

**2017**

# **Sturgeon Valley Special Study Area**

## **Terms of Reference**



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**Project Name: Sturgeon Valley Special Study Area Terms of Reference**

**Date Initiated: January 2017**

## **Part One: Sturgeon Valley Overview**

### **1.0 Background**

The Sturgeon Valley Area Structure Plan (SV ASP), adopted in 1999, set forth in general terms a proposed pattern of land use for an area of over 5,060 hectares (80 quarter sections). Rather than pre-districting the entire plan area for future country residential development, the plan prudently required new rural residential development to build-out contiguous from an established core under the following key objectives.

- Rural residential subdivisions are to be provided with piped water and sewer systems, and paved roads,
- Development is to proceed in an orderly fashion,
- Development is to be located to lands that have marginal agricultural value, and
- Development is to be attractive, conveniently located, and safe physical environments.

Implementation of the SV ASP has resulted in the continued preservation of high-value agricultural lands, along with responsible orderly rural residential development (existing approved country residential lots are nearing 90% build-out).

Recognizing the changing dynamics in the region, the oversupply of country residential land in the greater Edmonton Metropolitan area and the cost of servicing associated with such a housing product, Sturgeon County has been working with the Capital Region Board and area developers for the past 10 years to determine housing product types that would complement the established rural residential community. Part of this vision included creating the opportunity for greater mix of housing forms, along with complimentary neighborhood level amenities that seeks to contribute to the ongoing development of a complete community in the Sturgeon Valley Area. A key element in this approach was to enable development from the Metropolitan Area boundary in a manner that is sensitive to the character of the established rural residential community while of a sufficient density and design to support infrastructure.

Without planning certainty over the past 10 years, it has been difficult for Sturgeon County to plan for the development and expansion of their existing municipally owned and operated water and sanitary infrastructure; having little basis for the determination of future service need without an understanding of likely growth potential. Furthermore, the established rural residential community has continued to express concern about the loss of their aesthetic characteristics through the continued encroachment of urban development on their fringes. In respecting the values of the established rural residential community, it is envisaged that development from the Metropolitan Area will be carried out in a transitional manner that mitigates the impact of urban development. Both existing natural features and innovative design techniques may be utilized to achieve this transition. For example, floodplains and potential wetland areas may present opportunities for natural buffers, while also constraining the amount the available developable land. Additionally, design techniques developed through an Area Structure Plan such as increased cluster development that enables greater infrastructure efficiency, present other opportunities to meet the vision. It is expected that further analysis of opportunities and constraints to achieving this vision will be a significant factor in the development of an Area Structure Plan. This community is unique, compared to typical forms of traditional country residential development, in large part because Sturgeon County provides full sanitary and water services and because of the proximity to the cities of Edmonton, St. Albert and CFB Edmonton, leading to the need for establishing different densities.

Given Sturgeon County's infrastructure investments, the proximity of the Sturgeon Valley to Anthony Henday Drive, the City of St. Albert and CFB Edmonton, opportunities exist to further develop remaining lands that contribute support towards future infrastructure, such as the extension of 127 Street. Pending outcomes of the mandated Capital Region Board SV SSA, it is expected that an agreement and set of high level policies will provide overarching planning parameters (such as density) that enables the development of a new Area Structure Plan that respects the values of the established rural residential community.

As outlined above, the Sturgeon Valley has a unique set of circumstances that have resulted in it being identified as a Special Study Area within the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan (2016) policy 4.4.5 states *“Development in the Sturgeon Valley will be addressed through a Special Study Area process in accordance with Part C. Implementation, Section 5.2.4.2. Area specific policies approved by the Capital Region Board and Government of Alberta for the Sturgeon Valley will prevail.”*

