

# PLANNING FOR RURAL AREAS

WHEN YOU'RE NOT  
UNDER THE INFLUENCE

A PRESENTATION TO THE COMMUNITY  
PLANNING ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA (CPAA)  
MAY 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017

**b&a** | **B&A Planning Group**

# B&A PLANNING GROUP

## B&A Planning Group

Passion to create better communities, together.

*We are one of Western Canada's leading and fastest growing professional community and land development planning firms.*

B&A brings a twenty-five year track record of success in providing professional consulting services to a diverse range of public and private sector clients including individual landowners, developers, municipalities and leading players in the aggregate and energy industry.



### Liisa Tipman

#### Associate

BA Hons, MEdes (Planning)

403 692 4544 ltipman@bapg.ca



### Ken Venner

#### Partner

BA, RPP, MCIP

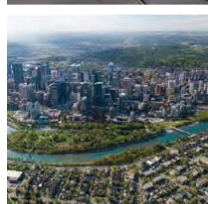
403 692 4530 kvenner@bapg.ca



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Visioning, design and planning for new urban and rural communities.



### Municipal Planning

Preparation of statutory and non-statutory plans, specialized analysis, studies and support for municipal growth initiatives.

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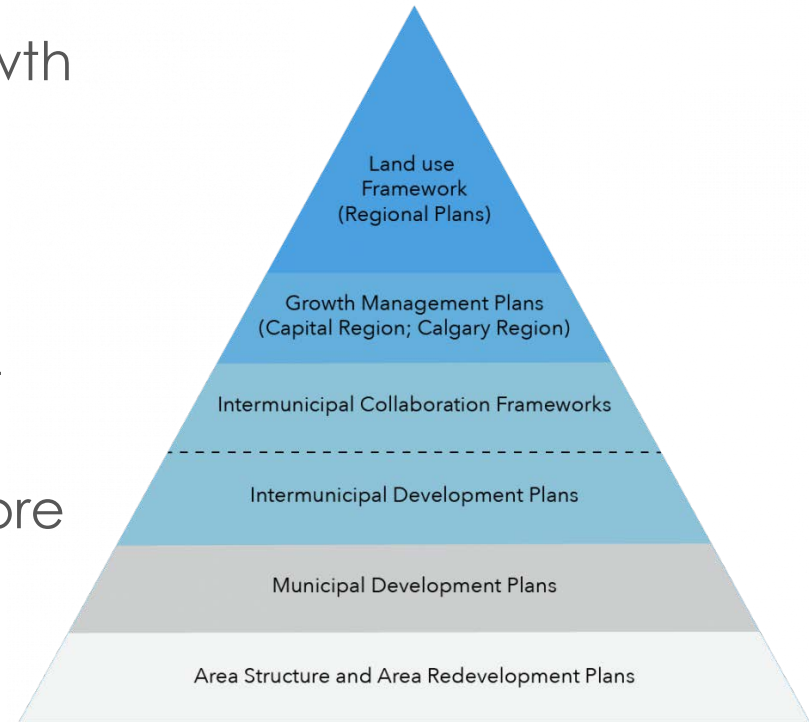


# PRESENTATION OUTLINE

1. Regional Planning
2. Growth Management Principles
3. Current Planning Trends
4. A typical approach to Growth Planning
5. An alternative approach to Growth Planning
6. Key outcomes of the alternative approach
7. Conclusion

# PLANNING FRAMEWORK

- The Province has implemented a growth management framework
- Better coordinate land use with utility, transportation & transit infrastructure
- Encourage more compact & efficient development patterns that achieve higher residential densities within a more clustered developments pattern
- Decreased fragmentation within agricultural & environmental areas
- Focus on improving inter-municipal collaboration & regional approaches to service delivery
- Equitable delivery and funding of services (*i.e. water, wastewater & transportation*)



# THE MODERNIZED MGA

- Greater emphasis on regional collaboration
- Mandates Growth Management Boards (*GMB's*) within the Calgary & Edmonton areas
- Mandates Intermunicipal Collaboration Frameworks (*ICF's*) outside of GMB areas
- Requires cost-sharing agreements for regional service delivery
- Facilitates opportunity to build & finance more complete communities
  - Levies
  - Inclusionary housing
  - Inclusionary zoning



Province of Alberta

## MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT ACT

Revised Statutes of Alberta 2000  
Chapter M-26

Current as of December 9, 2016

Office Consolidation

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Alberta Queen's Printer  
7th Floor, Park Plaza  
10611 - 98 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2P7  
Phone: 780-427-4952  
Fax: 780-452-0668

E-mail: [qp@gov.ab.ca](mailto:qp@gov.ab.ca)  
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The logo for the Government of Alberta, featuring the word "Alberta" in a stylized script font with a small blue square to the right, and the word "Government" in a sans-serif font below it.

