation vehicles; protection of riparian vegetation and water quality should be pursued in collaboration with the appropriate Provincial and Federal agencies.

(2) Collaboration with existing regional watershed groups including, but not limited to the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance, and participation in stewardship initiatives to support a healthy regional watershed will be encouraged.

(3) Municipal Councillors will be appointed to North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance to facilitate advancements in watershed health.

(4) The environmental stewardship efforts of organizations such as subregional watershed groups, Cows and Fish, ALUS, and the Agricultural Service Boards will be encouraged to promote best practices for the relationship between agriculture and watersheds.

(5) To protect sensitive riparian habitat and water quality, explore the creation of common development setbacks from water bodies.

(6) Statutory and non-statutory plans for lake areas will be periodically amended to reflect advances in lake management best practices.

(7) Development proposed in proximity to water bodies and tributaries should be carefully evaluated for impacts on water quality.

(8) Existing agricultural operations and residential property owners will be encouraged to maintain a high water quality standard for wetlands, creeks, lakes and other water bodies through the application of best management practices to privately-owned riparian areas.

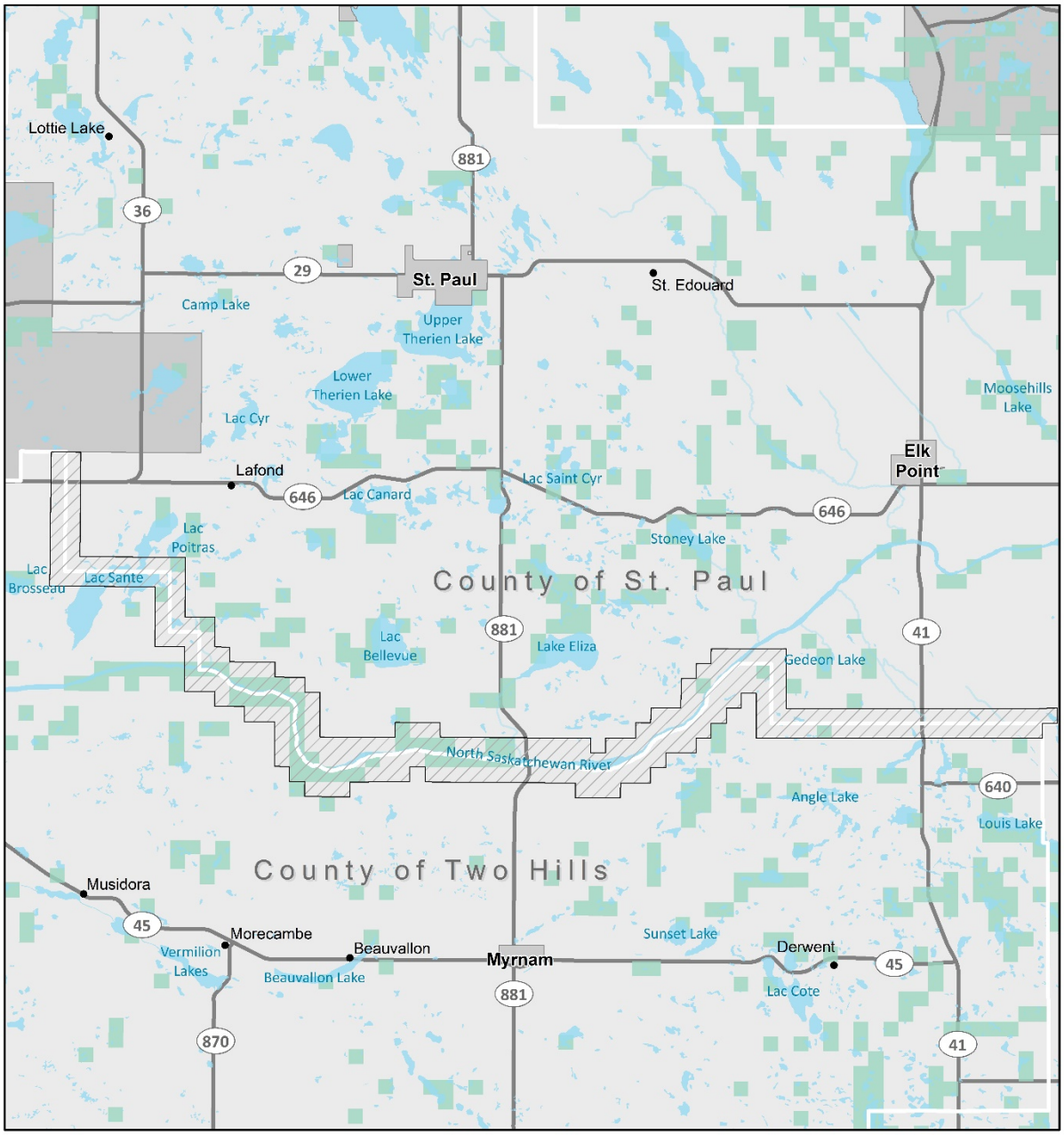
(9) Development on flood prone lands is not permitted.

