



# PLANNING 101

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE CITY OF RED DEER**

August 2024

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Cities are built to provide spaces where people can live, work, play, and learn. They are dynamic environments, and land development reflects how cities grow and transform over time.

Land use planning plays an important role in shaping how we experience our city. We aim to guide development within Red Deer in a way that reflects the community vision, public interest, and addresses the current trends and future changes.

The Planning 101 document outlines why and how land use change occurs in the city, the different types of planning tools, and the roles of Administration and Council. It also provides information on how to get involved in these planning processes.

## **2. LAND USE PLANNING 101**

## **2.1**

### **WHAT IS CITY PLANNING?**

Planning is a profession that focusses on the physical development of communities and the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the built environment. City planning involves looking years ahead to anticipate how a city will look and function, while balancing both the current and future needs of the city.

Planning provides a unifying framework for decision-making which helps to ensure that growth and development occur in an orderly, sustainable, and equitable manner.

Cities are constantly evolving as planners bring together a wide variety of interests to inform decisions about land use and development. Over time, these decisions gradually shape the pattern of community growth and the quality of life within a city.

## **2.2**

### **WHO PLANS?**

Community-builders are anyone who influences a decision that impacts the quality of life of a city. They are private individuals, public officials, city planners, developers, the business community, non-government organizations, school boards, and other levels of government. Everyone's role is different but essential to the overall process.

## **2.3**

### **WHO BUILDS THE CITY?**

Private companies (developers) and individual landowners conduct most of the development within the city. The City may build some infrastructure like roads, recreation facilities, parks, or renovate existing facilities. Other levels of government can also be responsible for certain facilities, such as schools and hospitals.

## **2.4**

### **THE ROLE OF PLANNERS**

Planners at The City of Red Deer guide land use planning for the city. Depending on the situation, the role of the Planner is to make recommendations to City Council on behalf of the best interest of the community.

Planners balance information from research, knowledge of the community, public and stakeholder input, training, and experience in order to make decisions and recommendations. They rely on knowledge of the many systems found within The City to understand how decision will impact economic, environmental, and social factors.

The City Planning and Growth Department also relies on professional input from other departments, such as Inspections and Licensing, Engineering, Transit, Finance, Parks, Utilities, Safe and Healthy Communities, and Fire Services.

Registered Professional Planners (RPP) in Alberta, and other professional planning designations around the world, have a code of conduct and commit to working within high ethical standards in the public interest.

## **2.5**

### **THE ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS**

Development Officers apply the Zoning Bylaw regulations to make decisions on development and building permit applications within the city. Development Officers work as the Development Authority to apply professional discretion and input from other City departments throughout the development permit and building permit processes. They also provide recommendations to City Planning & Growth regarding amendments to the Zoning Bylaw.

## 2.6

### PLANNING PROCESS

City planning follows a process that starts with broad ideas and concepts. As the process progresses, more detailed plans and decisions are made. The planning process can be organized into three key stages:

#### BIG IDEAS

- At this level long-range planning takes place with a forward-thinking approach to help guide future community building.
- Here, the overall vision is determined. The resulting policy or plan is high-level, but provides the blueprints for concept refinement.
- Tools include special studies, policy development, and statutory plans such as the Official City Plan or Municipal Development Plan and Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDPs).

#### REFINED IDEAS

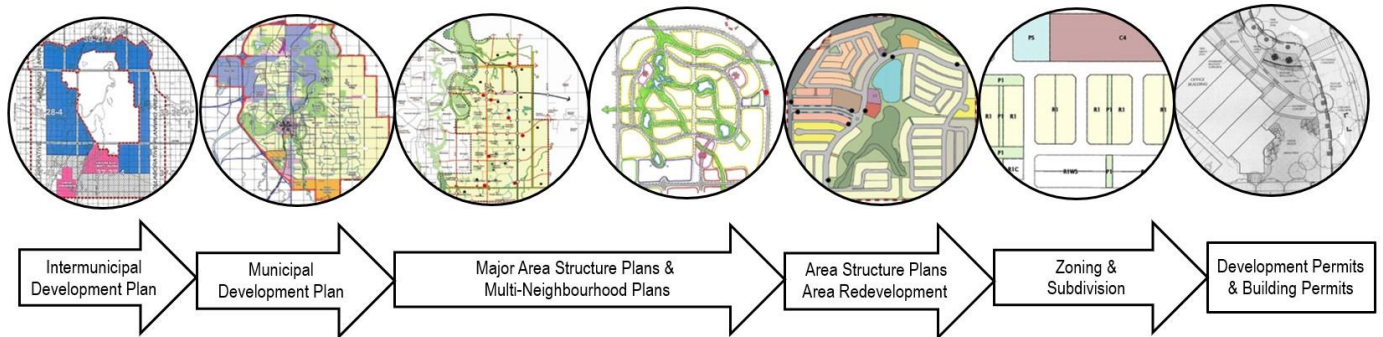
- Decisions at this level build upon and support the policies created at the long-range planning stage, resulting in policy or plans that are more detailed.
- Tools include Major Area Structure Plans (MASPs), Area Structure Plans (ASPs), Area Redevelopment Plans (ARPs), and Neighbourhood Area Structure Plans (NASPs).

