

# ASCENSION

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## PUBLIC CIRCULATION RESPONSES

The Conceptual Scheme was submitted to Rocky View County administration in August 2017 and was circulated to both internal and external stakeholders and area residents for feedback. Letters were received from approximately 35 area households, in addition to a combined letter signed by 28 people (some of whom were also the authors of individual letters) by Rocky View County Administration in Fall 2017 and were provided to the project team.

Updates were made to the Conceptual Scheme throughout 2020 and it was re-submitted to Rocky View County Administration in Fall 2020. The plan was then recirculated to the same internal and external stakeholders and area residents for additional feedback. Letters were received from approximately 41 area residents (some of which were duplications from the 2017 submissions).

Both sets of letters were reviewed both prior to and following the 2020 resubmission and contributed to some of the updates that took place to the Conceptual Scheme. Many common themes arose in both sets of letters and responses to the most common questions and concerns have been outlined below.

### **Bearspaw Area Structure Plan**

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#### **Some concerns were raised about the Conceptual Schemes compliance with the Bearspaw Area Structure Plan.**

The Area Structure Plan was originally adopted in 1994, and since that time the economic and development conditions of the County and adjacent urban municipalities have changed significantly. The ASP specifies that “The Plan is a dynamic document that is open to review, revision and amendment by all constituents, as new information, issues and solutions come to the fore” (p.1). This Area Structure Plan is currently undergoing review and update by Rocky View County.

### **Residential Density**

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#### **Many concerns were raised about the proposed density for the plan area, specifically it being significantly higher than the surrounding country residential area.**

Although the density is higher than typical country residential development, the lands are directly adjacent to the City of Calgary and a major transportation corridor, therefore the project team believes that a transitional density, between City of Calgary and Rocky View County standards is appropriate. Within the City of Calgary, new communities are generally required to have a minimum density of 8 units per acre (upa) (20 units per hectare(uph)), while in country residential areas of Rocky View County, parcels generally range between 2.0 - 4.0 ac equating to 0.25 – 0.5 upa. The density proposed in the Conceptual Scheme is 3.76 upa (9.3 uph), almost exactly midway between the two densities.

In addition, the land uses and parcel sizes currently being contemplated within the plan area recommend larger lots around the perimeter of the plan area adjacent to existing residential properties, with smaller lot sizes within the interior of the plan area and towards the Marketplace, creating a sensitive transition of density with existing development.

#### **Additional concerns regarding density included some opposition to the inclusion of multi-family style development within the plan area.**

Between the 2017 version of the Conceptual Scheme and the updated 2020 version, a number of changes have occurred to the proposed distribution of housing types within the plan area. One major change being the shift of a large portion of the comprehensive residential area to single-family development. This change (as well as other adjustments to the general plan layout) resulted in a decrease of 127 units of multifamily residential, and an increase of 55 units of single family, for an overall decrease of 72 units within the residential area.

There has been an indication of support for additional seniors’ residential options within the Bearspaw community to allow residents the option of aging in place. Therefore, the estimate for potential seniors’ residential units to be accommodated within the Market Place area was increased from 50 units to 300 units between the 2017 and 2020 versions of the plan. This increase is intended to allow for a variety of development forms within the Market Place that support the vibrant and walkable destination that is envisioned.

The shift in development areas and unit estimates resulted in an overall increase of 178 units. The impacts from this increase should be minimal as it is mainly due to the increased estimate of seniors housing which generally has fewer impacts on transportation and service use than other forms of development.

**Many letters were concerned about the proposed density for the plan area and cited it as 7 upa and “17 times higher” than the 0.4 upa in the surrounding area.**

There was some confusion in the interpretation of the density between units per acre and units per hectare, as the density of the 2017 Conceptual Scheme was proposed at 7.05 units per hectare. The proposed units per acre for the updated conceptual scheme is 3.76 upa and excluding the Seniors residential from that calculation (which is standard practice in the City of Calgary) the density is reduced to 2.49 upa.

