

BACKGROUND

Special Areas recognizes the value of public consultation as a part of the municipal decision-making process and is committed to creating opportunities for meaningful public participation. The Land Use Order (LUO) is a document that regulates development within the Special Areas. Every municipality in Alberta must have one under the *Municipal Government Act*.

The current LUO was approved in 2015, with some minor revisions over the past eight years. A comprehensive review of the LUO began in 2021 to ensure it reduced red tape, supported clear and understandable development processes, and aligned with legislative changes and the Municipal Development Plan. Special Areas administration and planning staff from Palliser Regional Municipal Services have led the review process.

Advisory Council reviewed proposed changes to the LUO document in 2023 and directed administration to gather feedback from the public. Feedback collected on the draft LUO document was reported back to Advisory Council in December 2023.

WHAT WE DID

Public engagement activities related to the draft LUO were completed from September to December 2023. They included both digital and in-person activities. In addition to these engagement opportunities, municipal and industry stakeholders were informed of this engagement and were invited to provide feedback on the proposed changes. Over four hundred letters were sent to property owners identified as having property affected by proposed changes. Property owners were invited to attend local in-person open house sessions or contact Special Areas Board Communications for more information and to provide feedback.

Communications advertised public engagement opportunities on local media and digital channels. Digital engagement activities included the publication of a dedicated project website which shared key documents including the draft LUO, major changes report, project background and timeline, frequently asked questions, and a feedback form. There were twelve unique digital interactions during this engagement period. In-person engagement activities included three open house information sessions (November 21 to 23) in each of the Special Areas: Cereal, Consort, Hanna. Sessions averaged fifteen attendees, primarily residential/agricultural landowners. During these sessions, attendees provided feedback via a survey and interactive feedback frames. In addition, informal feedback provided to administration and planning staff was also collected for the what we heard report.

Feedback collected during the public engagement period for the draft LUO was summarized and shared with the Special Areas Advisory Council in December 2023. After discussing this feedback, and reviewing the changes proposed to the LUO, Advisory Council recommended the Board take the draft document forward into the formal reading process.

WHAT WE HEARD

Overall, we heard most respondents were in favor of the proposed changes to the draft LUO document as long as current uses were not negatively affected.

Respondents shared they were in favor of changes which would reduce red tape, including an increase to the number of subdivisions and dwelling units permitted in Agricultural Districts, the consolidation of different hamlet districts into a single Hamlet District, and proposed setbacks for

wind energy conversion systems. Concerns related to renewable energy development were shared by some respondents including feedback around increasing or changing setbacks, the impacts of sound frequency, and restricting development around infrastructure like airports. Feedback around ensuring the draft LUO document accommodated uses like bed & breakfasts was also received.

Outside of the proposed changes, feedback was shared that showed concerns with the notification process related to development, including a desire for increased notification requirements for development applications in hamlets.

WHAT COMES NEXT

Special Areas and Palliser Regional Municipal Services staff will be reviewing feedback provided during the fall 2023 engagement. Based on feedback, changes to the draft LUO document may be recommended to the Board ahead of first reading of the LUO document. If changes to the draft LUO document are recommended, this information will be shared with the public.

The Board will review the proposed LUO document as a part of a first reading in early 2024. If the Board approves the draft LUO document, it will schedule a public hearing as per requirements set out in the *Municipal Government Act*. This public hearing will be well advertised in local papers and on Special Areas digital platforms. Written submissions will be accepted as a part of the public hearing process, in addition to oral presentations.

DID YOU KNOW

As a Crown agency governed by the *Special Areas Act*, the Special Areas Board does not have municipal bylaws. Instead, Special Areas uses Ministerial Orders in place of municipal bylaws. Just like traditional municipal bylaws, Ministerial Orders provide Special Areas the authority to govern activities in the Special Areas. This is the same type of authority municipal bylaws create in municipalities throughout the province. Some examples of Ministerial Orders which act like municipal bylaws include the Animal Control Order, Special Areas Parks Order, and Intermunicipal Development Plans.

A public consultation process is used for any draft ministerial orders which are intended to act like municipal bylaws. This process is outlined in the *Municipal Government Act*, the same process used by other municipal councils. It includes a public hearing and multiple readings of the proposed document which has been drafted by the municipality.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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