

A REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING IN CONFORMITY  
WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER'S OF PLANNING

An Evaluation of the Municipal Development  
Plans of the City of Calgary and  
Rocky View County for Conformity to  
the Calgary Metropolitan Plan

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## **Executive Summary**

The Calgary Region includes a number of urban and rural communities, each with its own unique identity and mix of amenities. The Region is home to approximately 1.26 million people and has experienced substantial growth in recent decades and possesses the largest concentration of population in southern Alberta. In consideration of such rapid growth, it is necessary to plan for subsequent development pressures. The implications for planning are significant. One of the ways in which this has been addressed in recent decades is through Smart Growth, a planning movement focused on the sustainable and efficient use of land.

The Calgary Regional Partnership (CRP) is a response to a renewed interest in regional planning in the province of Alberta. Following many of the tenets of Smart Growth, the general approach of the CRP has rested in bringing municipalities together to build a broader, common view of the region as a whole, acknowledging that current legislation and roles place much of the implementation for actions, specifically, in the hands of local municipalities (CMP, 2009). There are a total of 14 municipalities within the partnership that will be required, by provincial law, to align their plans within three years of the official provincial adoption of the Calgary Metropolitan Plan. Initially, there were a total of 17 municipalities in the Partnership. Due to irreconcilable differences, the 3 rural municipalities decided to withdraw their membership before the Draft Plan was submitted to the Province.

The purpose of this report is to determine the extent to which the Municipal Development Plans of the City of Calgary and Rocky View County, one of the rural municipalities that withdrew, align with the draft Calgary Metropolitan Plan. This report evaluates the Municipal Development Plans of the City of Calgary and Rocky View County in terms of their current policies and how

they conform to those policies proposed in the Calgary Metropolitan Plan. The objectives of this evaluation are to determine:

- the degree to which the plans conform to the Calgary Metropolitan Plan;
- how much each municipality will have to adapt their MDP to conform; and
- how the two different municipalities score in comparison.

Both Calgary and Rocky View County are located in close proximity to each other; Calgary shares boundaries on three sides with Rocky View County. Although there is a drastic difference in population size between the two municipalities, they do have one thing in common – they are both experiencing large amounts of growth. Growth challenges for both municipalities include making sustainable development decisions for new residential, commercial and industrial development, providing transit, maintaining and improving infrastructure and encouraging a prosperous economy. Both Calgary and Rocky View County have made significant efforts to progress in the arena of sustainable growth initiatives and responsible planning for future generations within a 50 to 60 year time horizon.

The comparative plan evaluation component of the report is executed using an analysis method whereby the policies are scored based on their ability to “not meet”, “somewhat meet” or “meet” the defined policies in the CMP and are subsequently scored “0”, “1”, or “2”. The evaluation criteria are represented in table format and correspond to the policies of the CMP. The following are the four Policy Areas within the CMP:

- Working Together;
- Regional Landscape;
- Regional Settlement; and
- Regional Infrastructure & Services.

The category called Working Together is present in the plan but relates to administrative and interpretive elements of the plan and is therefore not considered in the evaluation criteria. The

unit of measure for the evaluation method will be each of the 63 policies contained in the Regional Landscape, Regional Settlement and Regional Infrastructure and Services policy areas of the Calgary Metropolitan Plan compared with the policies in the MDPs of the case study municipalities. The summary table, as presented in the report as Table 3.13, is below.

