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1.0 Description of Proposal

1.1 Purpose

This Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) is being completed for the City of St. Albert by Select Engineering Consultants Ltd. The purpose of this assessment is to determine whether future development of land within the City boundary will have an impact on future agricultural sustainability and production. Section 5.1.1 of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board Growth Plan requires an AIA when an existing Area Structure Plan (ASP) is being amended to include lands that are classified as prime agricultural soils based on soil suitability ratings.

The subject lands are situated in the northwest region of St. Albert, as shown on Figure 1. The land is owned by the City of St. Albert and is currently being used as an organic waste collection and storage site during warmer months and the north area is used as a snow storage dump site during winter months. A portion of the land parcel is proposed to be added as phase 3 into the boundary of the North Ridge Area Structure Plan for future planning and development. Surrounding land uses include: agricultural cultivation to the north and east, a golf driving range to the west, residential development to the south and an electrical substation to the southwest.

1.2 North Ridge Area Structure Plan

The North Ridge ASP is currently being amended to include the south portion of the lands legally described as Lot 1, Block 2, Plan 052 5581. The development of this site will be impacted by the future development of Fowler Way, which is planned to bisect the subject area. The North Ridge ASP will be bound to the north by the future arterial roadway.

The initial plans for the subject lands are either to develop the site with institutional or recreational facilities or to provide an affordable housing option in this area of the City. The existing North Ridge ASP could benefit from incorporating these additional uses into the plan area. The proposed development area can be seen on Figure 2, however the planned land use has yet to be determined.

Phase 3 of the ASP will have ample access, being directly adjacent to future Fowler Way and existing Villeneuve Road. Due to the access capability of this site, there is the option for the site to work independently from the surrounding land uses, but also leaves open the option to integrate the lands as supporting uses to the neighbouring parcels. The site will connect well with Phase 2 of the ASP through designated walkways and access to the planned stormwater management facility that borders Phase 3. Phase 3 will have access to all of the trail connections in Phase 2, which connect the neighbourhood to commercial and open space land uses. If residential land uses are proposed for Phase 3 of the North Ridge ASP, the development will meet the minimum greenfield density set out by the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board Growth Plan.
FIGURE 1

LOCATION PLAN

LEGEND

Subject Lands
AIA Boundary
ASP Boundary

NORTH RIDGE PHASE 3
THE CITY OF ST. ALBERT

scale 1:50,000

STURGEON COUNTY
JENSEN LAKES ASP
DEER RIDGE ASP
ERIN RIDGE
JENSEN LAKES NORTH ASP
RANGE ROAD 260 ASP

FIGURE 1

THE CITY OF ST. ALBERT

LEGEND

Subject Lands
AIA Boundary

0 0.5 1 km

55-19004_01_PRF001.DWG

Jjurincic  January 9, 2020
PHASE 3 FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

- Future Fowler Way Alignment
- Hogan Road
- Villeneuve Road
- Future Development
- Electrical Sub-Station
- ASP Boundary

Legend:
- Future City Development
- ASP Boundary

North Ridge Phase 3
The City of St. Albert

FIGURE 2
2.0 Planning and Contextual Factors

2.1 Applicable Planning Policies and Regulations

The following documents have been incorporated in the development of the Agricultural Impact Assessment and the North Ridge ASP.

2.1.1 Municipal Government Act

The Municipal Government Act (MGA) is a provincial statutory document that guides the processes and regulates the duties municipalities must follow. The MGA provides baseline regulatory processes for municipalities throughout the province, to ensure continuity between regulatory bodies in municipal government. Part 17 of the MGA regulates Planning and Development with multiple sections outlining the process a municipality must follow to adopt an ASP. Section 633 sets out the requirements of an ASP document and what documents it must be consistent with, including Municipal and Intermunicipal Development Plans. Sections 636 and 692 of the MGA provide the regulations for the adoption of an ASP into the municipality.

