



# Ward 6

## UPDATE

### Walkable Communities

In October, Council and administration participated in a workshop presented by Dan Burden, a transportation planner from Orlando, Florida. His job is to create communities designed around the needs of people to enhance both safety and quality of life. His presentation consisted of a walking tour of some of the County's traffic "hot spots" – Wal-Mart, Wye Road, Wye School, Range Road 233 – followed by a discussion on current best practices in urban transportation design and engineering.

Many of the conclusions were frankly astonishing. Many believe that pedestrian- and cycle-friendly roads are possible only at the expense of motor traffic. It turns out that the reverse is true. A properly constructed two-lane road with bike and footpaths will move more cars than its four-lane equivalent! In the County, our criterion for considering twinning is a daily load of 8,000 to 10,000 vehicles per day. Burden showed us two-lane roads

that moved over 20,000 per day. In the USA and parts of Canada, there is even a trend to convert three- and four-lane roads back to two lanes. He refers to this as "putting roads on a diet." Not only are there fewer lanes, but the lanes are deliberately made narrower; 10 feet (3 metres) is the desired maximum width. Speeds are drastically reduced, but so is the need for traffic lights, which are the biggest single handicap to rapid traffic movement. Keeping cars moving, slowly, economically, but steadily is the secret to the success of this approach.

The timing is most fortunate. Road upgrades are always a very high cost budget item. It costs about a million dollars per kilometre to improve an existing road to first class standards, not counting the \$150,000 per intersection to install a traffic light. By embracing a few radical but well-proven ideas, we are now in a position to both create an efficient, people-friendly community and to save tax dollars.

### Wye Hall renovations

The Wye Hall renovations are almost complete, to the delight of the neighbourhood. It looks great and will be an asset to the entire County. Thanks to the Wye Community League, Strathcona County, the Anavets and all the many volunteers who helped out. A special thank you is due to Kayne Kempton who went into temporary retirement in order to apply his vast building trades skills to ramrod this project through to completion.

### Highway maintenance

Highways are maintained by contractors working for Alberta Transportation.

- For the area on Highway 15 east from the City of Fort Saskatchewan limits and Secondary Highway 830 from Highway 15 to Highway 38, call Traffic System Management at 1-800-390-2242.
- All other highways in Strathcona County are maintained by Alberta Highway Services at 1-888-255-5554.

### Playgrounds ready for play

Wye School will have two new playgrounds by early November—one for kids in Kindergarten to Grade 3 and the other for those in Grades 4 to 6. Funding provided by the Wye School Parents' Council and Strathcona County was matched by the Alberta government's Community Facility Enhancement Program. Congratulations to the Wye School Parents' Council on a job well done.

### 417-7100: the RoadLine, at your service 24 hours

417-7100 is Transportation and Agriculture Services' 24-hour line. Call to let us know about anything that needs immediate attention on County roads—for example, icy roads, downed traffic signs, or traffic signals that aren't working.



#### During business hours

If you call the Road Line from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays, you have a choice of:

- speaking to an operator
- getting recorded information on road bans and contact numbers for primary or secondary highways.
- leaving a message. Our staff check for messages every hour and return calls.

#### After hours

If you call evenings or weekends, you have a choice of:

- speaking to an on-call operator, who will page one of our staff if you are reporting emergency concerns
- getting recorded information on road bans and contact numbers for primary or secondary highways
- leaving a routine message. We check for messages first thing each morning, and return any calls.

## Growth and development

### Crimson Leaf

It is not often that you will see me as a cheerleader for residential development. This is one of those times.

The proposed Crimson Leaf development received its first planning approval from Council on September 20, 2005. Council adopted the Area Structure Plan for the development—located on Range Road 225, just south of Township Road 522 (SW 08-52-22-4). Two aspects of the development were well-received by Council. The developer agreed to provide sewer servicing to the development. This is consistent with Council's decision on July 5, 2005 to require sewer servicing for new developments in the Country Residential Policy Area, as reported in my August 2005 newsletter. The developer is also planning to service the development with geothermal power, a new initiative to reduce carbon emissions from this subdivision.

