

Project Plan

Land Use Amendments for the High River Regional Airport & Surrounding Lands

Introduction

The High River Regional Airport is a registered Aerodrome located approximately 3 km south of the Town of High River on lands which are legally described as Plan 8011027 located on a portion of Section 19-18-28-W4M.

As the High River Regional Airport (the Airport) grows and develops, it is important to consider revisions to policy to realize opportunities available to the Airport, Foothills County, the Town of High River, and the public. With a new Airport Business Development Strategy completed in 2017 and a revised High River Regional Airport Area Structure Plan adopted in 2018, Foothills County Council is now asked to consider a project that would recommend amendments to Foothills County's Land Use Bylaw to enable further development of the airport as contemplated in the Area Structure Plan.

Currently the purpose and intent of Direct Control District #5 (DC5) is to provide for the protection of the Airport from encroachment of uses that may have an effect on the operational safety of the airport facility and to allow Direct Control by the Council over development on the DC5 designated lands. As parcels in close proximity to the Airport share the DC5 land use designation there is ongoing confusion and development constraints on these parcels as their designation does not align with the land uses of the parcels. The majority of these parcels align with Country Residential and Agricultural land uses however are limited by requirements under the DC5 District. Establishing consistency and compatibility in the land uses surrounding the Airport is necessary to create a comprehensive planning framework to guide future development of the High River Regional Airport and the surrounding area.

Proposing to redesignate the surrounding lands away from Direct Control District #5 without additional provisions, does create a risk that development that is not compatible with the airport could be approved under the Country Residential, Agricultural or other districts that may be contemplated. As such, it is suggested that the Airport be protected by introducing an Airport Protection Overlay District. This would allow for the protection of the High River Regional Airport from uses that may impact its continued safe operation by establishing an area with a radius of 4000 metres around the High River Regional Airport that introduces height limitations, and limits uses that unduly create dust, smoke, steam, glare, electronic interference, or attract birds. Rather than blanket the area with one land use district the Airport Protection Overlay District is a strategic method of mitigating only those uses that may impact the operation of the Airport directly.

Background

On August 26, 1976, Bylaw 405 was passed by Foothills County (the County) in order to create a joint airport commission between the County and the Town of High River (the Town) that would be responsible for the affairs of the High River Airport. The Town had created Bylaw 3152/76 to the same effect on August 25, 1976. These bylaws both name

the commission as the Highwood Airport Commission (HAC). Subsequent amendments have been made by the Town and the County in order to update the specific functioning of the bylaws, but the intent remains the same.

At the time of the creation of these bylaws the airport lands were owned by the Province of Alberta and leased out to the County and the Town. The Airport lands were surveyed on August 11, 1979, and then registered as Plan 801 1027. On November 5, 1998, the Title to the Airport Lands was officially transferred to the ownership of the County and the Town.

In 2015, in an effort to make the airport more self-sustaining, the High River Regional Airport Board (the Board) issued a Request for Proposals to hire a consultant to prepare an Airport Business Development Strategy (the Strategy) for the High River Regional Airport. Additional work included updating the High River Regional Airport Area Structure Plan (ASP) and completing a site drainage overview. Dillon Consulting was awarded the contract and began work in May 2016.

The scope of work required the consultant to:

- Review relevant existing policy for the airport;
- Examine financial projections;
- Identify land for development and lease;
- Identify potential revenue sources;
- Highlight required upgrades and associated costs; and
- Develop short, medium and long-term projections for the Airport.

The report, completed in 2017, provided high level business considerations and recommendations for the future of the Airport. The subsequent amendments approved to the ASP by bylaw 50/2018 provided a planning framework for future development of the airport lands to facilitate implementation of the Business Development Strategy.

Planning Framework

The Town of High River/MD of Foothills Intermunicipal Development Plan

The Town of High River/MD of Foothills Intermunicipal Development Plan provides a framework for both municipalities to guide decision-making in areas of mutual interest. The purpose of the Plan is to identify and articulate municipal interests relative to lands within the Plan area and to develop policy framework for future planning that respect the interests of both Municipalities. The proposed land use amendments for the High River Regional Airport and surrounding lands relate to the Intermunicipal Development Plan as both the Town and Foothills County agree that the Airport is an important component of the regional transportation system and a significant economic generator. Both municipalities cooperate to provide the support necessary to ensure that the Airport continues to grow and thrive.

