

AGRICULTURE

# Our Legacy & Our Future

## Regional Agriculture Master Plan

POLICY FRAMEWORK • POLICY DEFINITIONS • POLICIES

 Edmonton Metropolitan  
Region Board

AUGUST 2021

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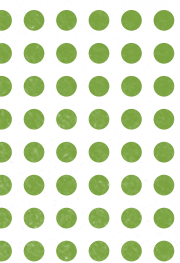
Think broadly about what agriculture is. Especially in Alberta, agriculture is a well-established piece of the province, and we want to continue that, but don't get too narrowly focused on what agriculture is at the moment. Think about the entire spectrum of agriculture, the really small stuff and the new things that haven't been considered yet. A broad-spectrum lens that opens us up to new opportunities in the future. Agriculture isn't just growing things, it's also the value-added piece. We don't know what agriculture will look like in 20 years, or even 200 years. It's nice to think this will last for 200 years, but this document will set up whatever comes next.

**RAMP ENGAGEMENT STAKEHOLDER**

*December 2020*

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## Message from the RAMP Chair

On behalf of the Task Force, I am pleased to present the Regional Agriculture Master Plan. Our work on RAMP began in 2018 and is the first agricultural plan of its kind in the prairie provinces. RAMP is a significant policy achievement for the Region and the 13 member municipalities of the EMRB. Through regional collaboration, we have created a policy framework that identifies prime agricultural land and the importance of the value-added sector to the agriculture industry.

As a core policy area in the growth plan, decisions on land use in the Region now need to consider impacts on agricultural land. RAMP provides certainty to producers, protecting valuable, productive agricultural lands throughout the Region, and secures these lands to ensure a local food source for future generations. As an agricultural region, RAMP is necessary to support the agriculture industry and to enable it to continue to grow and become an ever-more important part of our regional economy.

RAMP also recognizes that the greater goal is to take advantage of the Region's potential to become a major producer of food and other agricultural products, and to support the agri-food sector so that it may reach its full economic potential. RAMP is about creating the conditions for a sustainable and prosperous agricultural sector, because agriculture is economic development. By successfully implementing RAMP, we have the potential to increase the Region's economic prosperity by an estimated \$10 billion, supporting vibrant communities and economies.

RAMP is the first major policy initiative of the EMRB that involved a robust public engagement process. Task Force members realize that RAMP is a stronger document because of the diverse, thoughtful and constructive feedback received from all stakeholders, and in particular, the input received from the agricultural producers and rural landowners.

I would like to thank members of the Task Force, working group, stakeholders, and EMRB Administration for their collaborative expertise, vision, and leadership in building a truly regional plan for the future of agriculture in the Region.

**ROD SHAIGEC**

*Mayor of Parkland County, RAMP Chair*



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## How to Read and Interpret This Document

The contents of this Plan include a number of components that together represent the framework of the first Regional Agriculture Master Plan (RAMP) for the Edmonton Metropolitan Region (EMR). The RAMP framework includes policy area maps, policy definitions, policy area policies, implementation and monitoring and reporting.

The policy area maps, policy definitions, and policy area policies must be read together to ensure context and understanding as an integrated policy framework.

The policies in RAMP apply to all lands in the EMR, except for those lands under provincial and federal jurisdiction, such as provincial parks, airports, military bases and First Nations Reserves.

Terms or phrases in *italics* throughout the document are defined under policy definitions, or in the glossary of the regional growth plan *Reimagine. Plan. Build.*

The introductions to the policy area policies provide context and background and are intended to assist in understanding the intent of the policies and are not policy.

The policies apply to the geographical area within the policy areas as identified. If no policy area is specified, the policies apply in all policy areas.

The starting point for RAMP is the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan *Re-Imagine. Plan. Build.* approved by the Province of Alberta in October 2017. RAMP supports the implementation of the growth plan and responds to the three objectives identified in Section 6 (Agriculture) in the growth plan with more detailed policies to address the objectives. This work is the beginning with further work contemplated as part of the implementation of RAMP and scoping of the other considerations identified in an appendix in this document.

RAMP establishes a policy framework based on identified criteria, to inform land use decisions. Where RAMP policies contain a list of sub-policies, all sub-policies shall be required to be met in their entirety, unless specified otherwise.

The RAMP framework establishes four discrete geographic policy areas to identify the agricultural lands in the Region. RAMP policy areas consider existing land uses in the Region and the three policy tiers in the growth plan – metropolitan core, metropolitan area and the rural area.

**Policy Area 1 - Rural Agriculture** is generally defined as the lands within the rural area policy tier in the growth plan and may include some areas within the metropolitan area tier.

**Policy Area 2- Agriculture Co-exists with Other Land Uses** is defined based on existing land use designations and zoning (within existing statutory plans), includes country residential areas, major employment areas, and resource extraction areas, as examples.

**Policy Area 3 - Agriculture in Future Transition Lands** is defined based on approved statutory plans of member municipalities as of August 2021 and may include lands designated for future growth in the next 25 – 50 years.

**Policy Area 4 - Urban Agriculture** is defined as the built-up urban area within member municipalities as of August 2021.



## HOW TO READ AND INTERPRET THIS DOCUMENT

The applicable areas of policy in RAMP include.

### Section 2 - Land Evaluation and Site Assessment–Prime Agricultural Land Map

### Section 3 - Policy Definitions

### Section 4 - Policy Area Policies and Maps

### Section 5 - Implementation

### Section 6 - Monitoring and Reporting

RAMP policies are supplemental to the agriculture policies in the growth plan and are intended to advance and support the implementation of the agriculture policy area.

Policies in RAMP set the minimum requirements and member municipalities are encouraged to exceed those requirements, wherever possible.

All instances of the word “must”, “shall”, or “will” are elements municipalities must conform with through their statutory plans to fully implement RAMP. All instances of “should” or “encourage” are elements expressing recommendations. Use of the word “support” is not meant to be interpreted as providing financial support on the part of the EMRB or member municipalities.

The EMR Land Evaluation and Site Assessment model (LESA) and resulting map identifies the prime agricultural lands in the Region and may include specialty agriculture lands. The LESA map informs where policies regarding prime agriculture lands apply. Lands not identified as prime agricultural lands are defined as all other agricultural lands in RAMP.

RAMP maps are presented at a regional scale. A more detailed understanding of a specific land area will require a review of municipal statutory plans and/or land use bylaws.

RAMP policy areas may include both prime agricultural lands and areas identified as all other agriculture lands.

Urban municipalities generally include areas inclusive of policy area 3 and policy area 4.

The appendices are provided as tools to assist with implementing RAMP and provide context to support further work.

The completion of the monitoring and reporting framework is recommended as the first priority upon approval of RAMP by the EMRB.

Once RAMP is approved by the EMRB and Province of Alberta, RAMP will come into effect and will be integrated into the growth plan.



# Background

Agriculture is one of the six policy areas in the regional growth plan *Re-imagine. Plan. Build.* approved by the Province of Alberta in October 2017. The EMRB recognized the need to address increasing fragmentation and conversion of prime agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses, which is eroding the economic potential of the sector. RAMP represents one of the most significant opportunities for growth planning in the Region. As the Region grows to an estimated 2.2M citizens by 2044, a plan is needed to balance the demands growth will place on land uses. A strong future for agriculture starts with land, and the Region is home to some of the most productive lands in the province.

*"...the EMRB is providing regional leadership and setting the groundwork for future collaboration. Regional growth includes a healthy and expanding agricultural sector which depends on conserving a supply of prime agricultural land. The sector contributes to economic diversification within the Region and is an important component of an integrated growth management strategy". Reimagine. Plan. Build.*

## Why a Plan for Agriculture?

As the Region grows, rural area lands face unique challenges, particularly when it comes to the future growth and sustainability of the agricultural sector and rural communities. These growing pains are shared by many towns, cities and counties and were identified as important issues in the growth plan. Agriculture is a significant part of this Region's cultural heritage and economic history and will continue to be important and essential to our future.

As our local and global populations grow, there will be more demand for food, fibre and fuel, which requires a secure supply of productive agricultural land for producers and to attract foreign direct investment. The EMR has some of the richest soils and productive agricultural lands in the country. Agriculture is the single largest land use in the Region, approximately 1.7 million acres, and represents over 85% of the total land base in this Region and over a 10- year period from 2002-2012, 38,250 hectares of farmland in the Region were converted to non-agricultural uses – 60% of this loss being high quality farmland.



We need to produce in the next 40 years the equivalent of all food produced in the last 10,000 years

**MURAD AL-KATIB**  
*President and CEO, AGT Food and Ingredients*



The agricultural sector in this Region has shown strength and resiliency due to the dedication of farmers, ranchers, and producers who have committed to making their livelihood from the land, many for several generations, shaping the present and future landscape of this Region. The future viability and sustainability of the sector also depends on access to water and predictable climate, access to global markets and fewer regulatory barriers for agricultural products to meet local and global demand.

Regional growth includes a healthy and expanding agricultural sector which depends on conserving prime agricultural land. As the second largest economic sector in the province after oil and gas, the agricultural sector is well positioned to contribute to the provincial goals of economic diversification, growing GDP, creating jobs, and attracting investment. In fact, agriculture production and food processing together generate over \$4.5 billion in direct annual revenues.

There is an unprecedented opportunity for this Region to expand its focus on the opportunities both in urban and rural areas to produce food, fibre and fuel to meet the needs of future generations and support the growth and diversification of our provincial economy. Land is the foundation of all these activities - an irreplaceable

resource that is essential for the future of the Region's agriculture and food system. Beyond agricultural production, agriculture is increasingly recognized as a major contributor to environmental well-being given its inherent ability to sequester carbon, protect surface and ground water, protect biodiversity and mitigate the risks of climate change.

Development of RAMP could not come at a more important time in our history as the global population grows and the demand for food increases, this Region is well positioned to contribute to feeding the world.

## The Regional Growth Plan

Pursuant to Policy 6.1.1a., the growth plan directs that the EMRB prepare a Regional Agriculture Master Plan to conserve and maintain a secure supply of prime agricultural lands with the aim to support the regional food system, diversify the agri-food production base, contribute to the growth of the value-added sector of the agri-economy and guide agriculture supportive infrastructure investment.

By 2044, the Edmonton Metropolitan Region is estimated to grow by over 1.0 million residents reaching a population of 2.2 million and grow by 750,000 jobs for a total of 1.1 million jobs.



## SECTION 1.0 BACKGROUND

The growth plan focuses on responsible growth and includes policies to direct the future growth of municipalities in the Region with an emphasis on compact and contiguous growth, opportunities for infill development and making efficient use of infrastructure. The growth plan also supports the build out of existing employment areas and country residential areas. Implementing the policies in the growth plan is estimated to conserve 250 quarter sections of agricultural land over the long term as a result of growth being accommodated by building up before out and infilling existing lands designed for employment.

The growth plan also identifies the need for responsible growth throughout the Region and recognizes the interconnectedness between urban and rural communities. Historically, agriculture has not been recognized for its economic, social and ecological value and for its contributions in sustaining rural communities. RAMP provides an unprecedented opportunity to plan for agriculture at a regional level, as opposed to planning around it.

The viability of the agricultural sector is critically important to the future prosperity of the Region and depends on conserving a supply of prime agricultural lands to enable

the growth of agricultural and agri-foods sector. RAMP is meant to be inclusive and requires a commitment from every member municipality in the Region because all lands have value for agriculture.

An outcome of RAMP is to create more certainty for producers and raise the awareness and understanding among citizens and decision makers of the value of agriculture and its importance to our global economic competitiveness and prosperity. Agriculture and agri-foods sectors are seen as key contributors to the regional and provincial plans for diversification, and economic recovery and growth and their value for environmental sustainability and resilience, contributions to our culture and heritage, social cohesion, and food security and sovereignty. Addressing the growth of agriculture as the largest land use in the Region will inform all other policy areas of the growth plan - Economic Competitiveness and Employment, Natural Living Systems, Communities & Housing, Transportation Systems, and the Integration of Land Use and Infrastructure. RAMP is the first ever plan for agriculture, and once approved will be integrated into the regional growth plan, and will continue to be an important influence on decisions for how and where to grow.



