

Town of Fort Smith

COMMUNITY PLAN

March 2025

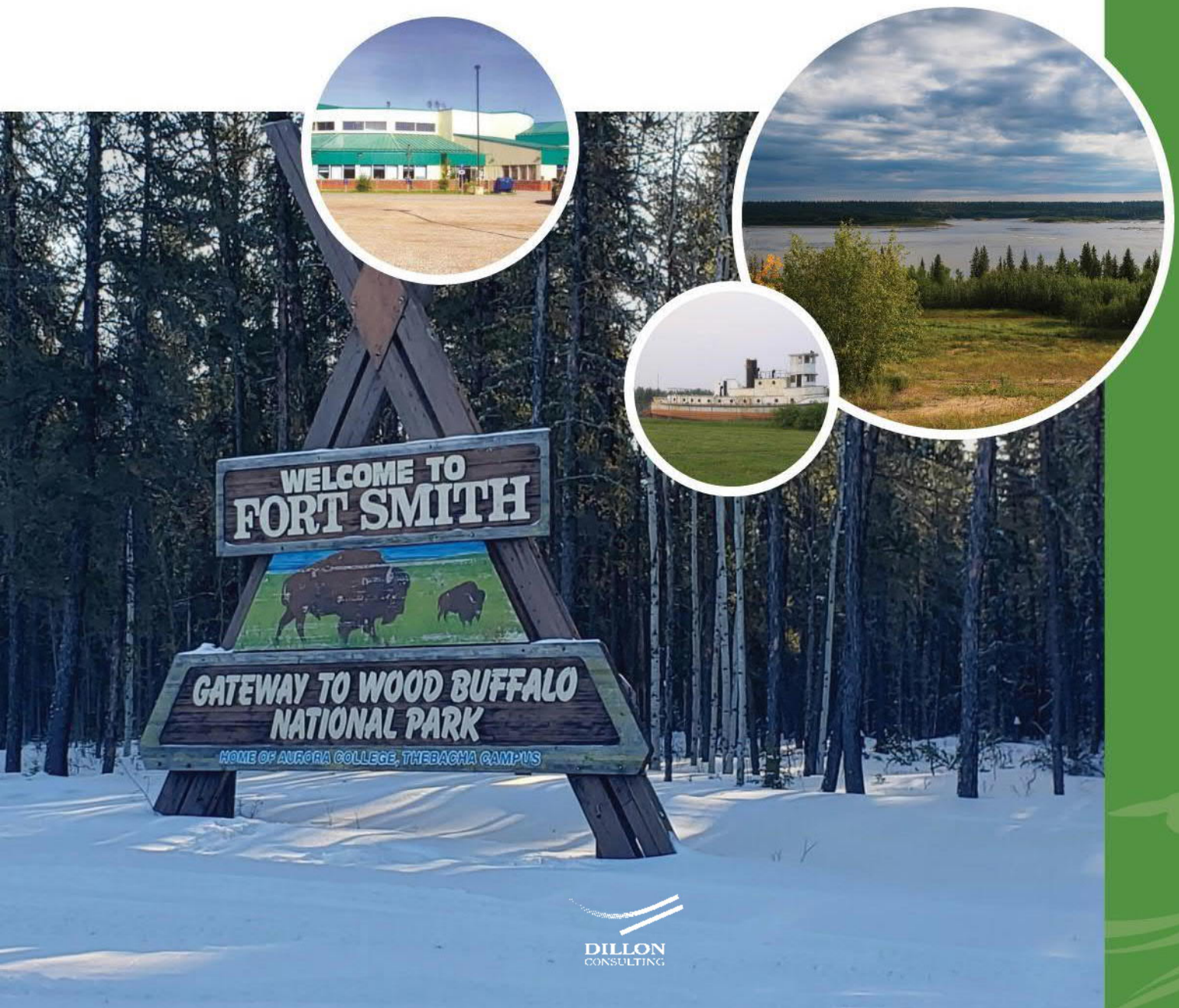


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Schedule B: Land Use Concept Maps



Definitions

Term	Definition
Area Development Plan (ADP)	A planning document with additional detail to the development of specific areas (then provided in a Community Plan) and informs how the Zoning Bylaw is implemented (i.e., development permits)
Community Planning and Development Act (SNWT 2011, c22) (Act)	The primary legislation that governs community planning and land development in the Northwest Territories. The <i>Act</i> establishes a framework for community planning and provides a process for developing community plans and land use plans.
Cultural and Traditional Land Practices	Activities relating to the use of land in connection to ancestral practices, including but not limited to hunting, trapping, and ceremonies.
FireSmart	Practices and principles established by FireSmart Canada, a national program that has developed practical, effective, and science-based practices that allow communities to take proactive steps in mitigating wildfire risks through education, planning, and action.
Nuisance Impacts	Adverse effects or disturbances that a particular land use or development may have on its surroundings, potentially affecting the quality of life, health, or property value of neighbouring properties. Adverse effects that may occur include noise, smells, fumes, traffic, etc.
Municipal Service Agreement (MSA)	An agreement for municipal service (either formal or informal) between a First Nation and the Town of Fort Smith where one level of government purchases municipal services from the other. Municipal Service Agreements may also include jointly funded and operated services.

This Plan follows the definitions provided in Part 1 of the Act.

Further definitions are provided in the Zoning Bylaw.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This is the Community Plan (the Plan) for the Town of Fort Smith (Fort Smith/Town). The Plan's primary objective is to function as a comprehensive, long-range planning document, guiding the development and use of land in the Town for the next 20 years. It is designed to serve as a supportive resource for the Council's decision-making and guide the Administration in implementing development initiatives within the Town. Acknowledging the distinct geographical characteristics and political complexities of the Town, including but not limited to governance structures and Indigenous land interests.

The Plan was prepared based on a detailed analysis of background information, public and stakeholder engagement, and consultation with the local Indigenous Governments/Authorities. It considers the Town's history, current demographic and economic context, climate vulnerabilities, current and potential future facilities and resources, land supply and demand analysis, and the impact of projected land development needs. A Background and Summary of Engagement Reports were prepared to document the analysis.

It is intended to be a 'living document' and may be updated occasionally as the Town grows and changes. **Section 6.5 - Monitoring and Reviews** of the Plan provides the Council with direction for ongoing monitoring and review; a full comprehensive review and update of the adopted Plan is required every eight years as per the *Community Planning and Development Act (the Act)*.

This Plan does not establish priorities for the Council. It is a guiding policy document, and it is recommended that its implementation be monitored and the Plan itself be reviewed regularly. This ensures that it continues to reflect evolving global circumstances, such as changes in climate and technology, and remains aligned with the Town's long-term Vision.

1.2 VISION

Fort Smith is a vibrant, future-focused community with a small-town feel, where residents enjoy a high quality of life. With efficient services and sustainable land use, the Town actively preserves and enhances its heritage, culture, and natural environment.

1.3 PLAN PRIORITY GOALS AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The development of the Plan included creating Priority Goals (Goals) and supporting objectives to guide development in Fort Smith. **Table 1** lists the goals and objectives that form the foundation of the plan. The order of the Goals in **Table 1** does not reflect priority; the Council will consider these Priority Goals when making decisions about land uses within the Town.

Table 1: Key Goals & Objectives

Goal	Objectives
1. Promote a variety of housing options	a) Identify available land for future residential development. b) Create policies and processes that support a range of dwelling types. c) Explore using incentive and/or disincentive programs to encourage housing development.
2. Foster a thriving and diverse economy that supports sustainable growth	a) Permitted land uses and development regulations consider multi-use activities that can support diverse potential business opportunities. b) Encourage opportunities to subdivide and/or re-develop existing properties in the Town Centre to stimulate the growth of local businesses. c) Work with Aurora College and government agencies to support opportunities to diversify the local economy, including providing land for new academic programs. d) Engage local businesses and the Thebacha Chamber of Commerce to understand how the Town's land use policies and regulations can support local businesses.
3. Advance reconciliation with Indigenous Governments/Aut horities through collaborative land use planning and decision-making.	a) Participate in the Thebacha Leadership Council (TLC) and engage with Indigenous governments/authorities through a government-to-government dialogue on development and land use. b) Support the development of Indigenous Government/Authorities land by establishing Municipal Service Agreements where appropriate. c) Indigenous Governments/Authorities will determine permitted land uses on their designated land.
4. Preserve and enhance the character of Fort Smith.	a) Encourage development highlighting local culture and history through its design or intended use. b) Provide incentives to developers who provide space for local culture, arts, and history to be shared with the public.