#### DETAILED PLANS

- The final stage of planning reflects the implementation of decisions made at the refined ideas stage.
- Information is detailed and plans are exact.
- Tools include the Zoning Bylaw, zoning, subdivisions, and development permits.



# PLANNING HIERARCHY



## 2.7

### HOW ARE DECISIONS INFORMED?

Planners and decision-makers rely on tools such as statutory plans, special studies, and bylaws created with community input to guide how the city should evolve. Detailed information about how different planning tools are used and why can be found in the Policy Framework section.

## 2.8

### WHO DECIDES?

It is the responsibility of City Council to make decisions on behalf of the public. City Council can delegate certain decision-making authority to City Administration, as outlined within the MGA. When decision-making authority is delegated, the authority must consider direction found within relevant statutory plans and bylaws passed by Council.

Detailed information about the decision-making authority at various planning stages is outlined on the following page.

## DECISION MAKER

## DECISION TYPE

**CITY COUNCIL**

### Statutory Plans and Bylaws

- Official City Plan or Municipal Development Plans (MDPs)
- Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDPs)
- Major Area Structure Plans (MASPs)
- Area Structure Plans (ASPs)/ Neighbourhood Plans
- Area Redevelopment Plans (ARPs)
- Zoning Bylaw
- Amendments to these documents

### THE SUBDIVISION APPROVING AUTHORITY

In Red Deer, this is a Senior Planner and the Municipal Planning (MPC) Commission