(10) All provincial regulations with respect to potable water and sanitary services shall be adhered to.

(11) Partnerships between the municipalities and the appropriate wetland mitigation agencies should be explored to promote the protection of the Plan Area sensitive habitats.

(12) Grants to conduct regional inventories of environmentally significant features and to obtain related aerial photography should be pursued.

Map 3: Environment and Water



Legend

- Plan Area
- Environmentally Significant Areas
- Rivers and Lakes
- Urban Municipalities, Reserves and Settlements
- Hamlet
- Arterial Roads
- Municipal Boundary

0 2.25 4.5 9 13.5 18 Kilometers

1:300,000

3.4. Recreation and Tourism

Context – The Plan Area includes boat launches and public use areas. Generally, current availability of managed recreation is limited within the Plan Area (Map 4) and is not expected to increase. Iron Horse Trail is a major recreation and tourism asset that runs through the Plan Area within the County of St. Paul (Map 5).

3.4.1. Objective

(1) To achieve greater economic and recreation opportunities for the region.

(2) To maintain and enhance current trails including the Iron Horse Trail.

3.4.2. Policy

(1) Tourism and recreation opportunities in the region such as ecotourism, enhancements to existing trails, new trail development, staging areas and parks/campgrounds that respect agricultural land uses and environmentally sensitive lands, may be supported.

(2) The municipalities will explore opportunities to increase operational efficiencies of the Iron Horse Trail.

(3) Collaboration with existing recreation and tourism groups to efficiently promote recreational tourism in the region will be encouraged.

(4) Where appropriate, each municipality will endeavour to find efficiencies in bylaw enforcement through public education on recreational use near lakes and the exploration of shared bylaw services.