Goal	Objectives
5. Foster a vibrant community that is connected and active	a) Follow the recommendations of the Town's Integrated Transportation Master Plan to provide inclusive modes of transportation that cater to residents' diverse needs and preferences. b) Ensure that all community facilities, where possible, are located in the Town Centre. c) Maintain sufficient land to allow for a range of spaces that will support diverse programs and activities catering to different interests and demographic groups, including seniors, children, and individuals with disabilities.
6. Protect the natural environment by integrating climate change mitigation and adaptation, with consideration of the Town's climate vulnerabilities, into all development practices.	a) All new developments shall incorporate adaptation or mitigation techniques considering the Town's identified climate vulnerabilities. b) The Town should assess the climate vulnerabilities regularly. c) The Fort Smith Wildfire Protection Plan recommendations shall be implemented on all Town property and infrastructure. The Town will direct residents and businesses to the current wildfire resources. d) Development on environmentally sensitive lands shall be strictly limited to the minimal infrastructure necessary for passive recreational activities. e) The Town's drainage systems shall be maintained and, if necessary, upgraded to accommodate the potential for increased precipitation levels.
7. Ensure there is sufficient land to support high-quality services and infrastructure	a) Develop policies to guide development per the Town's Vision, which considers municipal infrastructure and services. b) Promote compact development (multi-story and mixed uses) where appropriate. c) Encourage the renovation and adaptive reuse of existing buildings for new purposes. d) Collaborate with Indigenous Governments/Authorities to coordinate land transfers that support future municipal infrastructure development.

1.4 AUTHORITY & REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

This document is the Town of Fort Smith Community Plan. It has been prepared in accordance with the *Community Planning and Development Act, S.N.W.T. (2011) c22* as amended (the Act). This Community Plan replaces the previous Community Plan (Bylaw 935).

1.5 PLAN FORMAT

The Community Plan consists of various parts, being:

- **Schedule A** – The Community Plan, which lays out the goals, objectives, and policies referred to in this section should be read in conjunction with the Land Use Concept Maps.
- **Schedule B** – Includes a series of Land Use Concept Maps that divide the community into designated areas suitable for different types of development. The Maps should be read in conjunction with the plan's goals, objectives, and policies.

1.6 PLAN INTERPRETATION

The Plan is intended to be read in its entirety. Reading only specific sections or policies in isolation may not reflect the general intent of the Plan. Compliance with policies in this Plan shall be interpreted and applied as follows:

- **'Shall'** means mandatory compliance.
- **'Should'** means compliance in principle but is subject to the discretion of the Approving Authority where compliance is impractical or undesirable because of valid planning principles or circumstances unique to a specific application.
- **'May'** means discretionary compliance or a choice in applying policy.

1.7 ADOPTION AND AMENDMENTS

A bylaw to adopt a Community Plan shall receive first and second reading before the Council shall submit the Plan to the Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) for approval by the Minister. Once approval is received, the Plan shall receive a third reading from the Council to formally adopt it by law. A Community Plan has no effect unless it is approved by the Minister and adopted as a bylaw by the Council.

The Plan is intended to be flexible and consider the development and operational needs of Fort Smith over the next 20 years. It is intended to be amended from time to time in response to changing and evolving needs of the Town. More significant amendments to the Plan, including changes to the vision, goals, objectives, land use designations, or maps may require approval from the Minister. The Town Administration can make minor changes, including grammatical and formatting updates. Any updates to the Plan that do not require approval from the Minister should still be shared with MACA for information purposes.

1.8 PLAN CIRCULATION

Once adopted, the Community Plan should be made public to the residents of Fort Smith and circulated to relevant Indigenous governments and designated authorities, relevant government departments and agencies, and other key stakeholders so they are aware of the Plan and can coordinate development decisions to align with the Plan's goals and objectives. To best implement the Plan, the primary developers, and Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) departments that administer land and support community development must be aware of it. This includes but is not limited to:

- Aurora College;
- Environment Canada;
- Fort Smith Métis Council;
- Fort Smith Regional Airport;
- GNWT Department of Environment and Climate Change;
- GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment;
- GNWT Department of Infrastructure;
- GNWT Department of Municipal and Community Affairs;
- Housing NWT;
- NWT Power Corporation;
- Northern Life Museum and Cultural Centre (NLMCC);
- Province of Alberta;
- Salt River First Nation;
- Smith's Landing First Nations; and,
- Wood Buffalo National Park.

2.0 Town Context

This section provides a brief overview of the Town based on the research conducted as part of the planning process. It is intended as a high-level summary of the research and provides the context of the influences that shaped the Plan's objectives and policies.

2.1 OUR COMMUNITY

2.1.1 Location

Fort Smith is located within Treaty 8 Territory and is the traditional land of the Salt River First Nation, Smith's Landing First Nation, and the traditional homelands of the Fort Smith Métis. The Town is in the South Slave Region of the Northwest Territories and borders the south bank of the Slave River, which connects Lake Athabasca to Great Slave Lake. Fort Smith is situated on the southern boundary of the Northwest Territories and shares a border with Alberta. The north edge of the Town is defined by the natural course of the Slave River (refer to Figure 1 for the Regional Context Map). These natural and artificial limitations restrict the potential for future expansion of the Town.

Two communities are located just south of the NWT border in Alberta: Smith's Landing First Nations and Fort Fitzgerald. Fort Smith provides services to both communities' residents and is a source of employment. The Salt River First Nations has a portion of the Indian Reserve No. 195 inside the Town's municipal boundary. The Indian Reserve No. 195 was established under the Salt River First Nation Treaty Settlement Agreement signed in March 2002.

Wood Buffalo National Park (Park), the second largest National Park in the world and the largest in Canada, is located approximately 18 kilometres southwest of Fort Smith, surrounding the south and west sides of the Town. The Park is an important protected area that attracts tourists to the Town.

On June 21, 2024, five community leaders in Fort Smith signed a memorandum of agreement establishing the **Thebacha Leadership Council**. This Council comprises the Fort Smith Mayor, the Chiefs of Salt River First Nation and Smith's Landing First Nation, the Fort Smith Métis Council President, and the Thebacha Member of the Legislative Assembly. The agreement reflects their shared commitment to collaborate on common priorities.