**Subdivisions**

### THE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

In Red Deer, this is Development Officers, MPC, and the Licensing Department

**Development Permits**

**Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) or Land and Property Rights Tribunal**

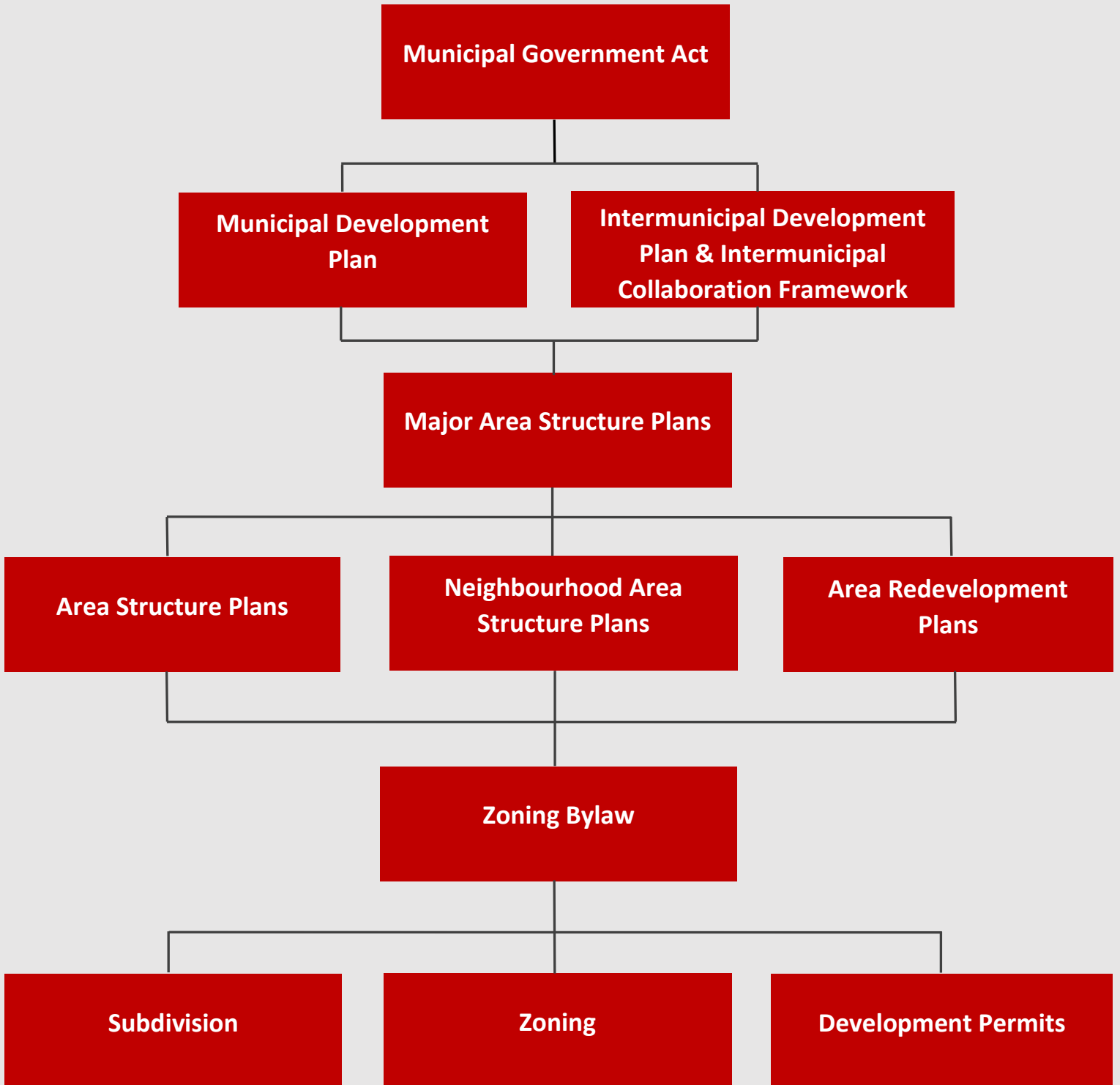
**Appeals related to subdivision and development permits**

### **3. POLICY FRAMEWORK**

Municipalities in Alberta use a variety of tools and plans to shape and guide development, including statutory plans, bylaws, and other non-statutory tools. The Municipal Government Act (MGA) and related provincial legislation requires cities to have specific plans and bylaws in place.

The MGA is the provincial legislation that governs everything municipalities do, including planning and development. There is also provincial legislation such as Subdivision and Development Regulation that specifically governs subdivision and the development of land.

### 3.1 PLANNING FRAMEWORK



## **STATUTORY PLANS**

### **3.2**

#### **WHAT IS A STATUTORY PLAN?**

Statutory plans are described in the Municipal Government Act (MGA). They include Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDPs), Official City Plans (OCPs)/Municipal Development Plans (MDPs), Major Area Structure Plans (MASPs), Area Structure Plans (ASPs), Neighbourhood Area Structure Plans (NASPs) and Area Redevelopment Plans (ARPs). The City develops big plans like the IDP, MDP/OCP, and MASPs. The smaller plans such as the ASPs and NASPs are often created by developers.

For information about the role and application of each statutory plan, please see below.

### **3.3**

#### **MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (MDP) / OFFICIAL CITY PLAN (OCP)**

The Municipal Government Act (MGA) requires each municipality to have a Municipal Development Plan (MDP). Municipalities can choose to name the document an “Official City Plan” but it must still meet the requirements of an MDP as outlined in the MGA.

The MDP is a high-level policy document that provides the framework for the physical development of Red Deer by identifying how the community will grow and change over time. The plan directs and guides the development of the City while taking into account a variety of factors such as social, environmental, and economic implications.

The MDP is visionary, strategic, and long-term in its outlook and application. The Plan relies on extensive public and stakeholder input and reflects the kind of community residents and business owners wish to see.

While the MDP provides a long-term context for day-to-day decision making, it is not intended to be used as a rule book or regulatory instrument like the Zoning Bylaw.

