



STRATEGIC PLAN

JUNE 2010

June 21, 2010



Our Strategic Plan

Clearwater County's Strategic Plan presents the blueprint for how the County will achieve its vision and mission over a period of the next number of years. Council has crafted a three year view of the future and a ten year view that will be addressed by a series of initiatives, programs and policies.

Why we have a Strategic Plan

A Strategic Plan provides a glimpse of what the future can be and how Clearwater County can achieve that future. Similarly a Strategic Plan provides a measuring stick to assess the progress and performance of Council towards the measurable objectives laid out in the Plan.

The process we used

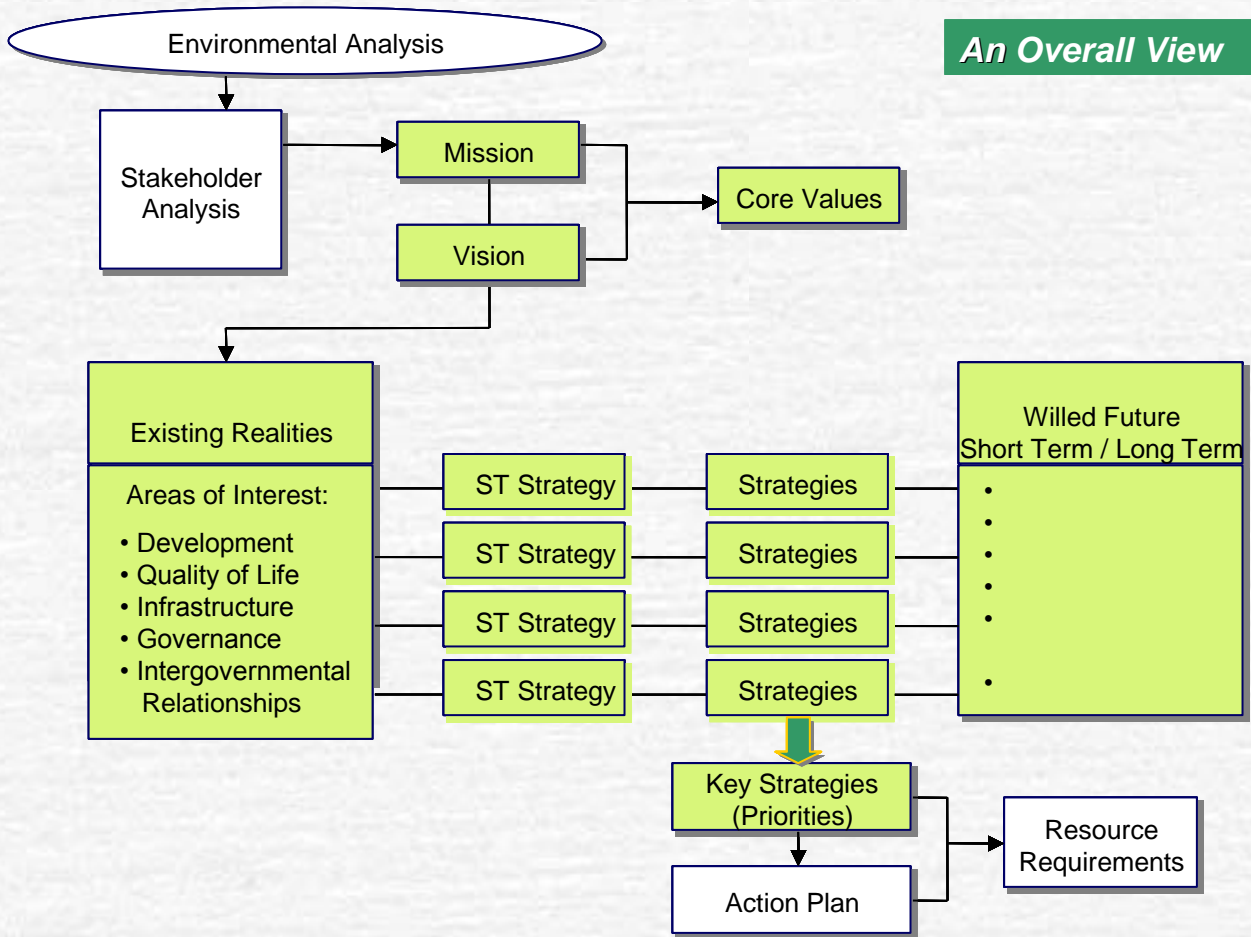
The next page provides an overview of the framework that was used to prepare and update the Strategic Plan. The Reeve and Councillors presented issues and concerns of residents and other key stakeholders. These became the Stakeholder Analysis that served as the background to the discussions. The Vision, Mission and Core Values were revisited to ensure that they reflected the commitment of the current Council. They are intended to drive decision making over the next few years.