Community Plan

Town Context

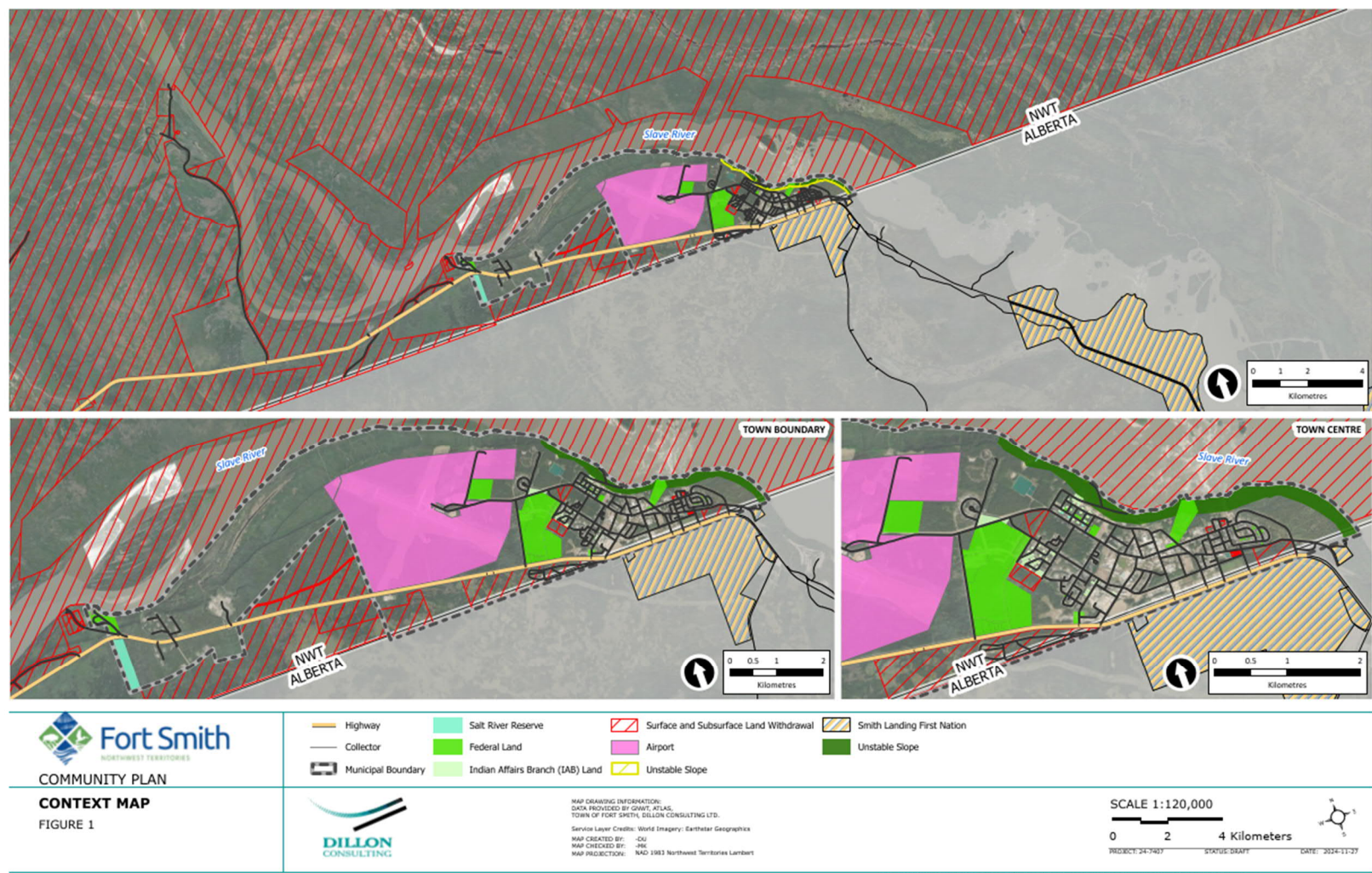


Figure 1: Regional Context Map

2.1.2 History

The Chipewyan, Dene, and Métis were the first to occupy and use the land, which is now Fort Smith. They hunted and fished in the area and used the tributaries of the Slave River for sustenance and transportation. After contact and the arrival of the explorers and fur traders, the Slave River became a crucial gateway from the Prairies, enabling travel north from Lake Athabasca.

In 1872, the Hudson's Bay Company established two outposts: the first, Smith's Landing at Cassette Rapids, and the second, Fort Smith at the Rapids of the Drowned, named after its governor, Donald Alexander Smith.

The Slave River remained an important transportation route, carrying freight from southern Canada to the Arctic until the highway to Hay River was built in 1949.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, several institutions established a presence in Fort Smith, including the northern headquarters for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Northern Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, and the Union Bank of Canada (the first bank in the NWT). Due to its beneficial location and established services, Fort Smith served as the home for the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories between 1911 and 1967 until the City of Yellowknife became the official capital city of the territory.

Fort Smith was incorporated as a Village in 1964 and became a Town two years later in 1966. This was the same year an all-weather road was completed between Fort Smith and Hay River. This highway formally connected the Town to all areas of Alberta. In 1987, the municipal boundary was expanded west of the Town Centre to encompass the area known today as Bell Rock.

Indigenous Governance and Land Management

The South Slave Métis Framework was signed in 1996. It set out a process for negotiating a land claim and self-government agreement for the Métis people of the South Slave region of the NWT.

The Salt River First Nation Treaty Settlement Agreement was signed by the Salt River First Nations No. 195 and the Government of Canada in March 2002.

On September 5, 2008, through an Order-in-Council, the Government of Canada established the Salt River First Nation Indian Reserve No. 195. A portion of the reserve land is inside of the Town's municipal boundary and is managed and governed by the Salt River First Nation.

The NWT Métis Nation signed an Agreement-in-Principal (AIP) on land and resources in 2015. This AIP provides the most basic framework of what will be in a final agreement. It includes interim withdrawal lands inside the Town's municipal boundary, which are protected from development while the land claim and self-government negotiations are underway.

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Town Context

In 1965, Northwestern Air Lease, a regional airline, was established in Fort Smith. It focused on providing aircraft leasing and charter flights to support businesses, residents, and firefighting in the remote northern regions. However, in 1994, the airline expanded operations to provide scheduled passenger flights connecting Fort Smith to other communities in the NWT and Alberta.

In 1966, the Talston Dam was built to supply power to the Pine Point mine. The Hydro plant is approximately 64km north of Fort Smith on the Talston River at Twin Gorges Forebay. This was a large construction project, and the Town was a primary access point and staging area for construction crews and materials. It provides reliable electricity to the Town and remains a central location for workers and families associated with the facility's operation. Road access to the facility is provided through Fort Smith, and any dam expansions are expected to impact Fort Smith.

In 1968, Aurora College, as it is known today, offered its first program in Fort Smith, a Heavy Equipment Operator program. A teacher education program was added shortly after, and an official Adult Vocational Training Centre was created. The Centre would eventually become Aurora College, and Fort Smith was branded the educational capital of the Northwest Territories.

In 1968, an unexpected landslide occurred on the bank of the Slave River, wiping out a large portion of the Town's existing infrastructure. One person died, and many people lost their homes. The re-development occurred on more stable ground away from the shoreline, and future development in the sensitive area was restricted. This set a new development pattern for the Town. Erosion and slope stability continue to be a development constraint in the Town.

In the 1970s, the Wood Buffalo National Park (Park) headquarters was established in Fort Smith. This became the park's central administrative office. As access to the Park increased, visitors came to Fort Smith for services such as permits, guided tours, and other information.

In 1973, Chief Francois Paulette, from Smith's Landing First Nation, one of the 16 Chiefs part of the newly formed Indian Brotherhood, attempted to register a caveat at the GNWT Land Titles Office to establish a legal interest in Crown land in the NWT. Chief Paulette personally signed the application for the caveat. The intent of registering interest was to reaffirm that the Aboriginal title to the land had not been extinguished through the signing of Treaty 8 and 11.

This action initiated a legal process that eventually determined that Aboriginal title had not been extinguished. Between 1981 and 1988, an Agreement-in-Principle was reached that marked the beginning of negotiations for new comprehensive land claim agreements between the Government of Canada and the Indigenous peoples of the NWT. It initiated the shift in the governance of land by Indigenous groups in the NWT, including in Fort Smith.



Although described in more detail in **Section 2.1.3**, significant Indigenous agreements that impact the governance and development of land in Fort Smith include:

- 1996 – The South Slave Métis Framework is signed.
- 2002 – Salt River First Nations signs a Treaty Settlement Agreement with the Government of Canada.
- 2008 – Salt River First Nation Reserve No. 195 is established.
- 2015 – NWT Métis Nation signs an Agreement-in-Principle.

Fort Smith partnered with the Town of Hay River and the K'atl'odeeche First Nations, the Dene First Nation Community adjacent to Hay River, to host the 2018 Arctic Winter Games. To prepare for the games, the Town upgraded select recreational facilities and public spaces to accommodate the sports and cultural events and increase guests.

The NWT's 2023 wildfire season posed a significant threat to Fort Smith, leading to the evacuation of residents for several weeks. During this time, fire crews worked to enhance the existing firebreak and reduce potential fuel sources around the Town's built area. Fortunately, the Town's infrastructure was largely spared from damage, and substantial efforts were made to FireSmart it to protect it from future risks.

2.1.3 Indigenous Governance

Section 2.1.1 references three Indigenous groups that have traditionally occupied the area in and around Fort Smith. These groups include the Salt River First Nation, the Smith's Landing First Nation, and the Fort Smith Métis Council.

2.1.3.1 Salt River First Nations

The Salt River First Nation No. 195 (SRFN #195) has its headquarters in Fort Smith. The Nation, a mix of Cree and Chipewyan people, traces its modern history to the signing of Treaty 8 in 1899. It was originally comprised of two distinct groups, the Dedharesche, mainly located above the 60th parallel, and Thebatthie, situated below the 60th parallel. The Canadian government later amalgamated the two groups into one, the Fitz-Smith Native Band and then the Salt River First Nation. In 1988, the consolidated band opted to divide through a Band Council Resolution, with the Dedharesche retaining the Salt River First Nation name.

After years of negotiations, the Salt River First Nation signed a Treaty Settlement Agreement with Canada in 2002, securing a capital transfer and 102,400 acres of reserve land across multiple parcels in the Northwest Territories and Wood Buffalo National Park. This agreement, along with the establishment of Indian Reserve No. 195 in 2008, formally recognized their land rights and paved the way for their continued self-governance. Through the federal "Additional Reserve" process, SRFN #195 could add additional parcels to the reserve in 2009 and 2011.

A portion of the SRFN #195 reserve lands are inside the municipal boundary of Fort Smith. The SRFN #195 manages and develops this land for commercial, industrial, and residential uses. This includes notable developments such as a Petro Canada Gas Station and Tim Hortons, a convenience store and, more recently, the Salt River First Nation Business and Conference Centre. In August 2020, SRFN #195 received \$16.8 million from Indigenous and Services Canada to support the development of the 39-lot residential subdivision.