As a potential future net producer of food, there is a need to ensure that this Region is preserving and protecting not only agriculture but the ability to maintain agriculture as an economic driver within the Region. Humanity will always need food. Alberta can produce food.

**RAMP ENGAGEMENT STAKEHOLDER**

*June 2021*



# Approach

RAMP provides a framework and policies to address the objectives for agriculture set out in the growth plan. These objectives recognize all forms of agriculture are critically important and focuses on capitalizing on opportunities for agriculture and agri-foods.

## Objectives

- 6.1 Identify and conserve an adequate supply of prime agricultural lands to provide a secure local food source for future generations.
- 6.2 Minimize the fragmentation and conversion of prime agricultural lands for non-agricultural uses.
- 6.3 Promote diversification and value-added agriculture production and plan infrastructure to support the agricultural sector and regional food system.

*Pursuant to Policy 6.1.1, Prime agricultural lands shall be assessed to identify and conserve a supply of prime agricultural lands and will be pursued through the following measures.*

*Policy 6.1.1.b. develop a Land Evaluation and Site Assessment tool (LESA) to assess land quality and contextual factors and identify and quantify a supply of prime agricultural lands.*

The results of the LESA tool provide a consistent framework for identifying those lands within the Region to be designated as prime agricultural lands and the remaining lands as all other agricultural lands. The regional map of these areas is intended to replace Schedule 11 in the growth plan as directed by Policy 6.1.1.c which states "use Schedule 11 to identify prime agricultural lands until the land evaluation and site assessment tool is completed".

This initial work on RAMP will provide further policy direction on the issue of fragmentation and conversion of prime agricultural lands for non-agricultural uses and will provide the foundation to advance the understanding of the agricultural system in the Region, provide direction for infrastructure priorities and identify strategies to promote the diversification and value-added agricultural sector and regional food system.



## SECTION 1.1 APPROACH

In developing the first ever RAMP, the EMRB has made it a significant priority to seek input and advice from regional stakeholders on the framework and policies of RAMP through two rounds of stakeholder engagement including several validation sessions. The intent was to hear from those who could be most impacted by RAMP and included farmers, ranchers, producers, landowners and others working in the agriculture and agri-food sector. Both rounds of engagement resulted in further insights into the challenges, opportunities and priorities for RAMP.

Overall stakeholders expressed strong support for the objectives and geographic approach for RAMP. Stakeholders also supported conserving prime agricultural land for agricultural use. Several stakeholders noted in addition to conserving large contiguous lands in prime agricultural areas, it was important to protect specialty and intensive crop areas, pastureland, and open spaces for wildlife. Many highlighted the significance of the rich soils in this Region, making it unique from anywhere else in

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<sup>1</sup> See *What We Heard Report 1*, December 2020 and *What We Heard Report 2*, June 2021, for further insights from RAMP Stakeholder Engagement.

Canada, and not well understood by decision makers and the public given its importance to the future of the agricultural sector.<sup>1</sup>

There are three First Nations in the EMR – Alexander, Enoch and Paul as well as Metis Nation of Alberta and an Inuit community. All Indigenous Communities in the Region are important stakeholders with a long history with the land. Outreach to the Indigenous Communities was initiated during the first round of stakeholder engagement and efforts are ongoing to build a long standing relationship. Indigenous peoples have valuable worldviews regarding the importance of protecting the natural environment- land, water, air and all other natural resources for future generations, and their views will be important to include in future work on RAMP and in the regional growth plan.

Finally, agriculture plans and strategies completed by member municipalities, particularly the City of Edmonton and the counties of Leduc, Parkland, Strathcona and Sturgeon were considered.



Policies with teeth to protect farmland must be put in place while there’s still time. While there’s a “pause,” there’s a chance to re-think what is expendable and what is actually needed for growth. There’s still an opportunity to protect what can never be replaced. We should be long past the time when rural areas are simply seen as land banks for nearby urban centers and developers who like wide-open farmland.

**RAMP ENGAGEMENT  
STAKEHOLDER,**

*December 2020*



# RAMP Task Force

Work to develop RAMP began in February of 2018 when the EMRB approved the Project Charter and appointed a seven-member Task Force to oversee its completion. Over time non-voting members were added to ensure appropriate ties to agriculture priorities at the federal and provincial level as well as regional economic development and investment attraction being led by Edmonton Global.

**Mayor Rod Shaigec**  
Parkland County, Chair

**Councillor Michael Walters**  
City of Edmonton, Vice Chair

**Mayor Tanni Doblanko**  
Leduc County

**Mayor Alanna Hnatiw**  
Sturgeon County

**Mayor Barry Turner**  
Town of Morinville

**Councillor Kathy Barnhart**  
City of Beaumont

**Councillor Paul Smith**  
Strathcona County

**Malcolm Bruce**  
CEO, Edmonton Global (non-voting)

**Karen Sundquist**  
Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry,  
Government of Alberta (non-voting)

**Candice Vanin**  
Land Use Specialist,  
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada  
(non-voting)



# Vision and Guiding Principles



Agriculture is our legacy and our future. RAMP is a land use plan specifically for agriculture and specific to the Edmonton Metropolitan Region. RAMP is a future-forward plan that recognizes the complexity of the sector and is intended to be a responsive and adaptable to the changes facing the agriculture and agri-foods sectors.

The vision and the supporting guiding principles for RAMP recognize the important role agriculture and agri-foods plays in growing the economy, protecting the environment and Region's *natural capital*, sustaining rural communities and supporting food sovereignty. RAMP is a plan that builds on our strengths – rooted in heritage, resilience, and innovation to enable future opportunities for a thriving agriculture and agri-food sector for the next 50-100 years.

## Vision for RAMP

*A thriving, globally recognized agriculture economy embraced by the community and characterized by:*

- *A secure agricultural land base*
- *Leadership in innovation*
- *Environmental stewardship*

**Guiding Principles** to support the Vision for RAMP:

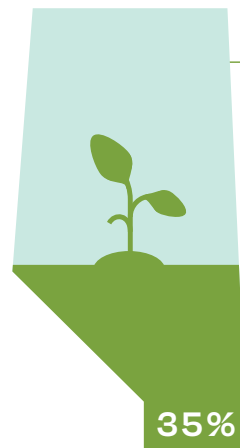
1. Agriculture is a vital sector. It contributes to the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of the Region. Its long-term future requires a set of environmentally sustainable land use, economic development, infrastructure and implementation policies and requires a holistic approach to stewardship and governance.
2. Agricultural land is a permanent feature of the Region's landscape and is a scarce and irreplaceable resource that must be protected.
3. A thriving agricultural economy requires strategic investment in both hard and soft infrastructure to develop entrepreneurship and provide leadership to foster a dynamic agricultural business culture.
4. Broad regional public support is critical. Agriculture will be embraced by the community through the understanding of the relationships with food, the economy, and the environment.
5. Success requires a collaborative approach including all orders of government, public and private agencies, and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). EMRB should be seen as a leader but cannot achieve the vision alone.

# Characteristics of Agriculture in the Region<sup>2</sup>



## Productive soils

The Edmonton Metropolitan Region is, in fact, the most productive agricultural region in Alberta.



- It is home to high quality black soils – 35% of the top producing soils in Alberta are found in the Region.
- 69% of the Region is comprised of 'prime' agricultural soils (LSRS 2, 3)<sup>3</sup>.
- The Region boasts a favourable climate – some areas in the Region have not experienced a crop failure in 100 years<sup>4</sup>.



Conserving and stewarding our prime agricultural areas is critically important

**RAMP ENGAGEMENT  
STAKEHOLDER**  
*December 2020*



<sup>2</sup>RAMP Situation Analysis July 2018

<sup>3</sup>Land Suitability Rating System (LSRS) Classes 2, 3 and 4 is highly correlated to Canada Land Inventory (CLI) 1, 2 and 3. These land classes, often referred to as prime, provide farmers the greatest flexibility with respect to the choices of crop to be grown and resilience with respect to variable weather conditions.

<sup>4</sup>RAMP Situation Analysis, July 2018, Comments received from individual farmers during the consultation process.



## SECTION 1.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF AGRICULTURE IN THE REGION

### Strong agricultural sector

The Region is home to 4,655 farm operations. These farms:

- generate 40% more revenue per acre than their counterparts in the rest of the province (\$499 vs. \$352 per acre),
- are smaller in size compared to the provincial average (523 acres vs. 1,237 acres),
- have rates of invested capital per acre that are almost twice the Alberta average (\$5,581 vs. \$2,863 per acre).



Agriculture, food and bioeconomy can be a long term regional economic driver—agricultural land and processing facilities should be prioritized.

RAMP ENGAGEMENT STAKEHOLDER,  
December 2020



### Experienced, innovative and skilled workforce

The Region has a great number of farmers who are rapidly expanding their operations; food processors who have developed successful businesses supplying customers both nationally and internationally; and an emerging class of entrepreneurs who are developing new food businesses and events.

### Vibrant food processing sector

An estimated 25% of the province's food and beverage processing industry is located in the Region. The sector includes two major poultry processors, several dairy processing plants, a large oil seed crusher, a feed milling sector as well as numerous specialty food and beverage processing businesses which have grown to become major national and international players. This sector generates an estimated \$3.76<sup>5</sup> billion in annual revenues and employs over 6,000 people.

### World leading research

We are home to several world leading institutions and special-purpose facilities established to support the agriculture and food industry. These include:

- University of Alberta and the Edmonton Research Farm
- St. Albert Research Farm
- University of Alberta Botanical Garden
- Agri-Food Discovery Place
- Alberta Agriculture & Forestry with the Food Processing Development Centre in Leduc
- Crop Development Centre in northeast Edmonton
- NAIT and the Culinary Program
- Pioneer DuPont Seed Research Farm in Strathcona County

### Existing critical infrastructure

In addition, the Region has high quality supporting infrastructure equipped with the necessary facilities and logistics to ship fresh or frozen food products to destinations both nationally and internationally including superior roadways, rail-lines, and the Edmonton International Airport.

<sup>5</sup> The economic multiplier (Alberta Treasury Board and Finance) for food and beverages – direct, indirect and induced is 2.308. Thus, this revenue multiplies to \$8.5 billion in total economic impact.

# Economic Potential of Agriculture in the Region

The characteristics of agriculture in the region illustrate the importance of agriculture and the agri-food sector to the regional economy. The EMRB has determined that the potential exists to grow the agri-food sector and increase its contribution to the regional economy.<sup>6</sup>

The EMRB Economic Imperative report identified the opportunity for the Region to achieve significant growth in value-added production of agricultural products growing the size of the agri-food sector and the regional economy. The ratio of farm gate sales to value-added agricultural product sales in the Region has historically been on a 1:1 basis. With a focus on investing in value-added production, the potential exists to increase the ratio of value-added production to 2:1 and even 3:1 for agricultural products.

Total direct economic output from the agricultural sector in the Region has the potential to more than double in terms of GDP from a combined farm gate sales and food and beverage of \$11.42 billion in 2021 to an estimated \$27 billion by 2046.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>6</sup> The EMR Economic Imperative for Agriculture, 2019

<sup>7</sup> The EMR Economic Imperative for Agriculture, 2019



**SECTION 1.5  
ECONOMIC POTENTIAL  
OF AGRICULTURE IN THE REGION**

The importance of agriculture in the Region, and the potential for growth, has been recognized by the province as being important sector to contribute to the economic recovery for the Region and the province. Minister Devin Dreeshen, Alberta Agriculture & Forestry, affirms its importance.