## 2.0 Planning Context

Sturgeon County encompasses an area of over 2,300 km<sup>2</sup>. As of 2017, Sturgeon County total population is reported at 20,495. The Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan (2016) - Schedule 1 Population and Employment Projections (2014-2044) identifies a future Sturgeon County population projection of 31,000 (low case) and 39,200 (high case). Bordering to the south of the Sturgeon Valley Area is the City of Edmonton where a portion of the lands have been developed for large institutional purposes and the remaining land area between Valor Road (Township Road 542) and the Henday falls within the approved Goodridge Corner Area Structure Plan. This Area Structure Plan provides a framework for the development of residential and mixed use with a commercial centre along 127 Street as indicated in the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan. The Sturgeon Valley Area is bordered to the east by Highway 28 and CFB Edmonton, with Highway 37 bordering its north. To the southwest is the municipal boundary of the City of St Albert, which includes residential development as the predominant land use. Currently, the City of St Albert is in the process of seeking annexation of lands to the west, north and northeast of the city that includes lands within the Sturgeon Valley Area. Transecting the Sturgeon Valley Area in a north-south direction is the railway line that will present challenges for developing connections for communities in an east west direction.

It should be noted that approximately 70% of the planned future population in Sturgeon County (8,609) is proposed to be centralized within the Sturgeon Valley Area Structure Plan. The remainder (30%) of planned future population is to be centralized in key growth hamlets with existing municipal servicing (municipal piped water and sewer), existing country residential and agricultural farmsteads/agricultural acreages.

The Sturgeon Valley Area Structure Plan encompasses fully-serviced (water and sewer) multi-lot developments that have been approved through various planning approval authorities summarized below. The portion of lands envisaged to be developed over time between the Anthony Henday to the south and established rural residential to the north would likely start in the western portion from Sturgeon Road, because of the natural terrain and existing services. Lands to the east are also more limited in their ability for development because of established wetlands that exist and ability to provide services to this area.

### 1963 to 1995: Edmonton Regional Planning Commission

- Approved approximately 45% of current registered lots in the Sturgeon Valley
- Average densities of the 19 multi-lots approved during this time period: 1.5 du/ha (gross) and 2.2 du/ha (net)

### 1999 to 2010: Sturgeon Valley Area Structure Plan

- Sturgeon Valley Area Structure Plan established maximum density of 2.96 du/ha (gross)
- Approved approximately 55% of current registered lots in the Sturgeon Valley
- Average densities of the 11 multi-lots approved during this time period: 2.5 du/ha (gross) and 3.7 du/ha (net)

### 2010: Capital Region Growth Plan: Growing Forward (Cluster Country Residential Area-O)

- Establishment of new maximum density of 2.0 du/ha (gross)
- 4 REF applications submitted between 2010-2012
 

(2010) - Sturgeon Heights	CRB approval - 3 du/ha (gross) - Subdivision application has since been withdrawn
(2010) - River's Gate	CRB approval - 1.25 du/ha (gross) - Currently in construction phase
(2012) - Green Hennessy	CRB approval - 2.025 du/ha (gross) - Currently in Development Agreement phase
(2010) - Estates of Tuscany	CRB refusal - 2.64 du/ha (gross) - No application due to CRB refusal

### 2016: Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan (Awaiting Provincial Approval)

- No maximum density has been defined for greenfield developments in Sturgeon Valley Area Structure Plan. Possibility exists for interpretation of future developments with Sturgeon Valley Area Structure Plan to be defined solely with context of rural policy tier.

- The metropolitan tier alignment within Schedule 2 of the Growth Plan effectively follows Valour Road (195 Avenue) and an extended area from the 127 Street functional alignment. The alignment is anticipated to be more refined through the SV SSA planning process.
- Future refinement of the 127 Street functional alignment (arterial road) as indicated in the Growth Plan crosses through portions of the SV SSA. The alignment is anticipated to be more refined through the Area Structure Plan planning process.

NOTE: It is envisaged that the SV SSA policy will include provision for all Area Structure Plan's within the SV SSA to be worked on collaboratively with the City of Edmonton and City of St. Albert. Hence, the SV SSA policy will be of a high-level nature that provides direction to enable the development of Area Structure Plans.