We identified Existing Realities in five areas of interest:

- Development
- Quality of Life
- Infrastructure
- Governance
- Intergovernmental Relations

We then described where we thought Clearwater County should be in three years time with respect to each of the areas of interest and then where the County should be in ten years time.

These milestone descriptions then allowed us to develop strategies to move from where we are today to the future we want to create.





Our Guiding Principles

Vision and Mission Statements, Core Values and the roles of Council and Administration:

As part of this year's Strategic Planning initiative, Council reviewed the Vision and Mission Statements and validated their appropriateness going forward.

The Core Values were reviewed and a wording change was made to the first Core Value to reflect Council's *expectation* that openness and integrity will be demonstrated by all County Officials and Staff.

No changes were made to the Roles of Council and Administration.

Vision Statement:

Clearwater County will be viewed by residents and visitors alike as a progressive, well planned, safe, clean and active municipality. It will be a desired place to live, work, raise a family, retire or establish and operate a business.



Our Guiding Principles

Mission Statement:

Clearwater County will provide high quality local government services to all its residents and corporations, by protecting and enhancing living environments and business development opportunities, while maintaining competitive municipal tax rates. The County will maximize opportunities to achieve efficiencies and higher levels of service by cooperating with its urban neighbors, the Town of Rocky Mountain House and the Village of Caroline.

A high regard will be paid to protecting the extensive natural beauty of the County. Opportunities to explore and enjoy this significant asset will be developed and provided to local residents and other Albertans in cooperation with other governments and the private sector. Industry and all users of land will conduct their affairs in a responsible manner complementing environmental protection and enhancement objectives of the Vision.



Our Guiding Principles

Core Values:

1. The affairs of the County will be conducted in an open, honest and respectful manner. A high degree of openness and integrity is expected of all County officials and staff.
2. All County officials and staff are accountable for their actions and decisions. Councillors are accountable to the electors, and staff is accountable through management to Council. All decisions are expected to be made in the best long term interests of the whole municipality.
3. The County recognizes that our staff is a valuable resource.
4. The continued financial well being of the County is of primary importance, and will be monitored and protected.
5. The County recognizes that it is not an island and will work aggressively, with local and regional municipalities, and provincial and national associations, to protect and improve local economic opportunity and the living environment for all its residents.
6. The County recognizes and supports the Town of Rocky Mountain House and the Village of Caroline as independent local governments and will maximize opportunities to share and enhance service responsibilities wherever practicable for the benefit of all residents of each municipality.

Revised: June 14, 2010



Roles and Responsibilities

Council's Role:

Clearwater County Council must make important decisions regarding service delivery and service levels on behalf of the municipality in order to balance the needs and wants of County residents in a financially responsible manner.

Through the implementation of the Strategic Plan, Clearwater County will:

- Create a short and long term Vision of the County and lead County priorities.
- Be responsible to current affairs, priority needs and best approaches by maximizing citizen engagement, as well as by acquiring information and recommendations from Administration.
- Ensure the strategies set out in the Strategic Plan are achieved.
- Continue to be engaged in annual strategic planning exercises to ensure goals and strategies are consistent with future municipal landscape.

Administration's Role:

Clearwater County Administration must understand and predict demand, as well as plan sufficient capacity to deliver municipal services as established by Council.

Through the implementation of this Strategic Plan, Clearwater County Administration will:

- Implement and maintain service level/standards as set out by Council.
- Develop and maintain supporting processes, such as the annual business plan and municipal budget that compliment the Strategic Plan.
- Provide Council the information necessary to meet their role and responsibilities out in the Strategic Plan.



