



## Clearwater County

### Municipal Vision 2004

Clearwater County, population 11,505, is a large rural municipality located in west central Alberta endowed with unparalleled natural beauty, industrial resources and opportunity. Agriculture, oil and gas, forestry and tourism are principle economic generators. Prime agricultural lands are located in the eastern sectors of the municipality, while the much larger western portions are mostly forested and mountainous. The Town of Rocky Mountain House and the Village of Caroline are the major service centers, containing well-developed health, school, cultural and recreation facilities. The Hamlets of Leslieville, Withrow, Condor, Alhambra and Nordegg and numerous country residential subdivisions provide opportunities for a variety of lifestyles and host a range of cultural, commercial and municipal emergency services.

An ever improving Provincial transportation network serves the municipality with Highways 11, 12, 22, 54 and 53, and numerous other highways previously referred to as Secondary Highways. Complimenting the Provincial highway system is an equally well developed and maintained local road network.

To serve air traffic needs, a municipal airport with an extra long paved runway and a modern airport terminal building, is jointly operated by the Town of Rocky Mountain House and the County.

The people of the County are energetic and community minded. They are looking for a local government that provides quality leadership and services, building on the natural amenities of the County and the existing spirit of community cooperation, while regarding the duty of each resident to manage his own affairs responsibly and to respect the rights of others.

## **VISION**

Clearwater County will provide high quality local government services to all its residents and corporations, by protecting and enhancing living environments and business development opportunities, while maintaining competitive municipal tax rates. The County will maximize opportunities to achieve efficiencies and higher levels of service by cooperating with its urban neighbors, the Town of Rocky Mountain House and the Village of Caroline.

A high regard will be paid to protecting the extensive natural beauty of the County. Opportunities to explore and enjoy this significant asset will be developed and provided to local residents and other Albertans in cooperation with other governments and the private sector. Industry and all users of land will conduct their affairs in a responsible manner complementing environmental protection and enhancement objectives of this Vision.

Clearwater will be viewed by residents and visitors alike as a progressive, well planned, safe, clean and active municipality. It will be a desired place to live, raise a family, retire or establish and operate a business.

## **PRINCIPLES of GOVERNANCE**

- A) The affairs of the County will be conducted in an open and honest manner. Openness will only be limited as required by legislation. A high degree of integrity will be exhibited by all County officials and staff.
- B) All County officials and staff are accountable for their actions and decisions. Councilors are accountable to the electors, and staff is accountable through management to Council. All decisions are expected to be made in the best long term interests of the whole municipality.
- C) The continued financial well being of the County is of primary importance, and will be monitored and protected.
- D) The County recognizes that it is not an island and will work aggressively, with local and regional municipalities, and provincial and national associations, to protect and improve local economic opportunity and the living environment for all its residents.
- E) The County recognizes and supports the Town of Rocky Mountain House and the Village of Caroline as independent local governments and will maximize opportunities to share and enhance service responsibilities wherever practicable for the benefit of all residents of each municipality.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1. Intermunicipal Relations Goal:** To improve and maintain the highest practical levels of service delivery, reduce costs, and assist in its advocacy role, the County will cooperate and participate with other municipalities and municipal organizations wherever appropriate.

### Objectives:

- a) Clearwater County will continue to develop and enhance its partnership with local urban municipalities, First Nation reserves and adjacent rural municipalities, and will seek new and improved ways of jointly providing services to achieve higher overall performance and efficiencies.  
The hallmark of this relationship will be a high degree of open and honest communication and will reflect an abiding respect for each municipality's independence.
- b) Council members and staff will participate on provincial committees and task forces that review issues of concern to Clearwater County.
- c) The County will participate as an active member in the following municipal associations:
  - ? Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties;
  - ? Central Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties;
  - ? Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

- 2. Provincial/Federal/Municipal Relations Goal:** The municipality will make itself aware of Federal and Provincial initiatives that impact municipal operations and make informed representations to the senior levels of government. In this regard the municipality will develop a reputation as a leader in providing quality and imaginative advice with a view to improve municipal organization and service delivery.  
The County will seek opportunities to partner with senior governments with a view to pursue common objectives and share services.

