



# COUNCIL REPORT

## Bearspaw Area Structure Plan

Electoral Division: 3, 4

File: 1011-501

Date:	January 28, 2025
Presenter:	Jan Sotocinal, Planner 2
Department:	Planning

### REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present the draft Bearspaw Area Structure Plan (ASP) for Council's consideration. The Bearspaw ASP project was done in accordance with the revised Terms of Reference (TOR), which was adopted by Council in May 2023.

The existing Bearspaw ASP was adopted in 1994. This review of the ASP was undertaken to bring the document in line with today's community's needs and desires, accommodate contemporary development trends, modernize policies with respect to the natural environment and servicing, and ensure consistency with County, regional, and provincial policies and legislation. This new ASP was prepared in conformance with the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA), in alignment with the policies set out in the Calgary Metropolitan Region Board Growth Plan (RGP), the Rocky View County/City of Calgary Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP), the Rocky View County/Town of Cochrane IDP, and the Municipal Development Plan (County Plan).

Administration has prepared a new ASP bylaw, that is based heavily on the existing ASP, as well as on technical studies conducted for the current context and on feedback received through public engagement. The intent of the new ASP is to maintain the general country residential nature of the Bearspaw community, with updated policies that consider the extent of development that has occurred since the original ASP was adopted, and consideration of today's County-wide and regional policy framework. The most significant updates to the ASP include:

1. A land use strategy that focuses development toward the east and west sides of the plan area, where more intensive forms of country residential development have naturally occurred over the last few decades;
2. Establishment of a Community Core, which recognizes the existing group of commercial uses, and provides for small-scale, local-focused commercial and institutional development;
3. Addition of policies relating to Agricultural Transition areas;
4. Prohibition of new Aggregate Resources Extraction uses within the Plan area; and
5. Establishment of the Lochend Road Overlay to guide cohesive planning of several adjacent quarter sections that are fragmented or are adjacent to fragmented quarter sections.

If Council supports the adoption of the Bearspaw ASP, Administration recommends that the Bylaw be referred to the Calgary Metropolitan Region Board (CMRB) for approval following second reading. The CMRB's Regional Evaluation Framework requires all new ASPs and regionally significant amendments to be referred to the Board.

The draft Bylaw C-8588-2024 repeals the old/existing Bearspaw ASP, adopts the new Bearspaw ASP, and repeals the Ascension Conceptual Scheme Bylaw (C-7991-2020).

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### ADMINISTRATION'S RECOMMENDATION

THAT Bylaw C-8588-2024 be given first reading.