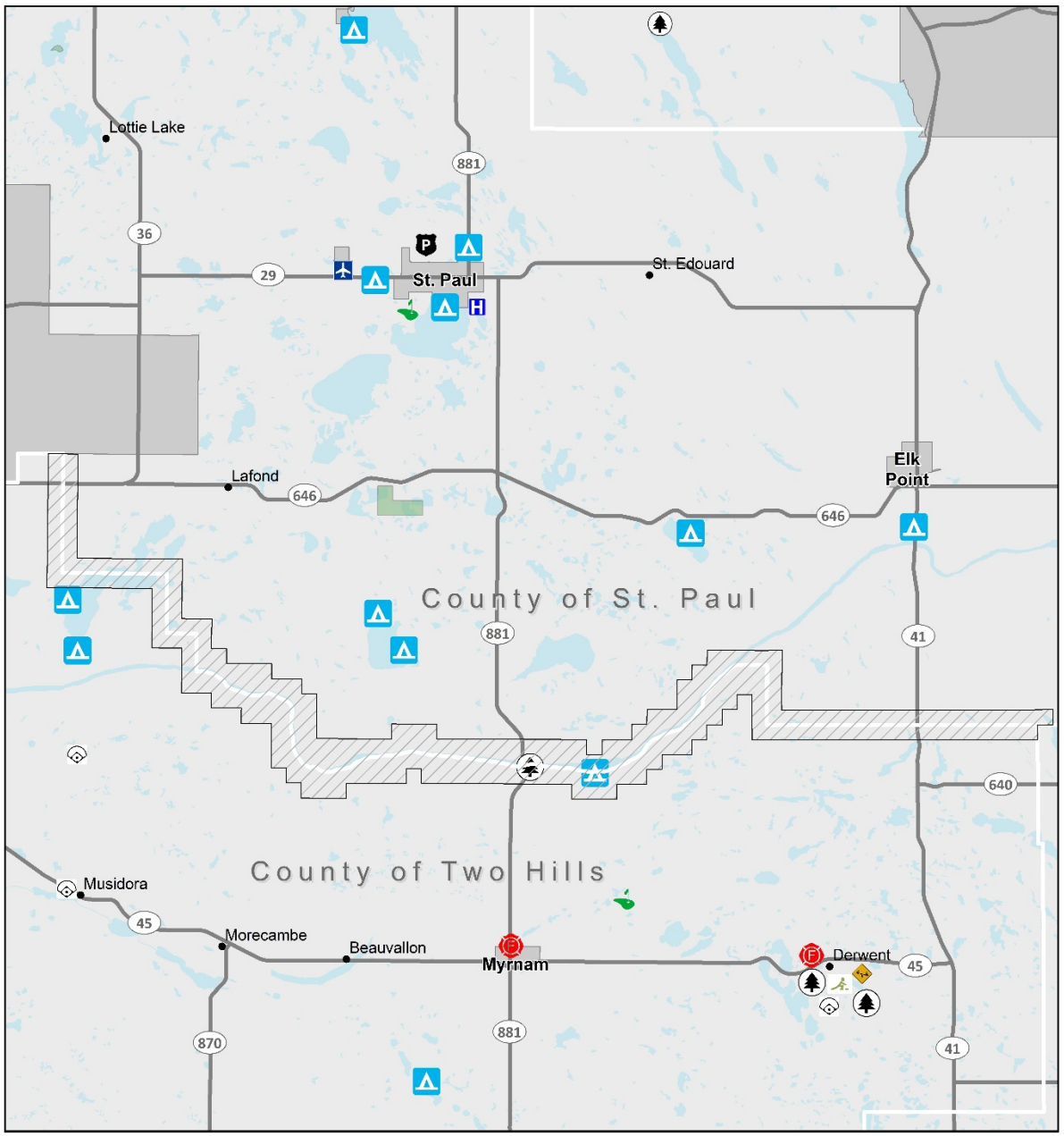
(5) The means of providing access to educational material regarding safe and responsible trail use, water body health, OHV regulations, hunting regulations, and property ownership will be encouraged.

(6) Public awareness of significant historic and cultural sites in the region will be promoted as part of heritage tourism efforts.

(7) Both municipalities will work together to jointly advocate to the Province on issues related to tourism and recreation such as fishing to support tourism in the region.

(8) Explore opportunities to work together on provincial and federal grant applications for recreation and tourism initiatives in the region.

Map 4: Service Hubs



Legend

- Plan Area
- Arena/Curling Rink
- Ball Diamonds
- Campground
- Golf Course
- Playground
- Riding Arena
- Fire Hall
- Hospital
- RCMP Station
- Airport
- Recreation Area
- Parks and Protected Areas
- Arterial Roads
- Hamlet
- Urban Municipalities, Reserves and Settlements
- Municipal Boundary

0 2 4 8 12 16 Kilometers

1:300,000

3.5. Transportation

Context – While transportation infrastructure is limited in the Plan Area, maintaining an efficient road network provides vital links for residents, operations and businesses. Provincial Highway 646, 881, and 41 are the primary transportation connections through the Plan Area (Map 5). There are some inconsistencies in road maintenance.

3.5.1. Objective

(1) To enhance the transportation network's efficiency and service provision standards.

3.5.2. Policy

(1) Each municipality shall work together to ensure a safe, efficient and cost-effective transportation network is developed and maintained to service farm operations, residents and businesses within the Plan Area.

(2) Future development applications shall consider proximity of local and topographic features to ensure no development is approved without both legal and physical access.

(3) Information sharing regarding appropriate practices for road design, maintenance, classification, permitting and road bans is encouraged between municipalities to promote an efficient and cost effective regional transportation network.

(4) Collaborate to identify potential intermunicipal transportation projects to improve effectiveness and support one another in provincial grant applications for road improvements.

(5) Coordination of asset management planning is encouraged.

