



## PLANNING

<b>TO:</b>	Council	
<b>DATE:</b>	April 26, 2022	<b>DIVISION:</b> 5
<b>TIME:</b>	Afternoon Appointment	
<b>FILE:</b>	07426001 / 6002 / 6003 / 6004	<b>APPLICATION:</b> PL20210102
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Redesignation: Direct Control District	

**APPLICATION:** To redesignate ± 258.8 hectares (± 640 acres) – four (4) quarter sections – from Agricultural, General District (A-GEN) to Direct Control (DC) to allow for a Solar Farm.

**GENERAL LOCATION:** Located adjacently north of the city of Airdrie, approximately 800 metres east of Highway 2 and adjacently east of Range Road 292.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** Council gave first reading to Bylaw C-8206-2021 on September 7, 2021.

The subject lands are predominantly cultivated agricultural land with one dwelling located in the south half of the section. Access to the parcels is through a private driveway from Township Road 274 with additional access potential from Range Road 292 to the west of the subject parcels.

The proposed redesignation is to support an 80 megawatt (MW) commercial-scale solar farm across the subject lands. The Applicant has indicated that the rationale for locating the proposal on the subject site is due to its ease of access to the provincial electrical grid, thereby minimizing the need for large-scale electrical infrastructure to service the development.

Although the subject parcels are located immediately north of the city of Airdrie, the subject parcels are located outside of the policy area of the Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP) between Rocky View County and the City of Airdrie. The City was circulated on the application and their comments can be found in Attachment 'B'. A discussion of the City's position is provided within the Policy Analysis section of this report.

The application was found to be consistent with the relevant statutory plan policies including those within the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan's (SSRP) Implementation Plan and within the Interim Growth Plan (IGP) sections relating to regional corridors, transportation, utilities, and servicing. The proposal also aligns with the Agriculture (Section 8.0) and Business Development (Section 14.0) sections of the County Plan and the regulations of the Land Use Bylaw. While the IDP does not cover the subject parcels, the proposal does meet relevant policies relating to intermunicipal entranceways and agricultural considerations.

Administration has provided an amended version of the Bylaw for Council's consideration that addresses the comments / concerns raised through the circulation process. These amendments are shown in Attachment 'C'.

**ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION:** Administration recommends approval in accordance with Option # 1.

### Administration Resources

Logan Cox, Planning & Development Services



**OPTIONS:**

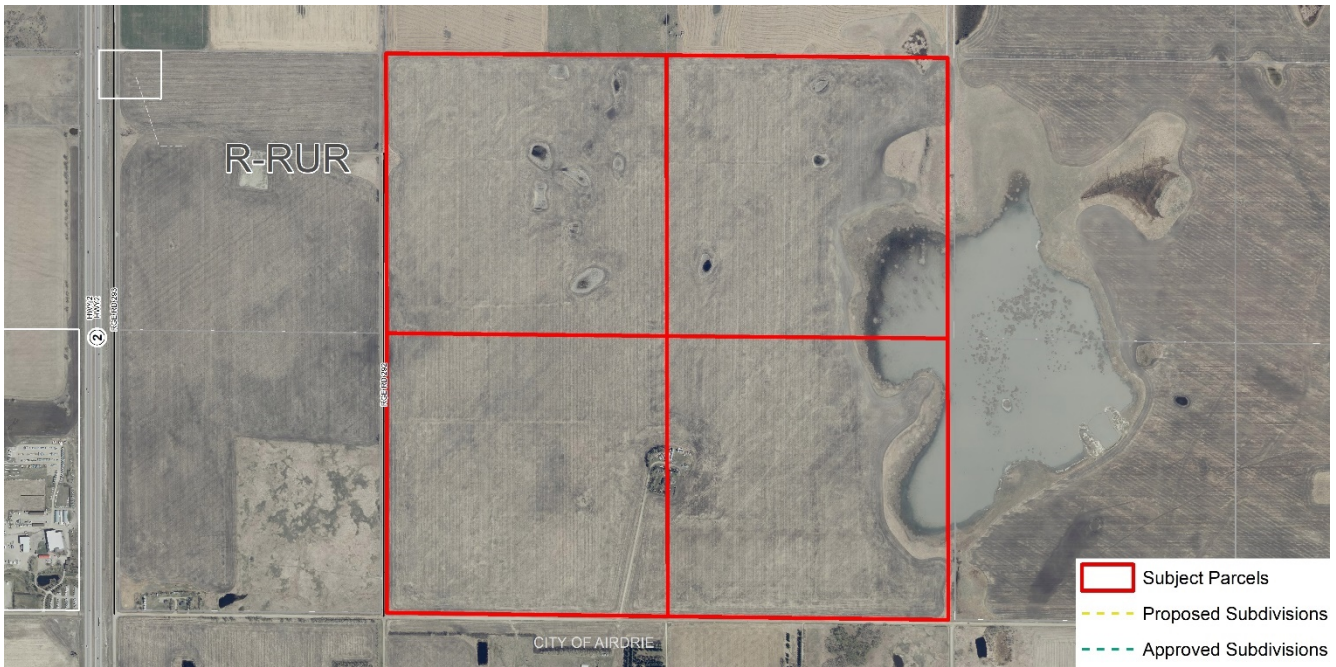
Option # 1: Motion #1 THAT Bylaw C-8206-2021 be amended in accordance with Attachment 'C'.