Foothills County's Municipal Development Plan

Foothills County Municipal Development Plan (MDP) is a statutory plan that guides growth and development in the County. The MDP considers the High River Regional

Airport an asset to the County and its public as it provides recreation, education opportunities, facilitates efficient movement of goods, people, and farm management operations. The land use amendments for the High River Regional Airport as proposed consider the Municipal Development Plan's goal of developing and maintaining a safe, sustainable, and efficient transportation system.

The High River Regional Airport Area Structure Plan

In proposing land use amendments for the High River Regional Airport and surrounding area it is important to consider and align with the High River Regional Airport Area Structure Plan (ASP). The purpose of the ASP is to direct and guide future growth and development at and around the Airport. While considering existing development and planning for future growth, the ASP provides direction to support the continued success of the Airport.

Project Objectives

- Create clear and understandable requirements for development in the vicinity of the airport.
- Protect the functionality and safety of airport operations.
- Re-zone DC5 lands outside of the airport lands to districts that are appropriate for their current use.
- Arrange airside, groundside and operational uses on airport lands.
- Refine the DC5 district to apply only to the Airport lands allowing for the inclusion of additional permitted and discretionary uses in the District that would not be appropriate outside of the airport.
- Examine the requirements for development permits on airport lands and look for ways to streamline the development process.
- Create public awareness of necessary restrictions on nearby lands related to safe operation of the airport.

Proposal

In order to enable the implementation of the High River Regional Airport Area Structure Plan, administration believe that amendments to Foothills County's Land Use Bylaw are required. A project with three components that would be undertaken concurrently is being proposed. The three components are as follows:

1. Redesignation of DC5 lands outside of the airport to appropriate districts under the Land Use Bylaw;
2. Amendments to the DC5 district to facilitate implementation of the High River Regional Airport ASP; and
3. Creation of an Airport Protection overlay district.

Redesignation of DC 5 lands outside of the Airport

Currently the purpose and intent of Direct Control District #5 (DC5) is to provide for the protection of the Airport from encroachment of uses that may have an effect on the

operational safety of the airport facility and to allow Direct Control by the Council over development on the following lands:

- In Township 18, Range 28, West 4 Meridian: Section 19, Plan 8011027

The Airport and surrounding lands within proximity to the Airport are designated as DC5 in an effort to protect the airport from development that might conflict with its safe operation. The creation of a homogenous land use designation for the Airport and surrounding areas did not consider that lands beyond the Airport boundaries are not intended to accommodate similar uses to those on the Airport lands and therefore application of the rules of the DC5 land use district is not appropriate. DC5 designation on lands outside of the Airport boundaries creates confusion for landowners on parcels where the actual and intended use of the land aligns more with Country Residential or Agricultural land use districts. Also, the DC5 district has no permitted and very limited discretionary uses, and all uses in this district require a development permit.

It is Administration's recommendation that lands located beyond the Airport boundaries should not be designated DC5 in order to mitigate confusion and allow for the permitted and discretionary uses within the Country Residential, Agricultural or other districts as deemed appropriate.

Amendments to the DC5 District

Opportunities for refining the DC5 land use district present themselves when the district only applies to lands within the boundaries of the Airport. The High River Regional Airport Area Structure Plan speaks to a variety of uses which are divided into airside, groundside and operational uses. Refining the DC5 district to apply only to the Airport lands allows for the inclusion of additional permitted and discretionary uses in the District that would not be appropriate outside of the airport.

In addition, revising the district provides an opportunity to consider alternatives which are not currently available. For example, private hangars proposed for aviation uses could be listed as a permitted use not requiring a development permit and instead could only require a special type of permit with a streamlined application process. Applicants have expressed their interest in a simplified permit process where a shorter time frame could be achieved in issuing a permit. Further ideas in refining the DC5 land use district could see general aviation uses not requiring a Development Permit altogether and instead written acceptance and confirmation from the High River Regional Airport Board. Administration would seek Council's opinion on allowing any development to occur within the Airport where a Development Permit would not be required prior to making any recommendations.