# REGIONAL PLANS

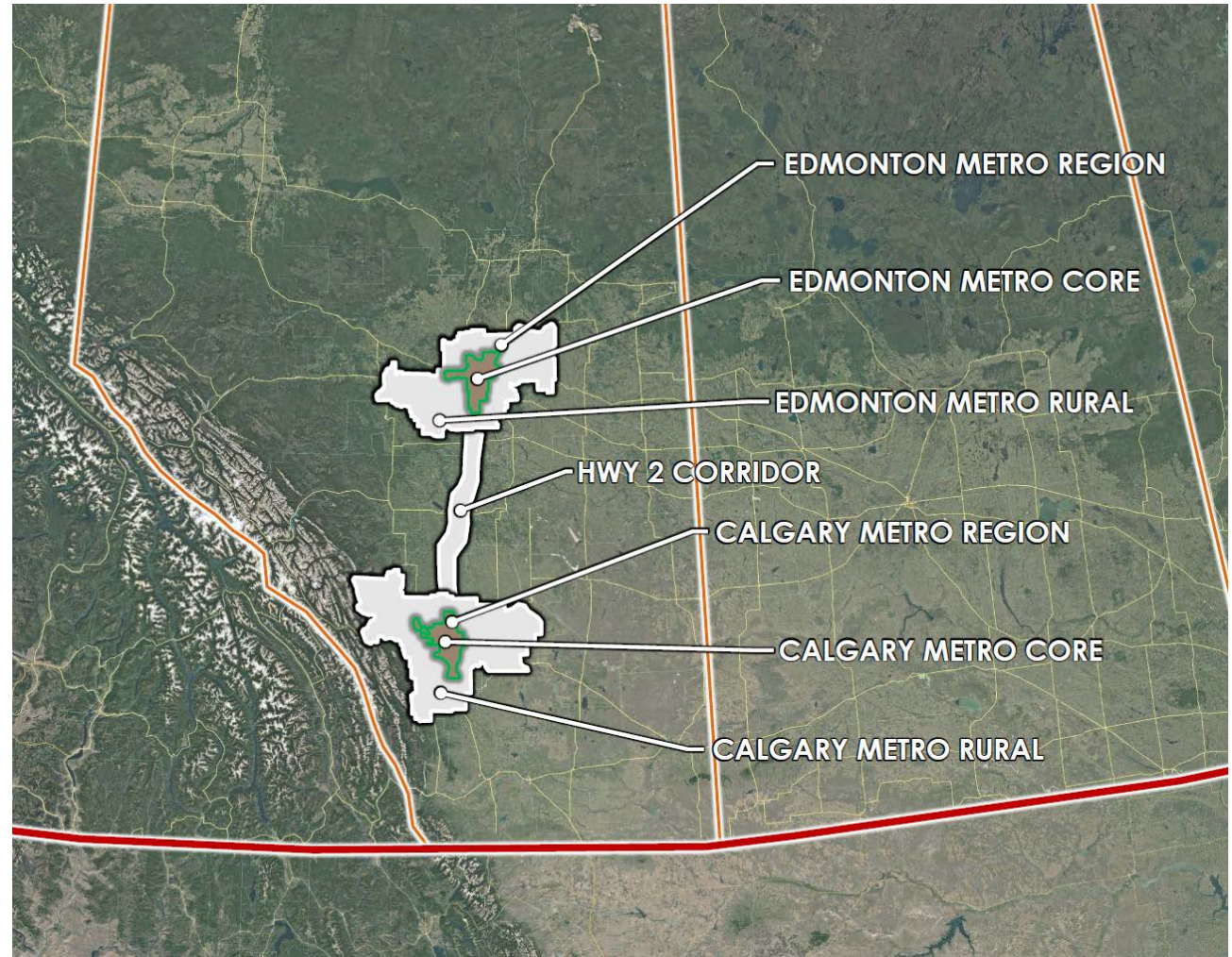
- Seven (7) regional plan areas
- Establish long-term vision for each region
- Commitment to engage Albertans in land-use planning, including aboriginal peoples
- Uses cumulative effects management to balance economic development with social & environmental considerations
- Establishes monitoring, evaluation & reporting commitments to assess progress
- Provides guidance regarding land use management for the region





# METROPOLITAN AREAS

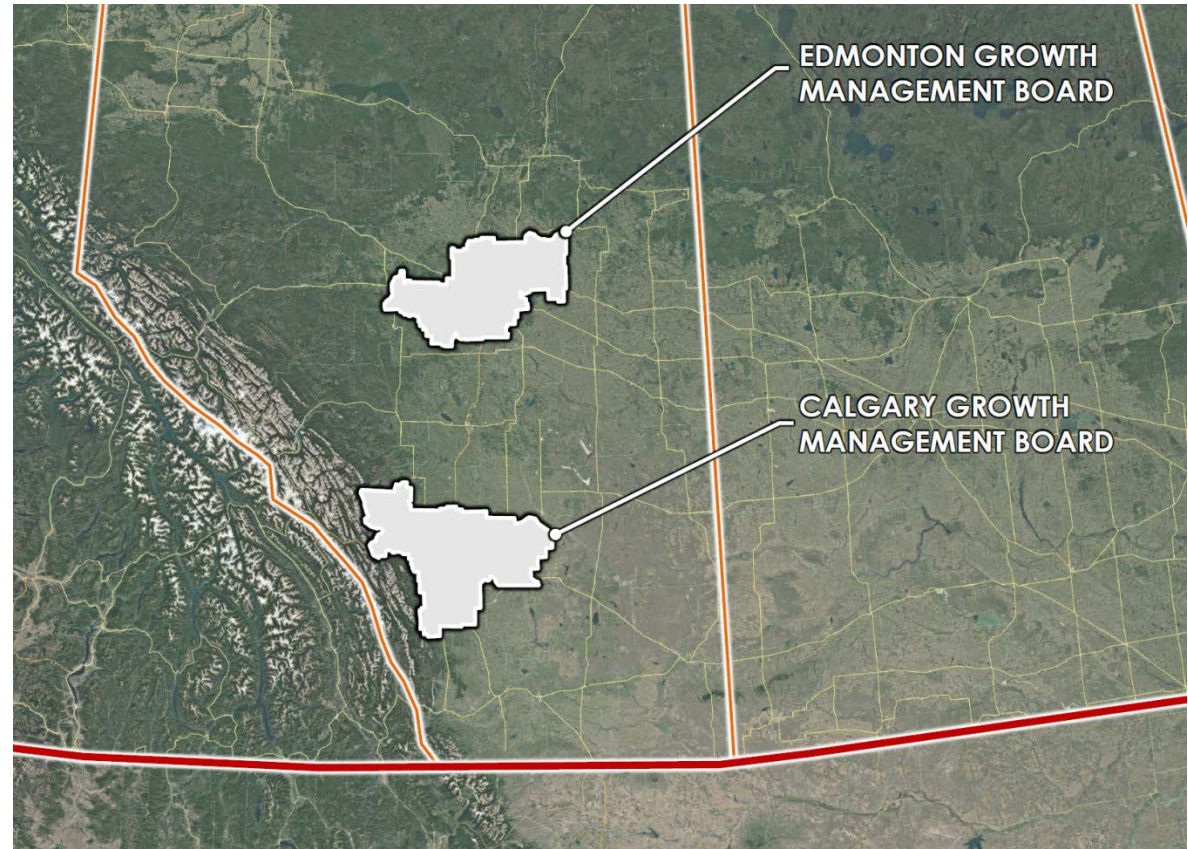
- Strong growth generally occurs in municipality's under the influence of Metropolitan areas
- Rural growth pressures are most significant around Calgary & Edmonton and along the Highway 2 corridor





# GROWTH MANAGEMENT BOARD

- Establish a planning framework within established 'higher growth' areas of the Province
- Oversee detailed & prescriptive policies to enforce planning best practices
- Accommodate the preservation of agricultural & environmental areas
- Develop regional approaches to the delivery and equitable funding of services