2.1.2 Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan

The Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board (EMRB) Growth Plan is a document that is intended to guide development within the Edmonton Metropolitan Region for the next 50 years. The goal of the Growth Plan is to minimize urban sprawl where possible and to ensure compact and efficient development throughout the region. Compact development can aide in reducing infrastructure costs, and improve affordability of housing. The document also encourages compact development to reduce the loss of agricultural lands on the outskirts of growing cities. A goal of the Growth Plan is to preserve the prime agricultural lands around municipalities for as long as possible to ensure sustainability in agriculture production. The EMRB Growth Plan designates all the lands in the region into three categories. The subject lands fall into the Metropolitan Area category. Growth directions of the Metropolitan Area include developing a mix of urban uses compactly and contiguously.

The agricultural sub-section of the Growth Plan sets out the guiding principles for development on agricultural lands. Objectives of the Agricultural section of the Growth Plan include minimizing fragmentation of agricultural land, and conserving prime agricultural lands within growth areas for as long as possible. Identifying and protecting prime agricultural lands is imperative to maintaining future food sources. Section 6.2.4 of the Growth Plan lays out the following criteria for converting prime agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses:

- 6.2.4.a – The lands are contiguous with built-up urban areas and/or planned areas,
- 6.2.4.b – The lands are required to accommodate municipal employment and population projections,
- 6.2.4.c – If residential uses are proposed, the lands are within a proposed statutory plan in conformance with the applicable minimum greenfield density,
6.2.4.d – An Agricultural Impact Assessment has been completed to identify the potential adverse impacts of the proposed development on agricultural lands and existing agricultural operations on-site and off-site in the surrounding area, and

6.2.4.e – Mitigation measures recommended through an Agricultural Impact Assessment are incorporated in the planning and design of the proposed development to minimize potential adverse impacts on agricultural lands and active agricultural operations on-site and off-site in the surrounding area from near neighbor impacts of urban growth.

An Agricultural Impact Assessment is required when an existing ASP is expanding its boundary or when a new ASP is proposed to include prime agricultural lands determined by schedule 11 within the Growth Plan. The schedule was developed by Agriculture and Agri-food Canada based on the Land Suitability Rating System (LSRS).

2.1.3 Intermunicipal Development Plan

Sturgeon County and the City of St. Albert approved the Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP) in 2001, however Sturgeon County repealed the IDP in June of 2010. The City of St. Albert continues to use the document as a guideline for development within the initial IDP area, as it provides a greater level of detail than other statutory plans. The goal of the IDP was to reduce conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural uses and avoid premature subdivision of prime agricultural land.

2.1.4 Municipal Development Plan

The Municipal Development Plan (MDP) was approved by the City of St. Albert in 2000. The future land use plan within the MDP designates these lands as residential development. The agricultural objectives within the MDP include:

- Avoid premature subdivision and conversion of agricultural land to other land uses,
- Reduce leapfrog development, ensuring contiguous development from existing urban areas,
- Reduce conflict between agriculture and other land uses, and
- Consider the impact of provincial and federal legislation on policies regarding agricultural uses.

2.1.5 Land Use Bylaw

The subject lands are currently designated as Urban Reserve, which allows for agricultural land uses, however this land use recognizes that agricultural uses are to be a placeholder until future urban development is contemplated.

2.2 On-Site Physical Resource Inventory

The current use of the land is separated between the north and south portions of the parcel. The north portion of the site is used as a snow storage facility during the winter months. Snow is piled on this site from roadways to melt in the spring. Due to the amount of melting, berms were constructed to hold the majority of the water on-site. There is an area at the northwest portion of the site that is used as a melting collection area for the water to flow, however this
could sometimes overflow and pour over the berm into the neighbouring property to the west. During summer months the south portion of the site is used as a natural waste compost yard. There is an electrical substation bordering the property at the southwest corner.

2.2.1 Agricultural Capability

The Land Suitability Rating System (LSRS) designates the subject land as class 2 soil. Class 2 and class 3 soils require an Agricultural Impact Assessment to accompany any ASP being proposed. The Agricultural Region of Alberta Soil Inventory Database (AGRASID) viewer determined the exact soil classification. As shown on Figure 3, the subject lands are mainly considered Class 2 soils with a subclass code of H, which limits the soil class based on temperature impacting the potential for agricultural development. The northeast and southeast portions of the site share the same soil qualities as the neighbouring site to the east. The majority of the soil in that polygon is the same as the majority of the subject site, however there is a possibility that some of the soil could have very severe limitations due to drainage capability. The AGRASID viewer provides data on soils based on similarities in the composition. They are broken up into polygonal areas when different limitations affect the agricultural viability of the soils.