Airport Protection Overlay District

With proposing the lands in proximity to the Airport be redesignated from DC5 it is still critical to protect the Airport from any sensitive uses on lands in close proximity which may harm or impact the Airport. Adopting an Airport Protection Overlay District in the Foothills County Land Use Bylaw will limit uses in the surrounding area that may impact the Airport's continued safe operation. The intent of the Overlay District will be to limit uses that may unduly create dust, smoke, steam, glare, electronic interference, and

attract birds, and outline height requirements for structures within the outer surface area. (a circular area with a radius of 4000m from the geometric centre of each runway).

Within the 4000m radius beyond the airport proposed uses or development which obscures visibility will require development approval by applying for a Development Permit. The intent of the Overlay district is not to limit general agricultural uses within proximity to the Airport and will therefore not require development approval. Additionally, the Airport Protection Overlay District will outline height restrictions based on defined Obstacle Limitation Surfaces (Outer Surface, Take-off/Approach Surface and Transitional Surface).

Project Methodology and Work Plan

The following sections outline the activities that will be undertaken through the project. The work plan can be divided into 3 general phases which would be undertaken in sequence: the Investigation Phase, the Recommendation & Development Phase and the Approvals and Implementation Phase. It is worth noting that the activities listed within each phase are not necessarily sequential, and some will overlap.

Investigation Phase

The Investigation Phase of the project will involve an analysis of existing plans and studies, refinement of the project objectives, exploration of best practices and analysis of current site conditions.

1.1.1 Review & Analysis of Existing Plans & Studies

The first phase of the project requires Administration's due diligence in reviewing and understanding the existing plans and studies that are relevant to the proposed project. This effort is important in analyzing the existing plans and studies to better understand whether they need to be reevaluated or if existing plans and studies align with the proposed amendments. It is important to consider the relationship of the proposed amendments on all existing plans and acknowledging this in the first phase will provide a foundation for improvements or revisions going forward.

1.1.2 Refine Project Objectives

The next phase of the project will involve Foothills County Administration reviewing the project objectives in order to establish a clear understanding of what the expectations and goals are of this project. This phase has been strategically chosen to be early in the project in an effort to prioritize the outcomes and objectives of the project to provide direction going forward.

1.1.3 Explore Best Practices

This project will benefit from reviewing examples of similar Airport improvement projects in proximity to Foothills County. For this reason, a phase including research and understanding of best practices of similar projects will prove beneficial for the success of the amendments proposed for the High River Regional Airport.

1. Airdrie Airport – Airport Vicinity Protection Area

- *“ensure compatibility of land use and aviation operations on lands surrounding the Airdrie airport, allowing for continued use of the Airdrie airport for aviation and related/complementary uses.”*
- *Identifies:*
 - *Administrative Requirements*
 - *General Requirements*
 - *Land Use Restrictions*
 - *Height Restrictions*

2. Olds Didsbury Airport Area Structure Plan – Mountain View County

- *“The Airport Operational Reserve protects the land for the future development or expansion of the facilities. These lands must be identified to ensure that other development does not encroach and restrict future development and may be used as extensive agriculture in the interim.”*
- *Guiding Principles:*
 - Safety
 - Financial Viability
 - Public Service
 - Community Benefit
 - Sound Management

1.1.4 Site Analysis of DC Lands

The process of amending lands currently occupied by landowners within the County requires a phase dedicated specifically to the analysis of the existing conditions and characteristics of these lands. Specifically, this phase seeks to review and analyze:

- Existing Approvals on the lands
- Lands located within the Flood Hazard Protection Overlay (FHPO) District
- Including landowners in a discussion (via public engagement) of how they are using the lands
- Aerial imagery analysis
- Topography analysis
- Reviewing what limitations may occur related to rezoning lands from Direct Control District #5

Recommendation & Development Phase

During the Recommendation and Development Phase of the project, Administration will create the draft DC5 and Airport Protection Overlay districts, create a redesignation

concept, and then refine the districts and the concept based on feedback received from stakeholders and Council.