The Strategies

Introduction

In the following sections we have summarized our vision of the future under the headings of Three-Year Willed Future and Ten-Year Willed Future.

To achieve this vision we have prepared a series of strategies that vary in complexity and in the time and resources that will be needed to carry them out effectively.

It is our intention to measure Council's performance in achieving this vision for the County and will endeavour to publish a report of our progress as we update the Strategic Plan each year.

Format of the Strategic Plan Strategies

Council's individual strategies are arranged under the Areas of Interest identified earlier.

2010 Edition of the Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan has been reviewed and updated by Council as promised in the 2008 and 2009 versions of the Plan. Additions, deletions and changes have been made to the plan and are presented in italics for ease of identification.

Progress and Performance against the Plan are presented in a companion document: Council's Strategic Plan Progress and Performance Report 2010.



The Strategies

Development

Summary of Existing Realities

We are a rural municipality that is undergoing transition to a rural-urban community. We want to capitalize on our growth and at the same time maintain our rural roots.

- The growth has led to new challenges in managing the expectations and desires of residents, industry and agriculture.
- In the past we have deliberately avoided creating development hurdles to keep the process simple. We are now facing the need to put into place mechanisms (for example; Area Structure Plans) that will minimize conflicting development aspirations.
- Not all areas of the County are the same and we need to plan to each area's strengths.
- Our competitive tax structure is a strength but demands of increased services and level of service will likely have some impact.
- The Rocky-Nordegg Trail represents a significant economic development opportunity.
- *The Province's introduction of a Land Use Framework may potentially have significant impacts on where and how development will take place in the County.*
- *Industrial assessment has fallen and is likely to continue to fall.*
- *There is a general fall off in development activity.*
- *Response to the Municipal Development Plan has been mixed – there is misunderstanding that requires communication and education.*
- *"Water-for-Life" initiative of the Provincial government has significant potential impact of where and how development takes place in the County.*

The Strategies

Development

Three-Year Willed Future

1. Agreement in place for recreation management in West County.
2. Rocky-Nordegg Trail construction underway, Horburg to Nordegg.
3. There will be a development plan in place for Nordegg.
4. A new Municipal Development Plan will be in place that is more comprehensive than the existing Plan.
5. We will maintain a competitive tax rate with comparable municipalities.
6. We will have an effective, technology based, mechanism for dealing with inquiries and complaints on a timely basis.
7. The Land will be in place and the facilities nearing completion for the Caroline Recreation Facility.
8. Leslieville Fire Hall will be completed.
9. Nordegg ES Building will be *torn down and rebuilt on a new site.(amended 2010)*
10. *We will have performed an impact assessment of the Land Use Framework and prepared a response.*
11. *We will commit to an option coming out of the Waste Water Treatment Study*
12. *There will be an IDP with the Village*
13. *We will have completed growth/development studies for all hamlets and for Caroline, done cooperatively with the Village.*
14. *We will have some form of cost share arrangement with the Province to develop areas that have the greatest potential*
15. *We will have evaluated the potential of exploiting our sand & gravel resources*
16. *There will be a mutual recognition of the various segments of our community and there competing needs*

The Strategies

Development

Ten-Year Willed Future Willed Future

1. Rocky-Nordegg Trail will be centre-piece of recreation management program in West County.
2. The Hamlets in the County will be growing (*amended 2010*)
3. We will have a rationalized development plan among Rocky, Caroline and the County.
4. *We will have taken advantage of the Land Use Framework and made it work for the benefit of the County.*
5. *We will have taken advantage of the “Water-for-Life” initiative and made it work for the benefit of the County.*
6. The AG Fieldhouse will be built or nearing completion.
7. The access road for the North Saskatchewan River Park will be built.