The Town Council and Administration recognize the SRFN #195 as a government and engage them as such.

2.1.3.2 Smith's Landing First Nation

The Smith's Landing First Nations No. 477 (SLFN) is located outside of the Town of Fort Smith in the province of Alberta. The SLFN is the traditional Thebatthie group, identified in **Section 1.1.1.1**, which became known as Smith's Landing First Nation in 1988. As described, the Thebatthie were mainly situated below the 60th parallel. This is still the case; the Smith's Landing First Nation community is located south of the NWT/AB border, approximately four kilometres from Fort Smith's Town Centre. Because of its proximity to Fort Smith, the SLFN relies on the goods and services provided by the Town.

The Town Council and Administration recognize the SLFN as a government and engage them as such.

2.1.3.3 Fort Smith Métis Council

The Fort Smith Métis Council (FSMC) represents a vibrant community of 1,400 Métis individuals with ancestral ties to the lands and waters surrounding Fort Smith. They are part of the Northwest Territories Métis Nation (NWTMN) and are descended from Cree, Chipewyan, and Slavey peoples. The FSMC, through the NWTMN, are actively negotiating a land claim and self-government agreement. Since 1996, under the South Slave Métis Framework Agreement, they have been working towards securing titled land within Fort Smith. As a result of the 2015 NWTMN Agreement-in-Principle, specific land inside of the Fort Smith municipal boundary is identified as interim land withdrawal and is being protected from development until the FSMC finalizes their negotiations.

Town Council and Administration recognize the Fort Smith Metis Council as a government and future landowners and engage them as such.

2.1.4 Population

The population of Fort Smith experienced modest and steady growth from 2001 until 2016, at which time the population saw a slight decline but remained relatively stable, with a population of 2,418 in 2021, as shown in **Figure 2** below. The longer-term population trends show a relatively stable population with a slight decrease which would be in line with most population projections in the NWT.

The largest age cohort falls within the 25 to 44-year-old age bracket (approximately 30% of the population). However, there has been a declining trend in all cohorts except those aged 60+. The population of Fort Smith is aging, which is consistent with the trend in NWT and most jurisdictions in Canada. The aging of the population is an essential consideration for land use planning. As the population grows older, there will likely be more demand for accessible and supportive housing and greater consideration for community design, allowing people to access services and destinations without needing a motor vehicle.

There is also a 'shadow population' of approximately 300 to 500 people at any given time. This has included students attending Aurora College, Fort Smith Correctional Complex inmates (closure pending), and those living outside the Town's built area but relying on municipal services. While not counted as permanent residents of Fort Smith, these residents use the roads, water, sewer, and recreation facilities that the Town needs to consider in planning.

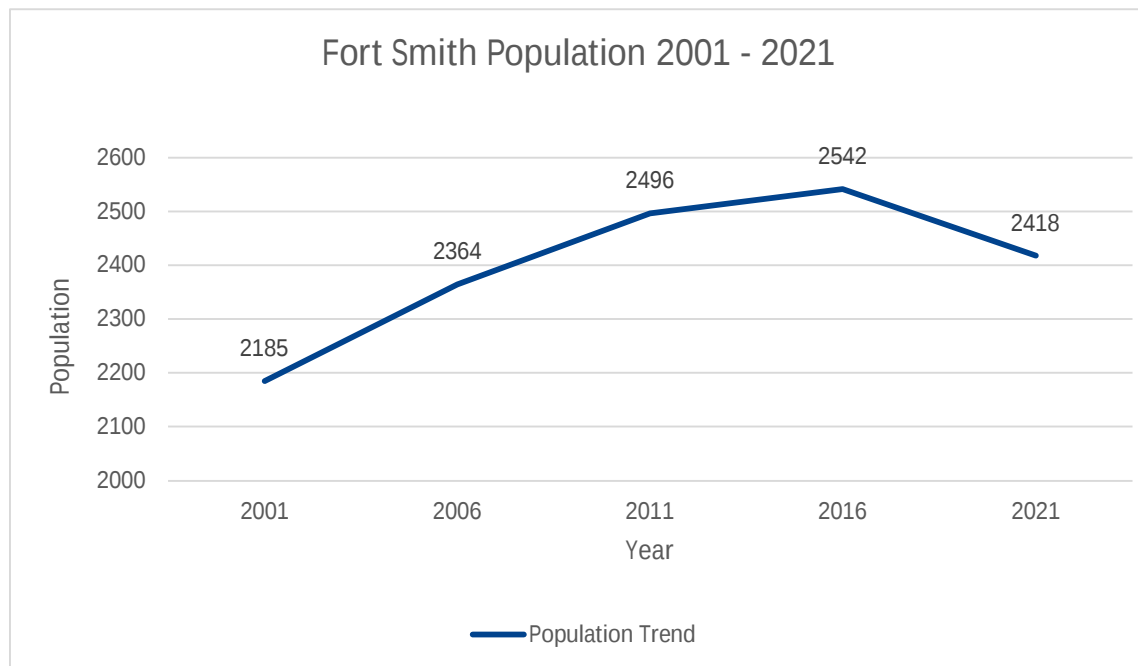


Figure 2: Fort Smith Population Trends

Source: Statistics Canada Census Data

2.1.5 Economy

The top three industries for employment in Fort Smith are:

- Public Administration – 27.3%;
- Educational Services – 13.6%; and,
- Health Care and Social Assistance – 10.3%.

Many of the labour force working in public administration, education, and health are related to Fort Smith's role as a regional centre for public services, including medical services, RCMP, and emergency services. Aurora College and the Town itself serve as other major employment centers.

2.1.6 Climate Impacts Vulnerability

Fort Smith faces numerous climate-related vulnerabilities. Increased temperatures and precipitation will lead to more intense hydrological events, escalating riverbank erosion and landslide risks while also impacting the reliability of the ice road that is built each winter between Fort Smith and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (Fort Chipewyan and Fort McMurray). A more extended fire season with hotter, drier days increases wildfire vulnerability, exacerbated by limited evacuation routes due to the Town's flat terrain and surrounding boreal forest. More frost-free days and wetter conditions increase icing events, creating risks for linear infrastructure, including power lines and transportation networks. Increased freeze-thaw cycles will damage roads and sidewalks. Though permafrost degradation is less prevalent, it still poses risks to infrastructure in discontinuous areas. A higher volume of spring freshets (water run-off from snow melt) and potential flooding threaten the sewage lagoon. Finally, increased snow loads pose a risk to structures.

2.1.7 Transportation

The Northwest Territories Highway No. 5 is the only all-season road access to Fort Smith. It connects north to Hay River and south into the Province of Alberta. Highway No. 5 connects to Alberta Highway 48 at the NWT border and is 22km long, connecting the Town to Smith's Landing First Nation, Wood Buffalo National Park, and the community of Fort Fitzgerald. A seasonal winter road connects Fort Smith to Fort Chipewyan and Alberta Highway No. 63, located in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. To increase access, the Town's Council and Administration are collaborating with other organizations to advocate for the winter road to be made into a permanent all-season road.

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The Fort Smith Regional Airport provides air connections for cargo and passenger flights. A regional airline, Northwestern Air Lease, operates out of the airport to provide regularly scheduled flights to several destinations in the NWT and Alberta. A helicopter pad also exists on airport lands to support helicopter traffic.

Most roads in the Town Centre area are paved two-way streets with no on-street parking provided. Concrete sidewalks are separated from the travelled portion of the roads by open ditches. Roads in the Bell Rock area are 2-way paved roads, no on-street parking, and no sidewalks.

2.1.8 Utilities and Municipal Services

The Town maintains underground piped water/wastewater services throughout the central Town area and provides trucked services in other areas. Currently, about 75% of the Town's infrastructure is connected to piped water/wastewater services, with the remaining 25% relying on trucked services. The Town operates a solid waste site for solid waste disposal and provides solid waste pick-up services twice weekly. A privately run beverage container recycling depot is regulated by the GNWT's Beverage Recycling program.

A Fire Department provides fire protection in the event of structure fires, motor vehicle accidents, and urban/wildland interface wildfires. It also offers pre-hospital health care and ambulance (EMS) transportation.

Fort Smith has a wealth of recreational and community facilities for a town of its size, including the Community and Recreation Centre, William Schaefer Memorial Pool, Centennial Arena, and the Mary Kaeser Library. The Town also maintains several outdoor recreational facilities such as playgrounds, skatepark, parks, baseball diamonds, tennis courts, a snowboard hill, and recreational trails used for hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling.