This development is an example of how things work when a developer acts in good faith and demonstrates a true sensitivity to the economic, environmental and lifestyle desires of the community. This development has set a standard that will be expected of applications in the future.

### Sconadale

Development proposals in the Sconadale neighbourhood have been referred back to administration for further review. Two redistricting applications and a Conceptual Scheme in Sconadale were considered by Council during public hearings on August 23, 2005. Neighbourhood concerns included access and traffic circulation in the area.

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## Helicopter Bylaw

The operation of rotary wing aircraft out of County acreages has been a concern to some residents for some time. While there are only four such aircraft currently based in Strathcona, these spectacular machines have created concerns about noise and safety. Planning and Development Services prepared a bylaw to deal with this. This went before Council in August and was referred back to administration for further study. The issue is jurisdiction. While the County has control over land use, including that of fixed-wing airports, there is some question as to whether we are able to regulate helicopter aerodromes. Even Transport Canada is a bit fuzzy on where to draw the line. As a result, we are now in negotiations with Transport Canada before proceeding.

The proposals were referred back to administration to address these issues, as well as Council's requirement for sewer servicing.

### Subdivision in Forest Hills Country Estates

The County's Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) will consider an appeal of a proposal to subdivide an existing lot in the Forest Hills Country Estates subdivision. The proposal was refused by the County's Subdivision Authority. The applicant is appealing that decision to the SDAB. The board's meeting on Friday, November 18, 2005 is open to the public.

We are aware of the issue of re-subdividing lots within existing country residential subdivisions. The issue is being specifically addressed in the Area Concept Plan for the Country Residential Policy Area. It will also be addressed in the review of the Municipal Development Plan.

### Golf course redevelopment defeated

On October 25, 2005 Council refused a proposal to redevelop Sherwood Park Golf Course for one-third-acre lots in an estate residential development.

The proposed bylaw to approve redistricting for the development was defeated at first reading. The public had expressed concerns about traffic and infrastructure issues associated with the proposed development, located on Range Road 233 across from Fountain Creek Estates.

## Triple Bottom Line

Triple Bottom Line is an expression heard quite a bit in the County these days. There are three principal standards—Environmental, Environmental and Social—and whatever we do must meet these standards such that one is not sacrificed for the others.

While "Triple Bottom Line" could be just another business cliché, in Strathcona, the concept has meaning. It is evolving into an effective method of ensuring your municipal government is doing what it is supposed to be doing to look after your interests in these three key areas.

There is already in place a method to evaluate Environmental Impact. The Planning and Development Services department reviews each potential development against the County Prioritized Landscape Ecology Assessment (PLEA). This ensures that wildlife habitat, wetlands, forests, water resources and drainage are taken into account through the establishment of Environmental Reserves and easements. Other County departments have or are establishing environmental criteria for activities such as road and parks maintenance, an example being the Pesticides Reduction Program currently being set up.

Economic Impact is the area that affects us most directly through taxes and user fees. The County does a thorough job of preparing and controlling annual budgets, monitoring spending on capital and operations. I believe that it is time that we began applying economic principles at an even more detailed level than an annual budget. I propose that each new initiative, whether industrial, commercial or residential, be required to go through a formal cost/benefit analysis to show its economic impact upon the community.

Social Impact is the hardest of the three to quantify and, directly or indirectly, covers a much broader spectrum—crime, traffic, poverty, aging, recreation. Nevertheless, we must address and mitigate the effect of growth and change upon the people who live here and whom we serve. Strathcona has begun this process through a Social Development Framework.

## Budget 2006 initial skirmishes

As part of the budget preparation process, Councillors are able to make Councillor Requests to ensure that particular projects of interest are considered. I submitted several such requests. Two of these were revenue neutral; two involved an increase in capital costs and one would result in a significant savings for an overall reduction in budget requirements.