# BEST PLANNING PRACTICES

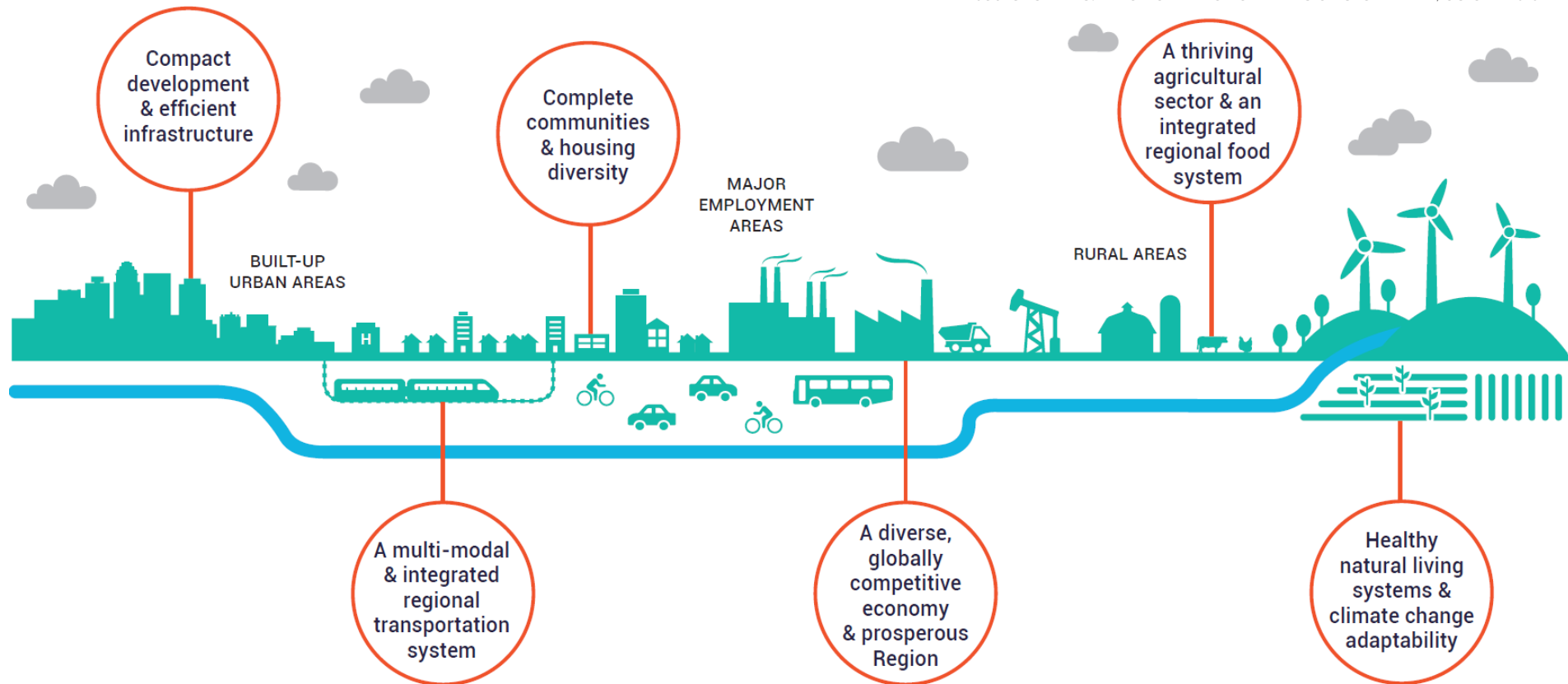
- Coordinate & manage urban development within high growth areas (*i.e. Metropolitan Areas*)
- Aspire to achieve higher residential densities, clustering of major/local employment areas & connect with public transit
- Encourage mixed-use development forms
- Emphasize piped municipal servicing
- Achieve objectives via regulation of the built-form



SOURCE GRAPHIC: EDMONTON METROPOLITAN REGION GROWTH PLAN, OCTOBER 2016

# INTENDED OUTCOMES

SOURCE GRAPHIC: EDMONTON METROPOLITAN REGION GROWTH PLAN, OCTOBER 2016



## What does this means within a rural context?

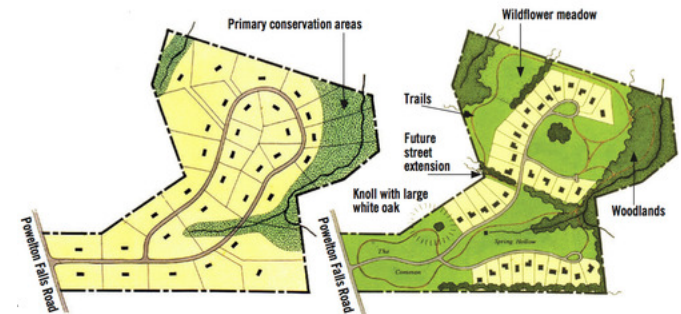
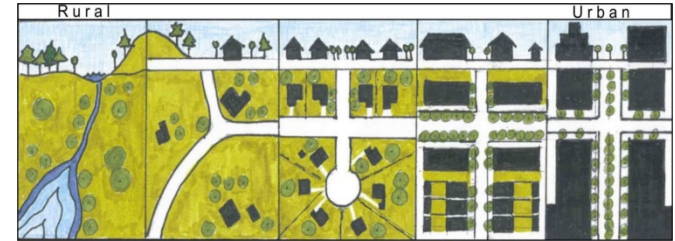
- Potential for continued growth opportunities to be directed towards urban areas – and away from rural areas
- Opportunities for rural diversification could be constrained
- Rural population centres could experience decline

# ACHIEVE COMPACT DEVELOPMENT

- Promote growth in existing communities
- Coordinate growth with infrastructure & land use to reduce costs & increase efficiencies
- Concentrate growth to decrease agricultural land fragmentation & minimize impacts to natural systems

## What does this mean within a rural context?

- Need to prioritize growth where infrastructure & services can be readily provided
- Need to clearly rank & prioritize investment in community infrastructure
- Need to provide flexibility to accommodate innovative forms of development





# PRESERVE & ENHANCE AGRICULTURE

- Minimize the fragmentation of the agricultural land base
- Prevent intrusion of incompatible land uses within predominantly agricultural areas
- Consider opportunities for agricultural diversification such as agri-tourism and value-added agriculture processing

## What does this mean within a rural context?

- Need to balance agricultural preservation with opportunities to accommodate for rural development
- Need to encourage employment diversification
- Need to balance economic and agricultural preservation considerations



# CREATE COMPLETE COMMUNITIES

- Focus on creating integrated & diverse communities
- Enable residents to meet daily living & employment needs locally without reliance on a higher order centre
- Promote alternative types of transportation (*i.e. regional transit*)