### 3.0 Sturgeon Valley Unique Elements

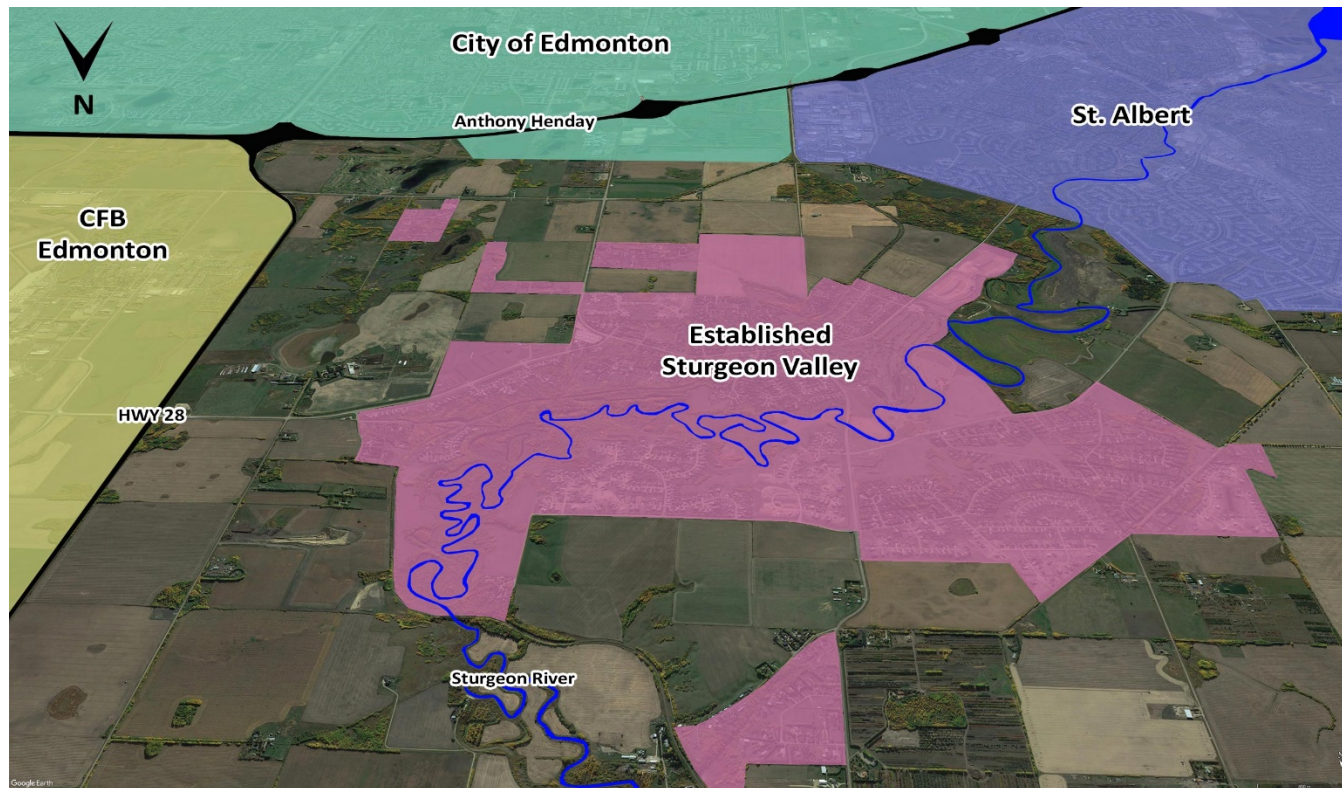


Figure 1: Established Sturgeon Valley

Sturgeon Valley is an established community with a variety of unique characteristics that distinguish it from other residential settlements within the Capital Region. A summary of the unique characteristics and circumstances are detailed below.

1. An established community that seeks to mitigate its rural character from the impact of urban expansion

- Established rural residential development surrounded by large open tracts of rural fields.
- Planned rural residential developments developed with principles related to: orderly rural residential development, on lands with marginal agricultural value and the provision of full municipal servicing (water and sewer).