1.1.5 Create Draft Districts

Once a series of phases involving research and analysis have been completed, in addition to the first public engagement session, this next phase would involve administration creating draft districts based on the findings of the research and engagement. The districts involved in this phase are:

- Airport Protection Overlay District
- DC5 amendments

1.1.6 Create a Redesignation Concept

In addition to the above draft districts, Administration will take the findings from the research and public engagement session in order to create a redesignation concept for the DC5 designated lands in proximity to the Airport.

1.1.7 Refine Districts & Redesignation Concept

Once the previous phases have been completed the proposed changes and concept will be shared in another public engagement session to highlight the work completed since the previous public engagement session. Further comments and recommendations from stakeholders and Council will be taken to refine the districts and redesignation concept.

1.1.8 Create Implementation Plan

Should the contemplated Land Use Bylaw amendments be approved there will be activities that will need to be undertaken to implement the amended DC5 District and the new Overlay District. Administration will create an implementation plan that outlines how these activities will be undertaken.

Approvals & Implementation Phase

During the Approvals and Implementation Phase of the project administration will undertake a Public Hearing and ask Council to consider Land Use Bylaw amendments. Should Council approve the amendments implementation of the changes will proceed.

1.1.9 Undertake Approval Process

The final phase involves administration proceeding to undertake the approval process. All work to this point will provide a comprehensive package to assist Foothills County Council in making an informed decision. A public hearing will be required as part of the approvals process and then Council will be asked to grant three readings to a bylaw (or bylaws) approving the recommended amendments to the Land Use Bylaw.

1.1.10 Implement Land Use Bylaw Amendments

Subsequent to three readings being granted to the amendments to the Land Use Bylaw staff will initiate the Implementation Plan undertaking the necessary activities to ensure that the changes can be implemented. This will involve items such as updates to the County's GIS maps and creating a process for accessing

LiDAR data to assess elevations of proposed structures, updating development information sheets and ensuring staff are aware of any new processes or procedures.

Engagement Strategy

Public participation in the decisions of local government is important to ensure that the desires, needs, and expectations of all stakeholders who will be impacted by those decisions are considered. The proposed project for the High River Regional Airport is likely to have an impact on a minimal number of citizens and stakeholders. Foothills County's Public Participation Policy outlines that the amendment of policies and bylaws shall involve a public engagement process. This project proposes to have a three-phased approach to stakeholder and public engagement.

Three levels of stakeholders have been identified: The High River Regional Board, DC5 landowners and individual airport sub-lease holders, and Overlay District landowners. The Board is the initial stakeholder that will be presented to in order to inform them of the proposed project plan, and address questions and concerns. Engaging with the Board first will allow for Administration to review and incorporate the Board's considerations into further discussion with other stakeholders. Shortly thereafter, DC5 Landowners will be directly engaged at the beginning of the project as they will be impacted substantially by the proposed project, it will be important to understand how their lands are currently used prior to developing the redesignation concept. Likewise, the airport sub-lease holders will be directly engaged (individually or as a group) to understand how lands on the airport are being used. Overlay District landowners will be engaged subsequent to the development of draft districts and the redesignation concept.

The engagement process with the High River Regional Board, DC5 landowners, individual sub-lease holders, and the Overlay District landowners will be completed over three phases.

Phase I Engagement – High River Regional Airport Board

Prior to engaging with the public, Administration will make a presentation to the High River Regional Airport Board, during a scheduled Board meeting, in order to inform the Board of the current progress and expectations going forward. With the Board being one of the main stakeholders, it is important to collaborate and be informative so that the Board can align and express its expectations with the proposed land use amendments. The presentation will be made shortly before beginning the public engagement process and will provide Administration with insight regarding the Boards considerations to the project.

Phase II Engagement – DC5 District Landowners and Airport Sub-Lease Holders

It is anticipated that DC5 District Landowners and airport sub-lease holders will be engaged early in the planning process in order to foster confidence in the process, assist with relationship building, and facilitate incorporation of stakeholder feedback into the project from the early stages.