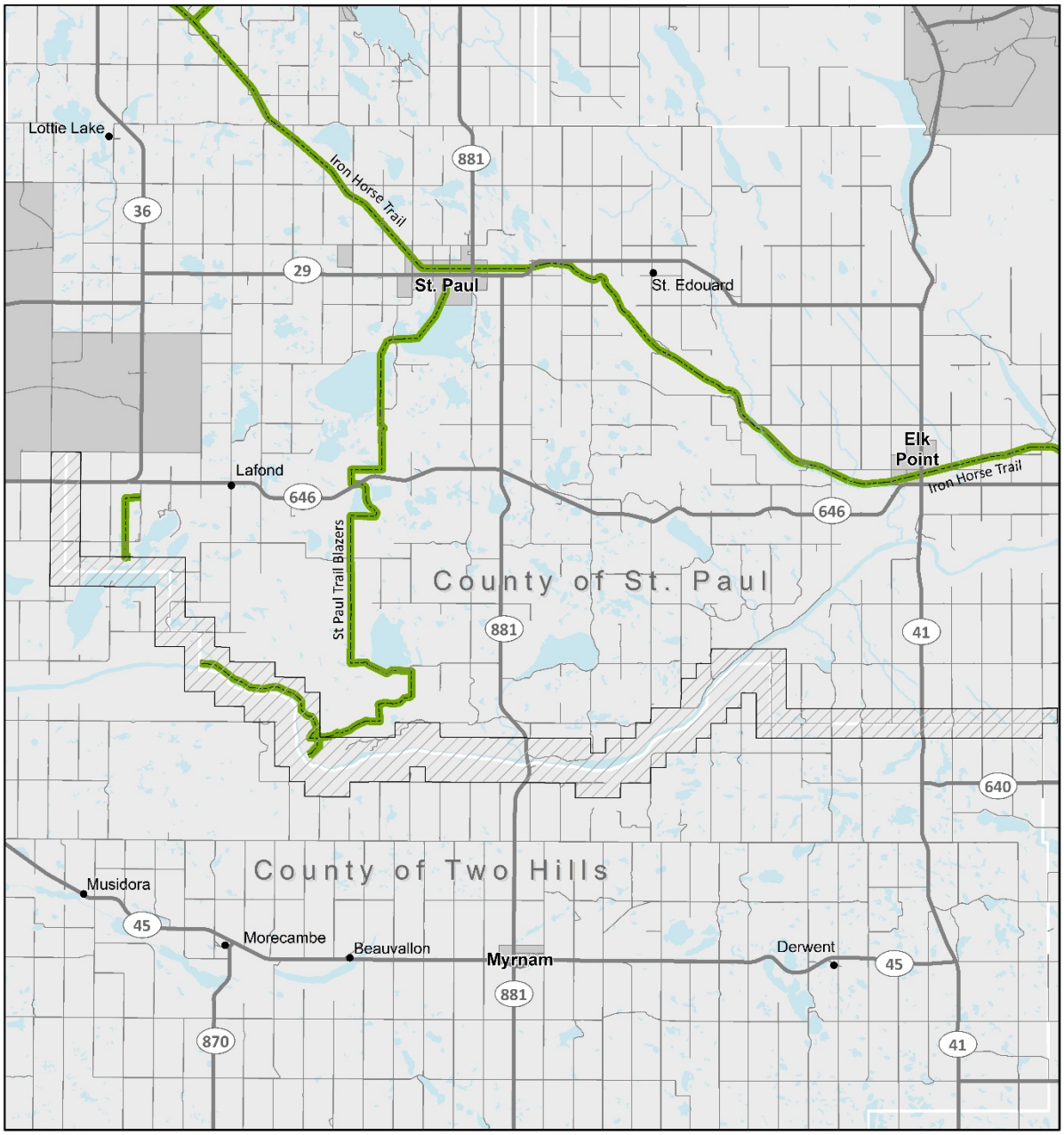
(6) Municipalities will collectively advocate to the Province to improve uniform implementation of highways standards across municipal boundaries.

(7) Where practicable, municipal transportation professionals will be invited to participate in the Rural Intermunicipal Development Plan Committee discussions that pertain to the expansion and/or maintenance of the regional road network.