2. The Sturgeon Valley is a community with history including:

- Initial subdivisions approved by Edmonton Regional Planning Commission dating back to 1963.
- 33 multi-lot rural residential developments that have built out continually over the last 50 years.
- Sturgeon Valley Area Structure Plan (1999) envisioned growth to 2020 and nearing 90% built out.

3. An existing concentration of people at the confluence of 3 municipalities

- Community of approx. 3,500 people in an established rural residential community, adjacent to Regional Employment Area (such as CFB Edmonton) and nearby commercial services via Anthony Henday Drive.
- 2014 Sturgeon County MDP projects additional 8,609 people to the Sturgeon Valley area (historical growth keeping with the CRB population targets)
- Primary location for future population growth, supportive development/services and social infrastructure service delivery; which is integral to Sturgeon County's long-term growth management for the area.
- Sturgeon Valley area surrounded by the Cities of Edmonton, St. Albert, and CFB Edmonton.

4. Sturgeon County investments in local infrastructure enable future development to address the changing needs of the community.

- Full municipal servicing (water and sewer) with integrated regional infrastructure.
- Existing investment by Sturgeon County enables maximized infrastructure capacity to accommodate the projected population growth in the Sturgeon Valley Area.
- Opportunities for intermunicipal collaboration between Sturgeon County, St. Albert and Edmonton.
- Roads of Regional Significance encompass the study area.

5. The Sturgeon Valley is an interconnected community.

- Future development is contiguous from existing community and there exists opportunity to centralize future development footprint to areas where County servicing can be extended.
- Contiguous development is located near major employment areas.
- Opportunities exists to redevelop and intensify undeveloped lands while mitigating potential urban impacts on the established rural residential community.
- Focus development where adequate supporting infrastructure exists.
- Accommodating population growth in built-up area reduces the impact of rural development sprawl and create developments that are fiscally responsible.

6. The Sturgeon River is a focal point of the community

- Ability to build upon natural assets to protect future community amenities.
- Natural features buffer and will assist with transitioning land uses between urban and rural communities.
- Rural/urban interface provides opportunity to develop an inter-municipal naturalized park system.
- Strong sense of community that values residing in a naturalized living environment.

7. Committed Regional Dialogue

- The confluence of adjacent urban municipalities has prompted necessary regional dialogue aiming to respect the interests of the existing communities and regional planning objectives.
- Both the Capital Region Board Growth Plan and Sturgeon County Municipal Development Plan identify areas for growth.
- Collaborative sub-regional discussion opportunities exist between Edmonton, St. Albert and Sturgeon County.

8. Ability to improve the sustainability of the existing development pattern

- CCRA limited development to 2.0 du/ha, which does not align with Growth Plan's aim to grow responsibly and to limit development footprint.
- Sturgeon County's 2010 analysis demonstrated that CCRA was not viable for the municipality or developers (low density vs development/servicing costs).

9. The Capital Region Growth Plan Policy and the Sturgeon Valley Area

- The Edmonton Metropolitan Growth Plan currently provide no guidance to the County on density or how the area will grow because the current policy does not accurately reflect the unique circumstances of this area that fit accordingly with the Rural or Metropolitan Tier.
- Policy 4.4.5 recognizes that this area is special for the reasons outlined above and requires development of specific policy to provide further direction on how growth will occur within the Sturgeon Valley Area. Working in partnership with the City of Edmonton and City of St. Albert it is the intention to develop policy around density, the boundaries of the study area and collaboration between the three municipalities to guide the future development of an Area Structure Plan.



## Part Two: Special Study Area

### 4.0 Background

As per the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan (the “Plan”) policy 4.4.5 states “*Development in the Sturgeon Valley will be addressed through a Special Study Area process in accordance with Part C. Implementation, Section 5.2.4.2. Area specific policies approved by the Capital Region Board and Government of Alberta for the Sturgeon Valley will prevail.*”

A Special Study Area is defined in the Plan as “*An area identified to address intermunicipal and/or regional growth issues that may require special policy consideration within the Plan to support the vision, guiding principles and objectives and will be addressed in accordance with the process outlined in Part C. Section 5.2.4.2 of the Plan*”. It should be noted that conducting a Special Study is a new responsibility for municipalities to implement as per the Plan.