All other statutory plans and bylaws must relate back to the policy direction contained within the MDP. This includes Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDPs), Major Area Structure Plans (MASPs), Area Structure Plans (ASPs), Neighbourhood Area Structure Plans (NASPs), Area Redevelopment Plans (ARPs), and the Zoning Bylaw.

To view Red Deer's MDP visit – [Municipal Development Plan - The City of Red Deer](#).

## **APPLICATIONS AND PROCESSES**

The MDP is a statutory plan that is approved by bylaw. The City initiates the review of an existing MDP and may amend that document, or repeal and replace it with a new MDP.

Extensive public participation and special studies are involved in this process. Council approves and makes amendments to the MDP through a process outlined within the MGA. The process has specific notification requirements and a Public Hearing must be held.

Amendments to the MDP are also approved by Council through bylaw. They can be made to the text, maps, or other elements of the document. Amendments to the MDP are sometimes initiated by the City and other times are initiated by private landowners, businesses, or members of the public. There is a fee and the process may be completed in conjunction with amendments to the ASPs or ARPs to ensure all documents align.

For information on planning fees and applications visit – [Planning Fees - The City of Red Deer](#).

### **3.4**

#### **INTERMUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (IDP)**

Intermunicipal Development Plans are not required by the MGA if bordering municipalities agree that they do not need one but they can be used and developed jointly by two or more neighbouring municipalities. These plans address future land use, development, and intermunicipal planning and cooperation.

The City of Red Deer has an IDP with Red Deer County. This plan outlines how and where each municipality will grow. The IDP includes land immediately adjacent to the City of Red Deer and was adopted jointly by both Councils. The IDP is reviewed annually in a joint discussion.

To view Red Deer's IDP visit – [Intermunicipal Development Plan - The City of Red Deer](#).

### **3.5**

#### **MAJOR AREA STRUCTURE PLAN (MASP)**

A MASP typically encompasses several sections of land and contains policies to guide future servicing, roads, subdivision, and development of the subject area to ensure it occurs in an orderly, complementary, and efficient manner.

To view Red Deer's MASPs visit – [Major Area Structure Plans - The City of Red Deer](#).

### **3.6**

#### **AREA STRUCTURE PLAN (ASP) & NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA STRUCTURE PLAN (NASP)**

These plans focus on planning new neighbourhoods and areas that are undeveloped. They contain policy direction for land use, density, transportation, servicing, parks, commercial and industrial activities, sequence of development, and more.

Both new NASPs and amendments to a NASP have processes to follow and application fees – [Planning Fees - The City of Red Deer](#).

To view Red Deer's NASPs visit – [Neighbourhood Planning - The City of Red Deer](#)

## 3.7

### **AREA REDEVELOPMENT PLAN (ARP)**

Area Redevelopment Plans are a neighbourhood-based planning tool that is used to guide redevelopment.

They contain policy direction for land use, density, transportation, servicing, parks, recreational activities, commercial activities, sequence of development, design standards, and more.

To view Red Deer's ARPs visit – [Area Redevelopment Plans - The City of Red Deer](#).

#### **APPLICATIONS AND PROCESSES**

Amendments to ASPs and ARPs follow the same process. Often, additional focus is placed on public participation during the ARP process when the proposal impacts existing residents and the subject area serves a dynamic set of community members. ARPs are initiated by both municipalities and private landowners or developers.

There is a fee to apply for an amendment to any ASP or ARP, and sometimes the process can involve changes to the MDP or LUB to ensure all documents align.

For information on planning fees and applications visit – [Planning Fees - The City of Red Deer](#).





## 3.8

### WHY DEVELOP A PLAN?

Plans provide a framework for future development of land and are sometimes amended to better reflect current community priorities.

These plans help to ensure that planning a development is occurring in an orderly manner while taking important considerations into account.

Some plans like the MDP are required by the MGA.

## 3.9

### WHO DEVELOPS PLANS?

The City usually initiates Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDPs), Municipal Development Plans (MDPs), and Area Redevelopment Plans (ARPs).