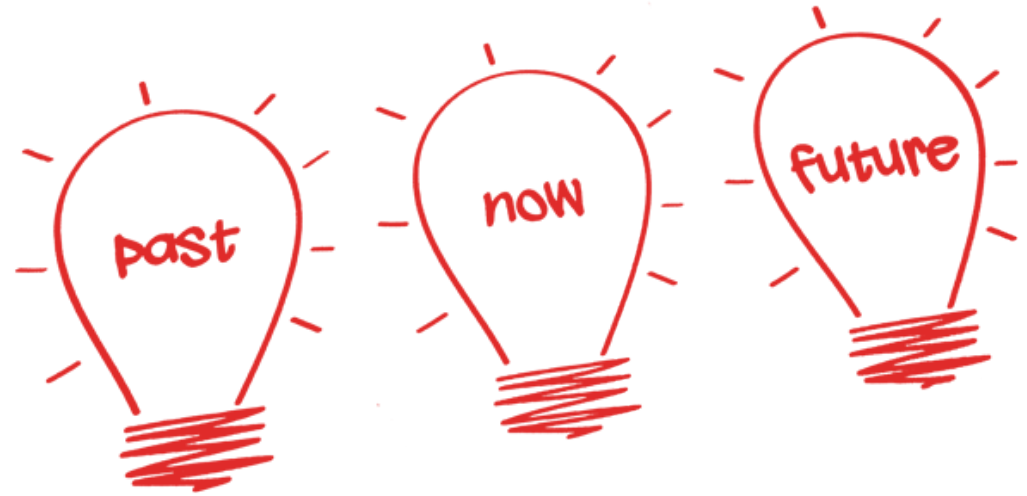
## What does this means within a rural context?

- Need to think of 'community' within a larger sub-region context
- Need to concentrate community services within areas that can function as a local and regional centre
- Need to build on existing community associations & groups to deliver services



# A TYPICAL APPROACH TO GROWTH PLANNING

- A typical growth study contemplates a future development scenario that is based primarily on past & current trends
- Intended to accommodate growth in areas where growth is expected to continue
- But what if the 'status-quo' outcome of a conventional growth study doesn't align with Council's and/or the community's desired goals?
  - A desire to encourage growth in an existing low growth rural area
  - A desire to facilitate economic diversification in a low growth area
  - A desire to better leverage & maximize existing community assets in order to facilitate new opportunities





# AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO GROWTH PLANNING

- An innovative approach that combines local context, existing synergies, economic perspective & community values
- Interprets planning best practices within the local context using GIS data
- Key focus is planning for growth that supports Council and community goals and consider the costs & benefits of growth
- To incorporate local & regional market considerations and economic forecasts
- To establish an optimal mix & location for future land uses
- To consider the overall fiscal health of a municipality
- To prioritize significant investment in core utility/community infrastructure

# STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AREAS

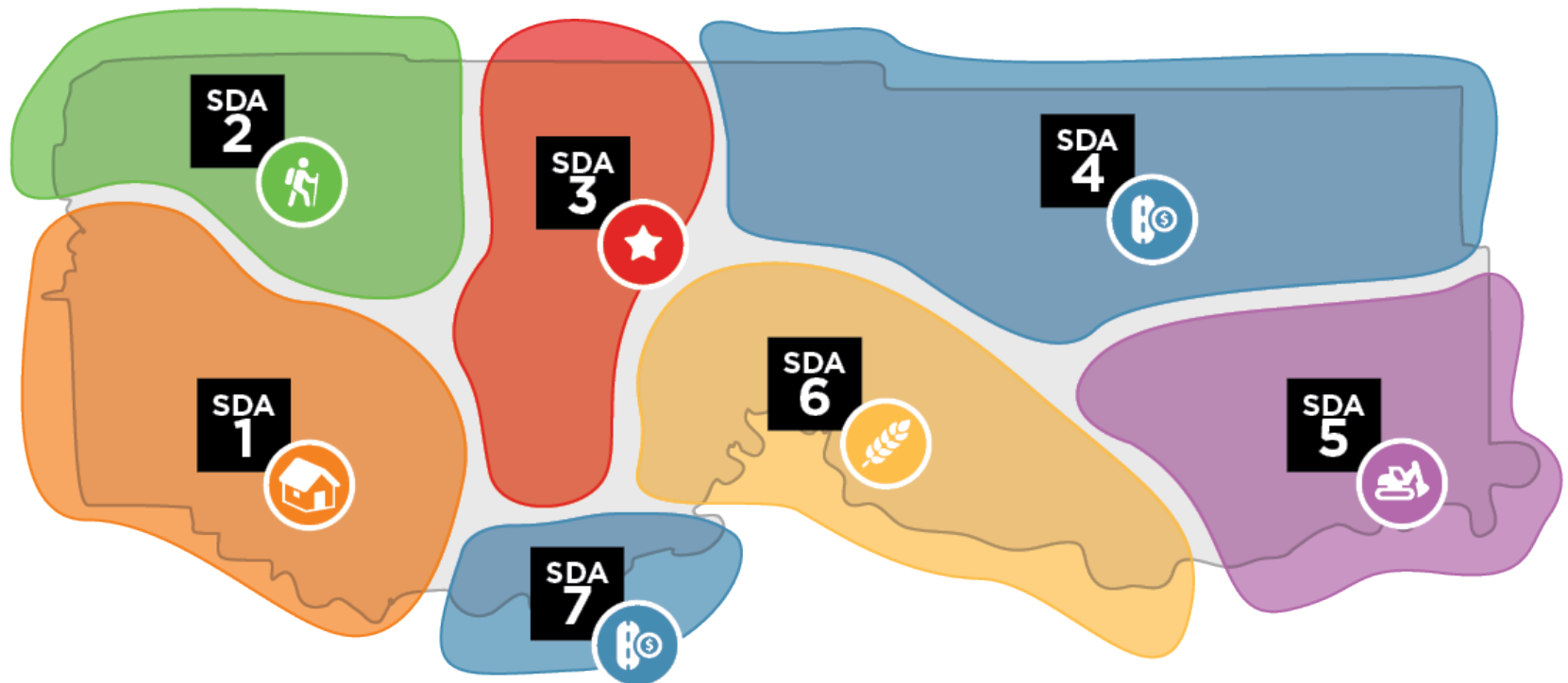
- A Strategic Development Area (SDA) is a general area of a municipality that is characterized by existing/future development conditions within which a Council may wish to focus public & private investment



# THE SUM OF ALL PARTS

## STEP 1: Identify key Strategic Development Areas (SDA's)

- Begin by carefully considering all Strategic Development Areas – each of which have a unique capacity to impact the overall growth picture and financial sustainability of the entire municipality