Agriculture in Alberta will lead our economic recovery in Alberta. Alberta’s farmers, ranchers and processors are global leaders in innovation - making Alberta the best place in the world to invest.

**MINISTER DEVIN DREESHEN,**  
*Alberta Agriculture & Forestry*



The global COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the importance of food security and food sovereignty and the need to protect the local food supply chains. There is an opportunity for the Region to increase its internal food security and lessen its dependence on external supply chains through the work on RAMP. Agriculture’s potential is recognized as part of the *Alberta Recovery Plan*<sup>8</sup> which includes increased “value-added processing capacity” in the agriculture sector as a focus for economic diversification and growth.

There is also a growing recognition that this sector can be a major contributor to the environmental well-being of the Region with its inherent ability to sequester carbon, contribute to the local water table through water filtration and flood protection and foster biodiversity.

The agricultural sector has always been an important part of the Alberta economy. Humanity will always need food. Alberta can produce food. As an important productive agricultural region in the province, the Region has an opportunity to make an existing regional economic strength even stronger. RAMP is a key step towards this promising future.

<sup>8</sup> Government of Alberta, 2020

# Assumptions

In preparing RAMP, a range of assumptions were identified to guide and inform the development of the policy framework.

1. Agricultural land is a finite and irreplaceable resource.
2. Prime agricultural land is a key component of the agricultural land base and must be conserved for future generations.
3. All other agricultural lands in the Region are part of the agricultural land base, have value for agriculture, and must be managed responsibly to maintain their agricultural capacity.
4. Where possible, agriculture must be given priority as a predominant land use.
5. Agricultural land is not uniform in quality. Any given quarter section may have pockets of lower capability soil, as well as seasonal or permanent water bodies, wooded areas, or steep slopes; land that may be of limited or no utility for agricultural purposes. (The land in question will likely have value from an ecological goods and services perspective).
6. A secure agricultural land base enables agricultural producers to make long-term investment decisions related to their operations.
7. A secure agricultural land base is one of three pillars in the agricultural system in the Region, the others being the agricultural producers and the products they produce, and the agri-food and value-added processing sectors that process and distribute the products.
8. The agricultural system approach will support a thriving agriculture and agri-food sector, based on all types and sizes of agriculture, and on agri-related development in appropriate locations across the Region.
9. Agriculture changes constantly and will continue to evolve over time. Therefore, the agricultural system is dynamic, and consideration must be given to both the current and future needs of the agriculture sector.



## SECTION 1.6 ASSUMPTIONS

10. Land use policies in support of agriculture must be outcome oriented, setting the minimum requirements to be attained. (Municipalities are encouraged to exceed the minimum requirements). Land use policies must also be sufficiently flexible to reflect agriculture in all its diverse forms across the Region, as well as the specific context in each rural and urban municipality.
11. Development and subdivision opportunities that support agriculture, agricultural producers and agri-food producers in rural areas also support and strengthen the rural way of life and rural communities.
12. RAMP is a land use policy document for agricultural lands within the Edmonton Metropolitan Region and acknowledges the role, authority and relationship of existing policy frameworks and legislation. Examples include but are not limited to:
  - *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* and related Land Use Framework Regional Plans
  - *Agricultural Operation Practices Act (AOPA)*,
  - Various environmental legislation such as the *Soil Conservation Act, Water Act, Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act, the Provincial Parks Act and Weed Act.*
13. Agriculture is integrated within other EMRB Strategic Initiatives which recognize the needs of agriculture and agri-food sectors identifying essential infrastructure as part of planning for the Region. For example, the need for digital infrastructure in the rural area to support the sector has been identified through a Regional Broadband Situation Analysis completed in 2020. The need for transportation connectivity - road, rail and air to support day to day operations, growth and diversification have been identified in the Integrated Regional Transportation Master Plan (IRTMP) approved by the EMRB in June 2021. The IRTMP also includes policies to further limit fragmentation of agricultural lands from infrastructure planning to minimizing the impact on agricultural operations. The importance of minimizing fragmentation on agricultural lands has also been taken into consideration as part of the transportation prioritization process.

# Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA)

Pursuant to Policy 6.1.1.b. the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan specifies the requirement to develop a *land evaluation and site assessment tool (LESA)* to assess land quality and contextual factors, and identify and quantify a supply of *prime agricultural lands* for conservation in the Region. The results of the LESA evaluation will provide an essential foundational component of RAMP, in the identification of prime agricultural lands and support the growth plan guiding principle: **Ensure the wise management of prime agricultural resources.**

The development of the EMR LESA tool involved a rigorous, scientific process with input from local, regional, national and international agricultural experts. The LESA tool provides a consistent methodology to identify prime agricultural lands and included site specific validation of the final results.

There are two main components to a LESA evaluation:

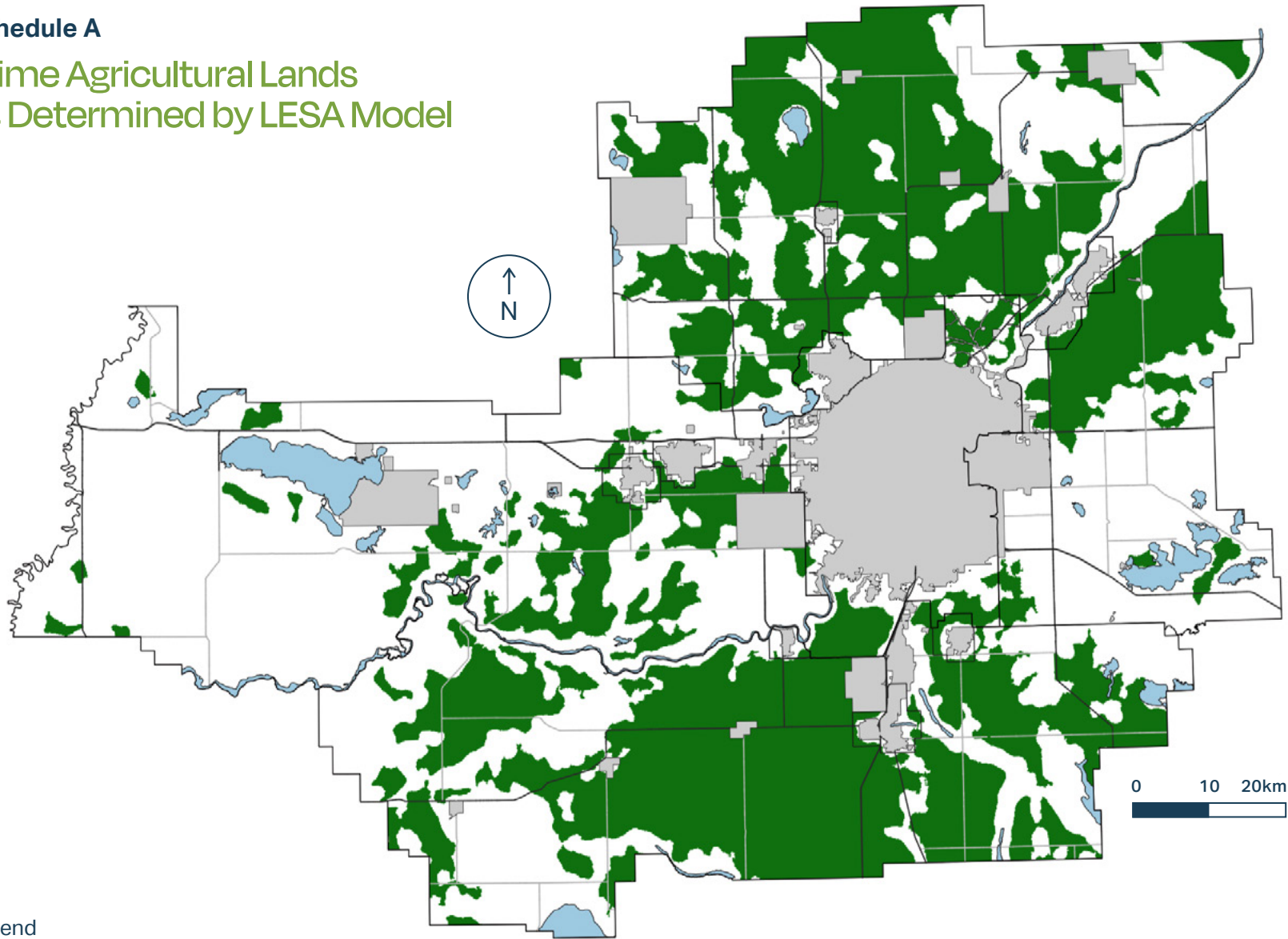
1. Land Evaluation (LE) measures the land's biophysical considerations including soil, climate, and topography in relation to agricultural use.
2. Site Assessment (SA) measures other important geographic, economic and social factors.

LE and SA components are combined to provide an overall LESA score for each landscape unit evaluated. *For a detailed explanation of the LESA model development please see Appendix D.*

Prime agricultural lands identified in Schedule 11 of the growth plan is based solely on the provincial Land Suitability Rating System (LSRS) and included 1,949,110 acres identified as prime agricultural lands. The LESA model and evaluation provides a more precise delineation of prime agricultural lands and identifies a total of 359,506.54 hectares (888,360 acres) of land, 45% of the area identified in the growth plan.

## Schedule A

### Prime Agricultural Lands as Determined by LESA Model



#### Legend

- PRIME AGRICULTURAL LANDS
- EMRB-MEMBER BOUNDARY
- WATERBODIES
- NON-STUDY AREA

- ROADS
- PRIMARY HIGHWAY
- SECONDARY HIGHWAY

*Data Sources: Prime Agricultural Areas as identified by the LESA model under the parameters specified in the June 2021 LESA Model Technical Report. Non-Study Area includes identified federal lands, non-EMRB member municipalities, and RAMP Policy Area 4. Waterbodies are as identified by AGRASID 4.1 as a W3 large waterbody and are also excluded from the Study Area.*



**SECTION 2**  
**LAND EVALUATION**  
**AND SITE ASSESSMENT (LESA)**

**Schedule A** identifies the prime agricultural lands identified by the LESA evaluation that meets or exceed the threshold score of 87.9 (or 58<sup>th</sup> percentile of LESA scores). Lands with a score below the threshold are considered all other agricultural lands in RAMP. Prime agricultural lands identified by LESA may include specialty agriculture lands and areas of lower capability lands.

The LESA validation process included a review of identified priority agricultural areas in existing MDPs for each of the counties, compared to the results of the prime agricultural lands identified by LESA. Overall, there is a strong correlation with only a couple of minor exceptions. The results of LESA are considered the minimum thresholds for prime agriculture lands and municipalities may designate additional areas for conservation.

The summary and distribution of parcel size within the prime agricultural areas identified by the LESA model is an important element of the agricultural land base. The following tables provide further context of the parcel sizes in Policy Area 1 for each of the four counties in the Region.