2.1.9 Housing

In 2023, Fort Smith conducted a Housing Needs Assessment which described the need for public housing, market rental units, and units for Aurora College students and staff. The assessment indicated that at least 225 new or renovated housing units are necessary to meet current housing needs. The Town is looking at additional housing opportunities for families, students, and seniors. This may include expanding partnerships with housing organizations and Aurora College.

Derelict buildings and vacant lots exist within the Town; however, redeveloping these lots can be costly, as they may contain contaminated soils, asbestos, or other materials that require special consideration during demolition.



3.0 General Objectives and Policies

This section outlines objectives and policies that apply to all land uses and development in the Town of Fort Smith.

3.1 TRANSPORTATION

This section aims to establish policies for a safe, efficient, and appropriate transportation system for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles within the Town. An Integrated Transportation Master Plan (ITMP) was prepared for the Town in August 2022 as a guide for developing a transportation network in Fort Smith. The ITMP was integrated into the Plan and shaped the key objectives and policies.

Table 2: Key Objectives & Policies - Transportation

Objective	Policies
1. Maintain safe and efficient transportation flow throughout Fort Smith	a) Municipal roads will be designed and maintained in accordance with best practices and the recommendations for roadway standards in Section 3.3 of the Town's ITMP. b) Municipal transportation networks should be designed to consider climate vulnerabilities and potential impacts based on the best practices established through the Northern Infrastructure Standardization Initiative (NISI). c) The Town should consider adopting active transportation design standards described in Section 4.3 of the ITMP. d) Clear signage should be installed throughout the transportation network to control vehicle use on the multi-use trails.
2. Provide vehicle access from roads for all developed land.	a) All developed lots shall have physical and legal access to a road, which may include a culvert if the Town requires it.
3. Ensure the transportation network is accessible to everyone regardless of demographic, socio-economic, or mobility status.	a) Sidewalks, trails, crosswalks, and roadways should be designed and constructed to be accessible to people with disabilities. b) All new municipal, government, and private commercial enterprise infrastructure and businesses should include bicycle parking, allowing residents to secure their bicycles while accessing services.
4. Encourage using alternative modes of transportation by connecting key locations.	a) New developments will be connected to the Town's multi-use trail and sidewalk systems. b) The Town should continue to improve the trail and sidewalk connections by implementing the proposed improvements in Section 4.2 of the ITMP.

3.2 UTILITIES AND MUNICIPAL SERVICING

This section establishes policies for developing and using municipal utilities and services on lands within the Town. The policies support and maintain the current systems and establish alternative servicing options. As the Town develops, expansions to municipal utilities and services may be required and should be executed in accordance with the policies of this section.

Table 3: Key Objectives & Policies- Utilities and Municipal Servicing

Objective	Policies
1. Provide municipal water and wastewater services to all developed lands.	a) All developed lots shall be equipped with water and wastewater services that comply with municipal standards. b) The Town may consider adopting bylaws for off-site levy's to fund upgrades or expansion of municipal infrastructure. c) New infrastructure development should consider climate vulnerabilities that may impact the Town and be designed based on the best practices established through the Northern Infrastructure Standardization Initiative (NISI). d) Existing infrastructure should be assessed periodically to determine if existing capacity is sufficient based on changing climate conditions.
2. Expand water and wastewater services.	a) Plan to expand water capacity throughout the Town, including adding an additional reservoir. b) Plan to expand wastewater capacity, including developing a new sewage lagoon.
3. Maintain an environmentally safe landfill that can accommodate the Town's existing and future waste management needs.	a) No development within 450 m that accommodates human habitation or conflicts with the operation of the existing landfill shall be permitted. b) The Town shall regularly review waste reduction opportunities when feasible to extend the capacity of the existing site for as long as possible. c) Waste management practices should consider the Town's climate vulnerabilities and incorporate appropriate adaptations/mitigations.

Objective	Policies
4. New development shall connect to existing municipal services.	a) New subdivisions shall only be approved if connected to municipal utility services. b) The Town shall discourage new subdivisions for commercial and industrial uses in locations not adjacent to existing municipal services or part of an approved Area Development Plan unless alternative adequate servicing can be accommodated. c) Developers are responsible for coordinating and financing the connection of new development to municipal services. d) Developers will be responsible for providing utility usage estimates. If estimates exceed the Town's existing capacity, the Town will initiate discussions to assess the costs and explore potential cost-sharing arrangements.
5. Provide appropriate levels of emergency management services	a) The Town will identify a suitable location for the new emergency services building. b) Zoning regulations shall limit the height of residential and mixed-use buildings to three stories unless it is confirmed that emergency and fire response services can accommodate more.
6. Provide municipal services for existing and new development on Indigenous-titled land.	a) Maintain a Municipal Service Agreement with the Salt River First Nation for SRFN No. 195 reserve lands. b) Based on the Municipal Service Agreement, provide municipal services for all new developments on SRFN No. 195 reserve lands. c) Establish Municipal Service Agreements with the Fort Smith Métis Council and Smith's Landing First Nations when required.

3.3 CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS

The natural environment surrounding Fort Smith is experiencing rapid change. Changing climate conditions will significantly impact the community, resulting in warmer temperatures, greater precipitation, erosion, increased forest fire activity and more freeze/thaw cycles.

The increase in freeze/thaw cycles will result in greater ground movement, leading to more frequent infrastructure maintenance, such as roads and pipes. Additionally, a warming climate and changes in precipitation levels will lead to periods of drought, increasing the risk of forest fires. These climate changes are already impacting Town infrastructure and natural assets. All new developments must incorporate climate change considerations and be designed to adapt to these evolving conditions.

Table 4: Key Objectives& Policies – Climate Change Considerations

Objective	Policies
1. All new developments shall incorporate adaptation or mitigation techniques considering the Town’s identified climate vulnerabilities.	a) New development shall follow the most current version of the National Building Code (NBC), National Energy Code for Buildings (NECB), and best practices identified by the Northern Infrastructure Standardization Initiative (NISI). b) The Town may consider developing incentive programs to support the use of environmentally conscious construction materials and practices.
2. Development on environmentally sensitive lands is limited to low-impact structures that support passive recreation activities or essential services.	a) Zoning Bylaw regulations shall not permit land uses that require large infrastructure development in environmentally sensitive areas. b) Slope stability along the river shoreline should be assessed and monitored routinely to ensure it remains safe for passive recreation activities.
3. Develop and maintain firebreaks around and within Fort Smith.	a) The Town shall maintain and follow a Community Wildfire Protection Plan. b) Maintain an open space area around the perimeter of the Town to act as a firebreak to slow or stop the progress of wildfires approaching from outside of the municipal boundary. c) Zoning Bylaw regulations shall not permit land uses that interfere with the maintenance and functionality of Firebreaks.

4.0 Growth Management

The objectives and policies in this section guide Fort Smith's future growth and development. This section considers future land development, including subdivisions and the development of vacant properties. Future development also needs to consider the border with Alberta, Wood Buffalo National Park, the Salt River First Nation Reserve Lands, and the Smith's Landing First Nations and Fort Smith Métis Transfer land.

4.1 SUBDIVISION AND NEW DEVELOPMENT

New subdivisions may be needed in Fort Smith as the community grows and expands. While the Government of the Northwest Territories remains the subdivision approval authority, the Town will be required to review and provide comments on any subdivision application within its municipal boundaries.

Table 5: Key Objectives & Policies- Subdivision and New Development

Objective	Policies
1. Ensure that sites identified for development are assessed for suitability before development approval.	a) New development locations shall be assessed for site conditions, including potential risks related to climate vulnerabilities. b) Site-specific studies and reports, including geotechnical investigations, may be required before deciding on a development.
2. Require all new subdivisions to provide adequate services.	a) All lots created as a result of a subdivision shall be connected to municipal services. b) In situations where a lot is not located within the existing piped utility network, truck-in and truck-out services may be provided, and sufficient road access for vehicles shall be required to the satisfaction of the Town.
3. Require all new subdivisions to provide services at the developer's cost.	a) The Town may require a development agreement before the approval of subdivisions. b) The Town will support subdivision applications requiring expansion and/or upgrading of existing municipal services only if it has been shown that all other goals and objectives of the Community Plan have been taken into consideration. The owner/applicant agrees to enter into a development agreement for the provision of any or all of the following municipal services: - o Roads; - o Pedestrian infrastructure;

Objective	Policies
	- o Drainage; - o Parking; - o Playgrounds; - o Street lighting; and, - o Any other matter the Town deems to be in the public interest.

