

Raymond Fringe Area Study April 1984

An urban-rural fringe is the area of land adjacent to urban centers of all sizes, although some communities have larger, more pronounced, or readily apparent fringes than others. The fringe can be a controversial area since it is of mutual interest not only to the rural municipality under whose jurisdiction the area ultimately reside, but also to the urban municipality which can be affected by land use decisions in the fringe. Urbanization pressures in the fringe are readily apparent around some of the region's urban centers and sometimes give rise to land-use conflicts as well as urban-rural conflicts. These urban-rural conflicts may involve the control and management of land use in the fringe, urban growth and annexation proposals, and the sometimes conflicting interests between urban and adjoining rural municipalities.

The Oldman River Regional Planning Commission has acknowledged that an area surrounding the Town of Raymond is an area, which for quite some time, has experienced the types of conflicts described above.

In order to resolve the situation, it was determined that a special study of the area was necessary. Financing for this study was made available by the Alberta Planning Board through the Oldman River Regional Planning Commission. The study is now complete, and this report details its findings and conclusions.

Executive Summary

1. An understanding of the unique nature of the study area is essential in any attempt at resolving the complex land use management situation encountered in the Raymond Fringe.
2. The historical evolution of the "Mormon Settlement Pattern" has resulted in a large number of semi-urban parcels in an agricultural area adjacent to the Town of Raymond.
3. In the past, the conflicting objective of owners, agencies and councils involved has led to a great deal of disagreement over adoption of specific land use policies aimed at resolving the situation.
4. Since the situation is complex in many respects, and evolved over a long period of time, a comprehensive "Land Use Management Strategy" to guide future subdivision and development activity is recommended.
5. Among the factors which are considered necessary for such a strategy are:
 - the preservation of agricultural land
 - minimum standards of development
 - environmental protection
 - a balance of public and private interests
 - a balance of urban and rural interests

6. In formulating an overall land use management strategy, a broad framework was prepared and a number of criteria were identified as being essential to the success of the strategy. These are:
 - Objectives must be community based.
 - Strategy must be comprehensive and formally adopted.
 - Strategy must be legally valid.
 - Plans and policies must be administratively feasible.
7. Goals and objectives were identified through the public participation process. For example, there is widespread support within the study area for country residential subdivision and development, since much of the agricultural land base is fragmented by ownership and lost to productive capability through historic irrigated farming practices.
8. A study steering committee developed six criteria under which subdivision may be allowed. This does not mean that subdivision will automatically be approved, since other issues must also be considered. The six criteria state that new titles may be created for existing parcels which are:
 - separated by a legal road allowance,
 - separated by a piece of land which will be required for a legal road allowance,
 - separated by other titles,
 - created through physical separation (e.g. rail line),
 - presently land-locked, but boundaries can be realigned
 - the result of consolidation to create agricultural parcels.
9. Through the freeing up on land-locked parcels by road building and creating other parcels through the six subdivision criteria, it may be possible to create up to 72 additional parcels for development.
10. Minimum development standards are included to ensure that various land uses are developed in a compatible fashion. This is done through segregating uses and establishing other standards which would be incorporated into a land use bylaw amendment.
11. Effective implementation of the land use management strategy must be preceded by official recognition through council resolutions, bylaws and statutory plans. This is necessary to ensure that all decision-making authorities are aware of, and committed, the policies finally adopted and to provide continuity to decision-making over the long term. This will include:
 - coordination with the Regional Plan
 - adoption of an area structure plan by the county
 - amendment of the County of Warner Land Use Bylaw
 - other detailed management policy requirements.

Land Use Problems in the Raymond Fringe Area

The Oldman River Regional Planning Commission recognized potential problems with the Raymond fringe area in the early 1970s, but until this study was

undertaken the extent of the problems was not known nor were the details documented.

With the implementation of the regional Plan in 1974, the conflicts became more apparent as the complex land tenure arrangements became subject to regulations governing rural lands. Although problems arise with other legislation, the Regional Plan, which attempts to conserve agricultural land and provide guidelines for subdivision approvals, is the main land use document. Many applications for subdivision in the Raymond fringe area conflict with some of the more restrictive sections contained in the Regional Plan.

Generally applications to subdivide are contrary to the sections of the Regional Plan concerned with:

- minimum parcel size,
- fringe area protection,
- creation of country residences,
- accessibility, and
- proximity to highways

Discretion can and has been used in implementing the above regulations; however, no guidelines for the use of this discretion exist, adding uncertainty to the situation.

Pressures for country residential subdivision and development increased generally during the mid to late 1970s, causing pressure for more subdivision in the fringe area.

The Alberta Planning Board was approached to assist in the investigation of a potential rural replot which, through land consolidation, would achieve, in part, one objective of the Regional Plan, namely the conservation of agricultural land. During the course of the study it became clear that a comprehensive replot was not feasible. The various alternatives discussed are elaborated in Part IV of this report.

In addition to the apparent land use problems, the need for a study became more important when in 1982 the County of Warner requested the Planning Commission to amend the Regional Plan to designate the entire fringe area of Raymond as a Special Area for Country Residential Use pursuant to Section 12 of the Rural Land Use Amendments (1980) to the Regional Plan (1974).