**Table A**  
**Policy Area 1 Prime**  
**Agricultural Land Parcel**  
**Size Summary**

Parcel Size	Sturgeon	Leduc	Parkland	Strathcona	Total
150+	141,831 (57,397 ha)	196,767 (79,629 ha)	40,272 (16,298 ha)	37,156 (15,037 ha)	<b>416,027</b> <b>(168,360 ha)</b>
80-150	42,407 (17,162 ha)	59,733 (24,173 ha)	18,394 (7,444 ha)	15,488 (6,268 ha)	<b>136,021</b> <b>(55,046 ha)</b>
40-80	62,107 (25,134 ha)	60,409 (24,447 ha)	9,339 (3,779 ha)	8,382 (3,392 ha)	<b>140,237</b> <b>(56,752 ha)</b>
0-40	8,655 (3,503 ha)	12,034 (4,870 ha)	3,631 (1,469 ha)	4,293 (1,737 ha)	<b>28,613</b> <b>(11,579 ha)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>255,001</b> <b>(103,195 ha)</b>	<b>328,943</b> <b>(133,119 ha)</b>	<b>71,636</b> <b>(28,990 ha)</b>	<b>65,319</b> <b>(26,434 ha)</b>	<b>720,898</b> <b>(291,737 ha)</b>

*\*Note: Rounding may impact accuracy*



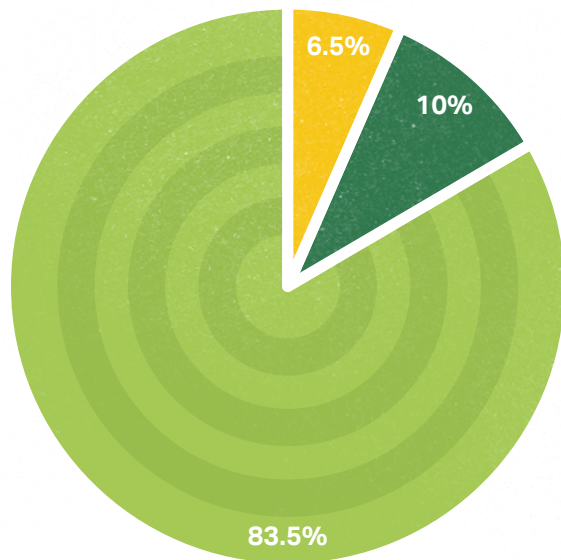


**SECTION 2**  
**LAND EVALUATION**  
**AND SITE ASSESSMENT (LESA)**

**Table B**

**Percentage of Total Prime Agricultural Land in Policy Area 1**

Parcel Size	Sturgeon	Leduc	Parkland	Strathcona
150+	48%	53%	43%	42%
80-150	14%	16%	20%	18%
40-80	21%	16%	10%	9%
0-40	3%	3%	4%	5%



**Chart A**

**Percentage of Prime Agricultural Lands by Policy Area**

Legend

- POLICY AREA 1
- POLICY AREA 2
- POLICY AREA 3

# RAMP Framework



RAMP recognizes agriculture as a significant contributor to the Region's past, present and future and its contribution to the economic, social, environmental, cultural and historical fabric of the Region. RAMP acknowledges the unique forms of agriculture that can occur in all parts of the Region, because all lands have value for agriculture.

The RAMP policy framework is adaptable and responsive to future growth and is not intended to limit or interfere with existing approval processes. It gives direction for future growth to allow agricultural operations to exist and even co-exist within other land uses for as long as possible. The intent is to provide certainty for producers and investors for the next 25-50 years.

The RAMP Framework consists of three interrelated components that need to be read together and form the basis of the policy framework of RAMP.

- Policy Area Maps
- Policy Definitions
- RAMP Policies

The **Policy Area Maps** are not intended to create an agricultural boundary, but instead establishes unique agricultural areas that allow for tailored policies to support the growth and continuation of all forms of agriculture. In general, the policy area map approach is consistent with the policy area approach in the regional growth plan. The policy area map is conceptual and includes some geographic features and not all topographical features that currently exists on the ground.

The policy area approach is intended to be adaptable and responsive to the demands of future growth for both rural and urban municipalities. The policy area map identifies specific lands in the Region, based generally on existing and designated future land uses. The policy area maps are at a regional scale, and for a more detailed understanding of a specific land area will require a review of municipal land use bylaws or a view of the lands using the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Geographic Information Services (EMRGIS). The RAMP policy areas in **Schedule A** show the prime agricultural lands and all other agricultural lands identified by the LESA evaluation.

The **Policy Definitions** are intended to provide consistency in the application and support the interpretation of the policy statements.

The **RAMP Policies** are tailored to specific policy areas and support the specific outcomes for each. Policy statements may include policy definitions.

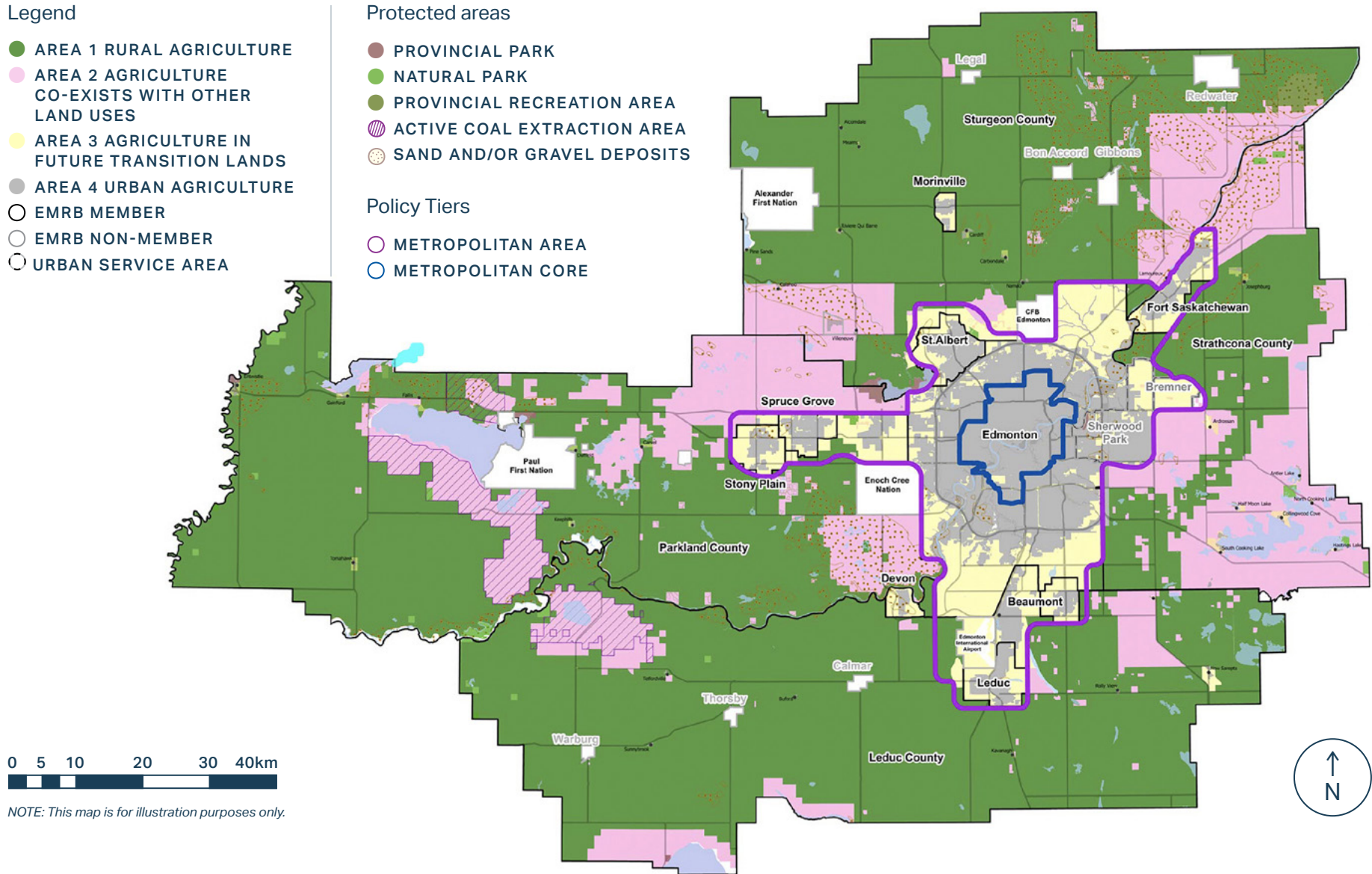
# Policy Areas

The RAMP policy area map is the starting point for RAMP. Each policy area map delineates the area in which specific policies apply. The policies in RAMP apply to all lands in the EMR, except for those lands under provincial and federal jurisdiction, such as provincial parks, airports, military bases and First Nations Reserves. The policy area maps are presented at a regional scale and include some contextual land base features and may require further analysis using the EMRGIS or a review of municipal land use bylaws.

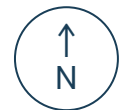


## Schedule B

# RAMP Agriculture Policy Areas



NOTE: This map is for illustration purposes only.





**Table C**

## Land Area by Policy Area

The land area of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region is approximately 946,091 hectares or over 2.3 million acres. The approximate size of each policy area is shown below:

		Hectares	Acres	Percentage of Land Base
Policy Area 1	Rural Agriculture	605,152.76	1,495,362.73	64%
Policy Area 2	Agriculture – Coexisting with Other Land Uses	206,778.59	510,960.23	22%
Policy Area 3	Agriculture in Future Transition Lands	57,507.42	142,103.70	6%
Policy Area 4	Urban Agriculture	76,751.92	189,410.73	8%
<b>Total</b>		<b>946,090.69</b>	<b>2,337,837.39</b>	

**Policy Area 1** represents the largest policy area and is closely aligned to the rural policy area tier in the growth plan and includes some lands within the metropolitan tier. This land area is the priority focus area for RAMP based on existing land uses primarily for agriculture. This area generally contains both large continuous tracts of land and areas containing unique climate and soil

conditions suited for specialty crops, a range of intensive livestock operations and grazing, recreation areas and environmentally sensitive areas. Policy Area 1 contains 83.5% of the prime agricultural lands in the Region.

**Policy Area 2** is the second largest policy area and includes lands which have specific land use designations and operate under existing planning approvals. This policy

area includes a range of land uses including country residential, lakeshore residential, industrial sites and employment areas, and resource-based extraction areas for coal, sand and gravel. Land areas within this policy area may contain unique climate and soil conditions well suited for specialty crops. Policy Area 2 contains 10% of the prime agricultural lands in the Region.

**Policy Area 3** includes agricultural lands generally within the metropolitan area policy area of the growth plan and includes agricultural lands identified for future growth. These lands may be planned and are recognized within RAMP as lands approved within a statutory plan for future growth for the next 25- 50 years. Lands within this policy area may contain unique climate and soil conditions and well suited for specialty crops. Policy Area 3 contains 6.5% of the prime agricultural lands in the Region.

**Policy Area 4** supports the emerging urban agriculture sector and its potential for growth in the built-up urban areas within urban centers in the Region. This policy area is included in all three tiers of the growth plan and may include cities, towns, growth hamlets and hamlets.

# Policy Definitions

The policy definition structure is presented in this form to illustrate the mutually beneficial relationship between agriculture, and value-added agriculture as part of the agricultural system.

The agriculture system is integrated and includes the agricultural land base, producers and the agriculture products they produce, as well as the agri-food sector that processes, manufactures and distributes agricultural products made up of physical assets, services and infrastructure.

Policy definitions are a core component of the RAMP framework and are embedded in policy statements in RAMP to support the consistent interpretation and application of policies.