The Strategies

Development

Our Strategies

Short-term:

1. Management plan for operation of the Rocky-Nordegg Trail will be developed.
2. Lobby and convince the Province to support the Rocky-Nordegg Trail and West County.
3. Identify and garner support from *Rocky-Nordegg Trail* User Groups
4. Identify and secure funding for Nordegg development plan.
5. Put into place a process and prepare a plan and schedule to validate the time-frame to complete the Municipal Development Plan.
6. Monitor tax rate(s) of comparable municipalities (Brazeau, Wetaskiwin, Lacombe, Red Deer, Mountainview *and others*) *as well as pertinent statistics available through Municipal Affairs' "Municipal Profiles" reporting.*
7. Carry out a project to put inquiry and complaint system into place and make operational.
8. Maintain leadership role in development of the AG Fieldhouse.
9. Complete land purchase and commence working with community groups to complete design and development of Caroline Recreation Facility; *Include expansion of arena/recreation complex in plans.*
10. Have recommendation from Regional Fire Committee regarding strategy for Leslieville/Condor.
11. *Prepare Impact Assessment and response to Land Use Framework.*
12. *Develop more industrial land, County will identify locations and needs in consultation with the Town.*
13. *Develop a strategy to be "friendly" to small businesses that are involved in Tourism.*

Continued . . .

The Strategies

Development

Short-term cont'd:

14. *Actively pursue recommendations coming out of the Town of Rocky Mountain House Waste Water Treatment Study.*
15. *Take the initiative to develop the IDP with the Village of Caroline*
16. *Develop growth/development plans for all hamlets and Caroline to determine where to develop first.*
17. *Lobby and negotiate with the Province regarding long term leases and the recovery of costs for the nodes.*
18. *Assess and determine the best approach to maximize the benefits from sand & gravel resources.*
19. *Charge the Agricultural Service Board with researching the issue of attaining mutual respect among different stakeholders in the West Country.*

Long-term:

1. The County will actively promote growth and sustainability in the Hamlets.
2. Continue to support development in the five recreation nodes.
3. *We will determine and implement a Land Use Framework Maximum Benefit Strategy.*

The Strategies

Quality of Life

Summary of Existing Realities

We enjoy a high quality of life in Clearwater County, but there are certain issues that must be addressed as we evolve towards being a rural/urban municipality:

- Conflicting perspectives on ATV use.
- Emergency services and the level of service require the development of sustainable models as demands on these services grow.
- The number of seniors continues to increase and their service needs are a concern.
- Attraction and retention of physicians continues to be an issue.
- Increased pressure to provide expanded community policing.
- Availability of residential building lots.
- Provision of recreational services and facilities.
- We have done a good job in protecting the environment in the County and continue to participate in initiatives that will sustain preservation.
- *The economic downturn has negatively affected many of our residents.*
- *The behavior of some users of the West Country verges on lawless – trespass is a problem.*
- *A balance between the needs and wants of residents and those who visit is required in the West County.*

The Strategies

Quality of Life

Three-Year Willed Future

1. We will have a management body that will address recreational use of County lands; including ATVs, hiking, etc.
2. Current levels (2008) of ALS, EMS, 1st responder, will be maintained.
3. We will work with the Town to maintain an adequately staffed medical treatment facility.
4. We will have adequate policing defined by a review of policing needs
5. Condor rail properties will be developed and sold.
7. *We will retain our current (2010) level of fire suppression service recognizing that it may cost more.*

Ten-Year Willed Future

1. We will continue to be an active participant in regional service delivery of emergency services *and explore opportunities to expand the services that are provided regionally.*
2. The level of emergency service will be appropriate to the needs of County residents.
3. Fire service will continue to be delivered by a competent contingent of volunteers.
4. Emergency equipment will be up to date and well maintained.
5. *We will assess the needs of seniors and develop a strategy to work with province in meeting these needs.*

The Strategies

Quality of Life

Our Strategies

Short-term:

1. Apply for a Rural Development Grant *for West Country development.* (Completed – Province has re-introduced this program.)
2. The County will be a strong advocate for emergency services being maintained a current levels.
3. We will continue to be an active member of fire services delivery model.
4. Take leadership role in developing business case for Life-Lease Initiative and the upgrading of Westview Lodge.
5. Active participation in County-Town committee to attract and retain physicians.
6. Conduct a review of policing needs to determine appropriate service levels.
7. Establish an economic development strategy to promote the sale of rail-line land.
8. *Maintain our current models of service delivery as long as possible to preserve our current service levels.*
9. *Research and determine what services the County should or could be providing.*

