



Town of Cochrane
&
Rocky View County
Intermunicipal Development Plan Review and Update
Terms of Reference

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1.0 Background and Context

1.1 The Municipal Government Act (MGA) requires municipalities with shared boundaries that are not part of regional growth board, to adopt an Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP). IDPs establish a coordinated framework for land use, development, and infrastructure planning along shared municipal boundaries.

The Town of Cochrane and Rocky View County adopted an IDP through their respective bylaws in 2001, which remains in effect. Between 2018 and 2025, land-use decisions in the region were directed through the Calgary Metropolitan Region Board (CMRB). With the dissolution of the CMRB and the Growth Plan no longer in effect, Cochrane and Rocky View County determined that the existing IDP requires a comprehensive review and update.

A modernized IDP will:

- Reflect current municipal boundaries, growth pressures, infrastructure priorities, and community expectations;
- Reduce the potential for land use conflicts;
- Provide greater certainty for residents and developers; and
- Strengthen intermunicipal collaboration and coordination.

By updating the IDP, both municipalities can align planning frameworks with today’s realities and position themselves to respond more effectively to future opportunities and challenges.

Cochrane and Rocky View County have a long history of cooperation and collaboration, as demonstrated through the RancheHouse Accord (2010), which provides a framework for intermunicipal collaboration and coordination. The RancheHouse Accord’s core principles of commitment, respect, and trust will be embedded within the updated IDP, as well as the Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework (ICF). By incorporating these values into the statutory frameworks that guide land use planning and intermunicipal relations, the RancheHouse Accord will no longer be required as a stand-alone agreement.