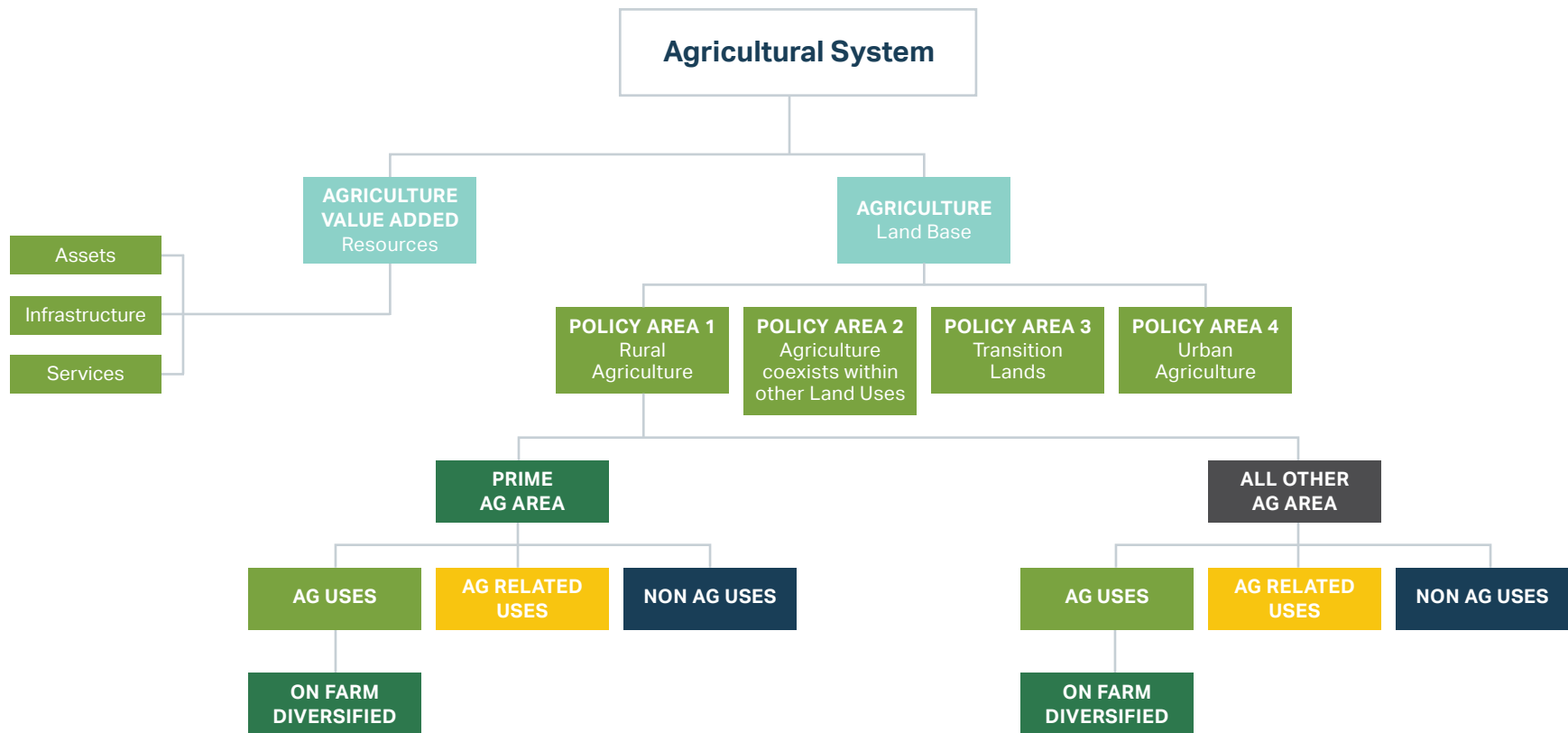
A primary focus of RAMP is on the agricultural land base. RAMP includes conceptual elements, like the policy areas, and specific elements, such as the policy definitions, to prescribe the types of agricultural uses in relation to the different types of agricultural land.

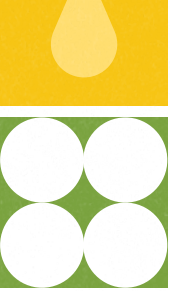
Prime agricultural lands have been identified across the Region and are required by Objective 6.1 of the growth plan. All other agricultural areas are a designation under RAMP to recognize the balance of the agricultural land base.

*The chart on the next page shows the relationship of the definitions to the two different land segments and the relationship to each policy area.*



**Chart B**  
**Policy Definition Structure**





The following policy definitions are listed to align with the policy definition structure shown on the previous page. The policy definitions are ordered to begin with the most general and foundational terms and progress to more specific uses or terms.

*The visuals accompanying the policy definitions are included for illustrative purposes only and intended to provide visual assistance in showcasing the differences between the different types of activities that may be associated with the uses defined.*

### **Agricultural System**

A group of inter-connected elements that collectively create a viable and vital agricultural sector. The system has three components; a) an agricultural land base comprised of prime agricultural areas and all other agricultural areas that together constitute a continuous functional and productive land base for agriculture, b) agricultural operations and practices producing food, feed, fibre, and energy products, and c) an agriculture and agri-food network that includes infrastructure, services, and assets important to the viability of agriculture and the agri-food sector.

### **Agriculture**

The growing, raising, managing and/or sale of livestock, crops, horticulture and agriculture related products or services including food, feed, fibre, energy and other complementary value-added activities.

### **Agri-food**

All aspects related to the production, sale, and distribution of agricultural food including a system of producers, businesses, suppliers, transporters, retailers, and consumers.

### **Agricultural Land**

Land that is or can be used for agriculture.

### **Prime Agricultural Land**

Agricultural lands identified through the EMR Land Evaluation Site Assessment tool (LESA) that meet or exceed the identified threshold.

### **Land Evaluation and Site Assessment tool (LESA)**

An analytical tool to evaluate land capability land and inform the identification of lands for conservation. LESA includes two components:

1. Land Evaluation (LE) measures the land's biophysical considerations; and
2. Site Assessment (SA) measures other important geographic, economic and social factors.

### **Prime Agricultural Areas**

An area where prime agricultural lands predominate and may include lands considered as all other agricultural lands if they are contiguous to prime agricultural lands. Prime agricultural areas will be delineated in detail by member municipalities in municipal development plans.

### **Specialty Agriculture Land**

Provides optimum conditions for agricultural production due to unique factors including but not limited to soils, water supply, and climatic conditions. Specialty agriculture land may be located in prime agricultural areas and in all other agricultural areas.



### All Other Agricultural Areas

Agricultural lands outside of prime agricultural areas.



### Agricultural Uses

Land uses directly associated with agriculture and includes buildings and structures accessory to and supportive of the activities.



### Agriculture-related Uses

Are uses directly related to agriculture, primarily support agriculture, benefit from being in close proximity to agriculture and provide direct products and/or services to agriculture.



### On-farm Diversified Uses

Are secondary uses and limited in area to the principal agricultural use and are compatible with the principal agricultural use and agricultural uses in the adjacent area. On-farm diversified uses may include but are not limited to home occupations, agri-tourism uses, and uses that produce value-added agricultural products.

### Non-agricultural Uses

Land uses other than agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses or on-farm diversified uses.



### Agri-Tourism Uses

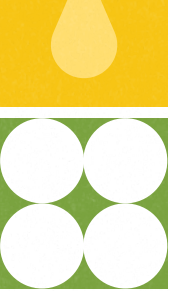
Farm related tourism uses, including limited accommodation, direct-to-consumer sales, agricultural education, recreation and activities that involve observation and participation in the farming operations.



### Value Added Agriculture

The addition of a process or service to an agricultural raw material being produced by the (farmer) producer. This may include some form of processing (such as milling, drying, cleaning, sorting, slaughtering, distilling, refining, or direct marketing through farm gate sales, farmers' markets or direct distribution).





### Cluster Site

An area or node identified in the growth plan for growth such as a major, planned or local employment area, a rural or urban centre, growth hamlet or hamlet. A cluster site may also include a local agricultural services area designated under an area structure plan, or other existing areas with appropriate designation and/or districting.

### Development

Means the same as Section 616 (b) of the Municipal Government Act RSA 2000 M-26, as amended.

### Ecological Goods and Services

Ecological goods and services (EG&S) are the environmental benefits resulting from physical, chemical and biological functions of healthy ecosystems and include market goods produced from ecosystems (such as food, fibre, fuel, fresh water, genetic resources, etc.), the benefits from ecosystem processes, (ex: nutrient cycling, climate regulation, water purification, waste treatment, pollination, etc.) and non-material benefits (ex: aesthetic values, recreation, etc.).

### Farmstead

Existing development, including a habitable dwelling, accessory buildings, and structures located in a rural area.

### Generally Accepted Agricultural Practice

A practice that is conducted in a manner consistent with appropriate and accepted customs and standards as established and followed by similar agricultural operations under similar circumstances, and without restricting the generality of the foregoing includes the use of innovative technology used with advanced management practices.

### Infrastructure

Infrastructure provides services related to, and including but not limited to, sewage, water, irrigation, storm water management, waste management, electricity (generation, transmission, and distribution), communications/telecommunications, broadband, transit and transportation modes (including road, rail, air, and airports), oil and gas pipelines and associated facilities.

### Natural Capital

The land and water resources that anchor our quality of life and support economic activity including agriculture, forestry, recreation, tourism, and energy generation. It also includes resources – minerals, timber, oil and gas as well as the ecosystems – grasslands, wetlands, rivers and forests – that produce valuable ecological goods and services.

### Urban Agriculture

Is the growing, processing, and distribution of food and other products through intensive plant cultivation and animal husbandry in and around cities.<sup>9</sup>



<sup>9</sup> Bailkey and Nasr. 2000. From Brownfields to Greenfields: Producing Food in North American Cities. Community Food Security News. Fall 1999/Winter 2000:6

# RAMP Policies



The work of RAMP has elevated the important role of agriculture in enabling resilience, sustainability, mitigating the effects of climate change, economic competitiveness, food security and sovereignty, and quality of life for all residents of the Region and should have greater visibility and recognition in the growth plan.

Policy statements are identified for each policy area and provide direction to EMRB member municipalities consistent with the outcomes for each policy area specific to agriculture. The policy statements are criteria-based and can include terms included in the policy definitions and correspond to the specific geographic areas on the policy area map.

An example of this is the subdivision policy criteria in Policy Area 1. In RAMP, subdivision policy is expressed by a number of criteria designed to meet the outcomes of Policy Area 1.

This is in contrast to subdivision policy at the municipal level that is often expressed in numeric terms, i.e., the number of subdivisions allowed per quarter section. This approach was considered more appropriate for RAMP as it would enable regional consistency for considering planning approvals across the four counties while allowing for some flexibility in implementation. Most importantly, a criteria-based approach is also seen as an effective approach to limit the cumulative impacts of subdivisions and minimize the impacts on existing agricultural operations in prime agricultural areas.

# Policy Area 1 Rural Agriculture

## Introduction

### **Policy Area 1 is key to the success of RAMP.**

Policy Area 1 is the largest of the four policy areas, accounting for approximately 63% of the regional land base. Policy Area 1 includes much of the best agricultural land in the Region, other agricultural lands of varying capabilities, and the majority of the intact contiguous tracts of agricultural land that are essential for the future of agriculture in the Region.

Policy Area 1 also includes a wide range of diverse and innovative agricultural operations of varying sizes and types. The three objectives of Section 6 of the growth plan, as well as the RAMP vision and guiding principles, can be most fully realized within Policy Area 1.

The first policy in this section establishes agriculture as the priority land use in Policy Area 1. This means that Policy Area 1 enables agriculture and that the remaining policies are supportive of and “in service” to agriculture and agricultural land uses throughout the policy area. Conversely, the extent to which agricultural lands may be used for non-agricultural land uses is to be minimized.

In addition to the recognizing *prime agricultural lands* in the growth plan, RAMP also recognizes those agricultural lands remaining in Policy Area 1 as *all other agricultural areas*. This effectively establishes two distinct areas of agricultural land throughout Policy Area 1 as foundational to the criteria-based policy approach in RAMP.