The Strategies

Infrastructure

Summary of Existing Realities

- We are experiencing changing expectations regarding the quality of our roads and the management of dust.
- The availability of gravel resources requires action to avoid the necessity of making long hauls to service parts of the County.
- The County has an extensive collection of buildings (halls, fire-halls etc.), utilities (water, waste-water etc.) and facilities (public works, administration etc.) that require on-going maintenance and replacement.
- Full occupancy in the Administration Building dictates that some form of expansion or re-development is required sooner rather than later.
- Solid waste management does not represent a significant issue at this time.
- Our support of the Airport facility will continue as we view this asset as being a significant benefit that will continue to support the growth of the County.
- Internet access throughout the County is important to us *and Council will be an advocate to actively enhance and expand the network.*
- *The Province continues to download responsibilities – replacement and maintenance of bridges.*
- *The Province has increased allowable axle weights in general and further increased weights for the timber industry – this is likely to lead to increased pressure on the County by other road user.*
- *To take advantage of continued aggressive pricing by suppliers we have gone to tender earlier than usual on some large dollar contracts.*

The Strategies

Infrastructure

Three-Year Willed Future

1. Gravel road network will approach a level of quality that will remove the necessity of imposing summer bans.
2. We will have completed a service level assessment of our road network, including: road quality, pavement, dust control, etc.
3. We will have a formalized Road Network Plan in-place.
4. Black top overlay will be delivered at the rate of 30 kilometers per year.
5. We will have a decision on securing long-term leases for crown-land gravel resources sufficient to meet our needs for *100 years and with an eye to regional needs*.
6. We will have a definitive use for or a plan for the Currie land west of town.
7. We will be in the process of resolving our space/occupancy issue in the Administration Building.
8. *All roads that are built, will be built to a ban free standard. (amended 2010)*
9. *We will cooperate with other rural municipalities to explore possibilities of providing pavement on roads at our boundaries.*
10. *The Road Network Plan will identify what East – West road links are needed.*

The Strategies

Infrastructure

Ten-Year Willed Future

1. Road network will reflect latest developments of road construction technology.
2. Re-surfacing will continue at the same level of service (30 kilometers per year).
3. We will have secured gravel resources for the County's *50 year needs in Strategic areas and 100 years needs elsewhere.*
4. An Administration Building solution will be in place.
5. *We will have a solution in place for bridges.*

The Strategies

Infrastructure

Our Strategies

Short-term:

1. *Enter into a dialogue with residents that will examine residents needs and expectations around the road network.*
2. Build upon the current Road Priority List to develop a comprehensive Road Network Plan.
3. Conduct a Space Needs Assessment for the Administration Building.
4. Examine potential of joint solution for administration space with the Town;(e.g. Joint occupancy, Town take-over of existing County space, etc.).
5. Look at reviving CRC Partnership to look at regional solutions to service delivery.
6. *Actively lobby existing providers for expansion and enhancement of wireless networks in the County.*
7. Provide front money to build towers for wireless internet network.
9. *Take the initiative to work with the County of Ponoka to get pavement into the north east sections of the County.*
10. *We will determine our position on bridges prior to entering into negotiations and lobbying of the Provincial Government.*

Long-term:

1. Look at paving alternatives that use less oil.

The Strategies

Governance

Summary of Existing Realities

- We are experiencing changes in the expectations of our stakeholders.
- Our traditional means of communicating with the public at large and individual stakeholder groups have served us well in the past *but do require that we begin using alternative mechanisms to ensure we are sending the right messages on a consistent basis. (amended 2010)*
- In the past we have not measured our own performance as a Council and have used election time as the ultimate test.
- We have entered into Strategic Planning as an ‘event’ rather than an integrated process that is tied to multi-year capital plans, annual business plans and the budget.
- Our ownership of Council policies is inconsistently acknowledged *but we are getting better.*
- *Stakeholder expectations are growing.*
- *We require better and more effective means of communicating with our stakeholders.*
- *Strategic Planning is becoming an integrated process tied to other planning processes.*
- *Historically, we have not lobbied provincial Ministers directly but now see a need to do so.*
- *We continue to support the lobbying efforts of AAMDC on broad issues of general concern to rural municipalities.*

