

Terms of Reference

Review and Update of the Municipal Development Plan

Approved by Foothills County Council: March 25, 2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose: Approve the scope, schedule, and engagement approach to update the current MDP to reflect current legislation, growth trends, and community priorities.

Timeline: Q1 2026 to Q3 2027 (18-24 months) with decision milestones at the end of phases 1-3.

Deliverables: Background study, engagement summary reports, draft MDP, final MDP bylaw, and implementation and monitoring framework.

Engagement: Four inclusive and accessible phases using hybrid methods.

Outcome: A clear, implementable, and aligned MDP to guide land use and infrastructure decisions for the next 20 years.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Terms of Reference establishes the purpose, scope, and framework for the review and update of the Foothills County Municipal Development Plan (MDP).

The MDP is a statutory plan adopted under Section 632 of the Municipal Government Act (MGA) that sets out the County's long-term vision for growth, land use, and development. It provides overarching guidance for how Foothills County will manage growth while maintaining its agricultural foundation, rural character, and environmental integrity.

Foothills County's current MDP was adopted in 2010 and amended in 2017. Since that time, significant changes have occurred in provincial legislation, regional policy, land use patterns, development trends, and community values. The MDP review will ensure the plan remains relevant, implementable, and aligned with both community values and higher-order planning frameworks.

2.0 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Section 632 of the Municipal Government Act (MGA) requires that the council of every municipality, with a population of 3,500 or more, adopt a Municipal Development Plan (MDP) through bylaw. The MDP establishes the overall vision for a municipality's future growth from a planning and development perspective and guides how and where growth will occur.

For municipalities where an MDP is required, the MDP **must** address:

1. Future land use within the municipality;
2. The manner of and proposals for future development;
3. The coordination of land use, future growth patterns, and infrastructure with adjacent municipalities;
4. The provision of required transportation systems, either generally or specifically within the municipality and in relation to adjacent municipalities;
5. The provision of municipal services and facilities, either generally or specifically;
6. The inclusion of policies, compatible with subdivision and development regulations, that provide guidance on the type and location of land uses adjacent to sour gas facilities;
7. The inclusion of policies respecting the provision of municipal, school or municipal and school reserves, including but not limited to the need for, amount of and allocation of those reserves and the identification of school requirements in consultation with affected school boards ; and
8. The inclusion of policies respecting the protection of agricultural operations within the municipality.

The MDP **may** also address:

1. Proposals for the financing and programming of municipal infrastructure;
2. The co-ordination of municipal programs relating to the physical, social and economic development of the municipality;
3. Environmental matters within the municipality;
4. The financial resources of the municipality;
5. The economic development of the municipality;
6. Any other matter relating to the physical, social, and/or economic development of the municipality;
7. The inclusion of statements identifying the municipality's development constraints, supported by the results of any development studies or impact analyses. These statements may also outline goals, objectives, targets, planning policies, and corporate strategies; and
8. The inclusion of policies respecting the provision of conservation reserve in accordance with Section 664.2(1)(a) to (d) of the MGA.

In addition, the updated MDP must align with the Alberta Land Stewardship Act (ASLA), South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP), and existing Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDPs).

3.0 PURPOSE AND RATIONALE

The Municipal Development Plan (MDP) review and update is necessary to provide direction on managing growth and to ensure that the objectives represent the vision of County ratepayers. This section outlines the context and rationale for the update.

3.1 Population and Employment

Population and employment growth in the County impact land use, housing demand, agricultural lands fragmentation and pressures on social, transportation, as well as ecological infrastructure. The MDP review will utilize the most currently available demographic statistics, including historical and projected population, household, and employment data in order to enable discussions on managing projected future population and employment growth.

3.2 Land Supply

Current land supply must be assessed against projected growth to ensure the County can accommodate future residential, commercial, and industrial needs in a sustainable manner. Existing residential and non-residential land supply inventory will be compared against growth projections to inform and validate policy direction and land use strategies.

3.3 Policy Context and Direction

The MDP review is guided by both provincial and regional frameworks, including the Municipal Government Act (MGA) and the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP), which establish requirements for land use planning and growth management. Since the adoption of the 2010 MDP, policy changes at the provincial and regional levels have introduced new expectations for alignment, collaboration, and sustainability.

In updating the MDP, policy will provide direction to balance development with environmental stewardship, agricultural preservation, and long-term financial sustainability.