**Some concerns were raised about the transition between Ascension and the neighbouring country residential properties.**

Section 6.7 of the Conceptual Scheme outlines the Boundary Interface Considerations and details strategies through its policies to limit negative impacts on neighbouring properties. For example features such as setbacks, landscaping and berms will be utilized to limit noise or visual connections between the properties. In addition, the land uses and parcel sizes currently being contemplated within the plan area recommend larger lots around the perimeter of the plan area adjacent to existing residential properties, with smaller lot sizes within the interior of the plan area and towards the Marketplace.

## Market Place

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**Some comments received indicated opposition to the inclusion of the Market Place within the plan area and suggested that there are enough commercial services in the surrounding area.**

Although there are commercial areas in the adjacent neighborhoods within the City of Calgary, they are far enough away that they are usually accessed by car. For example, the SE corner of the plan area at the intersection of Blueridge Rise and 12 Mile Coulee Road is approximately 2.1 km (~25 min walk) to the Sobeys in Tuscany, and approximately 1km away (~15 min walk) to the Rocky Ridge Co-op, which includes crossing a major intersection. In addition, neighborhood commercial within Rocky View County in this area is extremely limited.

The Market Place within Ascension is intended to provide a variety of services to meet the daily needs of area residents within walking distance. In alignment with principles for complete communities and sustainable design, the Market Place will allow both new and existing residents to meet their daily needs without the requirement to get in the car, this is particularly important for both youth and seniors anticipated to reside in this area for whom driving is not always an option.

**There were also some additional concerns about the commercial Market Place being out of place for the character of the area, and its potential to cause adverse impacts on light pollution and noise in the area.**

The Ascension Conceptual Scheme includes very specific descriptions and policies for the area to ensure that the layout and architectural design promote a walkable neighborhood scale design that suits the character of the area. Policy 6.3.6 specifies that “Architectural controls to ensure development of high quality and visual compatibility with the surrounding residential development that incorporates screening and landscaping elements shall be registered on title as a condition of subdivision endorsement.” While policy 6.3.8 specifies that “Consideration should be given to the lighting details in the development of the Market Place to prevent light spill or waste light and be dark-sky compliant.”

In addition, Section 6.8 of the Conceptual Scheme outlines the requirements for Architectural and Landscaping Design Guidelines with policy 6.8.1 specifying that “As part of the application for the first subdivision, the Developer shall submit for consideration and approval by Rocky View County, a set of Architectural and Landscaping Guidelines to regulate specific residential and commercial building criteria. These guidelines shall address: exterior building finishing and colours, landscaping, water conservation, building size, exterior illumination, and any additional considerations deemed necessary to uphold the commitment to provide high quality, valued built form. All architectural and landscaping guidelines shall be registered by caveat on each lot.”

All of these, and other policies within the plan, are intended to address the concerns of area residents regarding the character of the area, ensuring that future development is required to be cohesive with the surrounding landscape and existing residential.

**There were some objections to the concept of a hotel being included within the Market Place.**

A hotel is not planned for the Market Place at this time.

**Some comments suggested that the Market Place should have been located within the center of the Ascension community as opposed to the Eastern edge.**

The commercial area is located on the eastern edge of the plan area for several reasons. Access and visibility to commercial sites are important for ensuring knowledge of available services and efficient access in and out, which this area of the site is most ideally suited. In addition, the subject lands have a large natural ravine running through the center of the site which is proposed for preservation (ER) to limit impacts on the natural environment and wildlife and provide natural park and pathway space for area residents.

## Transportation

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**There were several concerns raised about the increase of traffic in the area as a result of this development.**

This development will result in an increase in traffic in the area, but a detailed Transportation Impact Assessment and thoughtful road design will ensure that the internal and external roads are constructed to safely accommodate this increase. The roads specified within the plan area comply with Rocky View County standards, and several external road improvements have also been specified to improve safety and the general flow of traffic.

