



## Governance Committee

Subject:	Division 2 – Harmony Hamlet Designation
Date:	April 16, 2024
Presenter:	Keagan Andrew, Intergovernmental Advisor
Department:	Intergovernmental Services and Regional Planning

### REPORT SUMMARY

The community of Harmony has reached approximately 1,500 residents and is referred to as a hamlet in County and regional planning documents. However, the community is not officially designated as a hamlet by the Government of Alberta. This report is to provide information to Governance Committee on the process and potential implications of designating Harmony as a hamlet before a future request to Council, which would seek direction to proceed. The potential benefit to the community is that Harmony may be eligible for additional provincial infrastructure grants, and there are no implications for property values or tax rates for residents. Administration has developed a communications plan to provide residents with information should Council choose to proceed with the designation.

### ADMINISTRATION'S RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Governance Committee receive the Harmony Hamlet Designation report for information.

### BACKGROUND

Initially approved as a Conceptual Scheme in 2007, Harmony is a major residential development within Rocky View County. The community currently has approximately 1,500 residents in approximately 520 dwellings. Once fully developed, the community is expected to house approximately 10,000 residents in more than 4,480 dwellings. In addition, Harmony is projected to provide 5,400 jobs in the County, making it a significant employment area in the region.

Hamlets are a historical designation for unincorporated communities within rural municipalities. To be a hamlet, a community must meet the requirements of Section 59 of the *Municipal Government Act* and receive a motion of Council. Hamlets typically consist of a mix of residential and commercial development and provide services to their residents and the surrounding communities. The County currently has 11 hamlets, ranging in population from approximately 30 residents in Madden, to approximately 5,500 in Langdon. With a current population of 1,500 residents, Harmony is larger than many of the County's existing hamlets.

### DISCUSSION

Statutory plans such as the *2013 County Plan*, and the Calgary Metropolitan Region Board's *Regional Growth Plan* consider Harmony to be a hamlet. Designating Harmony as a hamlet will bring the County into alignment with these statutory land use plans. With a projected population of 10,000, Harmony will grow into a major population centre within the County and become one of the largest unincorporated communities within the province. While County and regional statutory plans recognize Harmony as a hamlet, the community requires a formal Council resolution for recognition as a hamlet under the *Municipal Government Act*.

## Division 2 – Harmony Hamlet Designation

To aid municipalities in funding growth within their communities, the province maintains grant programs such as the Water for Life grant, which may provide up to 30% of upgrade costs to regional water and wastewater infrastructure in communities like Harmony. Access to funding through this program is available to regional partnerships between two or more eligible municipalities, and municipalities with contracted services to privately owned facilities. Applications for this program are strengthened if the proposed improvements will provide servicing to a hamlet that is recognized by the Government of Alberta. Water and wastewater servicing for Harmony is operated by the privately owned Harmony Advanced Water Systems Company (HAWSCo). In 2022, HAWSCo partnered with the Town of Cochrane, the City of Calgary, and the County to optimize wastewater servicing in the area. Designating Harmony a hamlet under Section 59 of the *Municipal Government Act* will strengthen the Water for Life grant application.

### Hamlet Designation Requirements

To designate a community as a hamlet, Council must pass a motion designating the hamlet's name and boundaries. To be eligible for the designation, the community must meet the following requirements:

1. Consist of five or more buildings used as dwellings, a majority of which are on parcels of land smaller than 1,850 m<sup>2</sup>;
2. Has a generally accepted boundary and name; and
3. Contains parcels of land that are used for non-residential purposes.

The average parcel size in the community of Harmony is approximately 1,556 m<sup>2</sup>, meeting the density requirements of the *Municipal Government Act*. At current buildout, the community surpasses many existing County hamlets for population, density, and non-residential uses. At full buildout, Harmony will have 4,480 dwellings, and a population of approximately 10,000, further strengthening the importance of the community within the County. The boundaries of Harmony are outlined in Section 5.0 of the *Harmony Conceptual Scheme*, and a map of the boundaries is included in "Attachment A". Finally, the Conceptual Scheme provides for many non-residential purposes, including commercial and institutional uses. The community's current and expected development meets all the requirements for hamlet designation outlined within the *Municipal Government Act*.

### Communication/Engagement

Administration has communicated with the Government of Alberta to determine the process for designating a community as a recognized hamlet under the *Municipal Government Act*. Administration has worked with Harmony's developer Bordeaux Developments, who support the designation of this community as a hamlet. They have indicated a willingness to help the County communicate the impacts of a potential hamlet designation to the Harmony Homeowners Association. Administration will develop communications material to ensure that residents understand the limited implications associated with hamlet designation and distribute them to residents of Harmony prior to the Council meeting.

### Implications

#### *Assessment & Property Tax*

There are no changes to assessed property value or to property taxes associated with designating Harmony as a hamlet.

#### *Financial*

There are no direct financial implications associated with designating the community of Harmony as a hamlet. However, doing so may allow the County to access additional grant funding to aid in regional infrastructure development.

## Division 2 – Harmony Hamlet Designation

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### *Policy*

Designating Harmony as a hamlet under Section 59 of the *Municipal Government Act* will bring the County into alignment with its designation under the *2013 County Plan*. It will also align with the CMRB's *Regional Growth Plan*, as Section 3.1.8.1(a) recognizes Harmony as a Hamlet Growth Area.

### **Next Steps**

Administration will bring a report to Council to officially request that Harmony be designated as a hamlet under Section 59 of the *Municipal Government Act*. Should Council choose to designate Harmony as a hamlet, Administration will officially inform Municipal Affairs and provide a map of the approved area and the Council resolution. This would allow for a potential grant application under the Water for Life program for the 2025 fiscal year.

### **ALTERNATE DIRECTION**

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Administration has not identified alternative direction for this item.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment A: 2021-06-08 Harmony Site Map and Development Plan

Attachment A: 2021-06-08 Harmony Site Map and Development Plan