These legislative requirements, regional dynamics, and local growth pressures provide the foundation for the objectives of the MDP review and update.

3.4 Objectives of the MDP Review and Update

The MDP Review and Update will:

- Establish the County's vision and goals for sustainable, balanced growth over the next 20 years;
- Respond to emerging development trends, demographic change, and infrastructure needs;
- Reflect current provincial and regional frameworks, including the MGA and SSRP;
- Incorporate the County's Growth Management Strategy and other plans and studies completed since the 2010 MDP adoption;

- Ensure policies for growth address financial sustainability, and impacts on transportation, infrastructure, agriculture, and the environment; and
- Affirm the benefit of proactive collaboration with neighbouring municipalities.

An updated MDP will enable Council and Administration to make land use and infrastructure decisions that reflect the County’s long-term vision while ensuring transparency for residents and interested parties.

4.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The review will be guided by principles that reflect Foothills County’s commitment to thoughtful, transparent, and responsible planning:

- **Collaboration:** Work closely with regional and intermunicipal partners to ensure alignment and coordination;
- **Transparency and Engagement:** Maintain open communication with residents, landowners, and interested parties;
- **Evidence-Based Policy:** Use current data, studies, and best practices to inform policy;
- **Fiscal and Environmental Stewardship:** Plan growth in a financially responsible and environmentally sustainable manner; and
- **Rural Character and Agricultural Focus:** Reinforce the County’s agricultural base and distinctive rural identity.

5.0 VISION

In setting a new vision for the County, the revised MDP will build upon the vision of the existing 2010 MDP and be guided by public engagement and feedback:

“The MD of Foothills encompasses a diverse rural landscape in which leadership and planning support a strong agricultural heritage, vibrant communities, a balanced economy and the stewardship of natural capital for future generations.”

6.0 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the MDP Review are to:

- Confirm and, if necessary, update the County's vision and guiding principles based on recent studies and public engagement;
- Evaluate existing and alternative policies, land-use designations, and growth management strategies to support the vision of the County;
- Incorporate updated demographic, environmental, and infrastructure data;
- Align with provincial and regional planning policy frameworks;
- Develop measurable performance indicators to assess policy effectiveness; and
- Prepare a comprehensive, clear, and user-friendly plan to guide Council decision-making.

7.0 PROJECT SCOPE

7.1 Study Area

The study area of the MDP review project encompasses the entirety of the County, as shown on *Figure 1 – Five Growth Management Districts*:

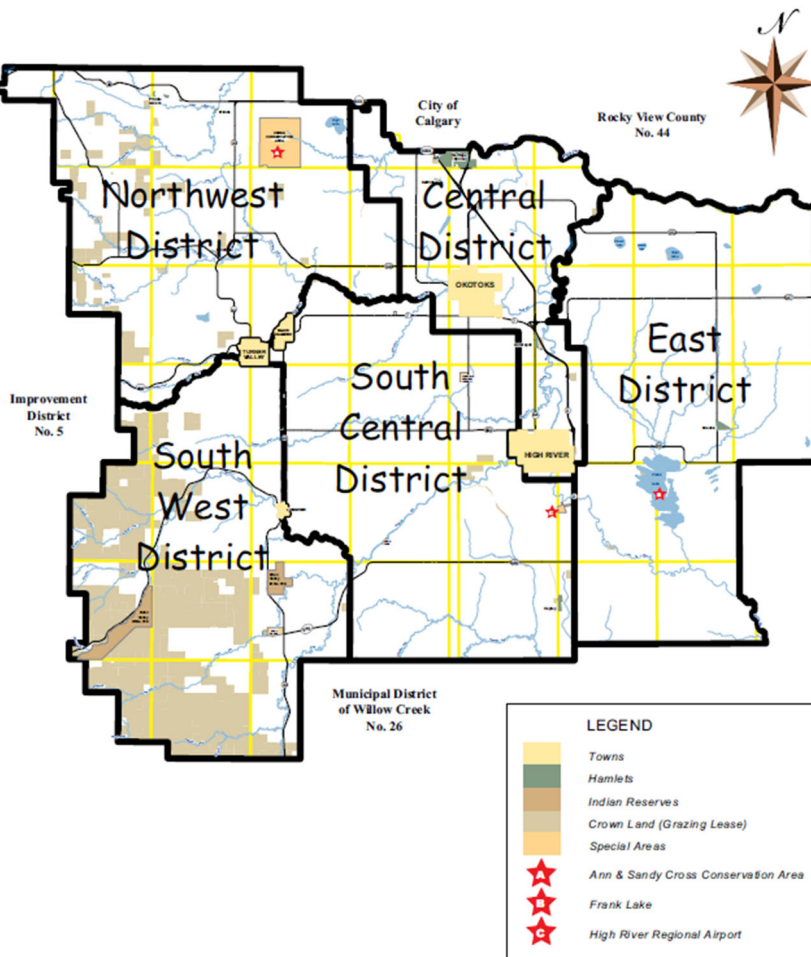


Figure 1. Five Growth Management Districts.

7.2 In-Scope vs. Out-of-Scope

In-Scope

- Undertake public and interested party engagement;
- Review and update of all MDP sections, including vision, goals, and policy framework;
- Review and update of all MDP appendices where necessary;
- Integration of new studies and regional policy updates;
- Process to gather input for a revised MDP; and
- Preparation of a new consolidated MDP document for Council adoption by bylaw.

Out-of-Scope

- Preparation of new Area Structure Plans (ASPs) or Area Concept Plans (ACPs).

8.0 PROJECT GOVERNANCE

Council will provide policy direction at major decision milestones:

- 1) Approval of ToR;
- 2) Receipt of background report;
- 3) Receipt of phase 1 engagement results;
- 4) Authorization to release the draft MDP for public review;
- 5) Consideration of first reading;
- 6) Authorization to proceed with a statutory public hearing; and
- 7) Consideration of second and third readings.

8.1 Intermunicipal Collaboration

The project will include early notification and coordination with adjacent municipalities to ensure policy alignment and to address cross-boundary matters related to land use, transportation, servicing, and growth management.

8.2 Consultant Procurement and Contract Management

Consultant services may be retained through a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP). Evaluation criteria will include team experience, methodology, workplan, resourcing, and fee structure. The successful proponent will enter into a consulting services agreement. Deliverables, milestones, invoicing, change management, and quality assurance requirements in this ToR will be incorporated into the contract.

8.3 Responsibilities

Council:

- Provide strategic direction and oversight;
- Approve project scope, key milestones, and the final MDP by bylaw following a statutory public hearing.
- Approve the project work plan and communication strategy;
- Review background reports, draft policies, and plan components;
- Provide policy direction to Administration and consultants;
- Recommend release of the draft MDP for public consultation; and
- Review public and interested party input and recommend revisions.

Administration and Staff:

- A cross-departmental Project Team (including representatives from Planning, Public Works, Utilities, Finance, Communications, and Assessment) will lead the development of the draft MDP. This team, informed by feedback from senior Administration and public engagement, will provide policy direction, project oversight, and conduct a detailed and critical review of the draft MDP.
- Additional Project Team responsibilities include:
 - Managing the day-to-day operations of the project;
 - Coordinating consultant work and data collection;
 - Reviewing public and interested party input and recommending revisions;
 - Preparing reports, presentations, and draft policies; and
 - Supporting Council throughout the process.

Third Party Consultants:

- As needed, third party consultants may be procured to support the work of the Project Team as set out in the procurement process such as:
 - Community engagement material and engagement summary reports;
 - Policy design and drafting; and
 - Completion of required technical and baseline studies, mapping, and/or modelling.

9.0 COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

All engagement activities and data collection will comply with the Protection of Privacy Act (POPA) and Access to Information Act (ATIA). Personal information collected during engagement will be used only for preparation of the MDP and disclosed only as required by law.

A comprehensive Communication and Engagement Plan will guide all outreach efforts to ensure inclusive participation in the community, identify interested parties, and intergovernmental organizations.

Engagement activities may include:

- Public open houses and workshops;
- Online engagement tools (such as a project webpage, surveys, and interactive mapping platform);
- Interested party meetings (agriculture, business/industry, environmental groups, developers, adjacent municipalities, and Indigenous groups); and
- Regular progress updates to Council and the community.

Engagement will occur in four main phases:

1. Visioning and Issues Identification – defining values, goals, and challenges;
2. Policy Development and Draft Plan – testing and refining directions;
3. Public Review and Adoption – presenting the final draft MDP for Council consideration; and,
4. Implementation and Monitoring – developing performance indicators to assess policy effectiveness.