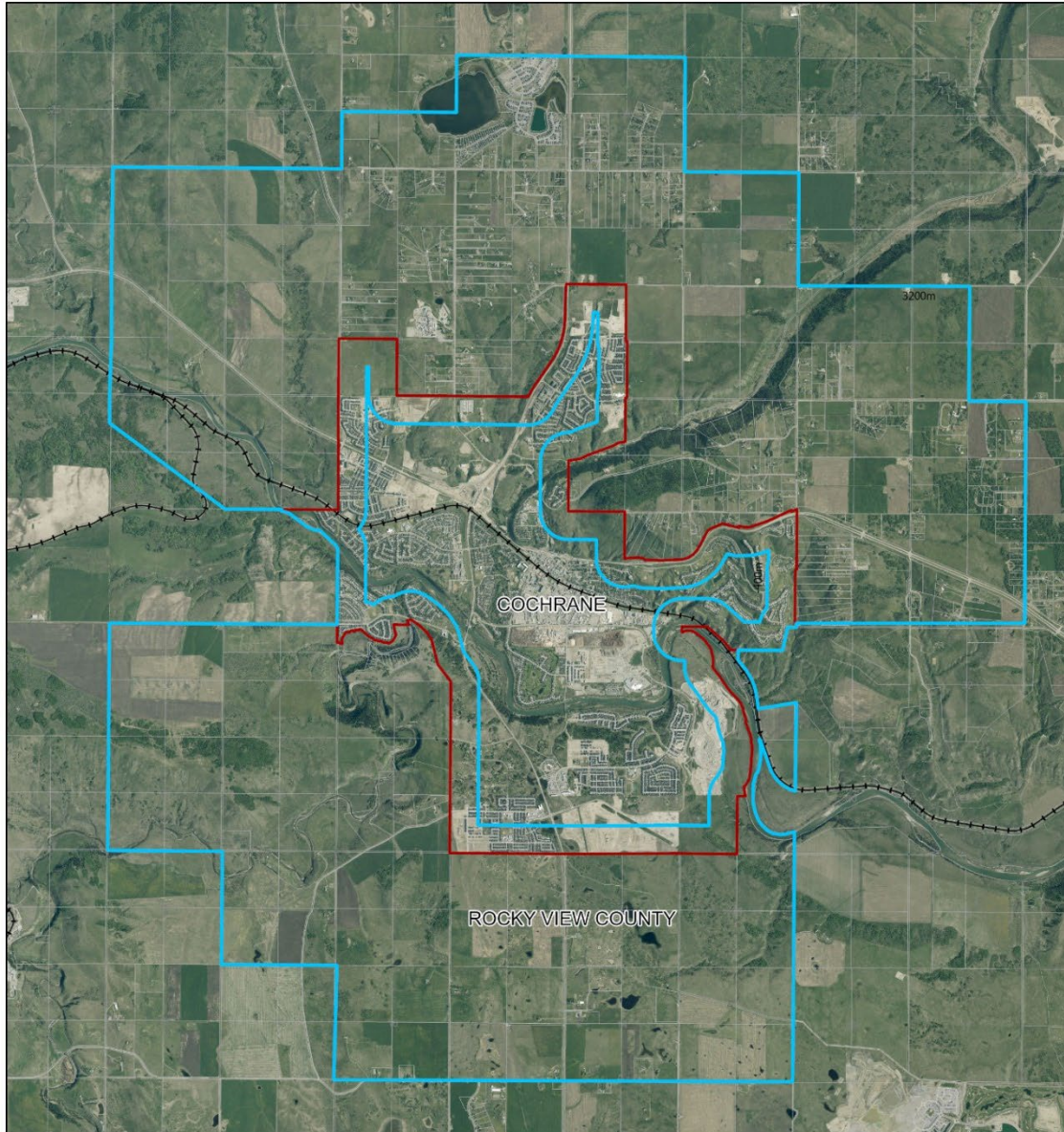
2.0 IDP Study Area

2.1 The Plan Area shown on Map 1 reflects the boundaries established in the current Intermunicipal Development Plan (2001), with consideration for boundary adjustments that reflect Cochrane’s current municipal boundary. As part of this project, the Plan Area will be reviewed and may be adjusted to ensure that all lands with intermunicipal interest are included.

The project’s Study Area will consider the surrounding context, regional assets, and corridors, including but not limited to transportation infrastructure, environmental corridors, and utility

rights-of-way. Key regional corridors between Cochrane, Cochrane Lakes, and Harmony shall be considered as part of the IDP Study Area.

Map 1: Cochrane – Rocky View County Intermunicipal Development Plan (2001) – “Plan Area”



Cochrane - Rocky View County IDP

- Town of Cochrane
- Plan Area

0 0.7 1.4 2.1 2.8 3.5
Kilometers

ROCKY VIEW COUNTY

3.0 Principles

3.1 The following principles guide the comprehensive review and update of the 2001 IDP. They reflect a shared commitment by Cochrane and Rocky View County to accountability, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

3.2 Accountability

- a. **Trust:** Conduct all discussions and negotiations in good faith to foster collaborative and productive partnerships.
- b. **Respect:** Acknowledge that each municipality is best positioned to determine its individual priorities while balancing intermunicipal goals for mutually beneficial planning.
- c. **Transparency:** Ensure that both municipalities have access to relevant and timely information throughout the process.
- d. **Mutual Benefit:** Ensure that overall outcomes and decisions provide value to both municipalities and their residents.

3.3 Collaboration

- a. **Ongoing and Effective Communication:** Maintain respectful and collaborative intermunicipal relationships through frequent, open, and deliberate communication, supported by timely responses, realistic expectations, and proactive information sharing at all organizational levels.
- b. **Evidence-Based Decisions:** Decisions between the municipalities should be data-driven and based on evidence.
- c. **Exploration of Opportunities:** Approach emerging issues with openness to collaboration and innovation, recognizing that joint efforts may create benefits for both municipalities.
- d. **Commitment:** Establish an equitable commitment between municipalities to undertake this project.

3.4 Continuous Improvement

- a. **Proactive Approach:** Anticipate and prepare for challenges and opportunities early in the process.
- b. **Change Control:** Adopt an approach that strives for continuous improvement.
- c. **Resiliency:** Foster resilient relationships that can withstand challenges, adapt to change, and reduce the potential for conflict.
- d. **Efficiency:** Strive for streamlined processes and outcomes that maximize efficiency and effectiveness in governance and service delivery.

4.0 Direction

4.1 Section 631 of the *Municipal Government Act (MGA)* provides the enabling legislation for the preparation and adoption of an IDP (Appendix A).

4.2 *Ministerial Order No. MSD:025/25* took effect on May 1, 2025. This Ministerial Order required former participating municipalities of the Calgary Metropolitan Regional Board to enter into an Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework (ICF) and IDP where common boundaries are shared by November 30, 2027.

4.3 Due to the existing IDP (2001), the legislated requirement to enter into an IDP by November 30, 2027, does not technically apply to Cochrane and Rocky View County, however, both municipalities agree to work towards this deadline to update and revise the IDP. This demonstrates a proactive commitment to intermunicipal cooperation and good governance, as both municipalities recognize the value of a current, coordinated plan completed in a timely manner.

5.0 Purpose

5.1 The purpose of this Terms of Reference is to guide the preparation of a comprehensive review and update to the IDP between Cochrane and Rocky View County in accordance with the requirements of the *MGA*, *Ministerial Order No. MSD:025/25*, and direction provided by Council.