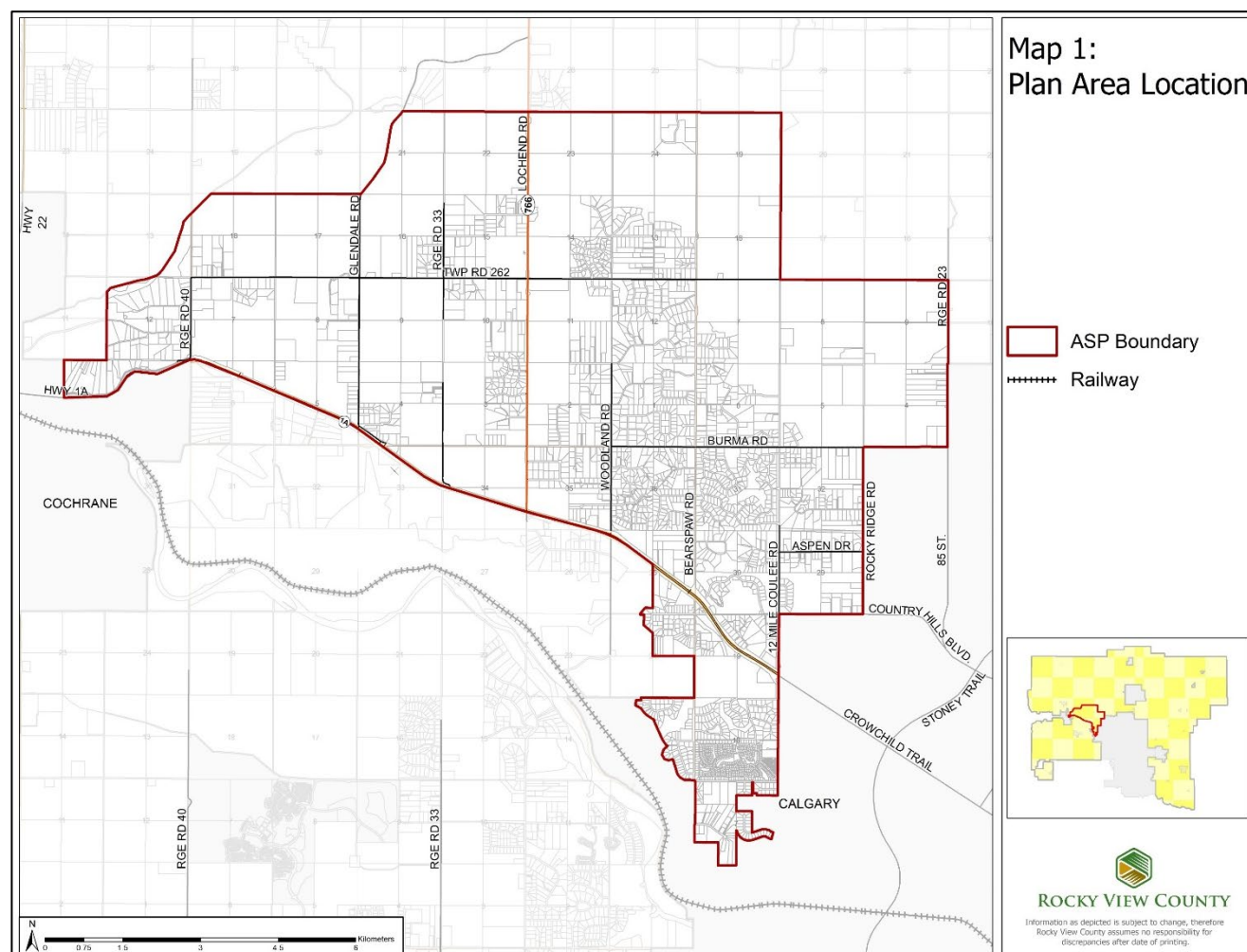
THAT Bylaw C-8588-2024 be given second reading.

THAT Bylaw C-8588-2024 be referred to the Calgary Metropolitan Region Board for approval.

### BACKGROUND

#### Location

The Bearspaw ASP is located in the northwest quadrant of the County, generally described as the lands which border the town of Cochrane to the west and the city of Calgary to the east. The plan area is north of Highway 1A except east of approximately Range Road 31, where a portion of the plan area extends south of Highway 1A to the border of the city of Calgary. The plan area extends north generally to Township Roads 262 and 264 and to Bighill Creek.



#### Project Context

The Bearspaw ASP was adopted in January 1994 and encompassed approximately 34,000 acres. Due to the separation of a portion of land south of Highway 1A to create the Glenbow Ranch Area Structure Plan (GRASP) in 2017, the Bearspaw ASP was decreased to 25,000 acres. In light of this change and

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the age of the ASP, the County began a review of the Bearspaw ASP to modernize the plan. The Terms of Reference (TOR) for this review project was adopted by Council on January 8, 2019.

Initial public engagement was undertaken in 2019 to seek resident feedback on setting the vision and priorities for the Bearspaw community; however, the project was paused to await the adoption of the Calgary Metropolitan Region Growth Plan (RGP). In August 2023, the project was reinitiated under an updated Terms of Reference (TOR). Technical studies and policy drafting work were undertaken, and in June 2024, the County released a draft Bearspaw ASP for public review. Public engagement included an open house and a general survey about the draft.

