



## Area Structure Plan/Neighbourhood Area Structure Plan Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is an Area Structure Plan (ASP)?**

Area Structure Plans (ASPs) are high-level statutory planning documents under the *Municipal Government Act* that propose a sequence of development for a defined plan area within a municipality (typically 160-800 acres or 3-5 quarter sections). An ASP outlines at a high level the proposed land uses, road network, infrastructure planning, protected environmental areas and overall guiding principles for the future development.

### **What is a Neighbourhood Area Structure Plan (NASP)?**

Neighbourhood Area Structure Plans (NASPs) are more detailed statutory plans and are required to facilitate future development of new neighbourhoods. NASPs establish a framework for land use, infrastructure planning, phasing, subdivision and development decisions at the neighbourhood level. They are typically 160-320 acres in size (1-2 quarter sections) and establish the layout of local streets, park spaces, school sites, servicing and land uses for new development areas, typically at the quarter section level. Although NASPs set the overall design for the area, subsequent steps such as land use re-designation, subdivision, development permits (in the case of multi-residential and/or commercial developments) and building permits are required before construction can occur.

### **What is the process between the Town and the Developer in preparing an ASP or NASP?**

The development of an ASP/NASP follows the process outlined in the Terms of Reference created by the Town which are available on our website at: <https://www.okotoks.ca/sites/default/files/2022-07/Okotoks%20ASP-NASP%20Terms%20of%20Reference%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

The Town is responsible for reviewing the Municipal Development Plan (MDP), master servicing studies and Council's strategic priorities prior to determining whether a developer-led ASP will be permitted to proceed. A proposed plan must align with the phasing approach and land uses proposed in the MDP and with the strategic priorities of Council prior to staff resources being allocated to work with a developer on a new Area Structure Plan.

The Town's role in the preparation of an ASP or NASP is to advise the developer on applicable legislation, policies, technical standards, and engagement requirements that must be considered in preparing these plans. The plan is also reviewed across departments to ensure there it provides for or addresses the requirements of other Town plans or strategies focused on culture, arts, recreation, infrastructure, transportation, sustainability and a variety of other focus areas. Council then considers

the plan and any public and stakeholder feedback that informed plan development, along with representations at a public hearing, in rendering a decision on the ASP or NASP.

### **How can the public participate in the decision making process?**

The public can participate in the decision making process by attending public engagement events that occur during plan development, and through the formal public hearing process when a plan is presented to Council for consideration of approval. Feedback from the community and relevant stakeholders, along with applicable policies, legislation and technical standards, is considered in the development and refinement of an ASP or NASP. This feedback is shared with Council through the preparation of What We Heard Reports, and the public has the opportunity to share their feedback on a plan directly with Council through the formal public hearing process.

The process of developing an ASP or NASP typically involves at least two public engagement events before a final draft plan is presented to Council for consideration of approval. In most cases, the preparation of ASPs and NASPs in Okotoks have been developer led, meaning that the developer has been responsible for conducting public engagement events in order to inform the development of their plans for submission to the Town and eventual consideration by Council. In the future, ASPs will typically be led by the Town; in these circumstances, the public engagement events that occur during plan development will be Town led.

### **How does the Town approve water for new growth?**

For any new development to occur within an approved ASP or NASP, developers work within the Town's [Water Allocation Policy](#), which limits the amount of new development based on the Town's water license capacity. No new development is approved unless there is sufficient water licensing capacity held by the Town to sustain the developed area. For a development to proceed, developers must coordinate with the Town and additional water license capacity must be acquired to support additional development areas through water license transfers. The developer must then pay for the costs of that licensed capacity for their development area through water license fees. This process ensures that sufficient water license capacity is available prior to approving land use for new development and ensures that the Town receives reimbursement for licensing costs.

ASPs and NASPs establish a comprehensive framework for future growth; however, development within these plan areas cannot proceed until there is available water license capacity. The water license capacity is considered in detail at the time of land use re-designation, which is the subsequent planning requirement to proceed following the approval of an NASP. Development agreements at the time of subdivision negotiate and contractually arrange the responsibilities to construct and fund necessary infrastructure.

### **What is the current status of the regional water project?**

In support of the regional water project with Foothills County, the Town's Water for Life grant application was approved by the Alberta government in July 2022. The Town will receive \$16M in grant funding to construct a raw water pipeline where water will be pumped from the Bow River at the confluence of the Highwood River through a shared water system to water treatment facilities in Okotoks and Foothills County.

Preliminary designs are complete and, with a two year construction timeline and pending final regulatory approvals, it is planned that the new water source is expected to be operational in August 2025. More information about this project can be found at: [www.okotoks.ca/water-solution](http://www.okotoks.ca/water-solution).