A detailed overview of the Communication and Engagement Plan can be found in *Appendix A – Communication and Engagement Plan Outline*.

10.0 WORK PROGRAM AND DELIVERABLES

10.1 Decision Milestones

Council approval or direction is required at the end of each phase prior to proceeding to the next stage.

| Phase | Timeline | Key Deliverables |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|---|
| 1. Project Initiation | Q2 2026 | Work Plan, Background Report, Council Workshop, RFP For Engagement Support, and Engagement Plan |
| 2. Draft Plan Development | Q3 2026 – Q2 2027 | Policy Review, Growth Scenarios, Draft MDP, Engagement Activities, and Engagement Summaries |
| 3. Review and Adoption | Q3 2027 | Final Draft MDP, Public Hearing, and Adoption by Bylaw |
| 4. Implementation | Q3 2027 | Implementation Strategy and Monitoring Framework |

Note: While the full project is expected to take 18–24 months, this timeline may vary depending on project scope and regulatory requirements.

10.2 Deliverable Requirements and Acceptance Standards

Consultant deliverables, including public engagement materials, must meet the satisfaction of County Administration and Council. Final deliverables are to be provided in both PDF and editable formats (e.g., Word doc, GIS geodatabase or shapefiles, and vector PDFs). All mapping produced must adhere to County cartographic standards including requirements for datum, scale, symbology, and metadata, to satisfaction of County Administration.

11.0 BUDGET RESOURCES

A budget has been allocated to complete the MDP Review, covering:

- Consultant and technical study costs;
- Public engagement activities; and
- Plan drafting and layout.

12.0 PROJECT RISKS AND MITIGATION

| Risk | Mitigation |
|---|--|
| Regional or intermunicipal policy conflicts | Early coordination and regular updates with neighbouring municipalities, including alignment with regional plans and use of established intermunicipal and regional planning forums. |
| Limited engagement participation | Use multiple outreach channels and flexible engagement tools, including a combination of asynchronous, synchronous, virtual, and in-person methods. |
| Resource or budget constraints | Phase project tasks and allocate contingency funds. |
| Shifts in provincial or regional policy | Monitor policy updates and adapt project content and timelines as needed. |

13.0 APPROVAL PROCESS

Prior to drafting an updated MDP, the Project Team will identify key policy areas and emerging issues. These areas of focus will be presented to Council for authorization to proceed to public engagement.

Engagement for the public and interested parties will be conducted to obtain input on these potential areas of change, confirm priorities, and identify additional considerations. Feedback received during this phase will inform the preparation of the draft MDP.

Following completion of engagement activities and incorporating feedback from the public and other stakeholders, Administration will prepare a draft MDP and present it to Council for consideration.

Following the consultation period, a final draft will be prepared and presented for Council's adoption by bylaw at a statutory Public Hearing in accordance with the MGA.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN OUTLINE
APPENDIX B – PROJECT MILESTONES AND DELIVERABLES OVERVIEW

APPENDIX A - COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN OUTLINE

1.0 PURPOSE

- Define the purpose of communication and engagement during the MDP review process.
- Emphasize transparency, inclusivity, and the integration of community and interested party's perspectives in shaping the new MDP.
- Ensure the public understands how engagement influences policy development and decision-making.

2.0 ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

The engagement process will aim to:

- Increase public awareness and understanding of the MDP's role and purpose;
- Provide multiple, accessible opportunities for input from diverse audiences (residents, landowners, Indigenous communities, developers, business owners, and intergovernmental partners);
- Gather qualitative and quantitative input to inform the MDP's vision, guiding principles, growth strategy, and implementation framework;
- Foster trust, accountability, and collaboration between the Municipality, Council, and the community; and
- Clearly document and communicate how engagement feedback informs project decisions.

3.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGEMENT

Engagement activities will be guided by the following principles:

- **Inclusive:** All affected and interested parties have an opportunity to participate.
- **Transparent:** Information will be shared openly and feedback will be summarized publicly.
- **Accessible:** Engagement will use varied formats and channels to accommodate geographic, digital, and demographic diversity.
- **Respectful:** All views will be considered and documented fairly.
- **Iterative:** Engagement will evolve through project stages, building upon previous input.

