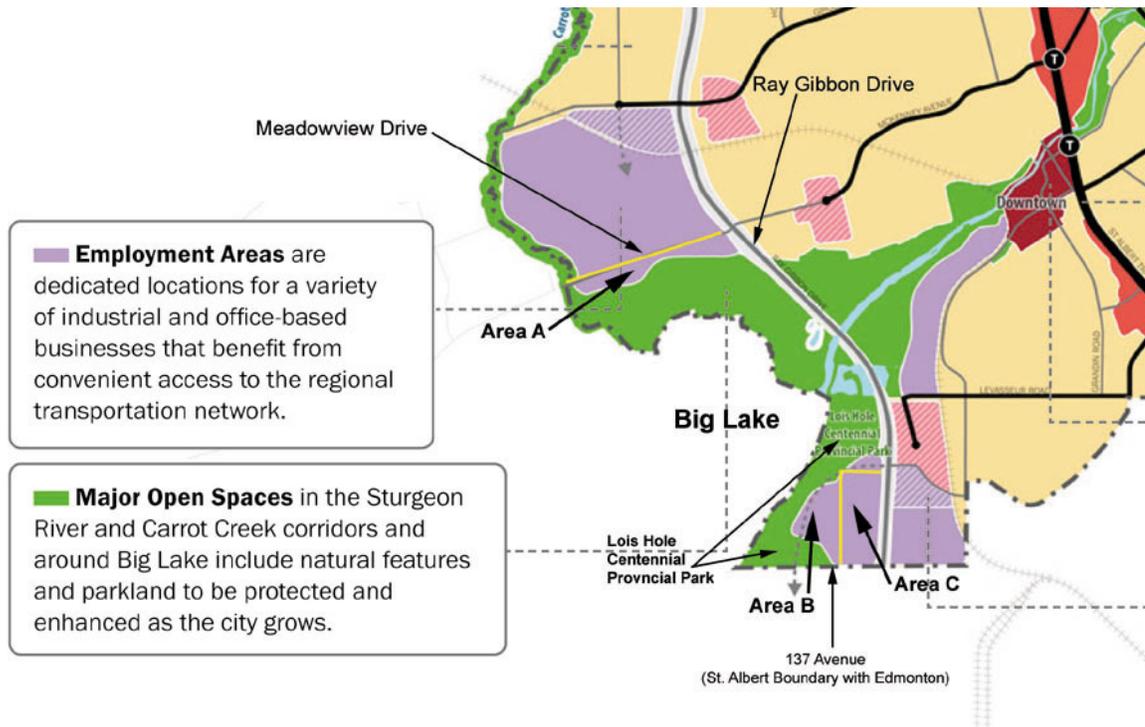


# BLESS Presentation to Council Regarding the Draft Municipal Development Plan (MDP)

## Executive Summary

The City of St. Albert released its first complete draft of the new Municipal Development Plan (MDP) to the public in November 2020. Since that release, BLESS has had opportunity to review the MDP in depth. With this presentation, we outline our concerns with the MDP in the areas adjacent to Big Lake and Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park.

There are three areas of the new MDP where we believe changes are warranted. These can be seen in the following map as the narrow strip of Employment Area on the south side of Meadowview Drive west of Ray Gibbon Drive (RGD) annotated Area A, the block of Employment Area annotated on the map as Area B and the block of Employment Area to the north of 137th Avenue adjacent to RGD annotated Area C.



Taken from new MDP draft dated December 16, 2020, Map 3 - Urban Structure and General Land Use, Page 25.

BLESS is requesting that the Employment Area designation not now be extended across Meadowview Drive into Area A. BLESS is also requesting that the new MDP reflect the province's intent for the Area B lands and change the designation for this land from Employment Area to Major Open Space. Area C comprising 24.3 hectares (60 acres) is isolated from the nearest Employment Area land by RGD to the east and will be bounded by LHCPP on the west and north. To the south of Area C is 137th Ave, the boundary between St. Albert and Edmonton, with residential development on the Edmonton side of that boundary. BLESS asks

that this land be designated Neighbourhoods to better conform with the designations on other adjacent parcels west of RGD.