Following the public engagement, the ASP draft was refined and formally circulated to landowners, agencies (including Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors (ATEC)), and adjacent municipalities (City of Calgary, Town of Cochrane). Comments received during circulation were incorporated into the final draft, which is attached to this report as Attachment A.

### Intermunicipal and Agency Circulation

The proposed Bearspaw ASP was circulated to all relevant agencies including The City of Calgary, Town of Cochrane, and Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors (ATEC), from October 4, 2024, to November 4, 2024. Agency comments are included in Attachment D. Administration did not receive any comments from the Town of Cochrane, ATEC, or the area School Boards.

The City of Calgary provided broad concerns and comments relating to recreation, impacts to drinking water, wastewater servicing and stormwater servicing, and transportation. Administration revised the draft ASP with the intention of addressing the majority of The City's concerns and provided a response to The City of Calgary on January 9, 2025. At the time of writing this report, the County has not received a final response from The City.

Correspondence between The City and the County is provided in Attachment D.

### Public Hearing Notification and Submissions

The Notice of Public Hearing was posted on December 23, 2024, in compliance with the County's *Public Notification Bylaw C-7860-2019*. Notices were physically and electronically mailed to agencies and landowners on January 2, 2025, which directed recipients to the webpage to review the draft Bearspaw ASP. This also included the landowners of all the properties within Section 18-26-02-W5M, and Section 19-26-02-W5M, as those lands were included in the most recent draft of the ASP. Notice was also electronically mailed to Homeowner's Associations (HOAs) of the communities within the City of Calgary that are adjacent to the Bearspaw ASP. Written submissions are attached in Attachment F, and mapped in Attachment E.

## ANALYSIS

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### Guiding Policy Framework

#### *Calgary Metropolitan Region Board – Regional Growth Plan*

The RGP guides development within the region towards the increased use of Preferred Placetypes in Preferred Growth Areas. The Bearspaw ASP is not within a Preferred Growth Area in the RGP; therefore, amendments to the plan cannot increase the population of the plan area (3.1.10.3). In compliance with this requirement, the proposed land use strategy allocates potential development densities to certain areas of the plan, but does not increase the overall potential population.

The RGP requires that development in Bearspaw align with the Rural and Country Cluster Placetype. This restricts density to a maximum of 0.5 units per acre overall, with the option to develop clusters of up to 80 units at 3 units per acre.

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	Density or other Regulation	RGP Policy
Rural and Country Cluster		
• Non-clustered	0.5 dwelling units/acre	3.1.5.2
• Clustered	3 dwelling units per acre if clustered, with max. 80 units per cluster.	3.1.5.3
Rural Employment Area	Not within 2 km of an Urban Municipality or Joint Planning Area.	3.1.6.2

The intersection of Highway 1A and Bearspaw Road has naturally developed into a small hub of business uses and fits the definition of the Rural Employment Area Placetype under the RGP. Section 3.1.6.2 of the RGP requires Board support for Rural Employment Areas that are located closer than 2 km from an urban municipality. The Community Core is approximately 1.08 km in linear distance from the boundary of the City of Calgary. Administration's opinion is that the Community Core is justified as drafted, for the following reasons:

- The boundaries of the Community Core include only lands that already have land use designation for business uses under the County's *Land Use Bylaw*;
- The location of the Community Core is identified in the County's Municipal Development Plan as a Highway Business area; and
- The boundaries and policies of the Community Core provide more specific guidance for development of business uses than the current Bearspaw ASP, which should lead to better land use planning outcomes.

The Community Core's policies related to servicing and transportation align with 3.1.6.3 of the RGP.

### *Rocky View County/Town of Cochrane Intermunicipal Development Plan*

The IDP between Rocky View County and the Town of Cochrane was adopted in 2001, and guides development around the intermunicipal boundary on the west side of the Plan area. The IDP includes policy regarding coordination of utilities, transportation, open space and recreation, development interfaces, and land use compatibility between the two municipalities.