Policy Area	Sub-Policy Area	Municipality		Difference in Score
		Rocky View County	City of Calgary	
Regional Landscape	Overarching Regional Landscape Policies	6.3	7.5	1.2
	Watershed Protection	6.3	10	3.7
	Biodiversity	0	10	10
	Climate Change/Adaptability	2.5	7.5	5.0
	<b>Average Score</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>5.0</b>
Regional Settlement	Overarching Land Use Policies	4.2	10	5.8
	Policies for Development <i>Inside</i> Compact Urban Nodes	4.0	10	6.0
	Policies for Development <i>Outside</i> Compact Urban Nodes	10	10	0.0
	Policies to Support a Prosperous Economy	6.0	8.0	2.0
	<b>Average Score</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>3.2</b>
Regional Infrastructure & Services	Overarching Regional Infrastructure and Services Policies	0	3.8	3.8
	Policies – Regional Water, Wastewater and Storm Water Systems	0	7.5	7.5
	Policies – Regional Transportation System	0	5.6	5.6
	Policies – Regional Waste Management System	10	5.0	5.0
	<b>Average Score</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>3.0</b>
<b>Overall Average for Meeting CMP Policies</b>		<b>4.2</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>3.7</b>

The total average score is the final indication of how the MDPs fared overall when evaluated against the policies of the CMP. Calgary received an overall average score of 7.9, whereas Rocky View County obtained an overall average score of 4.2. Findings conclude there is a large difference in the levels of conformity among scores for the two municipalities. This indicates that

Rocky View County and the City of Calgary are in very different positions in terms of aligning with the Calgary Metropolitan Plan.

Calgary scored highly in the majority of Policy Areas. There are, however, a few areas where improvement would benefit the MDP in its ability to align with the CMP. Calgary needs to provide for a Regional Cumulative Effects Management (CEM) approach to landscape planning. They will also need to more thoroughly develop and implement a range of conservation tools to support the goals of the CMP and Provincial Land Use Framework. With mention to Supporting a Prosperous Economy, Calgary will need to address more accurately, issues such as contributing to a Regional Economic Development Strategy instead of focusing solely on their own Calgary Economic Development Strategy. Lastly, Calgary will need to address the policy areas regarding a regional strategy to deal with infrastructure and systems for water, wastewater and stormwater systems.

Considerable improvement in the areas of biodiversity management, climate change strategy and the implementation of a CEM approach to landscape planning will be necessary for Rocky View County. Additionally, the protection of scenic corridors and major views will need to be incorporated into the MDP. Lastly, Rocky View County does not possess any applicable policies regarding regional infrastructure systems. This is a very large gap that will need to be addressed, should the municipality choose to move forward with the CRP at any time in the future.

The Province of Alberta has taken a position of support towards current regional planning initiatives. Their initiation of province-wide regional planning provides the framework for smaller scale regional planning to be championed. The Calgary Regional Partnership is an excellent

example of this. There is an expressed need in the Calgary Region to address the challenges of rapid growth with Smart Growth strategies. The policies within the CMP aim to achieve this through the collaboration with member municipalities.

The analysis shows that the City of Calgary is making strides in their approach to growth planning and is closely in line with Regional Partnership policies. Rocky View County, alternatively, does not effectively acknowledge the importance of regional planning initiatives that support the region as a whole within their MDP. Rocky View County is a crucial part of the region, representing a large majority of the rural interests, and should consider reconciling with the partnership.

This report promotes three recommendations for the future directions of the Calgary Regional Partnership;

**Recommendation #1**

*Participation by all members of the Calgary Region in the Calgary Regional Partnership is required.*

**Recommendation #2**

*A stronger focus must be placed on the involvement of rural municipalities in the planning stages to ensure that the interests of rural municipalities are upheld and they are not viewed as secondary in priority to accommodate the future growth of the City of Calgary.*

**Recommendation #3**

*Comparative plan evaluation to be completed by CRP to determine the feasibility of member municipalities' ability to conform within 3 years is required.*

From the perspective of implementation, it is necessary to have the buy-in of all municipalities in the region. It is an unfortunate circumstance that it was not possible to negotiate the concerns of the rural municipalities with the rest of the Partnership. A large number of the policies within the CMP involve the rural municipalities. Rocky View County is a very important stakeholder in the regional planning process and should be involved in the plan making process. Additionally, it will be necessary to place a stronger focus on the unique challenges and concerns of the rural municipalities. Facilitating further comparative plan evaluation by the CRP would allow for member municipalities to have a greater input into the plan and to the implementation process.