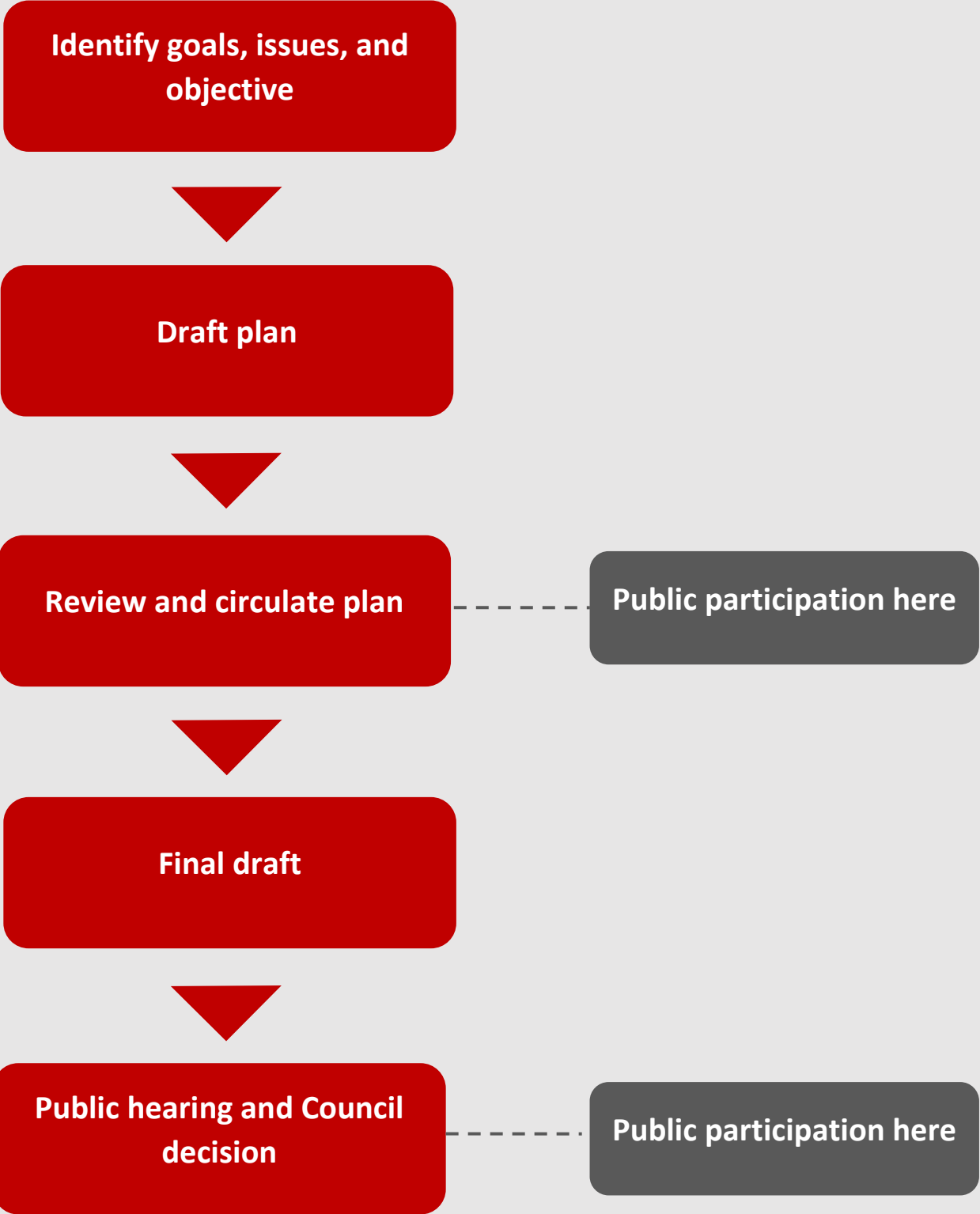
Private land owners or developers can apply for Area Structure Plans (ASPs) or Neighbourhood Area Structure Plans (NASPs). ASP applicants are required to prepare and submit all of the required detailed studies. Once this is completed, the City prepares the ASP bylaw.

Council has the authority to make the final decision to approve or amend any statutory plan.

There are fees for amending and applying for any statutory plan. All [planning fees](#) can be found on the City's website.



**3.10**  
**HOW IS A PLAN DEVELOPED?**



## ZONING BYLAW

### 3.11

#### Zoning Bylaw

Every municipality in Alberta is required to have a Zoning Bylaw (often referred to as a Land Use Bylaw) as per the requirements in the Municipal Government Act. The Zoning Bylaw is not a statutory plan, it is a bylaw. The Zoning Bylaw establishes regulations for land development as well as the decision-making process for development permit applications.