Furthermore, it is articulated in Section 5.2 in the Plan that Special Study Areas shall require a supporting Terms of Reference addressing: proposed study area, growth related items to be addressed, proposed planning process/timing and involvement of municipalities and stakeholders. This document is intended to fulfill the requirements of this specific portion of the process.

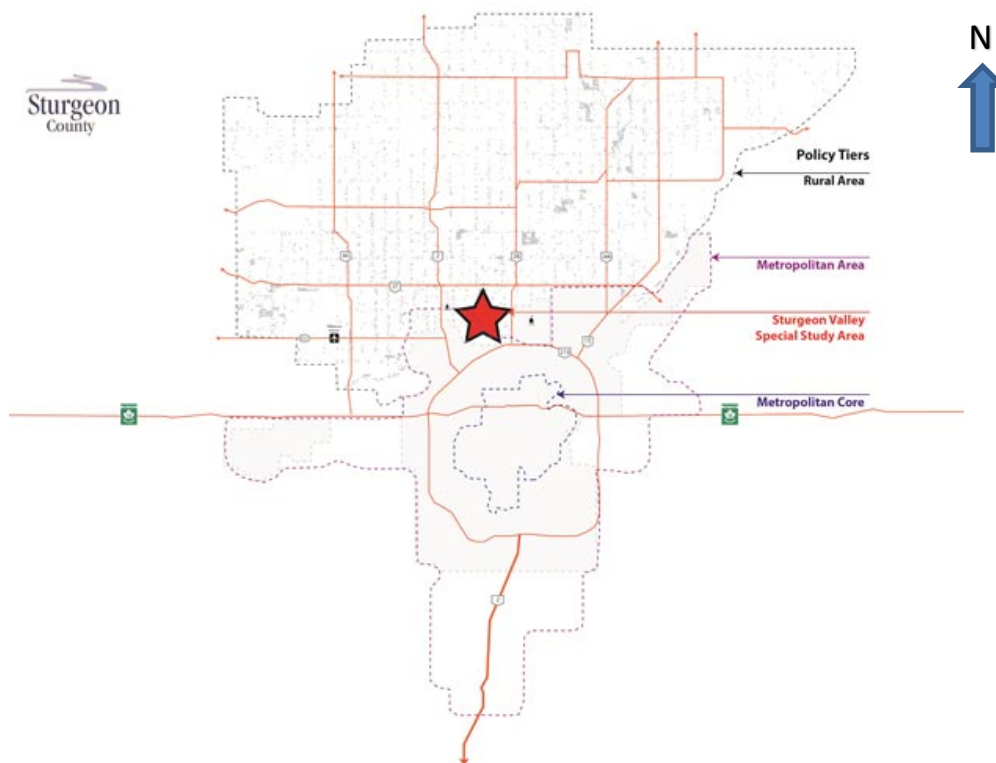


Figure 2: Sturgeon Valley Special Study Area

### 5.0 Objective

Both the cities of Edmonton and City of St. Albert share jurisdictional boundaries with the Sturgeon Valley Special Study Area (SV SSA). As noted in Part C: Implementation of the Plan, the agreement will define planning outcomes and provide planning certainty in terms of the following key elements:

- Proposed Study Area;
- Growth Related Items to be Addressed (such as Greenfield Development Densities); and
- Proposed Planning Process/Timing and Involvement of municipalities and stakeholders.

The Terms of Reference speaks to the general scope, guiding principles and actions required to ensure that the appropriate protocols and strategies are in place to support the mutual goals of Sturgeon County, City of Edmonton and City of St. Albert (as it pertains specifically to the SV SSA). The Terms of Reference includes a process that is expected to result in a framework for the various jurisdictions to work together collaboratively on issues related to land use and infrastructure in an agreed upon defined area.

## 6.0 Scope

There is value in a coordinated approach to accommodate growth, while maintaining jurisdictional autonomy. The Terms of Reference relies on providing baseline information and informing future processes and the necessary collaborations to guide future development in the SV SSA.