4.0 ENGAGEMENT PHASES AND APPROACH

Engagement will be aligned with the key milestones of the MDP project.

| Phase | Focus | Engagement Objectives | Example Activities |
|--|---|---|--|
| Phase 1: Vision and Values | Establish a shared understanding of community identity and long-term aspirations. | Identify values and priorities that will guide the MDP vision and principles. | - Public launch and project website - Community survey and online mapping - Initial public meetings or open houses |
| Phase 2: Growth Scenarios and Policy Directions | Explore options for managing future growth and development. | Gather feedback on growth management concepts, policy directions, and land use strategies. | - Public open houses / workshops - Online engagement tools - Technical engagement sessions |
| Phase 3: Draft Plan Review | Present the draft MDP for review by public and interested parties. | Confirm that the draft Plan reflects community priorities and is clearly communicated. | - Public presentation / virtual session - Online survey or comment forum - Council and committee briefings |
| Phase 4: Implementation and Monitoring | Develop indicators and report process | Ensure adopted plan achieves target objectives. Monitor and review for consistency and effectiveness. | - Conduct analysis of application and approval statistics - Feedback/public reports to inform residents of outcomes. |

Note: Phases may be added or amended depending on project scope and regulatory requirements.

5.0 COMMUNICATION TOOLS AND CHANNELS

To ensure broad awareness and participation, the Municipality may use a combination of communication methods, including:

- **Project Webpage:** Central source for information, documents, and updates.
- **Email List / Newsletter:** Regular updates on project progress and engagement opportunities.
- **Social Media:** Timely posts and reminders across municipal platforms.
- **Print Media:** Newspaper ads, flyers, and community bulletin boards.
- **Direct Mailouts:** Where required to reach rural or less digitally connected residents.
- **Public Notices:** As required under the Municipal Government Act.
- **Interested Party Correspondence:** Targeted outreach to key external agencies, Indigenous communities, and organizations.
- **Media Releases:** For key project milestones or Council decisions.
- **Virtual Tools:** Recorded presentations, videos, or webinars when in-person engagement is limited.

6.0 INTERESTED PARTY AND AUDIENCE GROUPS

Engagement will include the following groups as appropriate:

- General public and residents
- Landowners and developers
- Local business community
- Community associations and volunteer groups
- Agricultural organizations
- Environmental and recreation groups
- Indigenous communities
- Regional municipalities and provincial agencies
- Council, Administration, and advisory committees

7.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Council:

- Approves the Terms of Reference, provides strategic direction, and reviews engagement outcomes.

Administration / Project Team:

- Designs and delivers engagement activities, manages communications, and prepares summary reports.

Consultant Team (if applicable):

- Supports the Project Team with the design, facilitation, analysis, and reporting of engagement activities.

Public and Interested Parties:

- Participate in engagement opportunities and provide input to inform plan content.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT DELIVERABLES

At each phase, the project team will prepare:

- Engagement materials (surveys, maps, displays, presentations).
- Communication collateral (posters, web content, social media posts).
- A Public Engagement Summary Report documenting participation, themes, and how input was used.
- A Final Engagement Summary compiled as an appendix to the final MDP.

9.0 EVALUATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Engagement effectiveness will be evaluated based on:

- Number and diversity of participants;
- Geographic reach and accessibility;
- Clarity and quality of communication materials; and
- Integration of feedback into project deliverables.

Lessons learned will inform adjustments to future engagement methods and municipal communication practices.