It includes zones that are used to distinguish residential, commercial, and industrial land development and regulate specific land uses and buildings across the city. Each zone identifies compatible land uses and activities, as well as standards for lot size, building type, height, building setbacks, site coverage, densities, parking, landscaping, signage, and other elements of the built form. These standards provide for the amenity and safety of the area, and keep the location and form of physical development compatible.

To explore Red Deer's Zoning Bylaw visit – [Zoning Bylaw \(Land Use Bylaw\) - The City of Red Deer](#).



To view your properties zoning, visit – [Interactive City Map \(Web Map\) - The City of Red Deer](#).

## **WHAT DOES THE ZONING BYLAW REGULATE?**

- Land use
- Density
- Building height and size
- Off-street parking
- Landscaping
- Placement of buildings on a property
- Accessory buildings
- Historic or cultural site preservation
- Environmental preservation

## **WHAT DOES THE ZONING BYLAW NOT REGULATE?**

- Users – the individuals, cultures, or organizations using the land or building
- How a building is internally constructed – that is the role of the Alberta Building Code
- Noise or unsightly premises – these are controlled by the Community Standards Bylaw
- Roads and laneways
- Waterbodies such as lakes or rivers
- On-street parking
- Business licencing
- Infrastructure capacity and servicing
- Telecommunication facilities

## **APPLICATIONS AND PROCESSES**

Amendments to the Zoning may occur to the text, maps, or change land from one land use zone to another zone. Changing the land use of a parcel is called rezoning. This occurs when the applicant would like to change what is currently allowed to happen on the land.

The process for rezoning is important because it allows Council to consider how well the proposed change fits for the city. If an ASP applies to the area being considered for rezoning, the proposal must align with the future land use contained within the ASP. Otherwise, an amendment to the ASP and possibly the MDP may also be required before rezoning can be approved.

Amendments to the Zoning Bylaw require a Public Hearing and in some cases, additional public engagement is held.

### 3.12

#### HOW IS LAND REZONED?



## NON-STATUTORY TOOLS

### 3.13

#### SPECIAL STUDIES

Special studies are undertaken to gather information on a variety of best practices in land use planning. The information is used to help shape policy and bylaw recommendations. Planners can learn a lot from researching other communities and from gathering data about our own community. Special studies can also be technical and be prepared by experts in various fields like engineering or environmental scientists. These studies provide critical input to ensure recommendations and decisions are informed.

### 3.14

#### GUIDELINES

Guidelines supplement statutory plans and bylaws through additional direction at various stages of development. Planning is a balance between requirements and flexibility. Guidelines are used to provide clear direction and ideas for anyone undertaking development. They are typically non-binding, making them a good place for suggestions without making the process too prescriptive.

The City of Red Deer uses Neighbourhood Planning Design Standards to encourage complete communities. To view these standards, visit –[Neighbourhood Planning - The City of Red Deer](#)



## **3.15**

### **SUBDIVISION**

Subdivision is the process of dividing a parcel of land into two or more parcels so each will have its own legal title. This means that each parcel can have a different owner. If a change in land use is being proposed, rezoning will happen before a subdivision, which involves a Public Hearing and separate process.

Subdivisions are regulated by the City of Red Deer's Zoning Bylaw and Alberta Subdivision and Development Regulation.

The Subdivision Authority is the body or person(s) determined by Council through bylaw that will have the authority to make decisions about subdivisions on behalf of the municipality. In Red Deer, the Subdivision Approving Authority is a Senior Planner and the Municipal Planning Commission.

Subdivision decisions can be appealed to the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board or Land and Property Rights Tribunal. It is important to note that only the applicant, the City, a government agency, or a school board can file an appeal on a subdivision decision.

Public Hearings are not held for subdivisions. However, Statutory Plans and the Zoning Bylaw require a Public Hearing for them to be approved or amended and these documents provide direction for subdivisions.

If the subject land is located within an adopted Area Structure Plan, the City is not required to notify adjacent land owners. For the cases where notice is required, it is typically done through mail or signage. These notices describe what is being proposed and provide an opportunity for comments.