### *Rocky View County/City of Calgary Intermunicipal Development Plan*

The IDP between Rocky View County and the City of Calgary was adopted in 2012, and guides development around the intermunicipal boundary on the east side of the Plan area. The IDP includes policy regarding development interfaces between the two municipalities, coordination of utilities, transportation, open space and recreation, watersheds and source water.

### *Municipal Development Plan (County Plan)*

Adopted in October 2013, the County Plan is the County's Municipal Development Plan, which provides a policy framework on strategic growth, land use planning, and service delivery. It also provides specific policy guidance for matters not covered by the adopted ASP. The County Plan directs residential growth to existing hamlets and country residential areas within the County, such as Bearspaw. It also designates the existing rural commercial area along Highway 1A as a highway business area. Sections 10.5 and 10.6 provide direction and relevant considerations for review of existing ASPs.

## Land Use Strategy

The proposed Bearspaw ASP aims to preserve the existing country residential community in Bearspaw, supporting low-density country residential developments while limiting commercial and institutional uses to the Community Core. The ASP continues the general development trajectory of Bearspaw that has occurred under the existing ASP, while incorporating policy adjustments in consideration of current needs

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with respect to development trends, servicing efficiency, protection of natural environmental features, and regional planning objectives.

The land use strategy is comprised of the following policy areas:

1. **Country Residential Development** – The primary built form in the ASP will be Country Residential, with a minimum lot size of 2 acres. Development within the Infill Country Residential will be prioritized, with subdivision and development permitted to proceed under the ASP. In the Future Development Area, subdivision and development will not be permitted until the County has prepared a land use plan for the Future Development Area, unless guided by a Conceptual Scheme.
2. **Lochend Road Overlay** – This overlay encompasses several quarter sections, some of which are in various stages of subdivision and development with their own site plans. The overlay provides guidance for coordination of servicing, transportation, open space, and pathway connections as these lands continue to develop.
3. **Community Core** – The Community Core is intended for local-focused, smaller-scale commercial/business development and institutional uses. The lands within this area already have non-residential land use districting under the *Land Use Bylaw*.
4. **Agricultural Transition** – The Agricultural Transition area will continue to be used for agricultural development/uses where limited country residential development may be permitted. The policies for this area allow for subdivision of four lots to a minimum of 35 acres, to allow flexibility for smaller-scale agricultural uses. This area also acts as a buffer between the country residences and nearby larger-scale agricultural operations. The lands legally described as Sections 18-26-02-W5M, and 19-26-02-W5M are included in the plan area in the Agricultural Transition area.
5. **Aggregate Resources Extraction** – The existing Aggregate Resource Extraction operation in the ASP proposes no support for new or expanding Aggregate Resource extraction operations.

### Ascension Conceptual Scheme

Bylaw C-8588-2024 would repeal the Ascension Conceptual Scheme. The development proposal within the Ascension Conceptual Scheme does not align with the Infill County Residential policies within the proposed Bearspaw ASP. As the redesignation application to facilitate the Ascension Conceptual Scheme's development plan was refused by Council in February 2024, Administration recommends the Conceptual Scheme be repealed, and any future development proposal for the site be subject to the policies of the updated Bearspaw ASP.

### Technical Items

The draft Bearspaw ASP is supported by the following technical studies:

- Environmental Screening Report and Wildlife Habitat Modelling (February 2024);
- Commercial/Retail Demand and Capacity Study (May 2022);
- Transportation Network Analysis (September 2024); and
- Runoff Assessment Memo (September 2024) based on the Bearspaw Master Drainage Plan (2010).

The Environmental Screening Report and Wildlife Habitat Modelling (February 2024) recommends that a Biophysical Impact Assessment (BIA) be completed for all projects within the lands, following the County Servicing Standards (2013). Appropriate setback and future protection steps for Environmentally Sensitive Areas would also need to be classified and delineated. A Wetland Assessment and Impact Report and a *Water Act* Approval application will be required for developments that impact wetlands.