6.0 Goals

6.1 The following goals establish a shared vision for collaboration and long-term prosperity between Cochrane and Rocky View County. They provide a strategic framework to guide coordinated planning, foster effective partnerships, and ensure proactive, sustainable decision-making. These goals will direct how both municipalities manage development, infrastructure, and intermunicipal relationships in a manner that benefits the broader region.

6.2 Guide planning and growth

- a. **Support Coordinated Planning:** Ensure the long-term prosperity of both municipalities through coordinated future planning that identifies compatible future land uses, economic opportunities, and development constraints such as provincial highways, pipelines, oil and gas developments, contaminated lands, utility corridors, historic resources, and intensive agricultural operations.
- b. **Address Interfaces:** Coordinate the transition between land uses along the municipal boundary to reduce potential conflicts and promote compatible development.

- c. **Support Fiscal Responsibility:** Support sustainable and coordinated growth by recognizing the need to align infrastructure, servicing, and fiscal resources so that the long-term costs and benefits of development are appropriately addressed by both municipalities.

6.3 Promote collaboration

- a. **Share Knowledge and Data:** Work cooperatively to share regional knowledge, information, and data that facilitates the IDP and Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework (ICF) projects.
- b. **Encourage Innovation:** Embrace new ideas for innovation, including collaboration on joint projects of mutual benefit.
- c. **Advance Regional Outcomes:** Foster intermunicipal coordination that generates benefits at the regional level, including economic, social, and environmental interests.

6.4 Framework for partnerships and communication

- a. **Establish Collaborative Frameworks:** In conjunction with ICF, establish a comprehensive framework for collaboration between the municipalities, incorporating and building upon the principles of the *RancheHouse Accord* so that over time, the Accord is no longer required as a standalone agreement.
- b. **Strengthen Relationships:** Foster long-term, trust-based relationships between the municipalities at all levels.
- c. **Maintain Regular Communication:** Establish intermunicipal meetings to reinforce a process-oriented approach at a regular interval.
- d. **Establish Communication Protocols:** Develop communication protocols to administer the IDP, identifying shared opportunities, and addressing issues in good faith.
- e. **Formalize Conflict Resolution:** Create formal processes for conflict resolution, plan amendments, and potential repeals.

6.5 Be proactive

- a. **Anticipate Opportunities and Challenges:** Identify emerging opportunities and challenges to avoid delays.
- b. **Strengthen Issue Resolution:** Develop forward-thinking guidelines to collaboratively resolve matters of shared intermunicipal interest.

7.0 Responsibilities and Decision Making

7.1 Cochrane and Rocky View County will review and update the IDP as equal partners. Both municipalities will provide balanced representation at the Council and Administrative levels.

7.2 Council and Committee Responsibilities

Cochrane and Rocky View County will employ the already established and formalized Intermunicipal Committee (IMC) to support the review and update of the IDP. As outlined in the Town of Cochrane – Rocky View County Intermunicipal Committee Terms of Reference (adopted December 2, 2021), the IMC facilitates ongoing information sharing between the two municipality’s elected officials and administrative staff to provide a forum in which to review and comment on a range of topics of mutual interest.

The respective Councils of each municipality will be responsible for approval of the IDP through the adoption of a bylaw.

7.3 Administration Responsibilities

Administrations from both municipalities will be responsible for the establishment of a work plan for the project and for reviewing and updating the IDP with input from the IMC. Both municipalities agree to equitable dedication of administrative resources and cost-sharing throughout the process of IDP preparation and adoption.

Both municipalities will work through a designated project team and working group.

7.3.1 Project Team

Team Role	Responsibilities
Executive Sponsor	Provides strategic oversight and executive-level support, ensures alignment with broader organizational goals, and secures necessary project resources.
Project Sponsor	Champions the project internally: supports decision-making, terms of reference, and ensures alignment with planning priorities.
Project Lead	Leads day-to-day project execution: Acts as the key contact between municipalities; manages timelines, budget, and resources; oversees overall project delivery; and facilitates coordination across the project team and working group.
Communications Lead	Coordinates messaging, communications materials, and timelines with project partners to ensure consistency and transparency.

7.3.2 Working Group

Team Role	Responsibilities
Project Lead	Leads the development, coordination, and drafting of the IDP document; provides technical planning guidance and direction to ensure alignment with statutory plans, policies, and legislative requirements; and ensures deliverables meet quality standards.
Planning Support	Conducts research, data collection, mapping, and analysis to inform policy development. Supports document preparation.