For example, the peanut roundabout recommended within the 2017 version of the Conceptual Scheme has been amended to a standard round about that aligns the existing offset intersection of Blueridge Rise and Tusslewood Drive. This upgrade will not only improve the turning safety on and off these roads but has taken into consideration the impacts on and from the future interchange upgrade at Highway 1A and 12 Mile Coulee Road.

In addition, with or without the Ascension development, the 12 Mile Coulee Road and Highway 1A intersection (within the City of Calgary) will require an upgrade to accommodate future growth in the area. In anticipation of this, the Conceptual Scheme has detailed an interim design solution for this intersection to improve the flow of traffic until such time that the full interchange upgrade occurs. The Continuous Flow Intersection will ensure that traffic flows will remain within acceptable capacity standards for the next number of years (projections in the TIA were for the next 20 years).

It should also be noted that some road upgrades have already taken place by the City of Calgary on 12 Mile Coulee Road since 2017 when these circulation comments were received.

Finally, as previously noted in the density section, the adjustments to the residential unit distribution from 2017 to 2020 may result in less traffic overall as seniors residential generally has fewer impacts on transportation.

**There were some concerns raised about pedestrian safety along Blueridge Rise.**

The comments noted that many people currently walk along Blueridge rise and were concerned that the increase in traffic would be unsafe for pedestrians. The Conceptual Scheme specifies that this road will be upgraded to a 4-lane major road as per Rocky View County Standards. This road section contains a median as well as separated sidewalks which will significantly increase the safety of this road which currently does not support any pedestrian (or cyclist) infrastructure.

**There were some concerns about the multiple access points into and out of the Ascension community which would divert traffic past previously quiet country residential areas.**

The multiple access points to and from the site from the northwest, southwest and southeast support the distribution of traffic between multiple areas. If any of these access points were eliminated the impacts on the other areas would be increased. The three-access point design detailed in the Conceptual Scheme distributes the impacts.

There were also some comments suggesting that road access for this area should be provided directly from Highway 1A. This is not an option due to land ownership, setbacks required from the provincial highway and specifications for the spacing of intersections on and off a provincial highway. One point of clarification that should be noted from the 2020 circulation responses, the "potential future access" arrow identified on the Conceptual Scheme is not for potential future access to Highway 1A, but to the farmstead located to the north whose access road may be diverted due to Alberta Transportation roadway improvements. The legend on this figure has been updated to improve clarity.

**There were particular concerns about the access points into and out of the Ascension community from Bearspaw Road and Bearspaw Village Road, and the corresponding increase in traffic in these areas.**

In accordance with Rocky View County and general development standards, multiple access points into and out of communities are required to support safety and emergency access guidelines. In addition, the provision of multiple access points serves to distribute traffic through multiple routes thereby reducing the traffic in any one location. According to the TIA, the majority of traffic is anticipated to enter and exit the community via Blueridge Rise and 12 Mile Coulee Road with Bearspaw Road and Bearspaw Village Road as lesser trafficked routes. Provisions for the upgrade of Blue Ridge Rise and the intersection at 12 Mile Coulee Road to accommodate this increased use have been included in the Conceptual Scheme.

**There was one question about why parcels south of the plan area were identified in the ownership figure.**

These parcels are also owned by the developer (1797669 Alberta Ltd.) and have been identified on the ownership map because the proposed realignment of Blueridge Rise and the roundabout on 12 Mile Coulee Road will intersect these parcels.

## Utilities, Infrastructure & Services

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**Some area residents stated concerns that the local school systems would not have the capacity to accommodate the increase in population.**

As stated in the Conceptual Scheme the area is situated within the jurisdiction of the Rocky View Schools Division (RVSD) and Calgary Catholic School District (CCSD). At the time of the plan development the RVSD indicated that a school site would not be warranted while the CCSD requested additional consultation at future stages of development. To ensure that the school requirements are met additional consultation will occur at later stages of development with both Rocky View County and the school boards to ensure that the population in this area can be accommodated.

