

Friends of Leduc Area Greenspace

Our Disappointment in the Leduc County September 2007 Draft Land Use Bylaw

The Friends of Leduc Area Greenspace (FLAG) believe that all Canadians are collectively responsible for using our resources sustainably in order to ensure that future generations can benefit from them in the same sustainable manner. We are thus stewards of our land, air, and water as much as we are users of it. Leduc County's most significant and enduring resource is its land base, primarily the County's natural and environmentally significant lands. These lands are irreplaceable and contribute significantly to all Leduc County residents' high quality of life.

The Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaw currently in force in Leduc County were passed in 1983. They display well thought-out protection for environmentally sensitive areas throughout, including the use of three land use districts that restrict the number of uses on thousands of acres of environmentally sensitive land (specifically Wildlife Habitat, Recreation Open Space, and Lake Shoreland.)

Leduc County recently released a fourth draft of the Land Use Bylaw they propose to replace the current one with. In the opinion of FLAG, all four drafts have been much worse than that currently in force and this fourth draft is barely an improvement over the third, which was by far the worst. **This fourth draft has no land use district that truly protects environmentally sensitive areas. Many environmentally sensitive areas in Leduc County will have all current protection stripped away. Do Leduc County residents really want to see gravel pits, temporary asphalt plants, and campgrounds opening almost county wide—without Leduc County residents or Council having input into the decision?**

The latest draft land use bylaw proposes to:

1. Remove ALL land use zoning which protects environmentally sensitive areas of Leduc County, including irreplaceable watersheds, green spaces, the Ministik Natural Area, and the North Saskatchewan River valley. Such lands may be developed and their natural resources extracted through such invasive uses as gravel pits. A token land use district was created for the North Saskatchewan River Valley and 'Lake Watershed' applied to the land around three lakes, but the smattering of uses therein and lack of required protections makes both land use districts toothless;
2. Zone almost all County lands as Agricultural, but with a wide array of permitted or discretionary uses, which will enable almost any kind of objectionable development, like gravel extraction or asphalt plant, to occur on that land without public input;
3. Place development approval authority totally in the hands of the County's administrative staff, without requiring prior notice to the public or approval by the County's elected Councilors.

The September 2007 Draft Land Use Bylaw does not have any land use designation that will specifically preserve any of the land of Leduc County in its natural state for our future generations and wildlife.

In August of 2006, we made recommendations in the hope of helping to improve the second draft. In essence, none of our three recommendations were followed. The recommendations made were general in nature, including a request that Leduc County stakeholders be asked for input on the redraft that was ordered by Leduc County Council at the end of August 2006. In July of 2007, we made over 25 specific recommendations to improve the third draft. None of those recommendations have been implemented in the fourth draft of the Land Use Bylaw released in September of 2007.

Our recommendations are founded in sustainability and stewardship—that is what over 90% of Canadians support! In a national context, this is supported by an Ipsos Reid/ President's Choice survey in which the results, released April 17 of 2007, found that “the majority of Canadians (92%) feel personally responsible for preserving and protecting the environment in their province, yet only six in ten would give themselves an "A" (12%) or a "B" (48%) on their own personal performance.” There is also a much more local survey that was conducted by Parkland County in early 2006 as part of their Municipal Development Plan review. The telephone survey asked a statistically significant portion of county residents: "Using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means not at all important and 5 means very important, how important is it to you that the environment be protected in Parkland County?" The result was a mean of 4.7, which means that almost all respondents felt that environmental protection was very important.

There is a public hearing about the fourth draft Land Use Bylaw at the Nisku Recreation Center on October 3, 2007 at 7:30PM. FLAG calls upon all Leduc County residents, and all others affected by this draft Land Use Bylaw, to come out and let Council and administration know that you want environmentally sensitive areas properly protected.

Every member of the Friends of Leduc Area Greenspace is terribly disappointed in the actions of both Leduc County Council and administration. We call for this draft to be tabled pending the completion of two critical events: the municipal elections on October 15, and the completion of the \$100,000+ review of Leduc County's planning department. Why is this draft being rushed through prior to these two critical governance events?

Recommendations

Maintain the Wildlife Habitat land use designation and absorb the Recreation Open Space land into it. Leduc County is blessed with a number of natural areas that both deserve and need specific protection. This protection is most effective through a land use designation that makes it clear to prospective purchasers that the land in question is not suitable for invasive or conflictive uses. Keep the permitted and discretionary uses sparse in Wildlife Habitat.

Prevent unsound applications without preventing public input. FLAG perceives that there is a desire by the county to reduce the time, energy, and ‘noise’ of development applications. The manner selected appears to have been to reduce the number of land use designations and to add a smattering of discretionary uses to the land use designations remaining. Doing so will move the decision making authority on development applications from County Council, and through them

the general public, into the hands of administration. FLAG would much prefer to see proactive land planning through proper analysis of generally where uses are sustainable, sensible, desirable, and where conflictive uses are kept apart from each other.

Require environmental protection measures to make it clear in advance to applicants that a biophysical assessment will be required in certain circumstances and may be in others. Reduce the overuse of the fuzzy ‘may’ language that is peppered throughout the current draft.

Interested in what we have to say? Please read the full text of our “Changes Recommended To Leduc County May 2007 Draft Land Use Bylaw” document—ALL of the recommendations stand unaltered versus the September 2007 Draft Land Use Bylaw.

Want to help? Contact us and let us know!

Kindest Regards,
Friends of Leduc Area Greenspace

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