4.2 VACANT PROPERTIES

Within the Town, several vacant properties and otherwise underutilized sites could be redeveloped. Some sites contain abandoned buildings that pose a fire risk and safety hazard. The structures may present redevelopment challenges due to contaminants (e.g., asbestos, and lead paint) and may require remediation and additional steps for the safe demolition and removal of materials before redevelopment.

Table 6: Key Objectives & Policies- Vacant Properties

Objective	Policies
1. Encourage redevelopment of properties that are vacant or have a derelict building that is not in use.	a) The Town shall seek opportunities to encourage redevelopment of vacant and underutilized sites. b) The Town shall promote the development of vacant residential lots and the redevelopment of properties with derelict buildings. c) The Town may consider incentives to develop lands and repurpose buildings in accordance with Goal 5 of the Fort Smith Economic Development Strategy.
2. Ensure owned but undeveloped or vacant properties are appropriately taxed to encourage development.	a) The Town will continue to levy municipal taxes on owned but undeveloped properties. b) The Town may explore implementing an additional punitive surcharge or bylaw to further incentivize the development of such properties within a reasonable time frame.
3. Develop a method to manage and dispose of contaminated and hazardous materials.	a) To support the redevelopment of vacant sites, the Town may investigate options for working with territorial and federal agencies to facilitate the cleanup and disposal of hazardous materials.

5.0 Land Use Designations

The Land Use Concept Maps in **Schedule B** of this Plan outline the locations of each land use designation. These maps should be read together with the Plan text, **Schedule A**. Each land use designation described here includes an overview statement, objectives, and policies respecting the use and management of the lands in the designation.

For this Plan, the following Land Use Designations are established:

RS	Residential
TC	Town Centre
CM	Commercial
IS	Institutional
ID	Industrial
AP	Airport
PO	Parks and Open Spaces
ES	Environmentally Sensitive
IL	Indigenous Land Interest
UR	Urban Reserve

Where there is uncertainty of the boundary for a designation of any land use, the following rules shall apply:

1. Where land use designation boundaries appear to follow lot lines shown on a subdivision plan, the lot lines shall be deemed the boundary.
2. Where land use designation boundaries appear to follow roads, such boundaries shall be deemed to follow the road's centerline.
3. Where land use designation boundaries appear to follow the shoreline of water bodies, such boundaries shall be deemed to follow the shoreline. If the shoreline changes due to erosion or flooding, the boundary will line-up with new shoreline.
4. In any other situations of uncertainty, the Town shall determine the land use designation boundary.

5.1 RS - RESIDENTIAL

The Residential Land Use Designations are identified on the Land Use Concept Map in **Schedule B**. These areas include existing and future residential development. The objectives and policies in **Table 5** apply to this designation and residential development that may occur in other land use designations.

To address housing needs, the Town of Fort Smith completed a Housing Needs Assessment in November 2023, identifying housing challenges and recommending a broader mix of housing forms for development. Informed by this assessment, a larger mix of residential development will be permitted in Fort Smith. This includes but is not limited to single-dwelling units, multi-dwelling units, tiny homes, secondary suites, caretaker units, and care facilities. Residential development will also be permitted in other land use designations, including in the Town Centre, Commercial, Institutional (Aurora College Residents) and Industrial (caretaker units) land use designations. The purpose of permitting a mix of residential development is to reduce the policy and regulatory barriers that could prevent development and support the population's changing housing needs. In the Residential Land Use Designation, additional land uses may be permitted when the use supports or compliments the residential development. Land uses may include but are not limited to:

- Parks and areas for recreation;
- Home occupations;
- Places of worship;
- Halls and community centers;
- Greenhouses and community gardens;
- Daycares; and,
- Convenience stores.

The Zoning Bylaw will provide more prescriptive detail on permitted uses in residential zones.

Table 7: Key Objectives & Policies- Residential

Objective	Policies
1. Collaborate with different federal, territorial, and Indigenous governments/agencies to drive residential development that meet evolving community needs.	a) The Town will maintain a detailed land inventory to identify potential sites for dwelling construction. b) Collaborate with government agencies and partners to expand the residential land supply and promote development that addresses community needs.

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Land Use Designations

Objective	Policies
2. Support and encourage a diverse range of housing options to meet the needs of all community members.	a) The Zoning Bylaw will allow for a variety of residential dwelling types to accommodate diverse residential developments. b) The Town will act on the Housing Needs Assessments recommendations by rezoning areas, where appropriate, from R1 (Single Detached Dwelling Residential) to R2(Multi-Dwelling Residential). c) Approved subdivisions will feature varying sizes of lots to encourage the development of diverse dwelling types.
3. Promote Park spaces and active transportation links to enhance connectivity in existing and future residential areas.	a) New residential development shall include a park and/or open space. b) Existing residential areas are encouraged to include park space and be connected to the Town's trail network. c) New residential development should be planned to connect with existing trail networks and other active transportation networks.
4. Allow for certain non-residential uses in residential neighbourhoods.	a) Home-based businesses compatible with a residential neighbourhood shall be supported. The Zoning Bylaw shall include regulations that minimize potential land use conflicts. b) Light agricultural uses shall be permitted in residential areas. The Zoning Bylaw will include regulations that reduce potential nuisances that may interfere with residential dwellings. c) Agriculture activities that require more land area and create dust, odour, or noise should be limited to the Country Residential zone as identified in the Zoning Bylaw. d) Institutional uses that complement residential uses, like those listed in section 4.1 RS will be permitted. The Zoning Bylaw will include regulations that define complementary uses.
5. Limit development in proximity to nuisance facilities.	a) No developments used for human habitation will be allowed within 450 meters of a solid waste disposal facility or sewage lagoon. b) Primary residential land uses will not be permitted in areas designated for industrial use. Residential development in industrial areas will only be allowed for secondary use.



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Land Use Designations

Objective	Policies
6. Ensure that new development is within the utility capacity of the Town.	a) Redevelopment and densification through residential infill shall be supported, subject to servicing capacity. b) Residential development in areas not currently serviced by municipal services will only be permitted if all existing vacant serviced land is developed or the developer prepares a servicing plan approved by the Town.
7. Residential development shall consider climate vulnerabilities and safety.	a) New residential development should follow best practices identified by the Northern Infrastructure Standardization Initiative (NISI).



5.2 TC - TOWN CENTRE

The Town Centre is a mixed-use area that allows for a variety of commercial, institutional, and residential uses. The Land Use Concept map in **Schedule B** illustrates the extent of the Town Centre designation. Fort Smith's Town Centre serves as a vital hub for the community, offering residents diverse services and contributing to the unique character and charm visitors experience. Existing uses serve the needs of the public and may include commercial uses such as restaurants, retail stores, and professional services; institutional uses such as places of worship, community halls, daycares, or government administration services; and residential uses such as multi-dwelling units or secondary suites.

The objectives and policies are to guide land use development in the Town Centre. As it acts as the hub for the community, higher density and a mix of uses are important. The existing single-use parcels in the Town Centre, including single detached dwellings, will be permitted to remain until they are redeveloped.

Table 8: Key Objectives and Policies - Town Centre

Objective	Policies
1. Encourage mixed-use development in the core of the community.	a) The Town will promote mixed-use development in the Town Centre. b) The Zoning Bylaw will permit a mix of commercial, residential, and institutional uses in the Town Centre, and supporting regulations should be clear and flexible enough not to discourage development. c) The Town may consider incentives for developing commercial and mixed-use buildings.
2. The Town Centre is the hub of Fort Smith and shall maintain a high standard of appearance.	a) Complete a community improvement plan as identified in Goal 5 of the Town's Economic Development Strategy. b) Promote the development of commercial, cultural, and tourism uses in the Town Centre. c) The Town may consider adopting urban design guidelines or landscaping requirements to enhance the Town Centre's character and represent Fort Smith's culture and history. d) Outdoor storage in the Town Centre shall be discouraged unless appropriately screened.
3. Maintain a pedestrian-oriented Town Centre.	a) The Town will maintain and improve sidewalks and pedestrian access in the Town Centre. b) Street crossings and traffic control methods will be implemented according to the recommendations of the Town's Integrated Transportation Master Plan.

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Land Use Designations

Objective	Policies
4. Reduce the number of vacant lots and buildings in Fort Smith	a) The Town will support the redevelopment of vacant lands or buildings in the Town Centre. b) The Town will encourage the (re)development of vacant land in the Town Centre before considering expanding the Town Centre area.
5. Discourage single detached dwellings in the Town Centre.	a) New single-detached dwellings will only be conditionally permitted in the Town Centre. b) Medium to high density, commercial or mixed-use development shall be supported.