For more information on the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board visit – [Subdivision and Development Appeal Board \(SDAB\) - The City of Red Deer](#).



### 3.16 HOW IS LAND SUBDIVIDED?



### 3.17 AFTER THE SUBDIVISION DECISION





## 3.18

### DEVELOPMENT PERMITS

The City requires a development permit for most proposed developments including:

- new buildings
- additions, renovations, or structural repairs to existing buildings
- intensity of use of land or buildings
- signage

The Zoning Bylaw establishes specific regulations for development, such as land use, setbacks, building heights, site coverage, and parking.

Land uses are organized into permitted and discretionary uses. Discretionary uses may be approved to occur on the subject land at the discretion of the Development Authority. If a permit is granted for a discretionary use, the Development Authority may choose to include special conditions at their discretion.

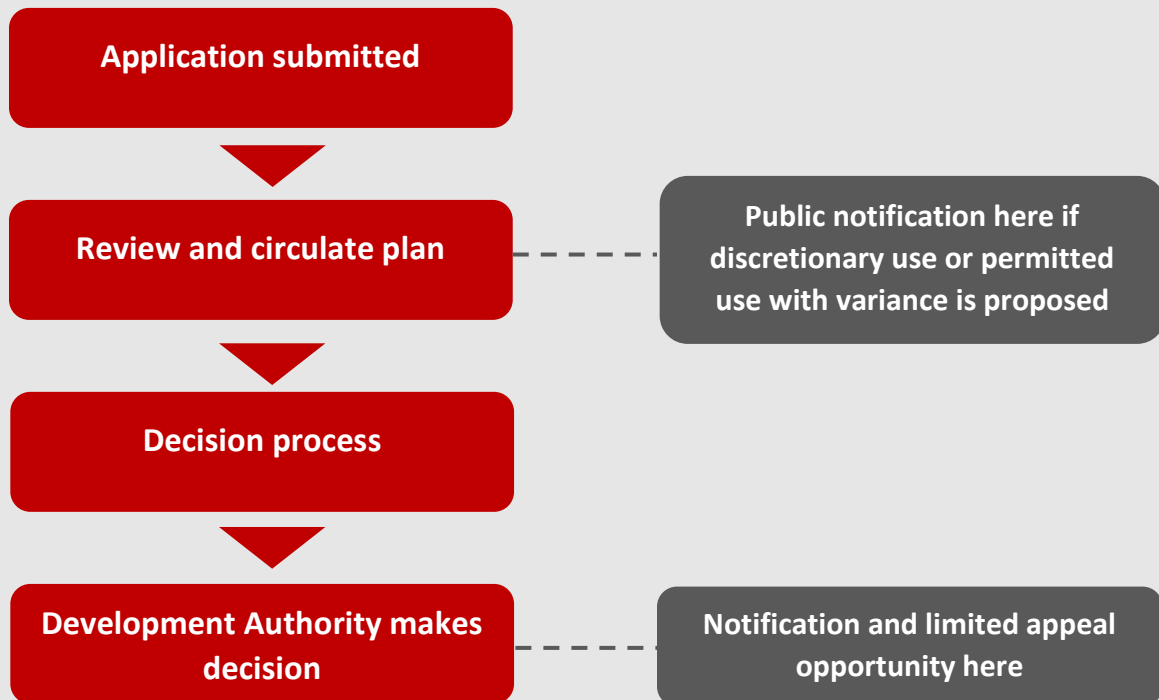
A development permit for a discretionary use has added notification requirements.

For more information on development permits visit – [Permits and Inspections - The City of Red Deer](#).



### 3.19

## DEVELOPMENT PERMIT PROCESS



### 3.20

## DIRECT CONTROL ZONES AND SITE EXCEPTIONS

A Direct Control Zone is a land use zone that is used for parcels that require site-specific regulations. These are generally used when there are specific features of a site or a project that would require unique regulations and guidelines.

In addition to the regular requirements found in other zones, Direct Control Zones may have added notification and public meeting requirements.

In some cases, Council may be the approving authority for development permits in Direct Control Zones.



## **4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Listening to the community through public participation is a key way to gather information on the issues that matter most to Red Deerians. Effective community building relies on creating initiatives and places that benefit everyone. Getting people involved in community building starts with engagement.