### In-scope

- Higher level legislation and plans (Capital Region Board).
- Already approved community wide and area specific plans, including Municipal Development Plans and other Statutory Plans that provides background information.
- Identification of regional infrastructure triggers and thresholds.
- Identifying areas of collaboration.
- Refining the location of the Rural and Metropolitan tier line.
- Establishing density targets.

### Out of Scope

- New Area Structure Plans in identified greenfield areas within the SV SSA (this will be addressed through future phases of the planning process in the SV SSA)
- Public engagement (this will be addressed through future phase of the planning process in the SV SSA)

### Assumptions

- Active participation of both the City of Edmonton and City of St. Albert
- Capital Region Board - Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan will be enacted as written

## 7.0 Study Areas

The Sturgeon Valley Special Study Area (SV SSA) is bordered by St. Albert to the west and Edmonton to the south. Given the unique character, connection between two existing urban centres, and intermunicipal servicing constraints, the Growth Plan requires that the lands be addressed through a special study area process to address the unique nature of the lands, explore opportunities for inter municipal cooperation on items such as servicing and transportation, and establish the appropriate land uses and density for the area. Recent changes to the MGA empower and encourage municipalities to work together to find mutually beneficial solutions to development including the provision of intermunicipal services.

Land use and density directly impact the built environment, character, pace of development, municipal revenue streams, and affordability of a neighbourhood. The 2010 Capital Region Growth Plan designated the entire SV SSA plan area as Cluster Country Residential with a density target of 2 dwelling units per gross hectare. As per the 2010 Growth Plan, the area directly south and southwest of the SVSSA plan area required a target residential density of between 30 and 45 dwelling units per net residential hectare (du/nrha). Schedule 6 of the 2016 Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan does not provide a minimum greenfield residential density to guide future developments in the rural tier of the SV SSA. Metropolitan Tier minimum residential density targets are identified as 45 du/nrha for the City of Edmonton and 40 du/nrha for the City of St. Albert. There is also no minimum density target for Sturgeon County defined within the Metropolitan Tier.

Density in the Sturgeon Valley Special Study Area needs to be responsive to the context of the neighbourhood and market rather than a 'one size fits all' approach. Part of the process will seek a density transition from the planned density in urban areas to existing low density country residential; while also supporting a diversity of housing, amenities and services to contribute to the development of a complete community. This process will also need to evaluate the fiscal impacts of different forms of development to enable responsible development required to service the lands and contribute towards key regional



infrastructure. Figure 2 defines the boundary area of the SV SSA as lands contained within the current in-force statutory plan for the area (Sturgeon Valley Area Structure Plan) and the defined CCRA policy area; being those lands contained within the area of Highway 37 to the north, Highway 28 to the east, Range Road 253 to the west and the city boundaries of St Albert and Edmonton to the south/southwest.