(8) The submission of a subdivision or development proposal that may result in access being required from a roadway within the Plan Area, will necessitate issuance of an intermunicipal referral.

(9) All right-of-way requirements will be secured for any subdivisions approved in the Plan area to ensure long-term transportation and road plans can be implemented when required.

Map 5: Transportation



Legend

- Plan Area
- Arterial Roads
- Collector Roads
- Trails
- Hamlet
- Urban Municipalities, Reserves and Settlements
- Municipal Boundary

0 2.25 4.5 9 13.5 18 Kilometers

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3.6. Infrastructure & Community Services

Context – To ensure efficient delivery of intermunicipal infrastructure and services, coordination between both municipalities is required. Existing infrastructure and community services that support the Plan Area are not expected to change in the foreseeable future based on the current inventory of service provision and land uses (Map 4 and 6).

3.6.1. Objective

(1) Where appropriate, to coordinate intermunicipal planning and provisions of infrastructure and community services.

3.6.2. Policy

(1) The provision of potable water and the treatment and disposal of wastewater on all parcels in the Plan Area shall be the responsibility of individual landowners or developers, in accordance with provincial standards.

(2) Where changes to Plan authorized land uses are proposed, a collaborative approach to the planning and development of associated infrastructure shall be pursued.

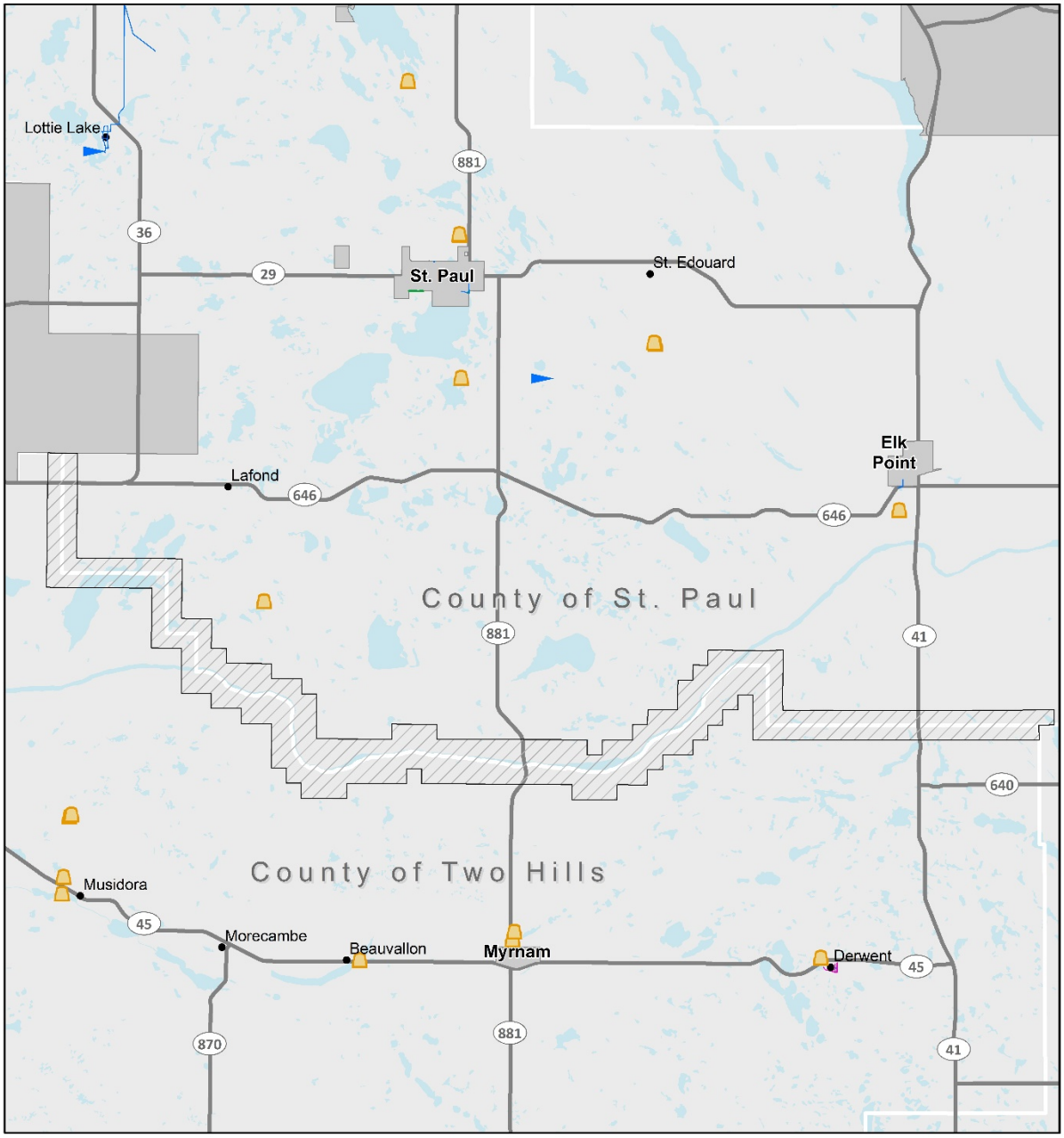
(3) Where potential opportunities to connect to regional services are identified, joint planning should be pursued.