# Schedule C

## Policy Area 1 – Rural Agriculture

### Legend

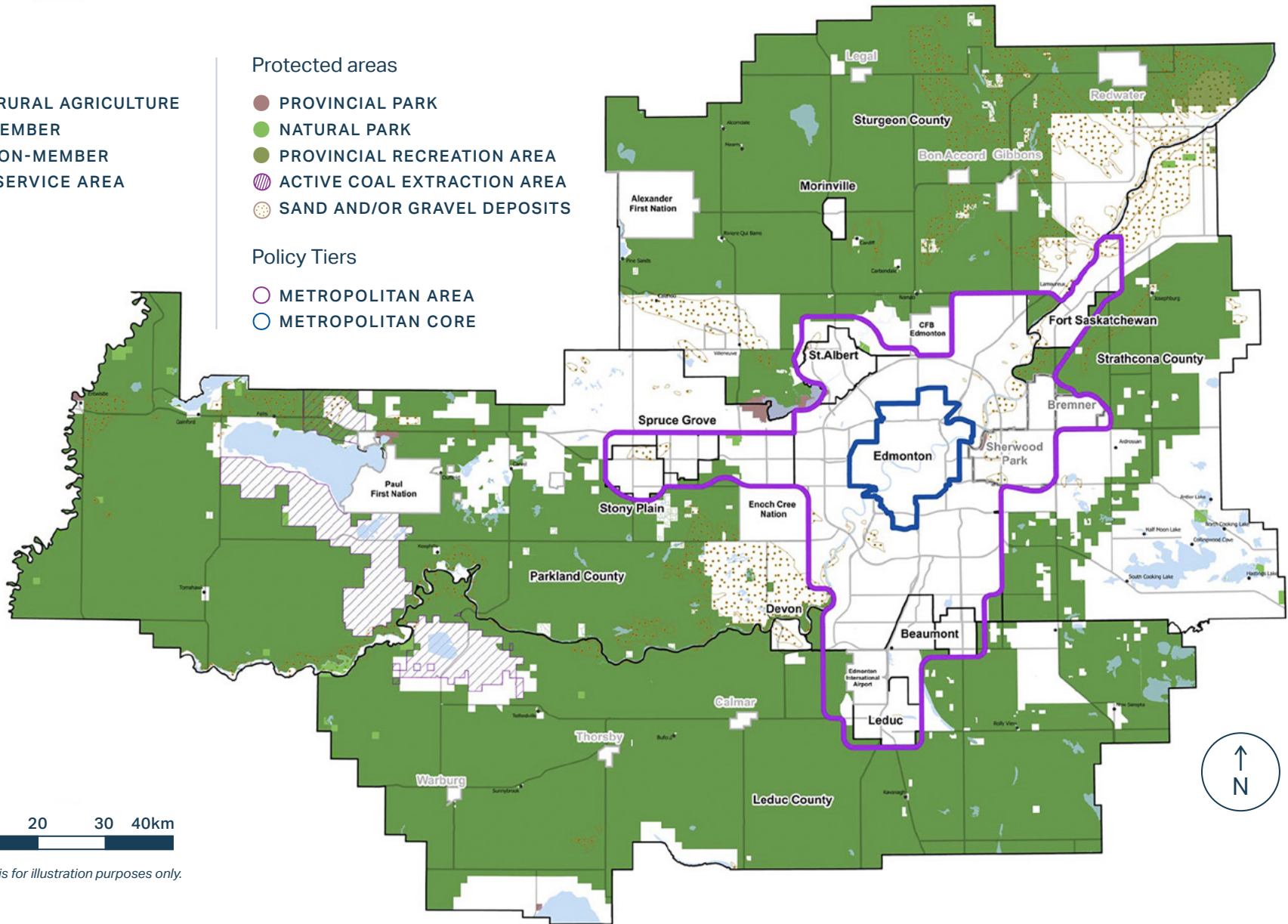
- AREA 1 RURAL AGRICULTURE
- EMRB MEMBER
- EMRB NON-MEMBER
- URBAN SERVICE AREA

### Protected areas

- PROVINCIAL PARK
- NATURAL PARK
- PROVINCIAL RECREATION AREA
- ACTIVE COAL EXTRACTION AREA
- SAND AND/OR GRAVEL DEPOSITS

### Policy Tiers

- METROPOLITAN AREA
- METROPOLITAN CORE



NOTE: This map is for illustration purposes only.





### Goal

A wide range of agricultural enterprises and types of agricultural production are the central component in an agricultural system that includes a secure land based, and a network of infrastructure, services and communities that support agriculture and agri-food sector.

### Objectives

- That agriculture is the priority land use and regional and municipal policies support agriculture and the related agricultural system.
- Prime agricultural lands are to be conserved by limiting their fragmentation and conversion through subdivision to non-agricultural uses. Direct similar agriculture uses to cluster sites.
- A full range of agricultural uses takes place at present and in the future by planning through an agricultural system approach.

### Policies

1. *Agriculture* is the priority land use in Policy Area 1.
2. Policies must be included in statutory plans to enable the continuation, development, and expansion of all types, sizes and intensities of *agriculture* throughout Policy Area 1.

3. *Agricultural uses* that follow generally accepted agricultural practices must be able to operate in suitable locations without being unduly encumbered or hindered by *non-agricultural development*, or by adjacent land uses in neighbouring Policy Areas.

### Designation of Agricultural Areas

4. *Prime agricultural lands* will be conserved in *prime agricultural areas* to provide a secure, long-term local food source for future generations.
5. *Prime agricultural areas* and *all other agriculture areas* will be informed by the outcomes of the *Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA)* tool and designated in statutory plans.
6. *Specialty agricultural land* may be identified in either *prime agricultural areas* or in *all other agricultural areas*.
7. Two or more municipalities that share a *prime agricultural area(s)* must coordinate the designation of the area to recognize the geographic continuity.

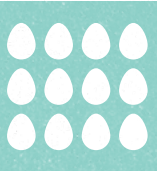
### Agricultural Land Uses

8. *Agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses, value-added agriculture uses, and on-farm diversified uses* are supported throughout Policy Area 1.

9. Notwithstanding Policy 8, *agriculture-related uses* and *value-added agriculture uses* must not hinder agricultural operations in the surrounding area.
10. *Agriculture-related uses* and *value-added agriculture uses* should be directed to lower capability *agricultural lands* when possible.
11. *Development of agriculture-related uses* and *value-added agriculture uses* should minimize the amount of *agricultural land* taken out of production.
12. Consideration should be given to directing *agriculture-related, and value-added agricultural uses* to *cluster sites*.

### Non-Agricultural Land Uses

13. *Non-agricultural uses* are discouraged in *prime agricultural areas*.
14. *Non-agricultural uses* may be considered in *all other agricultural areas* and should be minimized to maintain *agriculture* as the priority land use pursuant to Policy 1.
15. Consideration should be given to directing *non-agricultural uses* to lower capability land, where possible or to *cluster sites*.



16. In *prime agricultural areas*, development of in-situ, resource-based economic assets such as coal, sand and/or gravel, marl, and peat may be considered. Reclamation of lands after resource-based activities must be to a soil rating equivalent to or higher than its original state.

17. In *prime agricultural areas*, other *non-agricultural uses* may only be considered, preferably on lower capability land if it can be demonstrated that other locations in *all other agricultural areas* or at *cluster sites* are not feasible. An *Agricultural Impact Assessment* is required to confirm the proposed use will not hinder the agricultural operations in the surrounding area.

### Subdivision of Agricultural Land

Objective 6.2 of the growth plan – minimize the fragmentation and conversion of *prime agricultural land* for *non-agricultural uses* – is key to policies related to subdivision of *agricultural land*.

Policies in this section do not apply to country residential subdivision as defined in the growth plan. Country residential policies are addressed in section 4.4.4 of the growth plan.

Policies for subdivision of *agricultural land* are based on two distinctions:

- *Prime agricultural land*, and *all other agricultural areas*
- *Agricultural vs non-agricultural land uses*

Policy 18 below, refers to the types of subdivisions that can be considered in *prime agricultural* and *all other agricultural areas*. Policy 18 does not prescribe or imply density of parcels per quarter section.

### 18. Subdivision Policy Criteria:

#### *Prime agricultural areas*

- a. Subdivision of a residential parcel for an existing *farmstead* should be considered.
- b. Subdivision of land for *agriculture*, *agriculture-related*, and *value-added agriculture uses* may be considered.
- c. Subdivision for a new residential parcel from a quarter section with no existing residential use may be considered subject to Policy 15.
- d. Subdivision for *non-agricultural uses* is discouraged and may only be considered subject to Policies 15 and 17.

#### *All other agricultural areas*

- e. Subdivision of a residential parcel for an existing *farmstead* should be considered.
- f. Subdivision of land for *agriculture*, *agriculture-related*, and *value-added agriculture uses* may be considered.
- g. Subdivision for a new residential parcel from a quarter section with no existing residential use may be considered subject to Policy 15.

h. Subdivision for *non-agricultural uses* may be considered subject to Policy 15.

Depending on the type of subdivision, the following criteria apply:

19. Subdivision of *agricultural land* should result in parcels sized appropriately for the type of *agriculture use(s)* common in the area and sufficiently large to maintain flexibility for future changes in the type or size of agricultural operations.
20. Subdivision for any purpose should minimize the amount of *agricultural land* taken out of production and must not hinder the operation of surrounding *agricultural land uses*.
21. Consideration must be given to directing subdivision for *agriculture-related*, *value-added* and *non-agricultural land uses* to *cluster sites* and wherever possible to lower capability land.
22. Subdivision policies for *prime agricultural areas* apply to specialty agriculture land.

# Policy Area 2

## Agriculture Co-exists with Other Land Uses

### Introduction

A basic principle of RAMP is that agricultural lands have value for agriculture. RAMP also recognizes not all agricultural lands in the Region can be conserved for agriculture, and some agricultural lands may need to be fragmented and converted to other land uses. While agriculture remains an important land use for Policy Area 2, this policy area includes a range of designated land uses from country residential, lakeshore residential uses, industrial, to resource-based extraction uses such as coal, sand and gravel.

Lands in Policy Area 2 comprise 22% of the regional land base, with a significant portion designated as agriculture use. These lands are recognized in statutory plans, Land Use Bylaws and districting.

Although this policy area recognizes various planned land uses, this does not mean that all of the land designated is currently in use for the designated land use and that agricultural uses can exist in the interim.





## Schedule D

# Policy Area 2 – Agriculture Co-Exists with Other Land Uses

### Legend

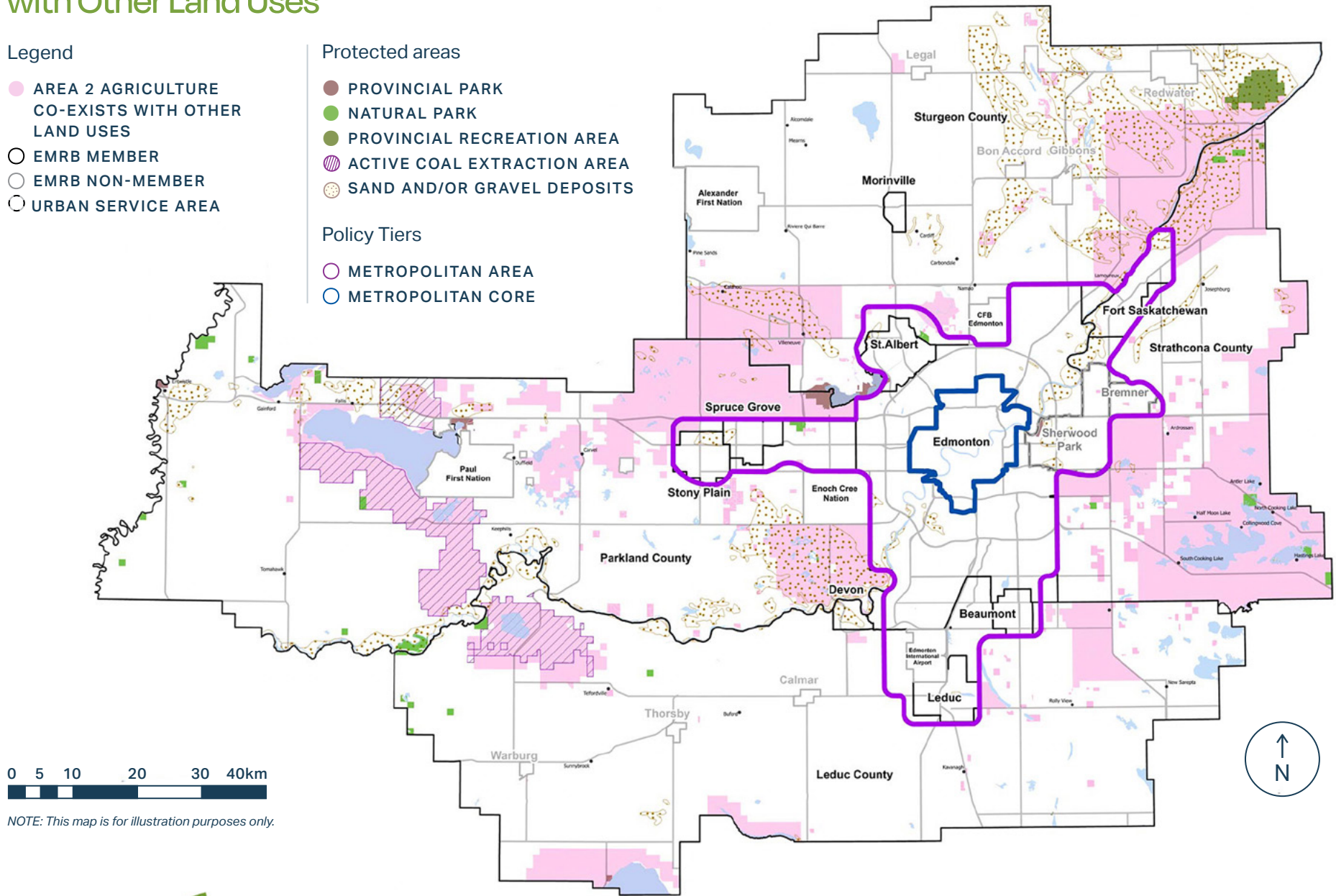
- AREA 2 AGRICULTURE CO-EXISTS WITH OTHER LAND USES
- EMRB MEMBER
- EMRB NON-MEMBER
- URBAN SERVICE AREA

