

Heartland Residents Task Force Report to Council

Background

1. Sturgeon County's Area Structure Plan for the Alberta Industrial Heartland was adopted by bylaw in March 2006. Since then, significant industrial development has occurred in the area. Remaining residents describe negative impacts resulting from the development.
2. In February 2018, council approved the Heartland Residents Task Force with the mandate to:
"Present to council recommended alternatives to address challenges experienced by residents living within and adjacent to Alberta's Industrial Heartland".
3. Task Force members: Ron Shaw, Chairman; Wayne Groot; Rob Shaw, Jeannette Harriot; Blaine Shaw; Marty Derouin; Stuart Shaw; Karen Shaw; Alanna Hnatiw.

Process

1. The Task Force met several times during the summer of 2018 and engaged an external facilitator in the fall.
2. During an all-day January 12, 2019 workshop, the task force and CAO discussed their perspectives of the situation and developed a list of possible mitigations.
3. Administration reviewed the mitigations and discussed their observations with the task force at a January 30 workshop. Through discussion with administration, task force members learned that some mitigations are already underway, some require council policy decisions and some are the jurisdiction of other agencies.
4. The task force met again with some members of administration and developed their recommendations to present to council.

Summary of Resident Concerns

Since the ASP was passed in 2006, residents have experienced uncertainty and loss in both their community and their personal lives. The following summarizes residents' concerns.

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| 1. | Heavy industrial zoning restrictions limit subdivision options and restrict the ability to sell residential properties in a normal open market. When the ASP was passed, the Voluntary Purchase Program provided a fair-market means for some residents wanting to leave the area. That program is now defunct. Some residents now find themselves on stranded properties which are difficult to sell in a normal market at a fair residential market value. Some residents are uncertain about their ability to sell their land. |
| 2. | Residents have health and safety concerns regarding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rural crime ○ Air quality and air emissions ○ Road safety due to traffic volume, traffic management and infrastructure ○ Personal stress resulting from uncertainty ○ Light pollution and noise pollution |
| 3. | Residents are concerned about future planning for the AIH: how will planning balance residential, agricultural and industrial needs while also considering climate change information? |

Recommendations to Council

Financial	
Preamble	<p>During the past 12 years residents within the ASP have experienced a decrease in the quality of life due to cumulative effects of industry and the ability to be financially assertive in the sale of some of their properties. Residents experience financial uncertainty as industry continues to expand.</p> <p>Residents in the AIH want to be treated fairly. It feels as if the east part of the County is treated differently than the west. <i>"We pay the same taxes as others, but we have different choices available. We can't subdivide, we can't add new dwellings. We feel handcuffed for future decisions."</i></p> <p>The Task Force recommends:</p>
1.	That the county provides current, future, and/or retroactive tax relief to residential properties in the AIH to acknowledge the negative impacts of zoning and nearby industrial development.
2.	That the county obtains individual appraisals of residential properties in the AIH. The information would include both current property values and comparable values as if the properties were not in the AIH. Because residents are uncertain over possible land sale, this would establish a data base of objective land valuations.
3.	That the county work to develop a plan for providing options that would allow remaining AIH residents to dispose of their property when they may choose to leave the AIH. Options may be similar to what had been available through the Voluntary Purchase Program. The county may consider working with other governing bodies in developing such a plan.
4.	That the County compensate landowners for the difference between the appraised value of their land and the forced sale value a landowner receives when land is sold.
5.	That the County compensate landowners for the costs a landowner incurs to obtain the necessary professional advice to properly explore potential land sale options offered by developers. Examples are legal and accounting advice and costs associated with subdivision.

Communication	
Preamble	Residents do their best to stay informed on matters that affect their life in the Heartland. However, there are many sources of information and residents would find a coordinated approach to information helpful. The Task Force recommends:
1.	That the county coordinates sources of AIH information including air emissions, emergency response planning, and roads and other related information into a one-window source for AIH residents.
2.	That the county provides regular, meaningful, in-depth and coordinated information on AIH industrial activities and development within the AIH.

Lighting	
Preamble	Residents have experienced a change in the quality of their rural life. Industrial lighting is one of those changes and the Task Force recommends:
1.	That the county request existing industries to adhere to voluntary reduction of light emissions.
2.	That the county develop a dark sky policy for the AIH.

Emergency Response Planning and Rural Safety	
Preamble	Industrial development impacts health and rural safety. The Task Force recommends:
1.	That the county work with the North East Region Community Awareness Emergency Response (NR CARE) and the Sturgeon Region Emergency Management Partnership to ensure a coordinated emergency management approach with industry, and to ensure that a proper notification protocol is in place for AIH residents.
2.	That the county increase bylaw patrol in the AIH to correlate with activity times in the area.
3.	That the county considers an enhanced rural crime watch system for AIH, similar to what has been done in the Barrhead area.

Air Quality and Monitoring	
	The Task Force recommends that:
1.	That the county host an event to up-date residents on air quality monitoring within the AIH.
2.	That the county provides additional active air monitors with locations determined with residents.