Motion #2 THAT Bylaw C-8206-2021 be given second reading, as amended.

Motion #3 THAT Bylaw C-8206-2021 be given third and final reading, as amended.

Option # 2: THAT application PL20210102 be refused.

**AIR PHOTO & DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT:**



**APPLICATION EVALUATION:**

The application was evaluated based on the technical reports submitted with the application and the applicable policies and regulations.

<p><b>APPLICABLE POLICY AND REGULATIONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Municipal Government Act;</i></li> <li>• South Saskatchewan Regional Plan;</li> <li>• Calgary Metropolitan Region Board Interim Growth Plan;</li> <li>• City of Airdrie/M.D. of Rocky View Intermunicipal Development Plan;</li> <li>• Municipal Development Plan (County Plan);</li> <li>• Land Use Bylaw; and</li> <li>• County Servicing Standards.</li> </ul>	<p><b>TECHNICAL REPORTS SUBMITTED:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stormwater Scope Study, prepared by Magna Engineering Services Inc., dated July 2021</li> <li>• Transportation Impact Assessment, prepared by Watt Consulting Group, dated June 2021</li> </ul>
--	---



## **POLICY ANALYSIS:**

### South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP)

The SSRP speaks to the preservation of Agricultural land (Strategy 1.1), by reducing the fragmentation and conversion of agricultural land. It seeks to maintain large agricultural areas, as well as smaller parcels being used for value-added agricultural support services.

In the SSRP's Implementation Plan, the objective to support the responsible development of the region's renewable industry is highlighted as a means to support Alberta's commitment to greener energy production and economic development. Strategy 1.9 of the plan calls for policies to be put into the plan to promote and remove barriers to new investments in renewable energy.

The SSRP notes in Strategy 1.10 that the region has a natural advantage for renewables such as wind, solar, bio, and hydroelectric energy, and speaks to investing in the development, demonstration, and deployment of renewable and alternative energy technologies targeted to improve Alberta's overall energy efficiency.

### Calgary Metropolitan Region Board Interim Growth Plan (IGP)

The Plan addresses regionally significant transmission corridors in Policy 3.5.2, which are identified on Schedule 6, Transmission Corridors - Energy. The regional electrical transmission line that runs along the road right-of-way of Range Road 292, along the western boundary of the subject parcels, is identified within Schedule 6 as a regionally significant energy transmission corridor. The Plan speaks to protecting these corridors through statutory plans and providing mitigation measures and policies to address potential impacts on the regionally significant transmission corridors. No directive policies are present within this Plan to which the application could be compared; however, the application appears to meet the broader goals of Plan.

### City of Airdrie/M.D. of Rocky View Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP)

While the IDP is not binding on the application, Administration reviewed the application against relevant policies to ensure healthy working relationships with the County's municipal neighbours. This also aligns the County with IGP Policy 3.2.2, which speaks to the collaboration of neighbouring municipalities through a structured engagement process.

IDP policy 2.5.2.3, within the Transportation, Utilities, and Servicing section, seeks to ensure future development that utilizes city roadways meets their standards. Future upgrades to the access would therefore need to meet the City's standards and would be required as a condition of any future development permit.

Policy 2.8.2.2, within the Land Use Transition Principles section, refers to the management of environmental and nuisance impacts of development, seeking that they be managed on site or minimized. Through a future development permit process, any nuisances would have to be reduced through on-site measures to the satisfaction of the Development Authority and the Alberta Utilities Commission.

Policies 2.9.2.4 and 2.9.2.6, within the Intermunicipal Entranceways section, consider sightlines and visual impacts on each neighbouring jurisdiction and highlights that screening developments from the traveling public are desirable. Incorporation of Agricultural Boundary Design Guidelines and landscaping around the proposed uses can be implemented through the development permit process.

In the Agriculture section, Policy 2.10.2.1 pertains to avoiding premature development of existing agricultural land. Administration considers that the proposed solar farm would have the potential to accommodate grazing operations on the site, so the use is compatible with agriculture and not premature. The soil classifications map indicates that the subject parcels have varying soil classifications that range from slight limitations to no capability to cultivate cereal crops. Portions of land along the north and east boundaries of the subject parcel have a classification range between moderate limitations and no capability to cultivate cereal crops.