## **When we get the regional water pipeline, will the watering schedule/restrictions go away?**

Water restrictions, or what we refer to as the Town's watering schedule, is about responsible sharing of a limited resource. When nature restricts access to water, we adjust our use accordingly. Without a watering schedule, we treat water as an infinite resource. The watering schedule creates awareness that it is a finite resource.

The South Saskatchewan River Basin, which includes the Bow, Oldman, Sheep, Highwood and Red Deer rivers is a closed basin. This means that all available water has already been allocated through water licensing and that the basin is closed to new water licensing.

As the Town's water supply will continue to be part of this basin, the Town plans to maintain the watering schedule going forward to ensure we live within our means.

The watering schedule is in place to manage overall town water use as part of the Town's sustainable water use policies. Restrictions may be put in place for a variety of reasons, such as:

- Seasonal demand increases by approximately 50%
- The Sheep River and its catchment may be in drought conditions which results in constraints on raw water production and withdrawal restrictions
- Wells experience pumping challenges when the river levels are low

To learn more about the Town's outdoor watering schedule how responsible management of a limited resource relates to growth, and details about residential water conservation programs and tips, visit [www.okotoks.ca/water-schedule](http://www.okotoks.ca/water-schedule).

## **How are transportation impacts to surrounding communities mitigated within new growth areas?**

ASPs and NASPs are supported by a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) that provides a detailed assessment of the proposed development and the potential impacts to the surrounding transportation network. A TIA is completed by professional engineers on behalf of the developer and then submitted to the Town's Engineering department for review and comment. The ASP or NASP framework and design is worked on collaboratively until the Town determines the TIA outcomes are in alignment with the Town's standards. The transportation network must align with policies in the Town's Transportation Master Plan and Municipal Development Plan (MDP).

The TIA works to inform the transportation network for an ASP or NASP area, and connection to surrounding communities; the transportation network greatly impacts the final land use concepts and subdivision and development frameworks within and connecting the plan area. This ensures a well-connected plan that encourages a variety of forms of transportation and alignment with the higher-level planning objectives outlined in the MDP.

TIAs of greater detail may also be required to be submitted for each phase of subdivision within a plan area to assess traffic impacts resulting from the development and traffic monitoring programs may be required to evaluate impacts to transportation networks as development progresses.

### **How is traffic noise mitigated for properties adjacent to new developments?**

A noise attenuation study is required for any development that is proposed adjacent to an arterial roadway. The noise attenuation study assesses future traffic volumes that would result from the proposed development and identifies any required mitigation measures. Noise attenuation is typically required if the future noise levels are projected to be higher than the standards established by the Town for specific roadway types. Noise mitigation may involve changing design elements of the community, potentially sound walls or other approaches that work to align with the Town's overall planning principles while mitigating potential nuisance effects.

### **How are construction impacts to surrounding communities mitigated?**

The land developer, through applicable guidelines and agreements, agrees to control dust, erosion, weeds, refuse, construction traffic, etc. during the construction period. Construction activities are monitored by the Town and any issues are followed up on in accordance with applicable guidelines and agreements in place.

### **How do new growth areas accommodate the need for more schools in Okotoks?**

As part of the plan development process, developers are required to set aside 10% of developable lands to be utilized for parks and open spaces, including future school sites for grades K-9. Coordination and collaboration with the school divisions is critical in the Town's school capacity planning. If a new high school site is required, the Town works to acquire a parcel through alternate processes. During the development of ASPs and NAPSs, local school divisions are engaged to gain an understanding of school site needs and to inform the amount and location of future school sites within the plan areas. The timing of school construction within new growth areas is determined by the local school division(s) in consideration of provincial funding.

### **What types of studies and analysis are undertaken to support the development of an ASP or NASP?**

Substantive technical analysis is required to support the preparation of an ASP or NASP. The following is a list of typical studies that may be required to be prepared to support an ASP or NASP application to the Town. These studies are then reviewed by the Town to determine conformance with the Towns' long-term planning goals as articulated in the Municipal Development plan, and alignment with technical standards and best practices.

- Biophysical Overview and/or Impact Assessment (BIA)
- Environmental Site Assessments (ESA)
- Historic Resources Overview and/or Clearance (HRO)
- Geotechnical Report
- Commercial/Retail Market Needs Assessment
- Transportation Impact Assessment (TIA)

- Water and Sanitary Servicing Study
- Master Drainage Plan
- Traditional Knowledge and Land Use Assessment (TKUA)
- Fiscal Impact Analysis (FIA)
- Functional Transportation Study for Arterial Roadways
- Any other studies or reports that provide necessary information to justify and support the proposed ASP or NASP

### **I have questions about a specific ASP or NASP. Who do I talk to?**

If you have specific questions about a particular ASP, NASP or development project underway in Okotoks, please contact Planning Services at 403-995-2760 where you will be directed to the appropriate staff person to discuss your questions. Click [here](#) to submit an online question.