### Objectives:

- a) Council will regularly meet with the local MLA and MP, and the Reeve will have more regular contact, to ensure that these senior government representatives are aware of the goings on in the County, and that the municipality is aware of Federal and Provincial initiatives.
- b) Council will deal more directly with Cabinet Ministers in the event the local MLA or the MP is not a member of the governing party.
- c) Management is expected to develop relationships with senior provincial bureaucrats to assist with the information flow between the municipality and the Province.

- d) Council will review and respond to Provincial Government discussion papers and other initiatives for change, in a thorough, thoughtful and professional manner.
- e) County will maximize grant and program opportunities.
- f) The County will involve itself, provide advice and participate in certain provincial service delivery areas within the County when appropriate, with a view to enhance service levels, gain efficiencies and promote County objectives.

**3. Administrative Goal:** The County will employ a highly motivated, well-trained, safe working and dedicated core of people, to provide quality services to its ratepayers. These staff members will be considered a resource of primary importance to the municipality.

### **Objectives:**

- a) Council will be aware of the administrative structure of the corporation and will regularly through the County Manager, review its performance, adequacy and efficiency.
- b) Given the changes occurring in local government structure and responsibility, staff will be given opportunities to assume a variety of roles. Staff versatility is critical to the long term well being of the municipality.
- c) Staff will continually look for new and improved ways for delivering services and meeting administrative and program responsibilities. This County will encourage research and appropriate experimentation with new techniques.
- d) Clearwater County staff will be seen as competent, knowledgeable and resourceful and appropriate training opportunities will be provided.
- e) Staff will be highly communicative both within the organization and without.
- f) Council will provide opportunities for staff to gather for certain social events and will offer a family friendly work environment.
- g) The County will provide a quality employee benefits package to full time employees, in addition to established pay scales. Council will annually review pay scales considering: the value of staff to the corporation, inflation factors, pay scales for other similar institutions, the leadership role expected from staff, the financial well being of the municipality, and other appropriate factors as determined by Council.

- 4. Financial Goal:** The County shall manage its finances so that it can achieve its service delivery objectives and stewardship responsibilities effectively, efficiently, and economically.
- ? Public trust in the County's administration of its finances should be maintained and, whenever possible, enhanced;
  - ? Financial affairs shall be conducted so that value for money in the public interest is obtained;
  - ? In financing its operations, the County shall strive to achieve a local government tax burden that is competitive in comparison to other rural municipalities providing similar services and shall strive to enhance predictability and stability with respect to its annual tax levies.

**Objectives:**

- a) The Council will be aware of the financial state of the municipality, will observe changes, and direct administration accordingly. The following reports will be made available to Council to assist in this regard:
  - ? budget reports;
  - ? monthly and year end financial statements;
  - ? accounts payables and cheque listings;
  - ? regular management activity reports.
- b) Council and staff will prepare annual budgets and long term financial plans.
- c) Financial information will be managed so that it can be understood by those who need to use it thereby enhancing decision making and ensuring the best use of financial resources;
- d) County Managers will monitor the environment, both internal and external, for ways to enhance County financial operations (eg. Investment strategies);
- e) It is in the long term financial interests of the municipality to see its tax base grow. In this regard the municipality will first of all; provide a climate that encourages business investment. This will include such things as competitive tax rates, quality services, clear planning and limited bureaucracy associated with development approvals.

- 5. Protective Services Goal:** People will feel safe in Clearwater County and the public will be encouraged to practice and incorporate safe driving habits, healthy lifestyles and fire preventative measures at home, at work and at play.

The County will provide a reasonable level of protective services to all areas of the municipality. The level of service will be dictated by the availability of funds, number of people served, and location in the municipality. The municipality will cooperate with other organizations and municipalities to improve efficiencies and harmonize service delivery.

### **Fire Protection Objectives:**

- a) Where appropriate the County will maintain protective service agreements with urban municipalities and Alberta Forestry.
- b) The municipality will maintain and encourage County volunteers by providing:
  - ? adequate facilities and equipment;
  - ? opportunities for training;
  - ? communication opportunities; and
  - ? appropriate recognition.
- c) Council will establish and fund a long-term plan to upgrade and replace equipment and facilities as necessary.
- d) In cooperation with the Town of Rocky Mountain House and the Village of Caroline, the County will maintain the office of regional fire chief to coordinate and assist volunteer fire departments in the delivery of their services.