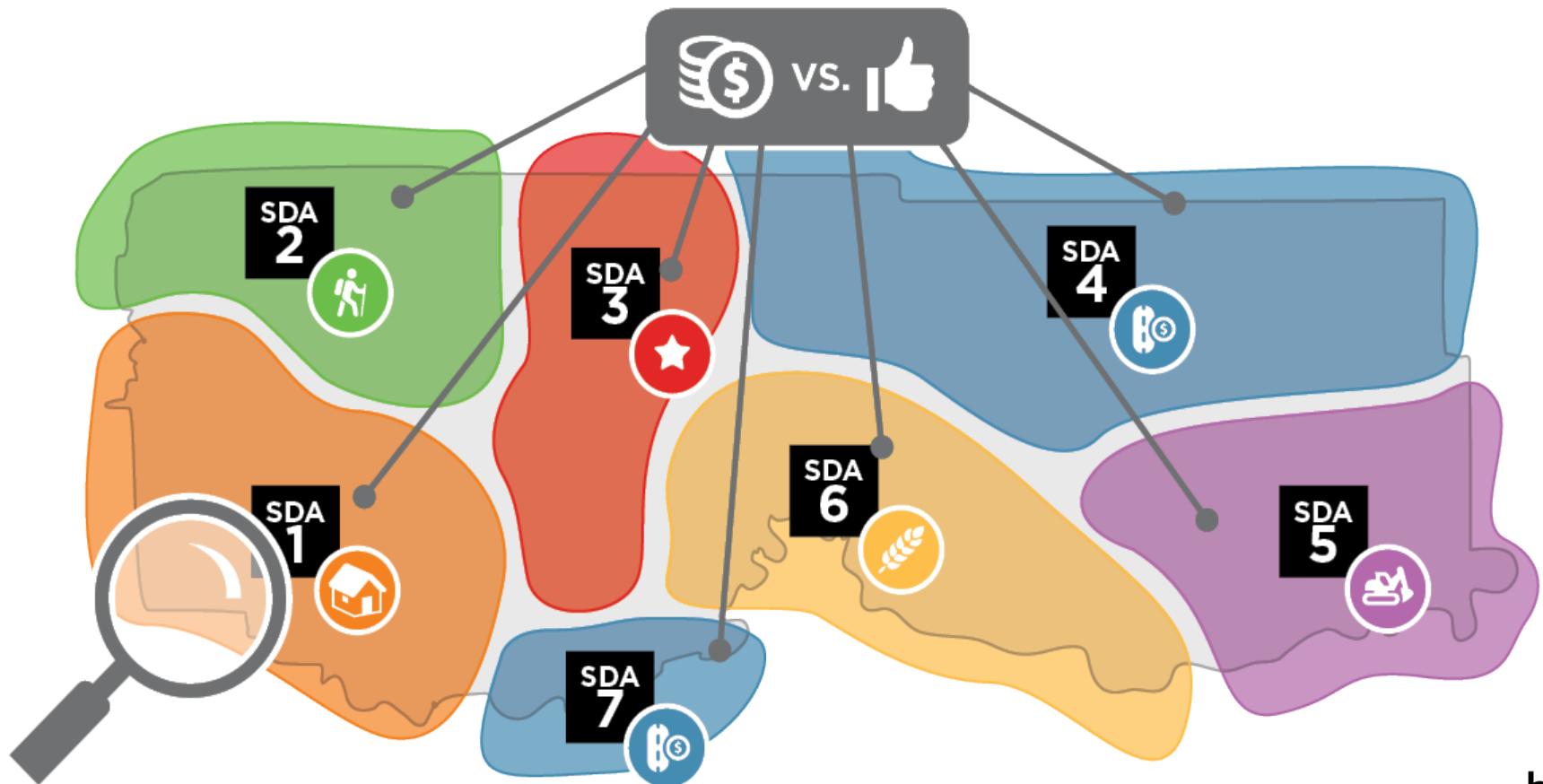




# COSTS & BENEFITS

## STEP 2: Undertake a Cost/Benefit Analysis

- Then evaluate the cost/benefits (*from a triple bottom line perspective*) that could be expected alongside key strategic public and/or private investment within certain Strategic Development Areas

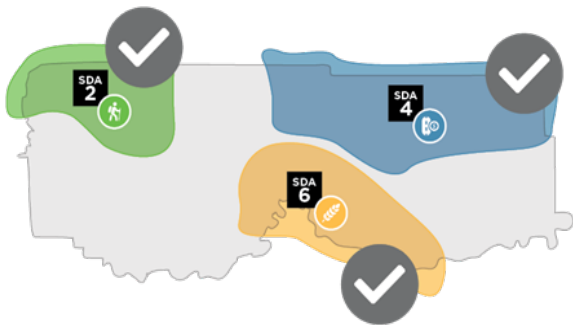


# ALTERNATE DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

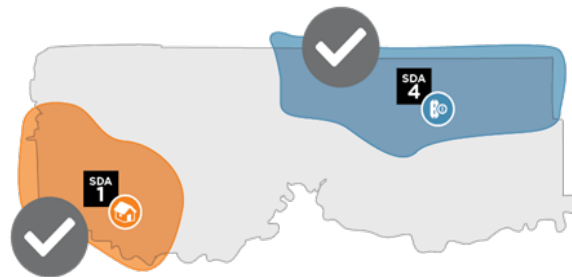
## STEP 3: Define Alternate Scenarios

- Using the results of the cost/benefit analysis, Council can prioritize some Strategic Development Areas over others based on their capacity to:
  - Maximize growth opportunities
  - Fulfill key Council strategic objectives
  - Enhance rural synergies
  - Utilize & enhance existing infrastructure