APPENDIX B – PROJECT MILESTONES AND DELIVERABLES OVERVIEW

1.0 PROJECT MILESTONES OVERVIEW

| Phase | Milestone | Description | Primary Deliverables |
|---|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Phase 1 – Project Initiation | Project Launch | Establish Governance, Scope, Schedule, and Engagement Framework | Terms of Reference, Communication and Consultation Program, Work Plan/Schedule |
| | Growth Analysis | Review Demographics, Land Supply, and Development Patterns | Background Study |
| | Council Workshop #1 | Confirm Visioning Approach, Key Issues, and Preliminary Policy Focus Areas | Workshop Summary |
| | Public Engagement Phase 1 | Early Engagement Focused on Values, Vision, and Issues Identification | Engagement Materials, Engagement Summary #1 |
| Phase 2 – Draft Plan Development | Policy Development Workshops | Project Team Conducts Internal and Interested Party Policy Refinement | Policy Direction Reporting |
| | Draft MDP Preparation | First Full Draft of MDP Prepared for Council Review | Draft MDP (Version 1) |
| | Public Engagement Phase 2 | Feedback on Policy Directions | Engagement Summary #2 |
| Phase 3 – Review and Adoption | Release of Draft MDP for Review | Draft MDP Circulated Publicly and to Interested Parties | Draft MDP (Version 2 - Public Review) |
| | Council Workshop #2 | Review Engagement Outcomes and Policy Refinements | Workshop Summary |
| | Public Engagement Phase 3 | Engagement on Draft MDP | Engagement Summary #3 |
| | Public Hearing | Statutory Public Hearing as required under the MGA | Public Hearing Package |
| | Adoption By Bylaw | Council Adopts the Updated MDP | Final MDP (Version 3), Bylaw for Adoption |
| Phase 4 – Implementation | Implementation Strategy | Framework for Monitoring, Reporting, and Alignment with other Municipal Plans | Implementation and Monitoring Framework |

Note: Phases may be added or amended depending on project scope and regulatory requirements.

2.0 KEY MILESTONES AND DELIVERABLES

2.1 Phase 1 – Project Initiation (Q2 2026)

This phase establishes the foundation for the MDP review.

Key Tasks:

- Finalize and adopt Terms of Reference
- Review and analyze background data
- Develop growth scenarios and development capacity assessments
- Develop detailed Work Plan and project schedule
- Prepare RFP for engagement support services
- Prepare Communication and Engagement Plan
- Compile Background Report (land use, demographics, infrastructure, environmental data, etc.)
- Conduct council workshop #1
- Launch project webpage and communication tools

Deliverables:

- Work Plan and Schedule
- Communication and Engagement Plan
- RFP for engagement support services
- Background Study
- Council Workshop Summary
- Engagement materials (Phase 1)
- Public Engagement Summary Report #1

2.2 Phase 2 – Draft Plan Development (Q2 2026 – Q1 2027)

This phase analyzes growth, refines policy direction, and prepares the draft MDP.

Key Tasks:

- Conduct engagement with interested parties
- Facilitate internal policy workshops
- Prepare policy direction options and concept mapping
- Draft MDP (version 1 – council review)

Deliverables:

- Policy Directions Report
- Draft MDP (version 1 – council review)
- Engagement Materials (phase 2)
- Public Engagement Summary Report #2

2.3 Phase 3 – Review and Adoption (Q2 2027)

This phase includes finalization of the MDP and statutory adoption procedures.

Key Tasks:

- Revise draft MDP based on Council and public input
- Prepare draft MDP (version 2 - public review version)
- Conduct public engagement (phase 3)
- Present draft MDP to Council for first reading
- Conduct statutory public hearing
- Prepare final MDP for adoption by bylaw

Deliverables:

- Draft MDP (version 2 - public review version)
- Engagement Materials (phase 3)
- Public Engagement Summary Report #3
- Public Hearing Report & Presentation
- Final draft MDP (version 3 – publication version)
- MDP Adoption Bylaw Package

2.4 Phase 4 – Implementation (Q3 2027)

This phase ensures the MDP can be implemented effectively.

Key Tasks:

- Prepare implementation
- Develop monitoring indicators and reporting process
- Identify required updates to related municipal documents
- Present final copy to Council (version 3 – publication version)

Deliverables:

- Implementation & Monitoring Framework
- Council Presentation
- Final consolidated MDP

3.0 SUMMARY TIMELINE (HIGH-LEVEL)

| Quarter | Milestone |
|------------|---|
| Q1 2026 | Project Terms of Reference, Council approval to commence MDP review and update |
| Q2 2026 | Project initiation, consultant procurement, background research, early engagement |
| Q2–Q4 2026 | Growth analysis, policy development, interested party engagement |
| Q1 2027 | Draft MDP development and refinement |
| Q3 2027 | Public review, revisions, public hearing, adoption |
| Q3 2027 | Implementation and monitoring framework completion |

4.0 FINAL OUTPUTS OF THE MDP REVIEW

By the end of the project, the following consolidated deliverables will be completed:

- Background study
- All engagement summary reports (phases 1–3)
- Council presentations and workshop summaries
- Updated and published MDP
- Implementation and monitoring framework
- Final MDP bylaw and public hearing materials