7.4 Decision Making

Decisions will be made by consensus among the Working Group members. Where consensus cannot be achieved, the matter will be escalated in accordance with the dispute resolution process outlined in Section 11: Dispute Resolution of this Terms of Reference.

7.5 Coordination with Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework (ICF)

An Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework (ICF) is an agreement that provides for integrated and strategic planning, delivery, and funding of intermunicipal services. In accordance with the *MGA* and *Ministerial Order No. MSD:025/25*, the municipalities are required to complete an ICF with its municipal neighbours. The ICF project will progress independently from the IDP; however, Administration will share updates and information regarding the IDP and ICF projects to ensure coordination and avoid conflicts. Opportunities for collaboration between the IDP and ICF projects will be sought wherever possible.

8.0 Communications

8.1 Cochrane and Rocky View County will develop a project Communications Plan that will outline consistent messaging for three key audiences: municipal councils, intermunicipal committees, and the public.

8.2 Communications materials will use clear language, visuals, and appropriate detail for each audience.

8.3 Updates will appear on both municipality’s websites with agreed messaging.

8.4 Before a municipality makes any public communication respecting the IDP or the intermunicipal relationship contemplated by this Terms of Reference, that municipality will provide advance notice to the other municipality of the intended communication for the purpose of awareness and coordination, where practicable. Where advance notice is not possible, the

communicating municipality shall provide notice as soon as practicable following the communication.

8.5 Information shared between Cochrane and Rocky View County as part of the IDP review and revision work is expected to be treated as confidential unless the municipality providing the information indicates otherwise. Each municipality will take reasonable care to protect information shared by the other, consistent with how it protects its own internal information and in accordance with applicable legislation.

9.0 Engagement

9.1 Public engagement is required, and a third-party consultant may be procured between the municipalities to ensure consistency. The procurement process will be led by Rocky View County, with the Request for Proposal collaboratively written by both municipalities followed by joint evaluation process.

9.2 Cochrane and Rocky View County will develop an Engagement Strategy jointly with the ICF that will outline public engagement activities that reflect the needs of each project.

9.3 The IDP will include two stages of engagement:

- Stage 1: Project Information will focus on introducing the purpose and scope of the IDP. It will gather early, high-level input on interests, opportunities, and concerns within the plan area. Engagement will include landowners, developers, industry, community groups, and interested residents. This feedback will inform the draft of the revised IDP.
- Stage 2: Draft Revised IDP will focus on gathering feedback on the draft of the revised IDP to assess how it reflects the plan area context, priorities, and opportunities. Engagement opportunities will be provided both online and in person to support broad participation. Feedback received during this stage will be revised and incorporated, as appropriate, prior to the final draft being brought forward for public hearing and Council consideration.

10.0 Scope and Project Stages

10.1 The Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP) project will evaluate and update the existing 2001 IDP to reflect current legislative requirements and intermunicipal priorities. This includes reviewing land use compatibility, infrastructure coordination, and fiscal responsibility, while introducing new areas of focus such as ecological networks – elements not addressed in the current IDP but now required by legislation. The updated plan will ensure that intermunicipal interests are comprehensively captured and aligned with coordinated planning objectives.

10.2 The scope of work is organized into five project stages, with proposed timelines necessary to meet the completion date of November 30, 2027.

10.3 The five project stages include:

Project Stage	Description	Anticipated Timeline
Stage 1	Initiation	Q4 2025 - Q2 2026
Stage 2	Planning and Background	Q1 2026 - Q3 2026
Stage 3	Draft Plan	Q2 2026 - Q1 2027
Stage 4	Revisions	Q1 2027 - Q3 2027
Stage 5	Plan Adoption	Q3 2027 - Q4 2027

11.0 Dispute Resolution

11.1 This dispute resolution process is intended to support timely and collaborative resolution of any issues that may arise during the review and updating of the IDP.

11.2 Disputes regarding the interpretation, Administration, or implementation of the current IDP will be addressed through s. 3.3 of the IDP (*Resolution of Intermunicipal Issues*).

11.3 Administrative Dispute Resolution

In the event of a dispute regarding the review and update of the IDP, Administration will first endeavor to resolve the dispute between the working group members. If the working group members cannot resolve the dispute, the following steps will be taken:

- a. The project sponsors from both Administrations will meet to resolve the dispute. If the project sponsors cannot resolve the dispute, then it will be elevated to the executive level.
- b. The executive sponsors from both Administrations will meet to resolve the dispute. If the executive sponsors cannot resolve the dispute, then the dispute will be elevated to the Formal Dispute Resolution process outlined below in section 11.4.