2.2.2 Drainage, Flood Control, and Irrigation Improvements

The drainage of this site generally runs to the west. There is a collection pond for the snow storage runoff at the northwest part of the site and drainage also collects in the ditch along Villeneuve Road. The pond serves as a temporary storage area for the water, which is pumped to the ditch along Villeneuve Road. In some cases of excess melting this pond will overflow over the crest of the berm, this runoff flows west onto the neighbouring parcel and eventually to Carrot Creek, which is the major drainage water body in the area.

2.2.3 Slope/Topography

The topography of the site is generally flat with minor slope from east to west, other than the constructed berms for snow storage purposes and the piles of yard waste. Based on a Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) done by Tetra Tech EBA Inc. in 2014, they determined that the site has been historically cultivated. The land was owned by the Edmonton and Slave Lake Railway Company between 1906-1930. Airphotos show that a railway line was once located on the site. The railway line has been removed but airphotos cannot determine the exact removal date. The site was purchased by the City of St. Albert in 2005 and the site was developed between 2008 and 2013 to its current form as an organic waste facility.

2.2.4 Drainage Details

Depending on the scale and type of future development, a stormwater management facility may need to be planned to contain drainage on-site or within a shared facility on adjacent lands. The site drains relatively well based on the findings in the ESA completed by Tetra Tech EBA Inc.

Drainage of the snow melt has affected the groundwater quality through raising salinity and metal levels in the area. The Phase II ESA determined that impacts from salinity and metals are present in the soils. The ESA determined that the levels are increased in the snow storage area and that the salt impacts could migrate west into the neighbouring property.
AGRICULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

FIGURE 3

THE CITY OF ST. ALBERT
NORTH RIDGE PHASE 3
CLASSIFICATIONS

55-19004_01_PRF003.DWG
Jjurincic
January 9, 2020

scale 1:50,000
km

1

0.5

Soil Landscape Polygons

2H(8) - 5W(2)

2H(8) - 2W(2)

Subject Lands

Villeneuve Rd

1 km

0.5

1 mi

2H(10)

Sources: Easr, HERE, Garmin, Infomap, Increment F Corp, OESDCO,
USGS, FAD, NRCS, NRCAN, Geolab, IGM, Keserker NL, Chretien
Survey, Earl Japan, NRCan, Earl China (Hong Kong), (c) OpenStreetMap
contributors, and the GIS User Community

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Government of Alberta, Alberta Open Government Licence
2.2.5 Groundwater and Irrigation

Groundwater testing was completed through the Risk Management Plan (RMP) completed by Golder Associates Ltd. in 2018. Groundwater was measured at depths between 2 – 5 m below ground surface on average, but some test holes revealed groundwater as deep as 7 m below the ground. The findings of the groundwater testing revealed that groundwater did not exceed Tier 2B guidelines for chloride. Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) defines the framework for soil salinity ratings and they are separated into three different approaches: Tier 1, Tier 2 and Exposure Control. These approaches are further broken down into levels A and B. The framework has been put in place to protect ecological and human health. Previous investigations determined that salinity impacts related to the snow storage site had been identified. The RMP also determined that groundwater on this site does not meet requirements to be considered a Domestic Use Aquifer. The Alberta Water Well Information Database indicates no record of water wells existing on this site.

2.3 On-Site Features

The Government of Alberta Fish and Wildlife Internet Mapping Tool (FWIMT) results show that there is an absence of any wildlife species inhabiting the site (See Figure 4). The ESA outlined the historical ownership of the site, with the majority of the timeline of ownership being owned by different members of the Kluthe family. Between 1906 – 1930 the lands were owned by the Edmonton and Slave Lake railway company. The land was sold by the Kluthe family to a corporation in 1978. The lands were then sold to Badger Holdings Ltd. in 1986 and later purchased by the City of St. Albert in 2005.