A Commercial/Retail Demand and Capacity Study (May 2022) provides that there is a demand for 27.0 acres of commercial land in the Bearspaw Area by 2051. The study also provides additional opportunity



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for small scale commercial uses to be oriented along Highway 1A and Bearspaw Road, where existing commercial uses are already established.

The Transportation Network Analysis (September 2024) concluded that current right-of-way networks would need to be protected and implemented with staged network improvement, as developments proceed, subject to Traffic Impact Assessments.

A Runoff Assessment (September 2024) concluded that the Bearspaw Master Drainage Plan (2010) has a more conservative view of run-off flows than the proposed conditions in the latest draft of the Bearspaw ASP, which makes it suitable to use the Bearspaw Master Drainage Plan. Applications for local plans would be required to adhere to this Master Drainage Plan.

An updated servicing strategy was not conducted for this ASP update, because the land use strategy does not intend a significant increase in land use intensity. The policies within the plan prioritize piped water and wastewater servicing where feasible. More detailed servicing planning may be undertaken with the Future Development Area planning work.

Existing Area Structure Plan

If the proposed Bearspaw ASP is approved by Council and the CMRB, Bylaw C-8588-2024 will repeal the existing ASP and replace it with the new Bearspaw ASP. The bylaw also includes provision to repeal the Ascension Conceptual Scheme Bylaw C-7991-2020.

COMMUNICATIONS / ENGAGEMENT

Several phases of public engagement have been conducted for the Bearspaw ASP since the project’s initiation. The first phase of engagement, conducted in 2019, consisted of an Open House, coffee chats, and online questionnaire, which set the visions and goals of the Bearspaw Community. When the Bearspaw ASP project restarted in 2023, the following public engagements were implemented to gauge the public’s interest in the first draft of the ASP:

- In-person Open House (June 19, 2024) – held in Bearspaw Lions Club, which provided participants to comment on individual display boards.
- Virtual Open House (June 24, 2024) – those who were not able attend the in-person Open House had the opportunity to attend the virtual open house.
- General Survey (June 19, 2024 – July 22, 2024) – the survey was the primary method for providing input on the proposed plan.

An online information session was held on January 8, 2025, to allow residents to ask questions and discuss the changes to the Bearspaw ASP prior to the Public Hearing.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

No financial implications have been identified at this time.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Key Performance Indicators			Strategic Alignment
Thoughtful Growth	TG1: Clearly defining land use policies and objectives for the County –including types, growth rates,	TG1.2: Complete Area Structure Plans (ASPs) in alignment with the Regional Growth Plan and Council priorities	The proposed Bearspaw ASP has been prepared in alignment with the Regional Growth Plan and directed by Council.

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Key Performance Indicators			Strategic Alignment
	locations, and servicing strategies		
Thoughtful Growth	TG2: Defined land use policies and objectives are being met and communicated	TG2.3: Statutory plans that align with the Regional Growth Plan and receive an approval recommendation from Calgary Metropolitan Regional Board (CMRB) Administration	The proposed Bearspaw ASP has been prepared in alignment with the Regional Growth Plan.

### ALTERNATE DIRECTION

Council may refer the draft Bylaw back to Administration to address matters raised at the public hearing. If Council wishes amendments be made to the draft before approving first reading of the Bylaw, Administration recommends the following motion:

THAT Bylaw C-8588-2024 be referred to Administration to amend the Bearspaw ASP to address concerns raised at the public hearing.

### ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Proposed Bearspaw Area Structure Plan Bylaw C-8588-2024  
Attachment B: Existing Bearspaw Area Structure Plan Bylaw C-4129-93  
Attachment C: Ascension Conceptual Scheme Bylaw C-7991-2020  
Attachment D: Agency Responses  
Attachment E: Landowner Public Hearing Notice Mailout Map  
Attachment F: Public Hearing Written Submissions  
Attachment G: City of Calgary Updated Comment (to be provided under separate cover)

### APPROVALS

Manager:	Dominic Kazmierczak
Executive Director/Director:	Dominic Kazmierczak
Chief Administrative Officer:	Reegan McCullough