(4) A collaborative approach to the planning and protection of key utility corridors is required.

(5) Telecommunication towers shall be sited in accordance with federal regulations.

(6) Municipalities will explore the creation of emergency access points to the North Saskatchewan River.

Map 6: Infrastructure



Legend

- Plan Area
- Gas Line
- Water Line
- Waste Water Line
- Landfill/Waste Disposal/Transfer Site
- Water Plant/Reservoir
- Arterial Roads
- Urban Municipalities, Reserves and Settlements
- Hamlet
- Municipal Boundary

0 2 4 8 12 16 Kilometers

1:300,000

* Not depicted on map due to unavailable data: Water line running from Water Plant/Reservoir located south east of Town of St. Paul to Elk Point.

3.7. Collaboration, Plan Administration, & Implementation

3.7.1. Objectives

(1) To provide a framework for ongoing collaboration between the municipalities and clear process for when disagreements arise.

3.7.2. Policies

3.7.2.1. Rural Intermunicipal Development Plan Committee

(1) A Rural Intermunicipal Development Plan Committee, a joint administrative committee for all six municipalities covering the eight IDPs, shall be created to coordinate all collaboration efforts including administrative plan review, infrastructure and planning coordination, and advocacy efforts.

(2) The Rural Intermunicipal Development Plan Committee shall meet a minimum of once a year, and as required if issues/opportunities arise.

(3) The Rural Intermunicipal Development Plan Committee membership will include one planning staff member from each municipality and other staff members as appropriate. The Terms of Reference for the Rural Intermunicipal Development Plan Committee will indicate that a flexible membership structure enabling responsiveness to new situations is encouraged.

(4) Municipal staff members are encouraged to informally discuss intermunicipal matters and consult with each other on an as-needed basis regardless of the Rural Intermunicipal Development Plan Committee agenda or schedule.

3.7.2.2. Referrals

(1) The IDP referral area is the same as the Plan Area and shall include all the lands within one quarter section (0.5 miles) from the shared boundary. Map 1 defines the Plan Area to which the policies within the IDP apply.

(2) Referrals shall occur for intermunicipal review of all statutory plans and amendments affecting the Plan Area (i.e., ASPs); non-statutory development plans (i.e., concept plan, or outline plan); land use bylaw amendments; discretionary development permit applications; and subdivision applications within the Plan Area.

(3) Excluded from referrals are subdivision of a first or second parcel out of a quarter section, accessory buildings, a secondary dwelling for agricultural purposes, minor home occupations and such other developments as the two municipalities may agree from time to time through a joint administrative protocol.

(4) All statutory plans and amendments affecting the Plan Area (i.e., ASPs); non-statutory development plans (i.e., concept plan, or outline plan); land use bylaw amendments; discretionary development permit applications; and subdivision applications within the Plan Area shall be referred to the other municipality prior to a public hearing or a decision being rendered. Referral response timelines are as follows:

a.	Statutory and Non-statutory plans	30 calendar days
b.	Land Use Bylaw Amendments	30 calendar days
c.	Significant Discretionary Use Development Permits	15 calendar days
d.	Subdivision Applications	20 calendar days

(5) In the spirit of collaboration and in alignment of the IDP values, proactive communication is encouraged, and referral responses are expected to be provided to continue to build two-way discussions. In the event that no response is received by the referral timeline, lack of response will be deemed no objection.