Stakeholder Letter

The first task in the engagement process will be to make stakeholders aware that a plan is being undertaken and inviting them to participate in the plan development process. This

will be done by sending a letter to each identified stakeholder by direct mail. It is anticipated that the letters will address the following:

- Announcing that the county will be undertaking amendments to the Land Use Bylaw that will impact the airport and surrounding lands
- Inviting stakeholders to participate in the initial stage of the planning process by visiting the project, responding to a short survey, or setting up a meeting or telephone interview, with municipal staff
- Identifying the affected parcels on a map
- Identifying and providing contact information for the project manager

Stakeholder Interviews:

Phase one of public engagement will present stakeholders an option to choose between reviewing written materials and completing a survey, attending an in person, telephone or virtual interview, or participating in a virtual group engagement opportunity. There will be a short survey available, to be completed digitally or in hard copy. And a loose script will be developed for direct engagements to ensure that important questions are asked, and responses recorded but it is anticipated that the majority of stakeholders will have questions and concerns so the interviewers will likely spend significant time on answering questions and addressing concerns.

Report to Council - What We Heard Summary:

Municipal staff will prepare a summary of the results of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 engagements and provide it to Council.

Phase III Engagement – Airport Board, DC5 District Landowners, Airport Sub-Lease Holders, Overlay District Landowners, & Public

After Council has reviewed and provided comments on the initial phases of engagement with the Airport Board, DC5 Landowners, and Airport sub-lease holders, Administration will prepare two draft land use districts and a redesignation concept for the DC5 lands.

A second round of public engagement will ensue which will include a wider audience, specifically:

- The Airport Board,
- DC5 Landowners
- Airport sub-lease holders,
- Overlay District Landowners
- General Public

All of these groups will be invited to review outcomes of the first round of public engagement, the draft DC5 and Overlay districts and the redesignation concept for the DC5 lands.

Open House:

As this third phase of the public engagement will be available to a larger audience, Administration would like to invite stakeholders to an in person open house, at the County Office, where updates and revisions will be able to be acknowledged and presented to all stakeholders and the public. This phase of engagement aims to provide specific information to the public and to stakeholders who have been engaged previously so that they may respond to the proposed districts and redesignation concept. This type of event would also, provide Administration the opportunity to hear and consider further opinions and perspectives prior to submission of a request to Council to schedule a Public Hearing.

Stakeholder Letters & Advertising:

A letter will be sent out to all DC5 Landowners, airport sub-lease holders and all Overlay District Landowners inviting them to the scheduled open house. Additionally, a public announcement regarding the scheduled open house will be placed on County's website. Social media may also be used to notify stakeholders and the public.

Report to Council - What We Heard Summary:

Municipal staff will prepare a summary of the results of the Open House and provide it to Council. Administration will seek Council's direction on whether an additional public engagement session shall occur or if Council is satisfied to proceed to a Public Hearing.

7.6 Phase IV Engagement– Public Hearing & Approval Process

Public Hearing:

With proposing revisions to the Land Use Bylaw, a public hearing will be required prior to approval. Subsequent to the hearing, Council may provide direction to Administration regarding amendments to the draft districts or the redesignation concept prior to further readings.

As part of the Public Hearing process, a formal circulation will be undertaken as required under the MGA. Stakeholders will receive notification by direct mail. Council or administration may also choose to direct mail a notification of the hearing to landowners within an expanded circulation area (beyond the radius of the overlay district). Additional advertising may include posting on the front page and project page of the County's website and social media.

Schedule

An approximate schedule for the activities contemplated for the project plan may be found below. The goal is to implement the Land Use Bylaw amendments in mid-2023.

Activity	2022												2023											
	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec				
Investigation Phase	Explore Best Practices																							
	Site Analysis of DC Lands																							
	Review & Analysis of Existing Plans & Studies																							
	Refine Project Objectives																							
Recommendation & Development Phase	Create Draft Districts																							
	Create a Redesignation Concept																							
	Refine Districts & Redesignation Concept																							
Engagement Phase	Create Implementation Plan																							
	Phase I Engagement - High River Regional Airport Board																							
	Phase II Engagement - DC5 District Landowners & Airport Sub-Lease Holders																							
	Report to Council - What We Heard Summary																							
	Phase III Engagement - Public Open House																							
	Report to Council - What We Heard Summary																							
	Phase IV Engagement - Public Hearing & Approval Process																							
Approval & Implement Phase	Undertake Approval Process																							
	Implement Land Use Bylaw Amendments																							