### Protected areas

- PROVINCIAL PARK
- NATURAL PARK
- PROVINCIAL RECREATION AREA
- ACTIVE COAL EXTRACTION AREA
- SAND AND/OR GRAVEL DEPOSITS

### Policy Tiers

- METROPOLITAN AREA
- METROPOLITAN CORE



NOTE: This map is for illustration purposes only.





## Goal

Cultivation of productive agricultural areas over the long-term on lands that co-exist with lands with other designated uses.

## Objectives

- Acknowledge agriculture can coexist with other designated land uses and will not constrain or restrict the designated priority use.
- Maximize the opportunities for the continued presence of agriculture and related activities and, where possible, encourage re-designation of lands back to agriculture if they are not needed for the priority land use.
- Ensure agricultural lands and associated landscapes are managed through the application of best management practices specific to soil, water and the environment.

## Policies

1. *Agricultural lands* co-exist with existing designated land uses and shall remain in *agricultural use* until required for conversion.
2. Reclaimed lands should be rehabilitated for *agriculture uses*. Where it may be more appropriate, reclaimed lands may be rehabilitated for environmental or ecological purposes, or for commercial, industrial, institutional or recreational uses that can leverage existing *infrastructure*.
3. When applications are made to re-designate and/or re-district non-agricultural lands, consideration must be given to re-designating and/or re-districting the lands for *agricultural uses*.
4. *Agriculture related* and *value-added agriculture uses* may be considered but must not hinder the operation of agricultural uses in the surrounding area, nor hinder the development of a designated *non-agricultural use*.
5. Existing *agricultural uses* shall be given consideration to be kept as an existing land use within statutory plans.
6. Encourage public education about the daily and seasonal operational needs of *agriculture* and agricultural operators, fostering awareness, understanding and reducing potential land use conflicts.

# Policy Area 3 Agriculture in Future Transition Lands

## Introduction

Lands in Policy Area 3 have been identified for future growth throughout the Region with much of this growth expected to come within the metropolitan area tier.

The future growth recognized in Policy Area 3 is based primarily on work by the cities, towns and specialized municipalities to determine their future municipal land requirements. When these lands will be required depends on the rate of growth in the Region which, in turn, is dependent on the growth of the regional, provincial and national economies. Growth in the Region will also be influenced by the policies of the growth plan. For example, the growth directions in the growth plan state “promote the diversification and growth of the agricultural sector including urban agriculture in an urban context”. Future growth is not expected to be consistent in all directions in the Region, nor is it expected that all of the lands identified in this policy area will be needed for growth by 2044. The growth plan directs more intensive and compact and contiguous urban growth to reduce the rate at which agricultural land is lost to development.

Most of the lands outside of the built-up areas within urban centers in this policy area are currently in agricultural use. Responsible growth, a core principle in the growth plan strongly encourage prime agricultural areas to be kept in production until they are required for growth and that new growth be built to a higher density. RAMP is intended to provide greater certainty for agricultural producers in terms of knowing when their agricultural lands will be needed for growth.



## Schedule E

# Policy Area 3 – Agriculture in Future Transition Lands

### Legend

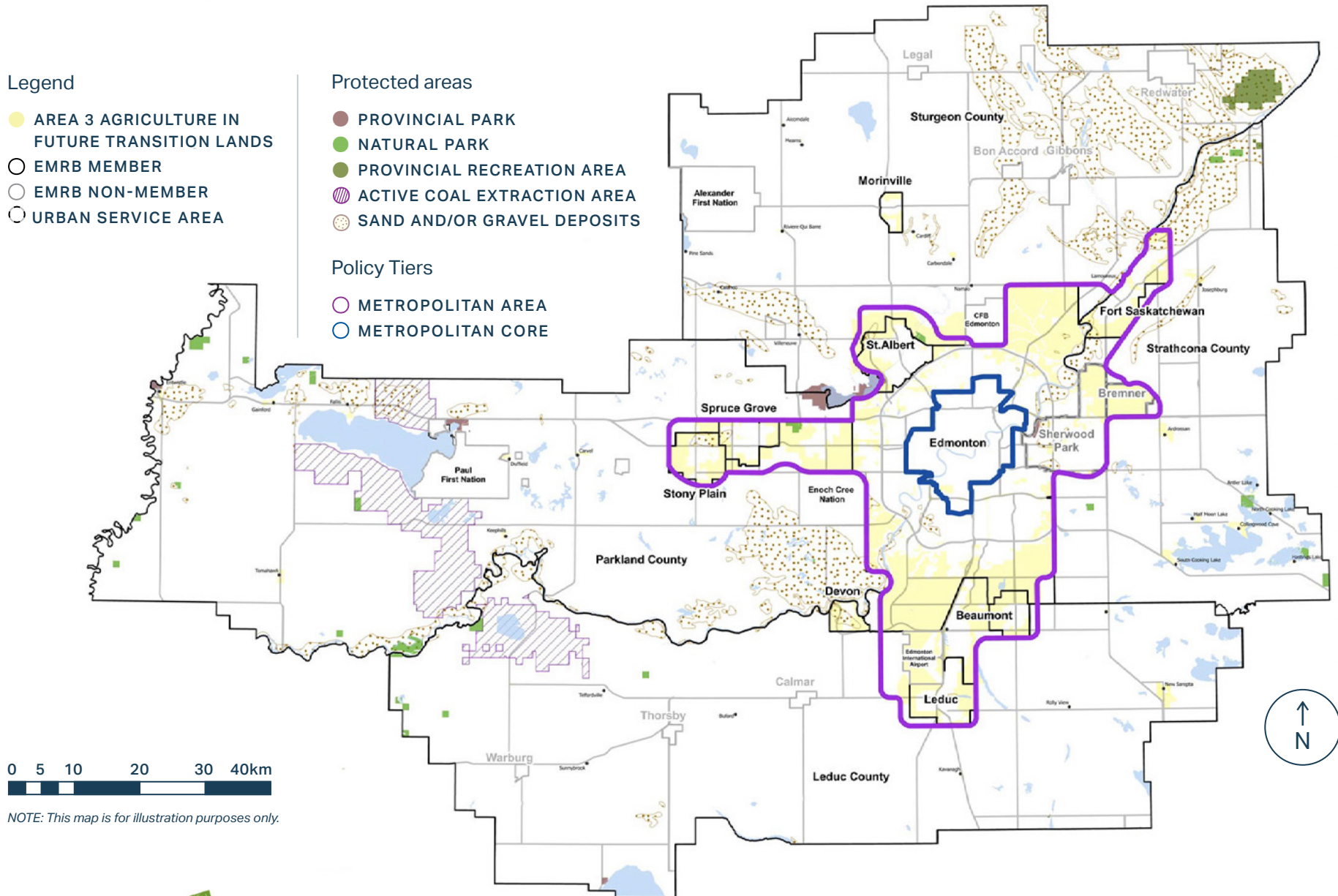
- AREA 3 AGRICULTURE IN FUTURE TRANSITION LANDS
- EMRB MEMBER
- EMRB NON-MEMBER
- URBAN SERVICE AREA

### Protected areas

- PROVINCIAL PARK
- NATURAL PARK
- PROVINCIAL RECREATION AREA
- ACTIVE COAL EXTRACTION AREA
- SAND AND/OR GRAVEL DEPOSITS

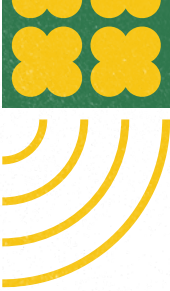
### Policy Tiers

- METROPOLITAN AREA
- METROPOLITAN CORE



0 5 10 20 30 40km

NOTE: This map is for illustration purposes only.



### Goal

Agricultural lands in the vicinity of the built-up urban area are kept in production and managed under principles of good land and environmental stewardship until required for future growth.

### Objectives

- Retain agriculture as a complementary use and minimize fragmentation so as not to constrain or restrict the designated priority use.
- Maximize the opportunities for the continued presence of agriculture and related agriculture activities as a complementary use for the long term.
- Ensure that agricultural lands and associated landscapes are managed through the application of best management practices specific to soil, water and environment.

### Policies

1. *Agricultural lands* in Policy Area 3 will remain in *agriculture use* until the lands are needed for population and/or employment growth.
2. Subdivision and development should be limited to maintain large parcel sizes to support ongoing *agricultural uses* until the lands are needed for population and/or employment growth.
3. Until the lands are needed for population and/or growth, agricultural producers must have access to their *agricultural lands* to farm their lands. This includes but is not limited to maintaining field approaches and local roads sufficient to accommodate agricultural machinery.
4. Consideration must be given to public education about the daily and seasonal operational needs of agriculture and agricultural operators, to increase awareness and understanding and reduce conflict.
5. Existing *agricultural uses* shall be given consideration to be kept as an existing land use supported by an urban agriculture plan.

# Policy Area 4 Urban Agriculture



## Introduction

Urban areas have not historically been seen as conducive to agricultural production, however, when considering the regional food system, it's clear, urban areas and their businesses and residents play a vital role. This is further emphasized with the advent of community and rooftop gardens, introduction of edible landscapes in parks, and improvements in hydroponic and other technologies, the possibilities in urban agriculture continues to grow.

The potential of urban agriculture has been recognized in the Region. *Fresh* – Edmonton's Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy – was approved by City Council in 2012. Implementation of *Fresh*, including the formation of the Edmonton Food Council, has been underway since then. Strathcona County completed an Agriculture Master Plan in 2015 that proposed, among other things, the development of "a strategy and policies to foster urban agriculture" with relevance to the urban service area of Sherwood Park. Similar agriculture master plans have been developed or are in development in Leduc, Parkland and Sturgeon Counties.