Any person, group, or organization affected by a proposed planning matter is encouraged to provide input. Public and community participation is important and feedback is highly valued by the City. Depending on the proposal, there may be multiple opportunities to provide input.

## 4.1

### WHY IS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IMPORTANT?

Everyone plays a role as a community builder by contributing to the places where they reside. City Council, or a delegated authority of Council, makes the decisions on planning proposals on behalf of the electorate. As those affected by these decisions, it is through public participation that the community is informed, consulted, and heard prior to a decision being made. This collaborative process provides opportunity for the community's voice to be reflected in the outcomes.

## 4.2

### HOW IS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION DONE?

Different methods of public participation include Public Hearings, public notification, appeals, public meetings, open houses, surveys, or focus groups.

Visit the [Engage Red Deer](#) platform for details on current participation opportunities.

### PUBLIC HEARING

Public Hearings enable members of the public to provide direct input to Council. They are held during Council meetings and are required for all proposed bylaws that change a statutory document. The MGA and Procedure Bylaw outlines the specific notification and procedural requirements for a Public Hearing.

Any person or group of people affected by the proposed bylaw may speak to the issue at the Public Hearing. Each speaker is permitted five minutes.

People may also choose to submit written comments through the [Public Hearing Submission Form](#), email ([publichearings@reddeer.ca](mailto:publichearings@reddeer.ca)), drop off a written copy of your submission at City Hall ([4914 48 Avenue](#)) during business hours, or by mailing in comments to:

Red Deer City Council c/o  
Clerk Legal & Legislative Services  
Box 5008  
Red Deer, AB T4N 3T4

For more information on providing written comments, please visit the [Submissions](#) page. If you have questions about participation or need additional information on Public Hearing procedures, contact Legal & Legislative Services at [403-342-8132](tel:403-342-8132) or email [publichearings@reddeer.ca](mailto:publichearings@reddeer.ca).

## **APPEAL**

City decisions about a subdivision application or development permit may be appealed to the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board. There are some restrictions as to who can file an appeal which can be found in the MGA.

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

A variety of informal (non-MGA required) engagement sessions with are often available for community in addition to public hearings. This may include a mailout requesting comments, an information session, or a group consultation session.



### 4.3

## WHO INITIATES PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES?

Depending on the project or development proposal, it could be a developer, private landowner, or the City.



### 4.4

## PUBLIC NOTICES

The City notifies the public about upcoming Public Hearings, as per the requirements outlined in the MGA. Look for advertisements on the City's website for information about [upcoming Public Hearings](#).

The City notifies landowners within 100 metres by mail when a new application for rezoning has been received, and invites feedback prior to a decision being made.

Notifications for subdivision applications are provided to adjacent landowners, when the property is not within an Area Structure Plan. For more information on this, visit the Subdivision section of this document.

Notification for Development Permits varies depending on the proposal and neighbouring uses.

### 4.5

## REACH OUT

Our Planners are happy to help! If you have any questions regarding a planning issue, call the City Planning and Growth department at [403-406-8711](tel:403-406-8711) or email [planning@reddeer.ca](mailto:planning@reddeer.ca).



## 4.6

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

#### CANADIAN INSTITUTE OF PLANNERS

The Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) works on behalf of over 8,000 planning professionals nationally, and has served as the voice of Canada’s planning community since 1919. Planners safeguard the health and well-being of urban and rural communities by addressing the use of land, resources, facilities and services with consideration to physical, economic, and social efficiency. For more information, visit – [www.cip-icu.ca](http://www.cip-icu.ca).

#### ALBERTA PROFESSIONAL PLANNERS INSTITUTE

The Alberta Professional Planners Institute (APPI) is a professional regulated organization under the provisions of the Professional and Occupational Associations Registration Act of Alberta, responsible for certifying members to achieve “Right to Title” and thereby are legally entitled to use the Registered Professional Planner – RPP designation. APPI regulates private and public sector planners practicing in Alberta, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. APPI is governed as a public accountable organization with an obligation to serve the public’s interest. For more information, visit – [www.albertaplanners.com](http://www.albertaplanners.com).

#### CITY OF RED DEER WEBSITE

The City of Red Deer website is a great place to find news and updates related to city planning, public hearings, and much more. To access the City’s website, visit – [www.reddeer.ca](http://www.reddeer.ca).