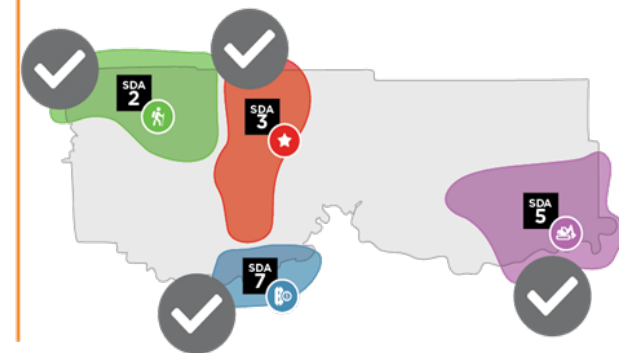
### Development Scenario #1



### Development Scenario #2



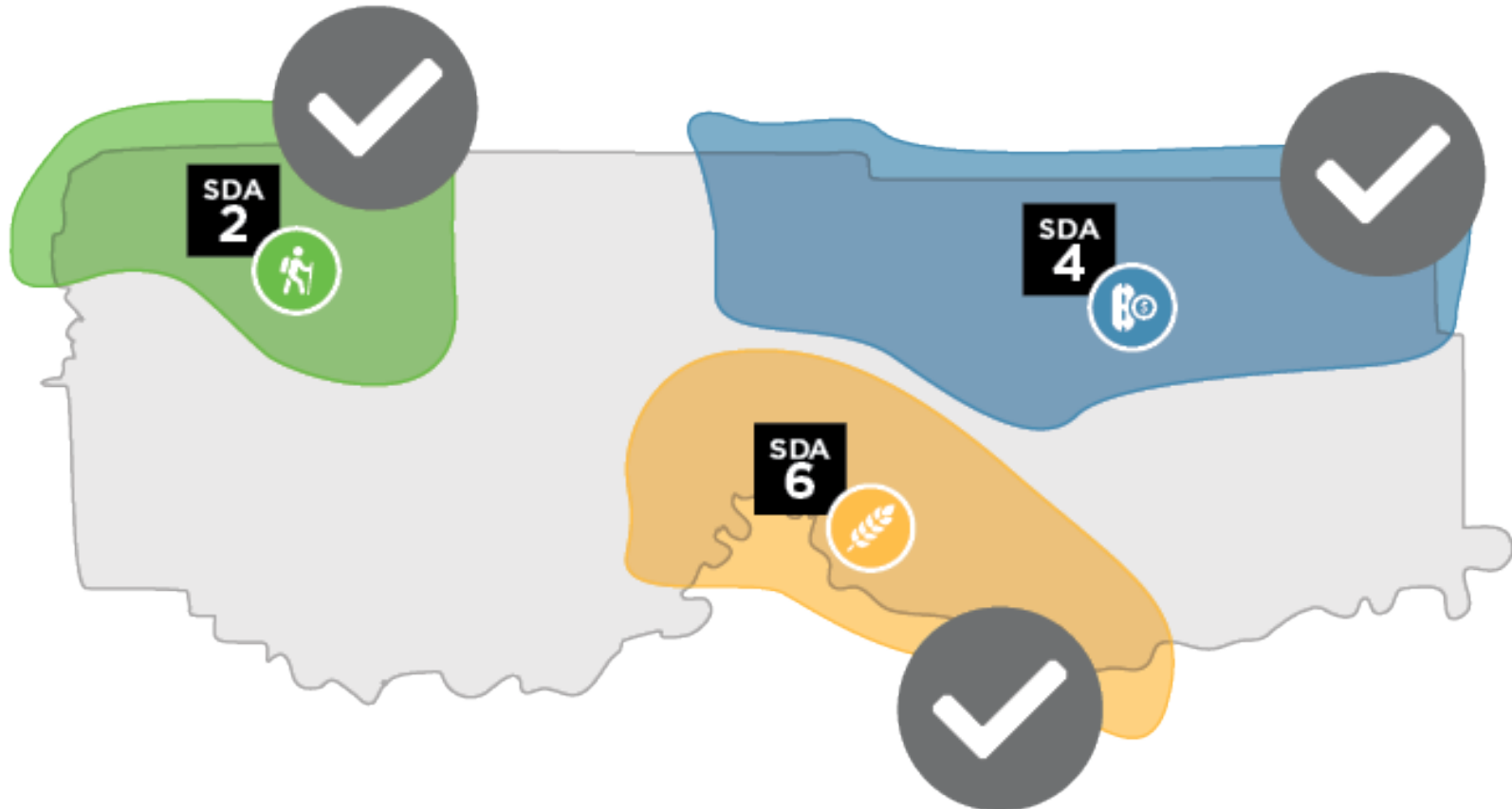
### Development Scenario #3



# PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

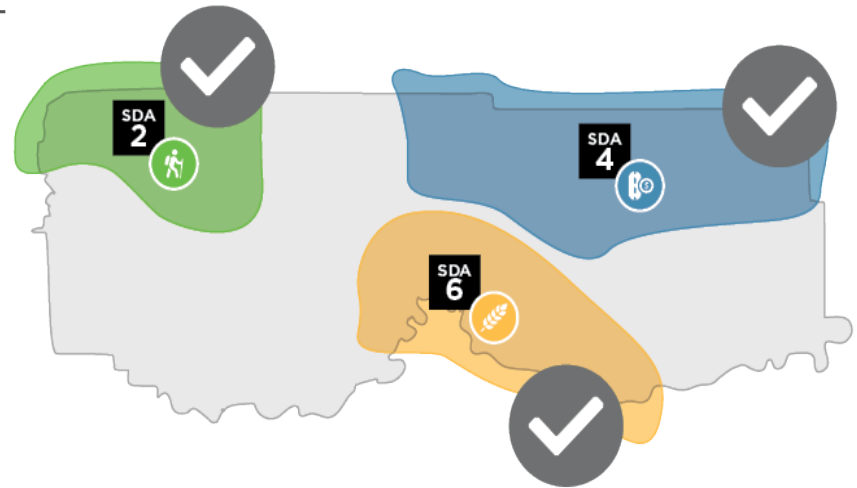
## STEP 4: Select the preferred Development Strategy

- Allows the municipality to delineate certain areas within which public/private investment can be encouraged
- Facilitates planning for overall economic development & employment growth



# RANK & PRIORITIZE INVESTMENT

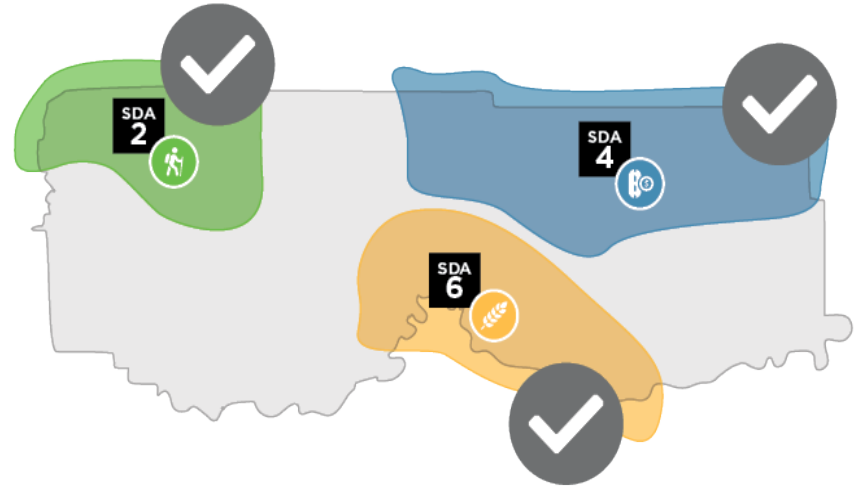
- Successful Strategic Development Areas generally have certain characteristics including:
  - Evidence of some growth pressure
  - Existing/planned schools, recreation & community gathering amenities
  - Opportunity for employment in proximity to residential communities
  - Convenient & efficient transportation connections (*road, rail*)
  - Opportunity for utility servicing
- Given that funds can be limited, existing nodes of development should be ranked & prioritized