### **Ambulance Objectives:**

- a) Ambulance services will be centered in Rocky Mountain House, Caroline, Nordegg, Rimbey, Eckville and Sundre to serve County residents and the traveling public.
- b) The County will provide ambulance services through private operator contracts where appropriate. These contracts will be tendered at reasonable intervals to ensure the municipality is receiving quality services for competitive prices.
- c) The County will maintain a volunteer ambulance in Nordegg and support the volunteer ambulance service in Caroline and Sundre.

### **Search and Rescue Objectives:**

The County will encourage and support the local volunteer search and rescue organization by:

- ? providing maintenance and insurance on vehicles;

- ? assisting with equipment housing costs;
- ? encouraging and supporting volunteers.

### **Policing Objectives:**

- a) The municipality will employ two Special Constables to regulate traffic on municipal roadways for purposes of traffic safety and the protection of investment in the roadway. The Special Constables will also enforce all applicable municipal by-laws.
- b) The municipal special constable will cooperate with the RCMP and other municipal and provincial enforcement agencies when appropriate.
- c) Council will maintain communications with the local RCMP detachments and provide advice on policing issues in the community. Council will participate on local community policing committees.

**6. Recreation and Culture Goal:** The County will support a variety of recreation and cultural opportunities that promote healthy life styles and develop a sense of history and community. Volunteerism will be the primary method by which recreation and cultural services will be delivered. Opportunities will be provided to explore and enjoy the natural setting of the County. In this regard the County will work closely with the Alberta Government in establishing developments and services and increasing public awareness.

### **Objectives:**

- a) Council will participate on, and provide grants to community halls, recreation and library boards, established to plan and deliver recreation cultural, and library opportunities directly to County residents.
- b) Council will, through agreements with Rocky Mountain House and Caroline, jointly fund quality recreation and library facilities (e.g. arenas and libraries).
- c) Council will depend upon, support and acknowledge volunteerism in the delivery of recreation, museum and library services.
- d) Municipal campgrounds, owned by the County, will be operated by local volunteer organizations.
- e) The County will support certain local museum development initiatives that display the heritage and history of the area.
- f) The County will advise the Alberta Government on the preservation and delivery of appropriate public opportunities to explore and enjoy the Clearwater West Country.

- g) The County, in cooperation with the Alberta Government, will facilitate development and services in the West Country to further the economic, recreational and environmental objectives of the County.

**7. Environment Goal:** The natural beauty of County is unsurpassed. While opportunities to enjoy and work in the County are important protecting the County's natural environment is of equal importance. The County expects that recreation and commerce will occur and the environment will be protected and wherever practicable enhanced. Businesses, residents and visitors to the County will be recognized broadly as responsible environmental stewards.

### **Objectives:**

- a) The County will take a leadership role in encouraging the protection and enhancement of the County's natural environment. In this regard it will participate in senior government forums and committees. It will promote environmental protection by facilitating strategic developments and by enhancing service delivery to the recreationalist and tourist.
- b) The County will participate in industry and business forums and promote environmental protection.
- c) All County programs and services will be delivered in an environmentally responsible manner.
- d) The County will recognize and promote the attitude that protecting the environment is very important and that often comes with a cost that users and developers must be willing to make.
- e) Municipal waste management facilities (sewerage and solid waste) will be operated in conformance with existing Provincial legislation and regulation.
- f) Staff will be aware of environmental issues and factors associated with their work sites, and acquire all necessary environmental permits.
- g) The County will establish communication lines with environmental regulators, to keep abreast of environmental issues and to expedite the receipt of environmental approvals.
- h) The County will stop the development of unsightly properties and will encourage existing owners of such properties to clean them up.

**8. Roads Goal:** Clearwater County recognizes that roads are a primary function of the municipality and will develop and maintain a quality road network to serve and complement residential, farming, commercial, recreational and industrial activities and needs. Highly responsive maintenance services will be delivered by well organized, dedicated, and efficient employees and contractors.

## **Objectives General:**

- a) The County has a good network of municipal roadways, complemented by an equally good network of Provincial Highways. The objective therefore is not necessarily to develop or expand, but to preserve and improve the existing network with priority placed on those roads most used by County residents and taxpayers.
- b) County roads shall be constructed and maintained to a standard that suites the traffic they are intended to serve. These standards will therefore vary depending on the local circumstances and as much as possible, future needs.
- c) The County will aggressively pursue a program of surfacing as many roads as possible, beginning with high use roads, and those gravel roads with high maintenance requirements. Residents within subdivisions will be encouraged to participate in cost sharing financing plans to permit the County to surface internal roads. The County will consider the long term implications of its surfacing program and its relationship to the maintenance and rehabilitation requirements of the municipality.
- d) The County will take advantage of public and private partnerships in its maintenance and road development activities and where demands exist for services above those normally provided by the County.
- e) The County will work with Provincial and urban authorities to ultimately achieve a Regional road system where maintenance, rehabilitation and construction activities are delivered in an effective, integrated and coordinated fashion.