The Strategies

Governance

Three-Year Willed Future

1. We will have a communications strategy in place to keep our residents and stakeholders informed.
2. The process for preparing and up-dating of the strategic plan will be institutionalized.
3. There will be a long-term capital plan in place that address capital needs beyond the current budget time frame.
4. Annual Business Plans will be developed that are integrated to the budget and will reference the Strategic Plan.
6. *We will have conducted an assessment of Council's performance.*

Our Strategies

1. Acquire communications resource to prepare strategy and address delivery of the County's messages.
2. Review the Strategic Plan on an annual basis to up-date the plan and to assess Council's progress and performance in achieving the Plan.
3. Bring together various plans and planning processes that involve capital items into one comprehensive capital plan.
5. *Charge Administration with researching and recommending an approach to conducting a Council Performance Evaluation.*
6. *Charge Administration with developing a framework to prioritize County initiatives that consume management resources and impact on the capacity and capabilities of these resources.*

The Strategies

Intergovernmental Relations

Summary of Existing Realities

- We have had a long and successful partnership with the Town of Rocky Mountain House and the Village of Caroline.
- The partnership has resulted in the development of shared services arrangements among the three municipalities.
- A municipal airport is jointly operated by the Town and the County.
- Our council and staff are active participants in many Provincial Committees.
- Our approach to dealing with the Province has not always been the most productive.
- We have few dealings with the federal government but should do a better job in putting ourselves in line to receive support from the federal government.
- *New Provincial Government reporting guidelines potentially result in misleading financial results – multi-million dollar surplus from restatement of reserves.*

The Strategies

Intergovernmental Relations

Three-Year Willed Future

1. We will continue to champion the CRC Partnership as an effective means of delivering regional services.
2. There will be more integrated service delivery on a regional basis with the Town and the Village.
3. We will have *lobbying strategies* in-place for dealing effectively with the Provincial Government. (amended 2010)
4. We will have an increased presence on Provincial Committees to promote our point-of-view.
5. We will be successful in getting federal and provincial approvals.
6. We will have an increased profile with the Federal Government.
7. Identified opportunities to enhance / maintain relationships with neighbouring counties.
8. *We will be viewed as an authoritative voice by the province in discussions concerning the Land Use Framework.*
9. *Our municipal reserves reporting will reflect the fact that we have allocated reserves for specific initiatives.*
10. *We will do a better job of informing federal MPs of our position on important issues.*
11. *We will provide support to provincial officials who are lobbying the federal government on issues of importance to the County.*
12. *We will have lobbying strategies in-place for dealing effectively with the provincial government.*

The Strategies

Intergovernmental Relations

Our Strategies

1. Look at the list of CRC partnership opportunities and take the lead in making them happen.
2. Holding Joint council meetings with the Town and the Village and potentially with neighbours.
3. Make relationship building with The Town and the Village a priority.
4. Work with other municipalities and associations to influence government.
5. Encourage staff to pursue their provincial relationships.
6. Actively pursue the *building of relationships with Blake Richards and Blaine Calkins.*
7. Promote mutual aid agreements.
8. Participate in activities of neighbouring municipalities when invited to do so.
9. *Actively pursue all avenues to positively influence the final version of the Land Use Framework.*
11. *Reserve reporting will indicate that all reserves have been allocated to specific initiatives.*
12. *We will make use of available resources to develop our skills at lobbying elected officials in other levels of government.*
13. *We will make use of available resources to develop our skills at lobbying administrative officials in other levels of government .*



Moving Ahead

This is an ambitious plan that sets forth many specific objectives and targets for Clearwater County to achieve in both the short and long term.

The next step in this process is for Administration to take this Plan and to build the business plans that will be necessary.

The long-term success of this initiative will be found in Council's (or in anyone else's) ability to track their performance against this Plan. Having a Strategic Plan is having a roadmap to the future with measurable milestones along the way.