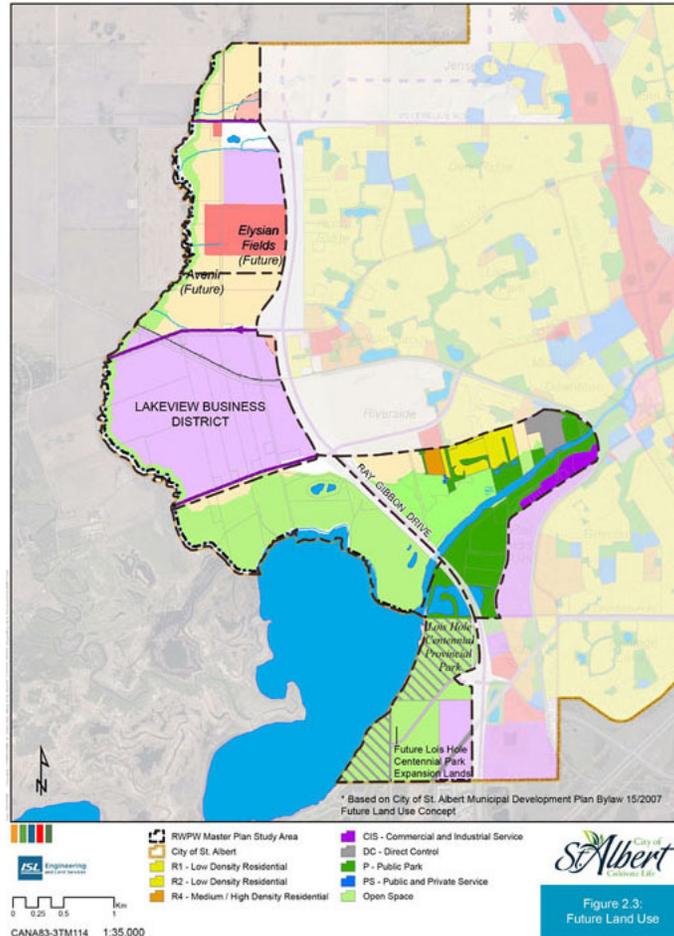
### Area A, South of Meadowview Drive

The new MDP expands the Employment Area designation into a narrow strip of land south of Meadowview Drive. This change contradicts the City's Red Willow Park West (RWPW) Master Plan, which was prepared in 2018/19 and was subject to extensive public engagement. The land south of Meadowview Drive is proposed in the RWPW plan to be a park destination with extensive trails and facilities for public enjoyment, see the maps below taken from the plan.



Red Willow park West Master Plan Update, November 2018  
Figure 3.5, North Big Lake Concept

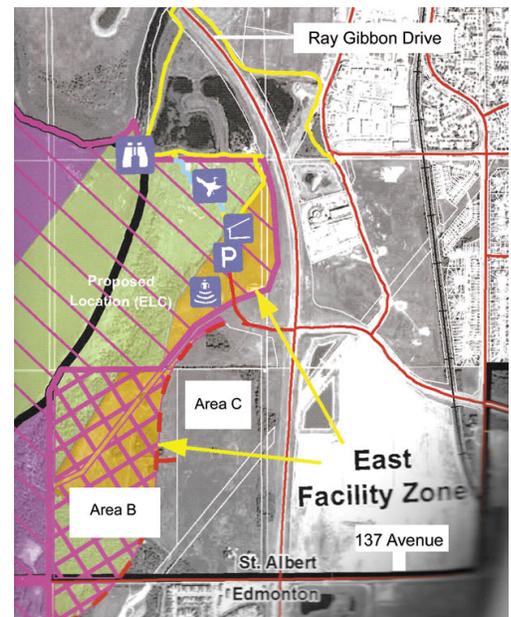
Park land south of Meadowview Drive and west of Ray Gibbon Drive (RGD) is noted as being one of the most important and sensitive natural areas within St Albert. It is a breeding nesting and staging area for migratory birds. It is also a major “stopover” location for migrating bird species, including swans, geese and pelicans. Meadowview Drive currently provides good viewing of vistas overlooking the north east shoreline of Big Lake. The RWPW plan envisions this area as a park destination, with access off Meadowview Drive and trails and viewing structures to enable nature seekers to experience the beauty of the natural area at a respectful distance from wildlife and wildlife habitat. The strip of land is also home to stands of old growth spruce and deciduous trees. The development of warehouses or other industrial structures on this land will significantly prejudice this important environmental zone and the adjacent parkland and Big Lake shoreline. Industrial or commercial development would contravene the City’s RWPW Plan.