5.3 CM - COMMERCIAL

The Commercial Land Use Designation is identified on the Land Use Concept Map in **Schedule B**. These areas are on the periphery of the Town, along the major transportation corridors and may not be suitable in the Town Centre due to their appearance or requirements for outside storage. The mix of uses is intended to suit uses routinely visited by customers, such as workshops, lumber yards, automobile sales and services, repair and services shops, and small-scale warehouses or storage facilities. Commercial lands are anticipated to have increased traffic and noise levels compared to residential designations. The objectives and policies will guide commercial development.

Table 9: Key Objectives & Policies - Commercial

Objective	Policies
1. Reduce the number of existing vacant commercial lots.	a) The Town shall require the (re)development of existing vacant commercial lots before pursuing commercial development in other areas. b) The Town may consider incentives to develop lands and re-purposing buildings.
2. Improve accessibility to commercial areas.	a) The Town may require, as a condition of approval, that new commercial developments include improved pedestrian access to and from residential areas.
3. Encourage a greater diversity of commercial uses to support economic diversification in the Town.	a) The Town will support a variety of commercial uses in the community. The Zoning Bylaw will permit a mix of uses, and supporting regulations should be clear and have enough flexibility not to discourage development. b) New commercial subdivisions should provide a variety of lot sizes to support businesses of various sizes and intensity. c) Collaborate with Aurora College and incorporate land use incentives and supporting regulations to develop industries related to the College's educational focus and expertise areas.
4. Allow for mixed-use, multi-purpose buildings within the Town.	a) The Town will allow residential dwellings to be secondary uses on commercial properties. b) Buildings that support mixed-use in commercially designated areas could increase development opportunities. Commercial use shall continue to be the primary use in the Commercial Designation.
5. Support agriculture within the Town.	a) The Town shall support a viable agricultural economy by allowing different types and sizes of agricultural operations.

5.4 IS - INSTITUTIONAL

The Institutional Land Use Designation is identified on the Land Use Concept Map in **Schedule B**. These areas are designated for various uses, such as schools, recreational facilities, the Aurora College (College) Thebacha Campus, and student residences. These uses typically require larger areas of land and may include fields, open spaces, and spaces for outdoor recreation. Facilities in the Institutional land use designation should be centralized and easily accessible to all residents.

The College is a prominent institutional land use in Fort Smith, and its operations require land uses that are secondary to institutional use, such as residential and industrial use. It is anticipated that by May 2025, Aurora College will transform into a polytechnic university. The Thebacha Campus will remain the administrative center for the Polytechnic University, and upgrades are expected to elevate the campus. The proposed upgrades are anticipated to include new student residence facilities, new student services, improvements to the works yard and re-purposing of existing facilities.

The Town is planning to develop a new emergency service building, and the territorial and/or Indigenous governments/authorities may plan for institutional land uses. One notable change is that the GNWT will close the Fort Smith Correctional Centre by 2025.

The objectives and policies are intended to guide the development of institutional land uses and set the direction for how the Town will engage with other levels of government to support growth.

Table 10: Key Objectives & Policies– Institutional

Objective	Policies
1. Coordinate with Aurora College to ensure adequate land supply for the development of essential facilities.	a) Assist the College in advancing both new and existing facility projects by updating zoning regulations and facilitating land subdivision as needed. b) Facilitate the re-zoning of land, when necessary, to accommodate College programs, including the Heavy Equipment Operator Training program and other land-based training initiatives.
2. Prioritize accessibility to institutional areas by maintaining or creating active transportation connections.	a) Active transportation networks should connect all institutional facilities. b) Connect new institutional development with active transportation networks. c) Maintain active transportation networks in accordance with the Town's Integrated Transportation Master Plan.

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Land Use Designations

Objective	Policies
3. Adequate land is maintained for institutional facilities in convenient locations to meet the needs of the population.	a) The Town should periodically review the adequacy of public services and facilities with other government agencies to identify opportunities for collaboration and shall support joint use agreements for sharing of public services and facilities. b) The development of new recreational facilities by the Town, including multi-purpose trails, shall consider integration and joint use with existing institutional uses. c) Institutional uses that cannot be accommodated in the existing built area will be in the Future Growth Area.
4. Significant historical sites are preserved as important community landmarks.	a) The Town will encourage public consultation prior to the alternation or demolition of important community landmarks. b) The Town will support the Indigenous Governments/Authorities if they identify historical or culturally significant areas that need to be protected or enhanced.
5. The adaptive re-use of institutional land and facilities is supported.	a) The Town will work closely with the GNWT to facilitate the re-purposing of the Fort Smith Correctional Center. b) The Town will work with territorial, federal and Indigenous governments/authorities to re-purpose land and facilities when required to support their institutional needs.



5.5 ID - INDUSTRIAL

The Industrial Land Use Designations are identified on the Land Use Concept Maps in **Schedule B**. These areas are intended to capture land uses that involve primary or secondary manufacturing and processing activities. Uses in these areas may create nuisances such as noise, smell, fumes, traffic, safety, or other significant impacts. Lands dedicated to industrial use may require larger parcel sizes and should be set back from residential uses through buffers or a transition of uses. Residential units are not appropriate for industrial areas. The objectives and policies intend to guide industrial development.

Table 11: Key Objectives and Policies- Industrial

Objective	Policies
1. Maintain an inventory of lands where industrial activities may expand to or occur.	a) Preserve industrial-designated lands for industrial uses. b) Develop existing industrial lots before making new lots available for development.
2. Consider how the future landscape of industrial land needs might shift.	a) As new types of industry are proposed, the Town will, at their discretion, deem them suitable or not suitable for industrial lands.
3. Reduce nuisance impacts of existing industrial activity on the community.	a) Development in industrial areas shall be buffered from abutting land uses that are not industrial in nature, in accordance with the Zoning Bylaw.
4. Encourage local food production.	a) Where appropriate, food production practices shall be allowed within the Town. This includes but is not limited to agriculture and greenhouses.



5.6 AP - AIRPORT

The Airport Land Use Designation is identified on the Land Use Concept Maps in **Schedule B**. The Fort Smith Regional Airport is a regional hub providing services between the Town and other parts of the NWT and Alberta. Under the *Federal Aeronautics Act*, the Airport Lands are regulated by the *Fort Smith Airport Zoning Regulations SOR/81-567*. The Airport Land Use designation identifies the clear boundary of the Airport Lands.

The Town will monitor all development adjacent to Airport Lands to ensure authorities consult with the Town before approving any proposed development. No new development shall occur in the flight path or near the airport that will jeopardize the safety or diminish the current operation and status of the airport due to physical obstructions, smoke, dust, electronic interference, or by causing the gathering of birds.



5.7 PO - PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

The Parks and Open Space Land Use Designation is identified on the land use concept map on **Schedule B**. The area's purpose is to provide active and passive recreational opportunities within the municipality in conjunction with those available in other designations.

The Town recognizes the value of natural open spaces and recreation areas for the community. Residents of all ages actively utilize a series of neighbourhood parks and playgrounds. Fort Smith also has access to Wood Buffalo National Park and several nearby Territorial Parks.

Fort Smith has a variety of multi-use trails, including a segment of the Trans-Canada Trail, the longest trail network in the world. Many other recreational trails are near the Town, serving residents and visitors.

Table 12: Key Objectives & Policies – Parks and Open Space

Objective	Policies
1. Protect existing green spaces.	a) All existing trails, parks, and playgrounds shall be retained where possible and feasible in the best interest of the community. b) New residential development areas will incorporate park space.
2. Preserve access to parks and recreation areas.	a) The walking and cycling infrastructure within the town and the connection to parks and open spaces shall be improved as per the Town's ITMP.
3. Provide multi-use trails and recreational corridors within and in proximity to the Town.	a) The Town will seek opportunities to develop recreational trails in undeveloped areas with consideration for year-round use that allows for multiple activities, e.g., cross-country ski trails in the winter and cycling trails in the summer. b) Trails for ATVs and other uses shall not degrade the environment and shall comply with other relevant bylaws.
4. Promote the development of community garden space.	a) The Town will support local groups to maintain community gardens to reduce food insecurity in Fort Smith.

5.8 ES - ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS

Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) Designation is identified on the Land Use Concept Maps in **Schedule B**. These are lands immediately adjacent to the river and are sensitive where there is evidence of past slope failure. They are not suitable for development.

New permanent structures are not permitted in this area; however, these lands may still be used as community open spaces and generally function as park spaces. The trans-Canada trail and multi-use trails traverse the area. Passive recreation and cultural and traditional activities will continue to be carried out on these lands.