### **Eliminate the recycle fee/fund from**

**general revenues:** This would acknowledge that this service is in fact not a utility and should therefore be funded as any other service without the irritation of a separate bill.

**Weed control program:** Eliminate broadcast herbicide applications in the rural areas; use spot spraying on noxious weeds only or at resident request.

**Reduced scope of Range Road 233 twinning to addition of bike/pedestrian path only:** Because of the congestion at Wye Road, because of the uncertainty around the timing of improvements of the Whitemud extension and above all because the local residents have shown no enthusiasm for a highway running through their neighbourhood, I believe that plans to twin Range Road 233 should be abandoned or delayed. This would result in a savings of over \$12

million over three years—\$4 million in the 2006 budget year alone. The residents wish safety for themselves and their kids, not more noise and traffic. All of the safety and convenience issues may be addressed without twinning and at a much lower cost.

**Wye Road bike/pedestrian path:** There are no shoulders provided on the north side of this busy road. It is only a matter of time before a cyclist gets nailed.

**Wye School road and parking safety:** Congestion around the school is an old and rapidly worsening problem that will be exacerbated by the twinning of Highway 21.

## Big Island Lake Water Management Project

In 2004, a meeting was held with the residents surrounding Big Island Lake, Alberta Environment and Strathcona County staff to discuss lake level concerns. The attendees agreed to support an engineering review of historic lake levels with the objective of defining the lake's full supply level.

In December 2004, Strathcona County Council approved the Big Island Lake Water Management Project to proceed, and a preliminary engineering report to be developed for submission to provincial authorities.

In June 2005, Strathcona County conducted a meeting with all residents living adjacent to Big Island Lake (Range Road 224 and Township Road 522). Presented at this meeting was the preliminary engineering report outlining results of a study, and determining the historical water levels of the lake.

Since this time, Strathcona County has been working with provincial government departments to finalize the draft report. It is anticipated that the engineering review will be completed by the end of this year, and construction of a lake water level control structure will be completed in the fall of 2006 subject to regulatory and funding approvals.

For information regarding this project, you may call Transportation and Agriculture Services at 417-7130.

## Beaver Hills Initiative

At the recent Alberta Urban Municipalities Association conference in Calgary, Strathcona County shared with several other communities an award for successful inter-municipal partnership. The focus of this recognition was our participation in the Beaver Hills Initiative.

The Beaver Hills, lying east of Edmonton, is a feature created by glacial retreat in the Beaver Hills/Cooking Lake moraine. The area crosses the boundaries of five separate rural municipalities: Strathcona County, Leduc County, Beaver County, Lamont County and County of Camrose. Elk Island National Park and several provincial parks and protected areas, including the Ministik Bird Sanctuary, are found within the Beaver Hills. This ecologically-significant land encompasses 1,572 square km or 607 square miles and forms a raised landscape feature approximately 750 m above sea level distinctly visible from the surrounding level plains.

The Beaver Hills Initiative is a partnership—among the municipalities, the provincial government and the federal government as well as industry and environmental non-government organizations—that acts co-operatively in developing

land use recommendations. The goal is to encourage decision makers to adopt environmentally sound policies that recognize the unique qualities of this area.

The Beaver Hills is experiencing increased demand for recreation, residential development, industry and agriculture placing increasing pressure on the area. In order for the ecosystem to remain sustainable, decision makers must consider the natural resources and their sensitivity to development.

The area is a critical source of both surface and ground water. A large proportion of lands, both public and private, are at present in their natural extensively treed state. Healthy forests, grasslands and wetlands filter rainfall, trap sediment, recycle nutrients and trap pollutants, thus cleansing water that enters underground aquifers and surface water.

The partners in this cooperative effort meet regularly to address land use and management issues. Data from many different sources helps create policy recommendations based on social, economic and environmental balance.

For further information, call Brenda Wispinski, Project Manager, Beaver Hills Initiative, at 464-8280.