2.3.1 Past Farming Practices

Farming practices have been absent on this site since 2008. Since the City took over the lands, it has been used as a snow storage and organic waste dump site. Airphotos show that the land was previously used for agricultural production as recently as 2004, however there was also a railway line on the western portion of the site in previous years.

2.3.2 Existing Agricultural Production

From airphotos, it appears that the land was farmed for hay prior to 2008. It appears that no intensive livestock operations took place on the site. The surrounding properties also appear to have been cultivated, however the site to the west was used as a landfill for many years according to the Golder RMP. The landfill operation has not affected the agricultural viability of the subject lands. An aerial photograph of the site can be seen on Figure 5.

2.3.3 Non-Agricultural Land Use On-Site

The site is not currently used as agricultural lands. The land has been used as a snow storage and organic waste dump site for the past decade. Due to these operations the ESA completed by Tetra Tech, suggested that it would take upwards of $10,000,000 to $15,000,000 to excavate the entirety of the salt impacts to soils on the site. There was also a rail line present on the site previously. An electromagnetic survey was completed to determine whether metals were present in the soil and groundwater. Elevated levels of metals were detected along the strip where the rail line used to exist, as well as, the southeast portion of the site. The site to the
southwest is a power substation, and there has been no impact observed to the subject lands. In conclusion the site is currently not agricultural and would require a substantial amount of work to convert this site into a viable agricultural operation.

Two abandoned oil well sites exist on the site. One well is located at the southwest corner just north of the electrical sub-station. Another well is located in the snow storage area in the middle of the parcel. The well sites were both reclaimed over 30 years ago.

2.3.4 Parcel Size Configuration and Agricultural Accessibility

The subject lands measure 30.4 hectares with site access from Villeneuve Road. The approximate size of the snow storage area is 13.9 hectares, while the organic waste disposal area is approximately 1.9 hectares. The land is generally rectangular with access from Villeneuve Road on the south boundary. Fowler Way, a planned arterial road, will eventually bisect the subject lands to connect Ray Gibbon Drive with St. Albert Trail.
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2.3.5 Existing Farm Management

There have been no farming practices taking place on these lands since at least 2008.

2.3.6 Capital Investment in Agriculture

There has been no recent capital investment on this site for agricultural purposes. Significant investment would be required to bring the lands into agricultural production.

2.3.7 Local and Regional Context

This parcel of land has a good opportunity to service the surrounding communities as residential or recreational/institutional development. The land has good access capability and is located in an area of the City with limited public facilities. The development of this site will require the City of St. Albert to find another location for the ongoing dump site and snow storage operations which could affect other agricultural lands within the City depending on the eventual site. This land has already been stripped of its agricultural viability and should not be used as agricultural land unless significant resources are used to restore the site.

2.4 Off-Site Features

The subject lands are located at the northeast corner of Villeneuve Road and Ray Gibbon Drive. The land is directly north and west of the existing North Ridge residential neighbourhood and east of a golf driving range, which was a former landfill site. North of the site are agricultural lands that are situated within Sturgeon County.

2.4.1 Surrounding Land Use Types

The current surrounding uses include residential, agricultural and recreational. West of the subject site is the Lone Spruce Driving Range. These lands west of the site were also used as a landfill site for construction materials many years ago. Testing on the landfill site has concluded that there is low potential for any environmental concerns to the neighbouring sites. North of the site are agricultural lands that are part of Sturgeon County. East of the site is Phase 2 of the North Ridge Area Structure Plan, while south of the site is Phase 1 of the North Ridge ASP.

Plans for Phase 2 include residential and commercial development, a stormwater management facility and a large park space that connect the neighbourhood. There are two medium density residential sites and a mix of low density residential housing forms. A commercial site also is planned in the northeast corner of Phase 2 with access from Hogan Road.

Phase 1 of the North Ridge ASP is a large residential neighbourhood to the south of Villeneuve Road. Housing types have some diversity however the majority of lots are large single family lots. The North Ridge neighbourhood is very walkable, with large green spaces and a trail system that runs through the whole neighbourhood and connects to existing trail systems in the City.