## **Maintenance Objectives:**

- a) Priority is placed on the maintenance of municipal roads; and the standard, and type of maintenance will vary depending on the local conditions and use. The objective of road maintenance activities will be to provide a safe driving surface for the traveling public and to preserve the investment in the road infrastructure. Primary attention will be paid to roads with higher use.
- b) A diligent system of placing road bans, administering vehicle weight enforcement regulations and issuing permits and truck haul route approvals will be developed and implemented to protect roadways from unusual damage and to reduce driving hazards and conflicts with adjacent residents. This system will be developed and administered acknowledging the importance to the County and to the Province in keeping commerce moving while balancing the needs and safety of other road users.
- c) Particular attention will be paid to all maintenance activities to minimize the need for major repairs and to ensure that any repair, once completed, is effective.

- d) Maintenance activities will be prioritized based on safety, traffic volumes and the severity of the problem. Council will consider allocating additional funds to major problem areas to ensure that repairs are effectual.
- e) The County will maximize the use of contracted equipment in its maintenance activities. The length of each grader beat will be such that it provides for a viable contract and minimize the number of regular beat graders, while a reasonable and dependable level of service is provided. As a rule of thumb, beats should be maintained at about 105 miles in length and all roads should be cleared of snow or graded within 96 hours. Grader maintenance will only occur however, when conditions warrant (e.g. more than 4 inches of snow).
- f) The use of graders for winter and summer maintenance will decrease as the mileage of surfaced roads increases. The County will regularly adjust the grader beats in light of changing circumstances.
- g) Additional snow plow trucks will be contracted as required.

### **Road Surfacing Objectives:**

- a) The County will surface certain roads to complement the Provincial Highway system and improve the traveling surface and provide a dust free environment for as many residents/taxpayers as possible.
- b) Priority will be placed on surfacing:
  - ? Roads which complete surfacing projects started;
  - ? Roads that meet the objective of ensuring that a surfaced road municipal road or a Provincial Highway is within 5 kilometers to most residents;
  - ? Network links to areas of the municipality, between Provincial Highways and to other municipalities/counties;
  - ? On other roads that provide the most benefit (dust control and improved maintenance standard) to the most people (as measured by traffic counts and the number of residents living along a road) while ensuring the distribution of surfaced roads throughout the municipality.
- c) The standard of the surfaced road will vary depending on circumstances but will not normally be below a 9.0m initial driving surface on higher traffic routes.

### **Construction Objectives:**

- a) Construction standards will be considered and established by council for each project prior to the commencement of works. Roads will generally be reconstructed one year in advance of receiving a surface. Construction supervisors shall exercise adequate care and attention to ensure proper shape, width and compaction.

- b) The County will maximize the use of the shoulder pulls, augmented with clay fill, to rehabilitate roads and to prepare them for surfacing.
- c) Complete reconstruction, new construction, the purchase of additional right-of-ways, and other work outside the road right-of-way will only be undertaken when no other alternative is practical, as these elements add considerably to the cost of road development. Lesser standards may be considered to avoid such works and to reduce costs, thereby making more money available to surface and upgrade existing roads.
- d) Gravel pits and clay pits will be located and developed in strategic locations throughout the county, for purposes of reducing haul costs for construction and maintenance projects.

### **Public Works Equipment and Staff Objectives:**

- a) The County is committed to the use of contractors and contracted equipment to the greatest extent possible and will only purchase equipment when no other practical alternative exists. It is therefore intended that the County's equipment inventory will remain small. Any equipment that is purchased will be well maintained, to maximize its operating life and performance, and to provide the best possible financial return when sold. Staff will monitor and record equipment maintenance costs to assist with decisions related to sale and replacement.
- b) The County will keep a small, well trained and motivated core of full time public works staff. In the summer time, the primary function of County public works staff will be to supervise contractors and seasonal staff. During winter months available County staff will provide maintenance duties.
- c) Staff is expected to evaluate their activities and to make recommendations through management to council for improvement in all aspects of public works operations.