(6) Comments from the responding municipality and received from a referral process will be taken into consideration prior to the decision being rendered.

(7) Supporting technical documents forming part of the development application will be available upon request as part of the referral process.

(8) Whenever possible, the municipalities are encouraged to share information as it becomes available about new or expanded confined feeding operations and energy projects within the Plan Area.

3.7.2.3. Plan Review and Amendment

(1) The IDP will be reviewed by the Rural Intermunicipal Development Plan Committee within 3 years of adoption, and will make recommendations to the formal IDP Review process that will occur within 4 years after adoption.

(2) Should the North Saskatchewan Regional Plan be adopted prior to the IDP review period, the municipalities agree to review any potential impacts and discuss amendments necessary for compliance.

(3) Either municipality may propose amendments to the IDP at any time, and third party requests to amend the IDP will be considered.

(4) Should circumstances arise that result in the repeal of this IDP, both municipalities shall repeal the IDP, and replace with a new IDP as required under the Municipal Government Act, RSA 2000, as amended.

3.7.2.4. Dispute Resolution

(1) This IDP recognizes that there may be disagreements on the review of statutory and non-statutory plans and amendments, and land use bylaws and amendments within the Plan Area, and/or IDP interpretations, and provides a framework for the resolution of such disagreements (Figure 3: Dispute Resolution Framework). Key factors built into the Dispute Resolution Framework include a standard process with clear roles, communications, and timelines that result in a timely resolution.

(2) Once a disagreement is identified through a written notice, no further action shall be taken on the application or matter in dispute until resolution of the disagreement has been determined.

Step	Communication / Documentation	Outcome
Step 1: Issues Identified & Technical Discussions **Maximum Timeline:** 14 Days	» Administration provides written notice to the other party (parties) identifying areas of disagreement and requesting negotiation » If the dispute is based on a statutory or non-statutory plan or amendments, or land use bylaw or amendments, the proposal, amendment, or application will not be processed further, nor decision rendered until the disagreement has been resolved	Resolution or Next Step
Step 2: Administrative Negotiation **Maximum Timeline:** 14 Days	» Meeting hosted with agenda and minutes » Involves staff directly relevant to matter under dispute, one senior planning staff, and the CAO for each municipality	
Step 3: Council Negotiation **Maximum Timeline:** 14 Days	» Meeting hosted with agenda and minutes » Involves municipal negotiation committees and any respective municipal administration members required to present their perspectives on the matter	
Step 4: Request Facilitated Mediation and Appoint Mediator **Maximum Timeline:** 30 calendar days to identify the mediator	» Written request made by the initiating municipality to the other party (parties) to identify a mutually agreed upon mediator » Municipal committee to be created to participate in the mediation. Participation to include one member of Council and one member of Administration for each municipality.	
Step 5: Mediation **Maximum Timeline:** 6 months after initial written notice (step 1)	» Initiating municipality provides the mediator with an outline of the dispute and any agreed statement of facts » The mediator will be provided access to all records, documents and information that the mediator may reasonably request » The municipalities must meet with the mediator as required, and negotiate in good faith » Costs of the mediator will be shared equally	
Step 6: Mediation Report **Maximum Timeline:** 21 Days	» Initiating municipality provides a report to the other party (parties) outlining the areas of agreement and no agreement	
Step 7: Appoint Arbitrator **Maximum Timeline:** 14 Days	» Mutually agreed upon an arbitrator » Initiating municipality must provide the mediation report to the arbitrator	
Step 8: Binding Arbitration **Maximum Timeline:** 1 year after initial written notice (step 1)	» To be hosted in accordance with the Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework Regulation (Alberta Regulation 191/2017) » Costs of arbitration to be paid as per the Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework Regulation (Alberta Regulation 191/2017) » Arbitration decision to be provided through an order » If the municipalities resolve the disputed issue during the arbitration, a summary report is required to be provided by the initiating municipality to the other party (parties)	Binding Decision

Figure 3: Dispute Resolution Framework