### Area B, North of 137th Avenue Adjacent to LHCPP

In 2014, the Provincial Government purchased 35.9 hectares of land in St. Albert, north of 137 Avenue, for inclusion within Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park. The provincially designated Big Lake Natural Area, comprised essentially of wetlands around the bed and shore of Big Lake, was made a provincial park in 2005 to commemorate Alberta's 100th year as a province and in honour of the 15th Lieutenant Governor of Alberta.

The provincial park suffers from a shortage of upland area to provide sufficient refuge for viable populations of wildlife and to provide access and facilities to the million or so people of the capital region, and tourists from outside the region, expected to use the park in future. Which is why Alberta Parks has actively pursued upland purchases around the park.



Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park Management Plan, February 2019, Map 2 - Park Zoning, Page 100.

In 2019, Alberta Parks released their latest Management Plan for LHCPP that designates Area B for future inclusion in the park as part of the "East Facility Zone", a zone that will include an Environmental Learning Centre among other amenities designed to enhance park visitor experiences. The City's new MDP still shows the Employment Area designation on Area B, which clearly does not reflect its intended purpose by the provincial government. BLESS asks that the new MDP be changed to designate this land as Major Open Spaces.

### **Area C, North of 137th Avenue Adjacent to Ray Gibbon Drive**

The new MDP designates Area C, to the west of Ray Gibbon Drive and north of 137 Avenue as Employment Lands. Area C comprises 24.28 hectares and is currently privately owned. The elevation of Area C is significantly higher than adjacent park lands to the west and north, rising roughly 14 metres above surrounding park lands that will see hundreds of thousands of visitors in future. As such, this land will have significant focus on the surrounding landscape. Industrial or commercial development under the Employment Areas designation would impose a blight upon the landscape and reflect poorly on the City's reputation as an environmentally responsible municipality.

Adjacent to Area C on the south is the Edmonton community of Starling, a residential development that has been under development since 2005. BLESS asks that Area C be designated in the new MDP to be Neighbourhoods. This designation will permit the land to be "low-rise housing, along with schools, parks, local shops, and services". This designation will complement the residential and park zoning on the land south of 137<sup>th</sup> Avenue. It will better fit the surroundings and be less intrusive upon the natural areas that make up the park.



## Other Employment Land Opportunities in St Albert

According to the Growth Management Study conducted by ISL in support of the December 2020 City of St. Albert application to annex land from Sturgeon County, St. Albert currently has 280 hectares of undeveloped industrial land (projected to be sufficient until 2037) and 111 hectares of commercial land (projected to suffice until 2048) available for development.

The 2020 annexation, when approved by the Municipal Government Board, will add a further 570 hectares of commercial/industrial Employment Area lands to the city inventory, which the study indicates will satisfy the city's land needs until 2065. In addition, St. Albert has an annexation initiative underway to add Employment Land to South Riel. This land, currently in the City of Edmonton, was stranded by construction of the Anthony Henday freeway. It will be the logical extension of the industrial development that is currently occurring in this sector of St. Albert. Clearly, the City is well positioned for strong growth with respect to available Employment Lands in this area, without the need for the industrial parcel on the west side of Ray Gibbon Drive.

## EMRB Growth Plan

The regional growth plan developed by the Edmonton Municipal Region Board in 2017 and updated in 2020 states at Section 2.1.2 on Page 44: "The Region will work together to conserve and restore the function, integrity and connectivity of natural living systems for the long term ecological and social benefit of the Region...". Included in the list of areas to be conserved and restored are the Provincial Environmentally Sensitive Areas outlined on the following plan.



Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan, Schedule 4, Natural Living Systems, Page 45

Unlike other proposed industrial land within St. Albert, all three of the parcels in question are located on lands covered by this designation. BLESS feels that Employment Area is not an

appropriate future land use if the land is to perform its necessary functions within a Natural Living System.