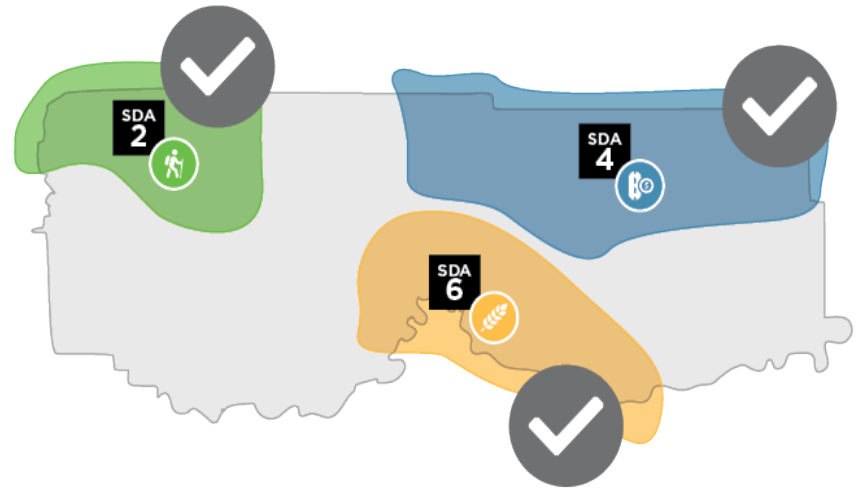
# RANK & PRIORITIZE INVESTMENT

- Provides a clear articulation of Council's growth preference would signal priorities to private industry
- Allows for more efficient capital planning of utility & community service delivery
- Enables the focussing of economic development initiatives
- Enables better fiscal modelling
- Establishes hierarchy of growth areas
  - Supports capital planning & budgeting
  - Indicates appropriate level of density and housing diversity
  - Establish role of growth area within "complete community"



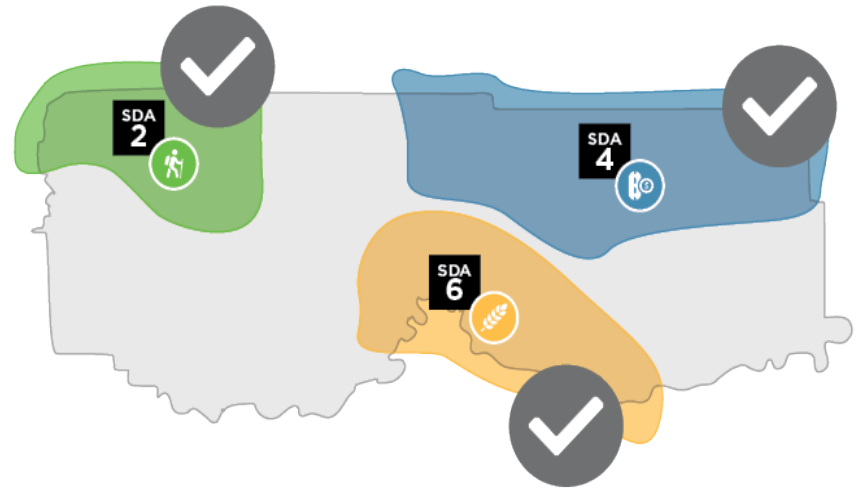
# PREDICT FINANCIAL IMPACTS

- Ensure all new Area Structure Plans undertake an Fiscal Impact Assessment (*FIA*)
- Encourage new developments to incorporate an appropriate mix of land uses
- Consider requiring multi-lot developments to provide an FIA to evaluate the municipality's net fiscal impacts
- Evaluate the benefits (& risks) of encouraging communal servicing projects
- Consider preparing a revolving Asset Management Plan to evaluate infrastructure life-cycle costs



# CREATE POLICY TOOLS & OVERLAYS

- Policy tools translate growth study outcomes into implementation
- Overlays can identify areas of existing synergies
  - Supports the unique character of areas within the municipality
  - Facilitates marketing & branding opportunities
- Provides for a uniquely 'rural' interpretation of growth areas



# ALIGN & INTEGRATE POLICIES

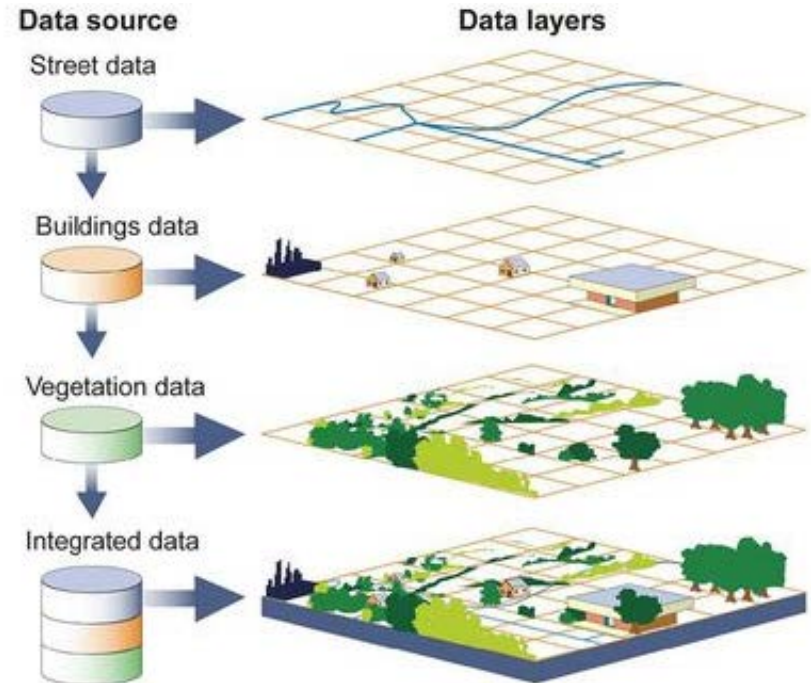
- Align planning policies & initiatives to focus on key development goals
- Establish a common message for your municipality
- Focus on 'smart' implementation strategies that acknowledge finite municipal resources & allocates them in the most cost-effective way possible
- Work to simplify & streamline the regulatory environment
- Leverage existing community groups & businesses to achieve local implementation