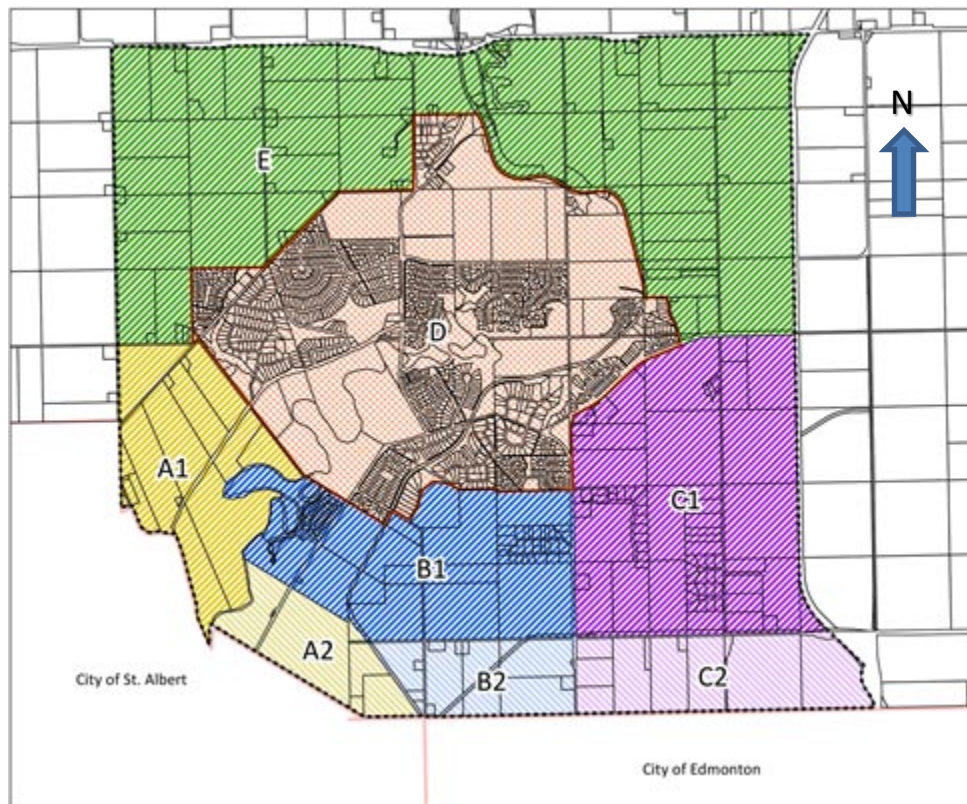


Figure 3: SV SSA Areas

There are five core areas within the SV SSA that will serve as a basis for the development of policy:

**Area A** - Lands currently under City of St. Albert annexation process. Area A is also broken down into A1 and A2 with A2 being considered largely undevelopable as the majority of the lands are within the flood plain or consist of provincially significant park lands.

**Area B** - Are lands that are likely to be developed first because of access and ease in servicing. Area B is broken into Areas B1 and B2; being lands mainly located either north or south of Valour Road.

**Area C** - Area C is broken into Area C1 and C2; being lands mainly located either north or south of Valour Road.

NOTE: Areas B and C represent 1,646ha of land within the SV SSA. Approximately 25% (528ha) is already developed or would not be considered having 'greenfield development' opportunity. This leaves approximately 1,118ha of gross developable lands, with an adjusted gross developable area (assuming 30%) of approximately 783ha.

**Area D** - Are existing established serviced Country Residential. It is comprised of an existing community of approximately 3,400 people. The Valley Core includes 33 multi-lots nearing 86% built-out, with 1,452 approved/registered lots and 201 vacant lots.

**Area E** - Are lands that will be retained for primarily Agricultural purposes. Area E will be protected and maintained to enable efficient agricultural production and to support the agricultural section in the Region.

**City of St. Albert** - Urban development within the City of St. Albert has reached Sturgeon County municipal boundaries to the southwest of the SV SSA. There are known development interests within portions of Area A1 of an urban built-form and density.

**City of Edmonton** - The Goodridge Corners Neighbourhood Area Structure Plan, adopted by COE Council in February 2014, borders the south portion of the SV SSA. The plan envisions a future population of 8,235 people. A variety of developments are located within the neighbourhood including the Edmonton Remand Centre correctional facility and the Edmonton Police Service northwest campus (currently in construction).

**CFB Edmonton** - CFB Edmonton is a primary military base that prepares Canadian troops for general combat and battlefield deployment. The base itself occupies over 2,500 hectares and encompasses approximately 320 buildings. The population on the base fluctuates as troops are deployed and return from active duty. As of 2009, CFB Edmonton had a Capital budget of over \$115 million dollars and employed over 6,100 people, making it the single largest employer within Sturgeon County. CFB Edmonton employs approximately 4,500 (regular forces), 500 (reserve forces), 500 (deployment surge), and 600 (civilian employees).

## 8.0 Growth Related Items to be Addressed

Growth issues related to Land Use Planning, Infrastructure and Open Space will be analyzed and presented within the above identified study areas. Interjurisdictional collaboration on the SV SSA will result in an administrative document written and compiled collaboratively by Administrative representatives of Sturgeon County, City of Edmonton and City of St. Albert that can be used for subsequent endorsement and approval by the Capital Region Board.