**Some concerns were raised regarding the possible reduction in police and fire service in the area as a result of the development.**

Municipal services such as police and fire service are funded by municipal taxes and therefore increased development in this area will provide the funding to the County to ensure that levels of service are not negatively impacted.

Section 9.5 of the Conceptual Scheme provides further detail on the provision of fire, police and emergency services to the area.

**Some Blueridge Mountain Estates residents questioned whether the servicing of Ascension would impact the quality of their servicing.**

Water servicing will be provided by Blazer Water Systems, which contains the development area within the franchise service area. Blazer Water Systems was consulted during the initial development and subsequent edits to the Conceptual Scheme and have indicated that a single feed connection from the existing Blueridge Mountain Estates would be sufficient for servicing Ascension. However, in order to mitigate any negative impact on the existing servicing to this area, the project team has identified a number of options to be considered during the detailed design stage including back feeding to the Blueridge main to provide improved level of service to Blueridge or installing a separate line all together along the same route. The final strategy will be identified at the detailed design and subdivision stage.

**Some residents questioned whether the stormwater impacts on lands to the South were considered in the design of the plan area.**

To protect downstream public and private properties, Rocky View County requires that discharge from new developments be less than or equal to pre-development discharges. In order to achieve this, the Bearspaw-Glenbow MDP has established a post-development unit area peak discharge of 0.99 L/s/ha. Storm water modelling has taken place for the plan area and the proposed stormwater management facilities have been designed to comply with all Rocky View County and Provincial Standards.

**Some concerns were raised about the use of the Bearspaw Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant within Watermark to provide sanitary servicing to Ascension.**

The Bearspaw Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant is owned by Rocky View County and currently operated by Macdonald Communities Limited, both of who were consulted during the development of the Conceptual Scheme. Expansion of the Treatment Plant is required to service Ascension and space is available within the County's Public Utility Lot for plant construction immediately to the north of the existing facility.

## Natural and Wildlife

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**Some comments received stated a concern that the proposed development would result in a reduction in the native natural areas currently enjoyed by area residents.**

The subject lands are private and have been operating agriculturally for some time, therefore the development for residential use will not disturb any existing lands used for recreational purposes by area residents. The dedication of municipal reserve and environmental reserve throughout the plan area has been done thoughtfully to preserve the native vegetation, and topography and pathways have been included throughout the plan area to increase the public trail options for new and existing residents. In addition, the Conceptual Scheme states that park and pathway areas will be vegetated with native species, thus supporting the biodiversity in the area.

**Some residents were concerned that the additional development would reduce their enjoyment of wildlife in the area.**

Similar to the previous response, the majority of the subject lands have been cultivated over time and therefore do not represent wildlife habitat. The natural vegetated areas through the ravine in the plan area will be preserved in their natural state and will continue to support the species that utilize it as a corridor.

The revised storm pond design has also been adjusted to a more natural style surrounded by native vegetation, which will also support wildlife in the area.

**There was a concern that the Conceptual Scheme did not factor in potential historical areas as identified in Figure 6 of the Bearspaw ASP.**

A Historical Resources Overview and Historical Resource Impact Assessment field work were completed on the subject lands in 2017. Future avoidance and/or mitigation of the two sites identified within the plan area will be in compliance with Alberta Culture and Tourism (ACT) requirements. ACT approval is required before stripping and grading, and a clearance letter will be obtained and provided to the County before that time. Additional details are included in Section 4.2 of the Conceptual Scheme.

## Implementation

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**There were some concerns about the potential nuisance that will be caused to neighboring residents during the construction process for this area.**

Nuisance during the construction process will be mitigated as much as possible, and Policy 12.2.2 in the Conceptual Scheme specifies that "A Construction Management Plan must be submitted for each phase as a condition of subdivision."

In addition, Rocky View County has a Noise Control Bylaw (Bylaw No. C-5772-2003) and a Construction Management section in their Subdivision Servicing Standards, and these regulations will all be complied with during the construction process.