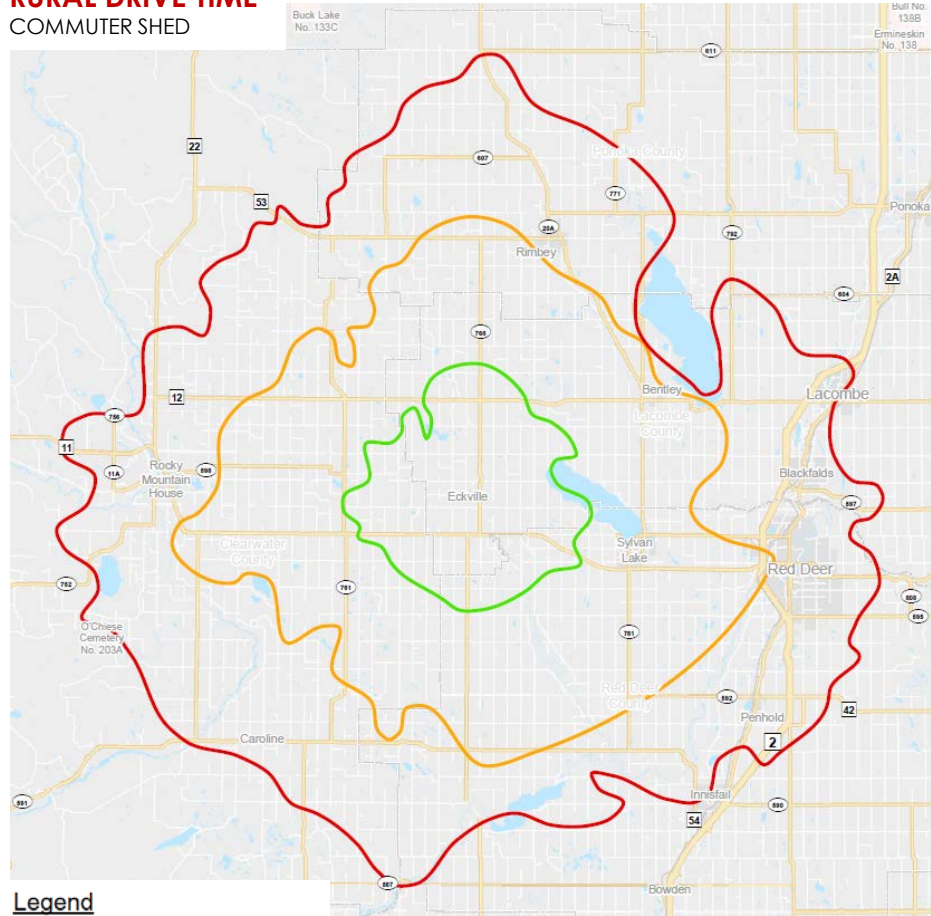
# THE ROLE OF GIS

- GIS links land use & assessment data to individual parcels of land
- GIS provides qualitative analysis about past/current/future trends
- Use of GIS is important:
  - Supports examining strategic areas rather than relying on census areas
  - Uncovers local economic trends & commuter sheds
  - Provides detail about agricultural fragmentation
  - Supports projecting residential & employment growth by specific area






# THE ROLE OF GIS

## RURAL DRIVE TIME COMMUTER SHED

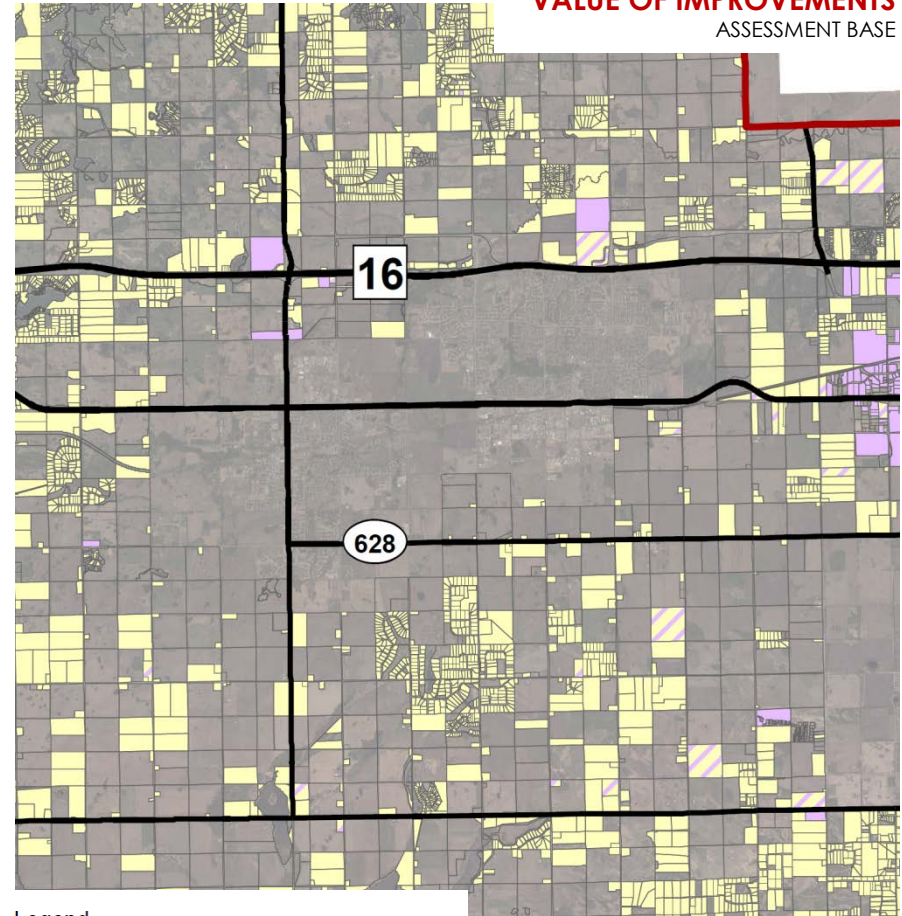


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


Approximate Commuter Shed

-  15 mins
-  30 mins
-  45 mins

## VALUE OF IMPROVEMENTS ASSESSMENT BASE



### Legend

-  Residential (<40 acres)
-  Residential/Non-Residential Improvement
-  Non-Residential - Improvements > \$50,000

# CONCLUDING POINTS

## AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO GROWTH PLANNING

- Any successful initiative to accommodate development in a low growth area needs to recognize the inherent complexity of rural communities
- The term ‘complete community’ must be defined in context (*i.e. means different things in different jurisdictions*)
- Economic & financial considerations need to play a central role in accommodating development in low growth rural areas
- Consider strategies that build on existing synergies between communities, employment opportunities & natural features/amenities
- Develop strategies that incorporate best planning practices within your context
- Leave room in your development policies to consider innovative opportunities