11.4 Formal Dispute Resolution

Unless otherwise agreed to by both municipalities, any disagreement that cannot be resolved through regular administrative communication during the review and update of the IDP shall be addressed through the following formal dispute resolution process. This process shall be executed in sequence and in a timely manner, and the municipalities shall participate in good faith at each stage to support resolution:

- a. **Elevation:** The municipality initiating the dispute shall notify the other municipality in writing and will specify the nature of the dispute in the written notice (“Notice of Dispute”). The Parties will elevate the discussion to their respective CAOs (or designates), who will have thirty (30) business days to resolve the dispute through collaborative discussion, unless otherwise agreed to by the CAOs (or designates).
- b. **Facilitated Discussion:** If the Municipalities do not resolve the dispute within thirty (30) business days, the dispute will be referred to the Intermunicipal Committee. The Municipalities may select a mutually agreed upon Facilitator, the costs of which will be shared equally by the Parties. IMC members will discuss the issues outlined in the Notice of Dispute with the intention of resolving the dispute. Unless otherwise agreed to by the IMC members, the municipalities have thirty (30) business days to resolve the dispute.
- c. **Mediation:** If the municipalities fail to resolve the dispute by way of discussion between IMC members, the dispute may be referred to mediation. Any one of the municipalities shall provide the other municipality with written notice (“Mediation Notice”) specifying the subject matters remaining in dispute, and the details of the matters in dispute that are to be mediated. The Mediator shall be mutually agreed upon by both Parties and selected from the Municipal Dispute Resolution Services roster maintained by the Government of Alberta’s Municipal Affairs. Unless otherwise agreed to by the municipalities, if the mediation is not completed within sixty (60) days from the date of receipt of the Mediation Notice, the dispute shall be deemed to have terminated and failed to be resolved by mediation. The cost(s) of any mediation shall be paid equally by both Parties unless the Mediator deems otherwise, and therefore, would indicate in their decision.
- d. **Non-binding Arbitration:** If mediation is unsuccessful, the dispute may be submitted to non-binding arbitration. The arbitrator shall be mutually agreed upon by the Parties and selected from the roster of arbitrators maintained by the Government of Alberta Municipal Affairs or another agreed-upon roster. The arbitrator will review the dispute and issue a written recommended resolution. The written recommendation shall be presented to each Council for consideration. Each Council will render a decision by resolution within sixty (60) days of receiving the recommendation and will provide the other municipality with written notice of its decision.

12.0 Budget

12.1 On behalf of both municipalities, Cochrane received an Alberta Community Partnership (ACP) grant of \$200,000 to support both the IDP and ICF projects with Rocky View County. The ACP grant funds will be shared equally between each municipality.

12.2 The total budget for the IDP project is expected to be \$270,000, requiring each municipality to equally contribute up to \$68,000 of municipal funds for a total municipal contribution of \$136,000.

12.3 It is not anticipated that additional budget will be required, however, should there be a future need for additional budget, this request will be brought to the respective Councils for approval if required.

13.0 Terms of Reference Approval

Rocky View County

Town of Cochrane

Sunny Samra

Reeve

Date: _____

Morgan Nagel

Mayor

Date: _____

Appendix A: Municipal Government Act – Relevant Sections

631(1) Subject to subsections (2) and (3), 2 or more councils of municipalities that have common boundaries and that are not members of a growth region as defined in section 708.01 must, by each passing a bylaw in accordance with this Part or in accordance with sections 12 and 692, adopt an intermunicipal development plan to include those areas of land lying within the boundaries of the municipalities as they consider necessary.

(8) An intermunicipal development plan

(a) must address

- (i) the future land use within the area,
- (ii) the manner of and the proposals for future development in the area,
- (iii) the provision of transportation systems for the area, either generally or specifically,
- (iv) the co-ordination of intermunicipal programs relating to the physical, social and economic development of the area,
- (v) environmental matters within the area, either generally or specifically, and
- (vi) any other matter related to the physical, social or economic development of the area that the councils consider necessary, and

(b) must include

- (i) a procedure to be used to resolve or attempt to resolve any conflict between the municipalities that have adopted the plan,
- (ii) a procedure to be used, by one or more municipalities, to amend or repeal the plan, and
- (iii) provisions relating to the administration of the plan.

(9) Despite subsection (8), to the extent that a matter is dealt with in a framework under Part 17.2, the matter does not need to be included in an intermunicipal development plan.

(10) In creating an intermunicipal development plan, municipalities must negotiate in good faith.