## 9.0 Consistency with Capital Region Board Growth Plan Principles

Overall, the SV SSA policies and future development of Area Structure Plans in the SV SSA are to be consistent with the principles of the Capital Region Growth Plan, however special considerations are needed when developing the policies. Specifically, densities within the SV SSA are to be articulated in a manner that enables development in a responsible manner, that capitalizes on existing servicing and that mitigates the potential impact on the established rural residential community.

## 10.0 Deliverables

A set of high level policies that guide future development within the Special Study Area, with a focus on establishing a study area boundary, development densities, municipal roles, and policies related to general land use, built form, open space and infrastructure, that will be adopted by the Capital Region.

## 11.0 Success Criteria

This phase of the Initiative is one step towards initiation of future statutory planning for the SV SSA.

Project Success Criteria		
End Goal	We Can Measure It By:	Intermediate Measures
Special Study Area regional policies that outline the role of all municipalities and specifications for future statutory planning.	Approval by Capital Region Board	Approval of SV SSA Area Specific Policies between Sturgeon County, Cities of Edmonton and St. Albert.

## 12.0 Schedule

Phase	Start Date
Phase 1a - Initiation - Tri Parties engagement process.	January 2017
Phase 1b – Terms of Reference - 5.2.4.2 (a) and (b) Adoption of Terms of Reference by Capital Region	September 2017

Phase II - Area Specific Policies Development - 5.2.4.2 (c) and (d) of Growth Plan Part C: Implementation	February - November 2017*
Phase III - Approval - 5.2.4.2 (e) of Growth Plan Part C: Implementation	TBD**

\* Finalization of Phase II is dependent on initiation and subsequent approval of Phase Ib of the project. The suggested end date is subject to change.

\*\* Note that further development of specific Area Structure Plans will be addressed through future phases of the planning process in the SV SSA. It is premature to provide a tentative start date for Phase III – (ie. future Area Structure Planning) given the uncertainty to when the TOR or Area Specific Policies for the SV SSA will be approved by the CRB Board.

### 13.0 Summary

To summarize, Sturgeon County has been working on updating the Sturgeon Valley Area Structure Plan over the last 10 years in order to:

- Enable development of a well-planned community that recognizes its neighbours (the City of Edmonton and City of St. Albert) and that respects and protects core agricultural land to the north, and
- Acknowledge the established rural residential community who have concerns over the loss of their aesthetic characteristics through the continued encroachment of urban development on their fringes; which also recognize the need to capitalize on existing Sturgeon County infrastructure services located in the area.

While an existing Area Structure Plan exists for the SV SSA area, the County and land developers recognize that it is:

- Outdated, does not capitalize on existing servicing provided by the County, or future planned infrastructure, and
- Inconsistent with the new Capital Region Growth Plan.

It is recognized that it needs to be changed. To carry this out firstly requires the development of Special Policy Area in accordance with the Capital Region Growth Plan.

The area of greatest sensitivity on future development exists with those lands located between the boundaries of the City of Edmonton and City of St. Albert that lead up to the established rural residential community. This requires specific provision of policies to enable the development of a new Area Structure Plan that is sensitive to the unique issues while at the same time providing policy that speaks to the wider existing Area Structure Plan. Enabling the development of a new Area Structure Plan, in a collaborative fashion, will allow further in-depth research that will lead to development of a plan that meets the policy established for the area.

The key differences with the Capital Region Growth Plan exists in the area of densities and how they will be applied to the SV SSA area. More specifically, how a transitional form of development, that is fiscally responsible, can be developed while mitigating the potential impact on the established rural residential community while meeting the overall intent of the Growth Plan. The first step in this process is to obtain agreement to this Terms of Reference to enable the Tri Parties (Sturgeon County, City of Edmonton and City of St. Albert) to continue the development of policy for the SV SSA with the intent of obtaining final approval from the Capital Region Board. Once approved, Sturgeon County will move forward with developing a new Area Structure Plan in collaboration with the City of Edmonton and City of St. Albert.