- 9. Economic Development Goal:** Clearwater County is uniquely located and is blessed with abundant natural resources and opportunities. The County will be viewed by visitors, residents and business alike as a progressive and viable community. As appropriate and sustainable development is critical to the long term economic well being of the municipality and its residents, the County will actively seek and facilitate development and diversification in all geographic areas of the municipality. All developments will support or enhance Clearwater County's personality as a vibrant, beautiful, environmentally conscious, safe and modern rural community.

**Economic Development Objectives:**

- a) Agriculture will remain as a primary economic generator of the municipality. Planning policies and decisions will reflect the importance of agriculture by protecting good agricultural lands and by directing non-agricultural development to poorer lands. The County's Agricultural Service Board will provide programs and opportunities to enhance and develop the agricultural opportunity in the County (see ASB section for more details).
- b) County hamlets will be primary sites for County efforts in attracting a variety of housing and commercial developments. The County may adopt a multitude of strategies to promote and assist hamlet development ranging from working with (or partnering with) developers, to actually funding development.
- c) The County will work with the Town and the Village wherever practical to attract and accommodate development within the region. The County will involve itself in the broader region (CAEP) or the province as necessary to promote its economic development objectives.
- d) The County will develop an inter-municipal economic development marketing plan with the Town of Rocky Mountain House and the Village of Caroline, and will actively seek out developers and discuss development opportunities in the region. The plan will maximize opportunities associated with the natural features and services of the County and region.
- e) The County will review new and imaginative ways to involve itself in facilitating and supporting commercial/ recreational/tourism development in the County's West County.
- f) David Thompson Development Nodes will be the primary locations for major tourism development in the West County. On a cost recovery basis, the County will plan and develop infrastructure to facilitate development.
- g) As the major land owner in the Hamlet of Nordegg, the County will develop and market the community, as financial resources permit and in accordance with the Nordegg Development Plan and Design Guidelines. Primary emphasis in the next number of years will be to upgrade the community's water and sewer systems.

- h) The County will continue to provide management and financial resources to the Nordegg Historical Society to assist with the development and promotion of the Nordegg Mine Site.
- i) County administrative programs and processes will support and assist the development industry to the fullest extent while conforming to all County by-law and policy.
- j) Resource extraction industries are welcomed and will be accommodated in the County in a manner that will demonstrate a high regard to the environment and public safety. Industry will be encouraged to cooperate and work with the County in offering recreational/tourism opportunities along with their development or operational activities, and the County will protect and respect industry's need for isolation a buffering when appropriate. Industry located in Clearwater will be envied by other similar industries because of its relationship with the community and the environment.
- k) The County views the Rocky Mountain House Airport as a facility of significance in supporting the economic, recreational and cultural objectives of this plan. The County will collaborate with the Town to support financially, and encourage the Rocky Mountain House Airport Commission in their endeavors to promote, and enhance the use and development of airport facilities. The County acknowledges the plans the Commission has developed and supports development as proposed.

**10. Agricultural Services Goal:** Clearwater County will be a thriving agricultural community with livestock operations taking full advantage of the areas high rainfall giving forages and feed crops opportunity to produce in abundance. The many different sizes of agricultural operations whether large beef cattle operation, dairies, hog farms, horse farms or the smaller part time set-ups will all be given full opportunity to be successful and coexist in a well balanced rural community.

The Agricultural Services Department is governed by the Agricultural Service Board (ASB) on the basis of Council approved programs and budgets. The ASB operates within guidelines provided by the provincial Agricultural Service Board Act. In essence the Board is the “voice of agriculture” to Council responding to issues of local, provincial and national interest.

The Agricultural Services Department will be a conduit of agricultural information and will provide a variety of agricultural services that will meet the needs of the unique balance of farming operations within the County. Programs and services dedicated towards the well-being of the agricultural community will focus on education and awareness while preserving and protecting the agricultural resource.

Agricultural Service Board Objectives:

- a) To develop programs to enhance the social, environmental and economic well being of the agricultural community.
- b) To develop agricultural policies to meet the needs of the County.
- c) To administer the ASB act and other agricultural legislation.
- d) To foster good will and cooperation among agencies and individuals with mutual interests in agriculture.