## ROCKY VIEW COUNTY

The City of Airdrie has provided no objection to the proposed redesignation, subject to the resolution of their comments to the circulation of the subject application. The City raised transportation, environmental, use term limit, and aviation-related concerns as part of their circulation comments; these comments can be found within Attachment 'B' of this report. Many of these concerns can be addressed at a future development permit stage for the project.

### County Plan

The subject lands do not fall within an identified Business Area as shown on Map 1 of the County Plan.

There is little consideration of renewable energy proposals within the County Plan policy. County Plan Policy 14.22, within the Business Development section, requires businesses outside of identified business areas to be limited in size, scale and intensity, and scope; have direct and safe access to a paved County Road or Provincial Highway; provide a traffic impact and intersection assessment; and minimize adverse impacts on existing residential, business, or agricultural uses. While the proposed solar farm is not limited in size, once constructed, the intensity of the use would be limited, and impacts upon transportation infrastructure and surrounding amenity would be effectively managed at the development permit stage. Temporary development permit terms would allow the County to monitor such impacts and make appropriate decisions on future continuation of that use.

### Land Use Bylaw (LUB)

The proposed Direct Control District (DC) is based on the Agricultural, General District (A-GEN) and would allow for the construction of a Solar Farm and associated infrastructure. Section 299 of the Land Use Bylaw C-8000-2020 requires that the Solar Farm use can only be considered on a parcel that has been designated Direct Control.

## **ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

### Environmental

A large wetland is located along the east boundary of the subject parcels along with several other smaller wetlands throughout the parcels. The proposed development avoids the large wetland, and the Applicant has indicated that *Water Act* approvals from Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) will be pursued as necessary. If the development impacts any wetlands, the Applicant would be required to submit a Wetland Impact Assessment as part of a future Development Permit process. The City of Airdrie has raised concerns with impact to drainage, preservation of the bodies/wetlands, and the potential of groundwater/soil contamination through leaching of toxic chemicals.

### Transportation

The application included a Traffic Impact Assessment from Watt Consulting Group, dated June 2021. This assessment notes the anticipated traffic from the construction of the solar farm is 170 one-way trips to the parcel per day, or an average of 60 vehicles per hour during peak hours. Once the solar farm is operational, it is anticipated to generate 1-2 vehicles per hour during peak hours. The TIA concludes that no capacity issues were identified during their evaluation of the project on any of the four potential access routes they identified.

Access to the subject parcels is from Township Road 274, which is within the city of Airdrie at this location. Any future road or access upgrades to City transportation infrastructure required to support the development would be to the satisfaction of the City. The City notes that under their Transportation Master Plan, an additional 48 metres of road right-of-way, 24 metres from the subject property, is required for the future Skeletal Arterial Road standard that is anticipated to connect to Highway 2 via an interchange. The City recommends a minimum 20 metre setback from the current Township Road 274 with the option to review subsequent Development Permit renewals against the Transportation Master Plan. The amended proposed DC district has been updated to reflect a 20 metre setback from Township Road 274 to address these comments from the City.



Calgary Airport Authority

The Calgary Airport Authority was notified of the application due to the comments received from the City of Airdrie. The Airport Authority has no concerns with the application and has recommended that Transport Canada and NAV Canada be notified of the proposal. Both agencies have been notified and would receive further circulation opportunities with a future development permit proposal; specific circulation notes were added under the Administration’s recommended changes version of Bylaw C-8206-2021.

Administration’s Recommended Amendments to Bylaw C-8206-2021

Through the review of the file and circulations responses, Administration has made several recommended edits to C-8206-2021 to address comments raised. The edits address the requirements for further circulation of a development permit application, the inclusion of setbacks that address the setback distance from a road requested by the City of Airdrie, modify the additional requirements to be submitted with a development permit application, and add time limits to the Development Permit decisions for the proposed uses. Through discussions with the applicant the proposed amendments have been drafted to the satisfaction of both the applicant and Administration.

Respectfully submitted,

Concurrence,

“Brock Beach”

“Byron Riemann”

\_\_\_\_\_  
Acting Executive Director  
Community Development Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
Acting Chief Administrative Officer

LC/lh

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- ATTACHMENT ‘A’: Application Information
- ATTACHMENT ‘B’: Application Referrals
- ATTACHMENT ‘C’: Amended Bylaw C-8206-2021 and Schedules ‘A’ & ‘B’
- ATTACHMENT ‘D’: Map Set
- ATTACHMENT ‘E’: Public Submissions