Once Fowler Way is built, the north portion of the subject lands should be incorporated with annexed lands from Sturgeon County to develop more residential lands.
2.4.2 Existing and Potential Constraints to On-Site Agriculture

Existing uses for the site are not compatible with agricultural food production. Future constraints on agriculture include the planned development of Fowler Way. The development of this arterial roadway bisecting the land would fragment two parcels and use land for the right of way. Other constraints include the adjacent former landfill and electrical sub-station. Neither of these uses have caused any issues to this point and have been identified as having potentially low impact to the site, however they should be monitored, as historically, uses such as these have the potential to affect surrounding sites. Existing Villeneuve Road could also pose some on-site concerns as runoff or pollution from vehicles passing along the road could affect the site. Agricultural production on the site is more restricted by its own existing constraints than the uses surrounding the site.

2.4.3 Regional Land Use, Lot and Tenure Patterns

The City of St. Albert is in a period of steady growth. The City is planning for a new Municipal Development Plan to support growth up to a population of 100,000. The City will need to annex additional lands on the outskirts of the City to meet its goals for employment and population. This site could be developed to either support the surrounding neighbourhoods as a community focal point or to provide additional growth. The City is currently considering sites for an additional recreation facility, as well as, an additional secondary school and this land is in consideration.

The subject lands have no existing permanent structures located on the site. There are large piles of organic waste, as well as, a constructed berm to control water melt runoff.
3.0 Agricultural Viability

The subject site measures 30.4 hectares, however almost none of the land is currently viable for agricultural food production. The former rail line area has remained untouched since the rail line was removed, and the area now consists of tree stands and natural vegetation. Although the soil rating is classified as prime agricultural lands by the Land Suitability Rating System (LSRS) prepared by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, recent activities have harmed the actual viability of the soils contained within this parcel. According to Phase II ESA by Tetra Tech EBA, the snow storage area has minimal agricultural viability due to increased salinity levels.

The area that is used for the organic waste dump site may be viable for agricultural use, however there is no connection to existing agricultural lands and its size is too small as a standalone farm.
4.0 Potential Impacts on Agriculture

The development of this site would have negligible impact on future agricultural production within the region as the lands are not currently being used for agricultural production. It would also take significant resources to turn the site back into a viable agricultural production due to environmental impacts of current uses. Existing St. Albert planning documents (MDP, IDP) recognize this land as future urban development therefore it is not intended for agriculture in the short or long term.

There would be no recognized loss to Provincial agricultural production if this site were to be developed, unless the existing uses were relocated to agricultural lands. The City could explore undeveloped industrial lands for the future snow storage and organic waste.
5.0 Alternate Location Analysis

There is urban development up to the south boundary of the subject parcel and planned development to the east boundary.

Access is currently available from Villeneuve Road and access to Fowler Way is planned as early as 2026. Proximity to Ray Gibbon Drive will allow residents to access the regional road network. The site is adjacent to existing and future development and is a logical place to expand the development boundary.

An alternate location for the snow storage site and organic waste depot will need to be considered once urban development proceeds, but knowing the environmental impact of these sites, a more logical location can be found where the impacts would not be as severe and development is not imminent.

The development of this site is a logical and contiguous development of land within the urban boundary of the City.
6.0 Mitigation Measures

The site will be bound by future Fowler Way on the north, separating the developing land from the agricultural fields. The new roadways will provide better access for farmers to their crops. Lands to the east are planned to develop as residential in the near future, therefore no mitigation is necessary for those lands. When development occurs on this site, the soil condition should be taken into account. Any contaminated soils should be properly disposed or reconditioned and not transferred to other adjacent sites.

As this site is already in non-agricultural use, its development will delay the expansion of future development into nearby agricultural lands.
7.0 Conclusion

This Agricultural Impact Assessment has been completed by Select Engineering Consultants Ltd. in accordance with policy from the Edmonton Region Municipal Board as a supporting document for the North Ridge Area Structure Plan amendment. The findings of this report support planned urban development on Prime Agriculture Lands designated as Class 2 Soils by Schedule 11 of the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Growth Plan. This support is primarily due to the absence of agricultural production currently on the site and the logical and contiguous nature of land development within the City of St. Albert.