Table 13: Key Objectives & Policies– Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Objective	Policies
1. Protect Environmentally Sensitive Areas and minimize danger to people and property due to riverbank slope failure.	a) No new permanent development shall be permitted in environmentally sensitive areas, including structures and roads. b) Removing or cutting vegetation within ESAs will be restricted unless required as part of FireSmart activities.
2. Allow for land use activities that do not negatively impact Environmentally Sensitive Areas.	a) Low-impact development in ESAs, such as parks, trails, or small structures for recreational or educational purposes, is permitted.
3. Reduce environmental risks in flood-prone and erosion-prone areas.	a) Continue to monitor areas at risk of flooding and erosion. b) The Town, in partnership with the GNWT, will regularly conduct slope stability assessments and consider the climate vulnerabilities. c) The Town will inform the public if the river's slope stability or potential flooding risks could pose an increased risk to the public.

5.9 IL – INDIGENOUS LAND INTEREST

The Indigenous Land Interests are identified on the Land Use Concept Maps in **Schedule B**. Inside the municipal boundary of Fort Smith, there are parcels of land with some level of Indigenous interest. The type of interest varies depending on the agreement the Indigenous group made with the Government of Canada (GoC) and the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). Details of the agreements are found in **Section 2.1.3**. Three forms of land tenure indicate some Indigenous interest in Fort Smith:

- Salt River Reserve;
- Indian Affairs Branch (IAB) Land; and,
- Commissioner's Land – Interim Land Withdrawal (Surface).

The Salt River Reserve lands are owned in fee simple by the Salt River First Nation and are part of the SRFN No. 195 Treaty Settlement Agreement capital reserves. The SRFN governs these lands and determines their land use and development.

The federal government manages the Indian Affairs Branch Land parcels with an Indigenous group. The parcels usually have some significance for an Indigenous group. Typically, these parcels of land are unavailable for (re)development but can be used for residential development where that aligns with the Town's zoning. Existing uses may continue.

The Commissioner's Land with an interim land withdrawal is part of the Agreement-in-Principal signed between the Northwest Territories Métis Nation (NWTMN), the Government of Canada (GoC), and the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). These parcels of land are being protected because they are subject to ongoing land claims and self-government negotiations. At this time, they cannot be developed. Once an agreement is signed between the three parties, it is expected that some or all these lands will be owned in fee simple by the Fort Smith Métis Council (FSMC).

The objectives and policies guide how the Town will engage with the Indigenous governments/authorities to support the coordination of safe and adequately serviced land in Fort Smith.

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Land Use Designations

Table 14: Key Objectives & Policies – Indigenous Land Interest

Objective	Policies
1. Maintain a dialogue about land use and development projects with the Indigenous governments/authorities.	a) The Town shall notify the Indigenous governments/authorities of new developments that may impact their lands and work together where appropriate. b) The Town shall collaborate and support the Indigenous governments/agencies on development projects that are planned on Indigenous lands in the municipal boundary.
2. Coordinate on infrastructure and servicing within the Town's borders.	a) The Town shall maintain Municipal Service Agreements with Salt River First Nations for lands within the municipal boundary. b) The Town will support the Fort Smith Metis Council and the Smith's Landing First Nation to develop Municipal Service Agreements.



5.10 UR - URBAN RESERVE

The Urban Reserve Designation is identified on the Land Use Concept Maps in **Schedule B**. The area is for lands reserved for future rezoning and development. Future development within these areas will require consideration for transportation, servicing, and adjacent land use patterns. Amendments to this Plan will be required before these areas can be developed.

Table 15: Key Objectives & Policies – Urban Reserve

Objective	Policies
1. Allow existing uses to continue within the Urban Reserve.	a) Existing uses shall be permitted to stay in areas identified as Urban Reserve until such a time as operations cease or require redevelopment.
2. Consider limited low-impact or temporary uses within the Urban Reserve.	a) The Town may allow for a limited range of uses within the Urban Reserve, including temporary uses subject to the regulations of the Zoning Bylaw.
3. Maintain orderly development of the Urban Reserve.	a) Where new uses and expansions of existing uses within the Urban Reserve are proposed, the Town shall consider the impacts and may require rezoning before development approval. b) Where rezoning is required, the Town shall require an amendment to this Plan before the redesignation of Urban Reserve. c) The Town will discourage the development of Urban reserve areas until the current serviced areas reach capacity.

6.0 Implementation

Once the Community Plan has been adopted, implementation will help the Town achieve its objectives and policies and ensure that future development is orderly and integrated with social, economic, or other community-based plans and strategies. Implementation is supported by:

1. “Land Use Concept Map m” in **Schedule B**;
2. Supporting municipal regulation bylaws; and,
3. Supplemental studies or plans undertaken by the Town.

Certain aspects of the Plan may also be supported by the Leadership Council and Advisory Boards in Fort Smith, including:

- Thebacha Leadership Council;
- Economic Development Advisory Board;
- Community Services Advisory Board; and,
- Sustainable Development Advisory Board.

This section describes the tools and procedures for effectively implementing the Plan.

6.1 MUNICIPAL REGULATION BYLAWS

6.1.1 Zoning Bylaw

The Town's Zoning Bylaw and the Development Permit process will continue to be the main tools for implementing the policies and objectives of this Plan. The Zoning Bylaw shall be amended to implement the policies in the plan. All subsequent amendments to the Zoning Bylaw must be consistent with the Community Plan. All development must conform to the intent of the Community Plan and comply with the Zoning Bylaw. Major changes to the Plan can only be made in accordance with the *Act*.

6.1.2 Area Development Plans

As the community continues to develop, the Town may consider implementing or requiring developers to provide Area Development Plan (ADP). An ADP guides specific development areas at a more detailed level than what is provided in the Community Plan. If a new ADP has policies that do not align with the Community Plan, then the Community Plan must be amended. The authority to prepare, adopt and implement an ADP is set out in the *Community Planning and Development Act*.

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Implementation

6.1.3 Land Administration Bylaw

The Land Administration Bylaw is another important tool used to help implement the Plan. The Land Administration Bylaw applies to all acquisitions, dispositions, and other similar activities, including sales, licenses, or leases by the Town. To support the Land Administration Bylaw, an inventory shall be maintained by the Town Administration that identifies legal descriptions, zoning designations, site area, ownership, and any other important attributes. The inventory shall be updated annually and coordinated with the Tax Roll Assessment and GIS mapping.

6.2 INTEGRATED PLANNING

This Plan is one of many plans the Town of Fort Smith has adopted. In guiding community development, the Town must consider and coordinate the goals and objectives of other plans, strategies, and regulations, including but not limited to:

- Town of Fort Smith Capital Plan;
- Fort Smith Housing Need Assessment;
- Fort Smith Integrated Transportation Master Plan;
- Integrated Community Sustainability Plan;
- Energy Plan;
- Economic Development Strategy;
- Strategic Marketing Plan;
- Emergency Management Plan/Bylaw; and,
- Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

6.3 INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENT/AUTHORITY PARTICIPATION

Indigenous settled land claims and self-government agreements are changing the governance and land ownership landscape in Fort Smith. The Town will collaborate with the Indigenous Governments/Authorities to support future development and advance reconciliation through Nation-to-Nation dialogue. The primary forum will be the Thebacha Leadership Council; however, if this Council dissolves or the focus changes, the Town will seek other methods to engage and collaborate with the Indigenous groups.



6.4 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public participation is a key component of sustainable community planning. Community members shall be consulted to obtain their views, opinions and concerns about the Plan and related bylaws.

In recognition of the limited capacity of a small town and the increasing number of issues involving public consultation, every effort should be made to improve information dissemination and provide opportunities for feedback that are appropriate for the community.

6.5 MONITORING AND REVIEWS

The Town is required to monitor the Community Plan routinely to determine whether it has been effective and if any amendments should be considered. The Town Administration should prepare an annual report for review and consideration by Council and consideration of possible amendments to the Plan. The annual report should also serve to review how the Plan's priority goals and strategic objectives are being achieved.

In accordance with the *Community Planning and Development Act*, a formal review of this Plan shall be completed within eight (8) years of its adoption by bylaw. Subsequent reviews shall be required every eight (8) years.

Council may direct the Administration to update or amend this Plan at any time to reflect the Fort Smith's changing needs. The public may also request amendments to the Plan through a formal application process.

The background is a solid green color. On the left side, there is a large, stylized silhouette of a bird, possibly a pelican, with its wings spread and its head turned to the right. Below the bird, there are several wavy, horizontal lines of varying lengths, suggesting water or a landscape. The text is positioned in the upper right quadrant.

SCHEDULE B

B. Land Use Concept Maps