Urban centres in the Region have important assets to support both rural and urban agriculture. Urban utilities, including water and sewer services, can support food processing plants and value-added



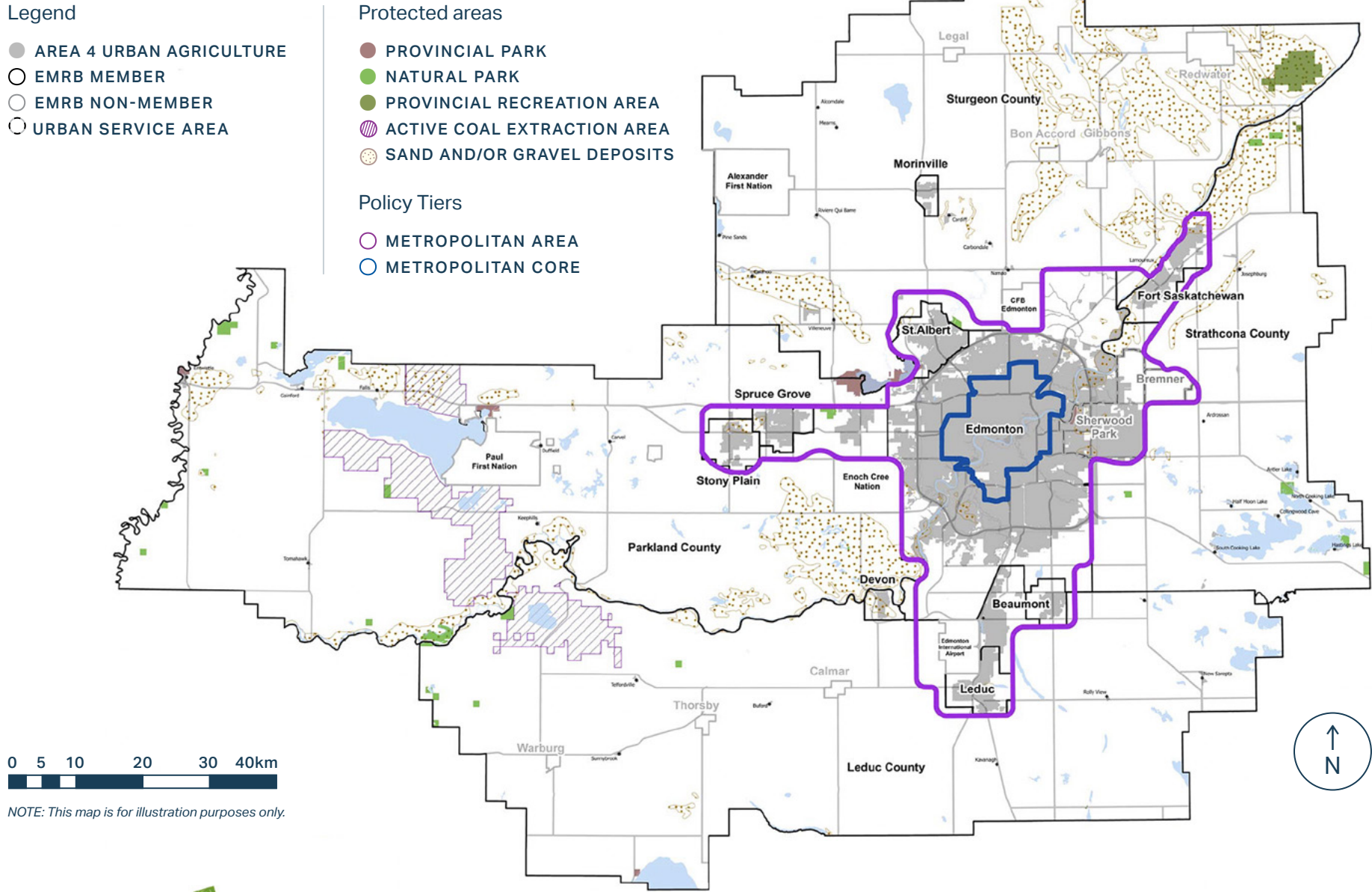
Figure 1:EMRB Regional Food System

agricultural production. Agricultural processing uses that generate negative externalities can be directed to fully serviced commercial and industrial areas. Institutions such as the provincial government's Food Processing Centre in Leduc, can support development of the agriculture industry. Post-secondary institutions (e.g., University of Alberta, NAIT) can support agricultural research and education. The University of Alberta has extensive landholdings in the Region to support agriculture research.

Urban residents often have limited opportunities to learn where their food comes from and, as a consequence, may have little understanding of agriculture. Establishing urban agriculture in urban municipalities across the Region will reverse this trend. Increased interactions between all producers and consumers of food, rural and urban, will build support for the regional agricultural economy.

# Schedule F

## Policy Area 4 – Urban Agriculture



NOTE: This map is for illustration purposes only.

## Goals

Urban agriculture is established and thriving and reflects the individual characteristics of each municipality. Urban agriculture is fostered by engaged communities that support a wide range of agricultural activities, public and private, and involve residents, businesses, communities, and organizations.

## Objectives

- Urban agriculture connects people to the food they eat, is accessible and visible in member municipalities, and increases awareness and understanding of the importance of agriculture to the Region.
- Urban agriculture contributes to the role agriculture plays in growing the regional economy.
- The ecological and social benefits urban agriculture provides to communities include quality local food, increased food security, active and productive use of green space in urban areas, enhanced natural living systems and mitigating the effects of climate change.

## Policies

1. Urban agriculture plans will be prepared for each member municipality with an urban or rural center and is encouraged for Hamlets with a minimum population of 500. *(See Appendix A – Urban Agriculture Plan Guidelines).*
2. Existing *agricultural uses* shall be given consideration to be kept as an existing land use and supported by an urban agriculture plan.
3. Policies must be included in statutory plans to enable *urban agriculture* in suitable locations throughout Policy Area 4.
4. *Value-added agriculture uses* will be considered in this policy area.



# Implementation

The implementation of RAMP will require ongoing collaboration among the EMRB member municipalities, the Government of Alberta, other regional stakeholders and EMRB. This section includes additional policies and direction to support the ongoing work of implementation.

## 5.1 Agricultural Land and Soils

RAMP establishes the importance of agricultural land in the Region. Maintaining the health and productivity of the soil is essential to maintaining the quality of the agricultural land.

1. Soil should be recognized as a limited non-renewable resource and managed accordingly.
2. Soil management, including its reuse and recycling, should be considered as part of an area structure plan for greenfield areas.
3. Soils should be managed in the municipality in which they originate. Where soils are exported to another municipality, the municipality in which the soils originated is encouraged to engage with the municipality receiving the soil to ensure effective soil management.

**SECTION 5.0  
IMPLEMENTATION**

**5.2 Land Use**

Through the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment evaluation, prime agricultural lands have been identified in the Region. The LESA Map will inform the direction of future growth while continuing to create certainty for the future for agricultural producers in the EMR.

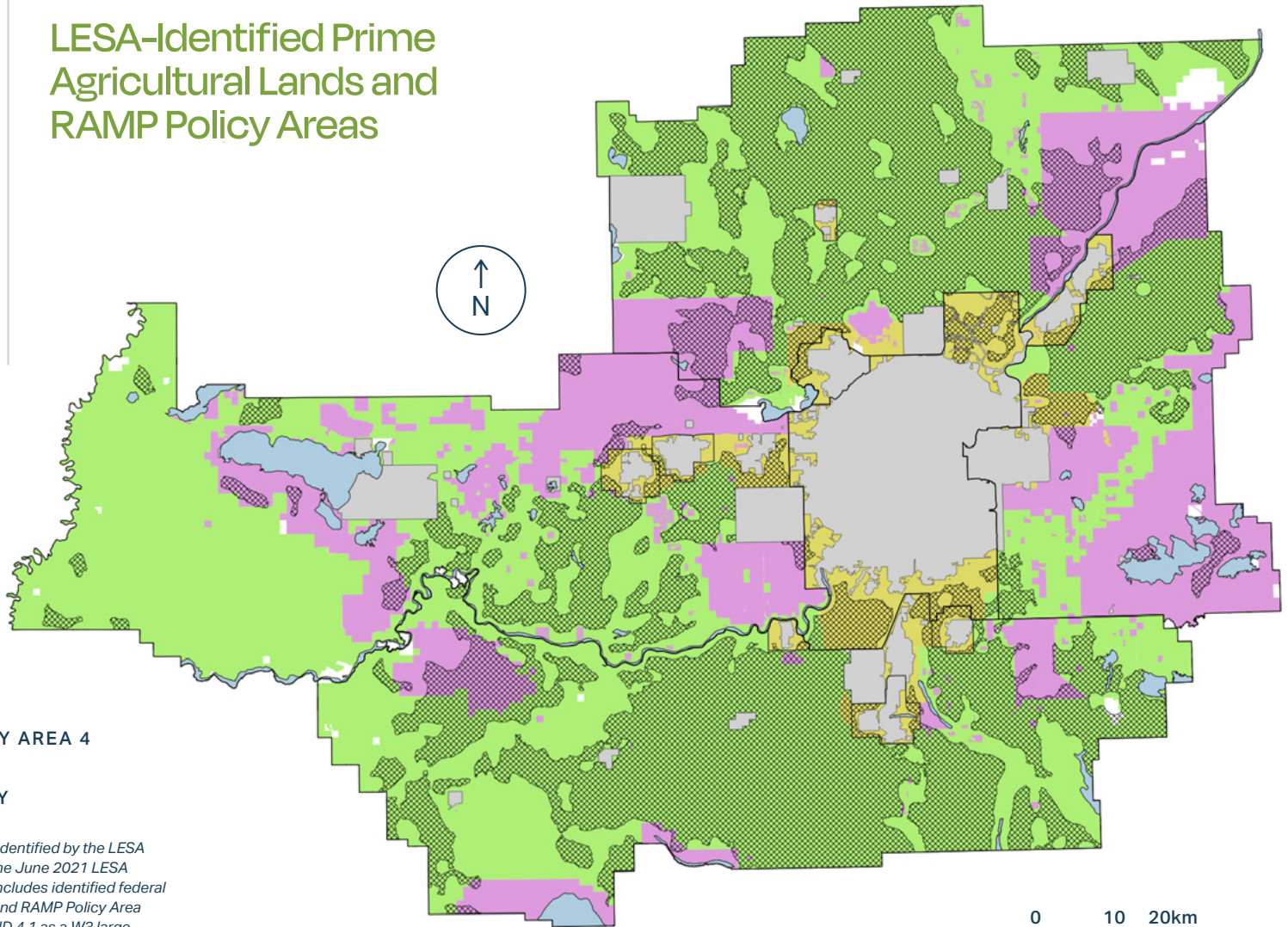
**Schedule G**

**LESA-Identified Prime Agricultural Lands and RAMP Policy Areas**

**Legend**

- PRIME AGRICULTURAL LANDS
- POLICY AREA 1
- POLICY AREA 2
- POLICY AREA 3
- NON-STUDY AREA/POLICY AREA 4
- WATERBODIES
- EMRB-MEMBER BOUNDARY

*Data Sources: Prime Agricultural Areas as identified by the LESA model under the parameters specified in the June 2021 LESA Model Technical Report. Non-Study Area includes identified federal lands, non-EMRB member municipalities, and RAMP Policy Area 4. Waterbodies are as identified by AGRASID 4.1 as a W3 large waterbody and are also excluded from the Study Area.*



## SECTION 5.0 IMPLEMENTATION

1. The policies and outcomes of RAMP and all other policies in the growth plan to achieve responsible growth, will be considered, as part of the EMRB 5-year interim review of the growth plan, specifically to:
  - a. Complete a regional growth study to update and inform the rate of land consumption. The results of the regional growth study will consider the alignment of the metropolitan area policy line in conjunction with RAMP policy area 3. The resulting analysis should strive for a no net increase in land within the metropolitan area policy tier of the regional growth plan to 2044;
  - b. The regional growth study should inform the identification of thresholds for % build out of area structure plans and infill development before new lands (unplanned /greenfield) are considered for development to conserve agricultural lands for as long as possible and ensure responsible growth. (Includes both residential and non-residential); and
  - c. The regional growth study should inform the direction of future growth in the Region, in all policy areas, to protect prime agricultural lands identified through the EMR LESA analysis, for as long as possible, and in accordance with the objectives for each policy area.
2. Update RAMP Objective 6.1 to broaden the scope to include the global opportunity to supply food, fiber and fuel.
3. Member municipalities will be responsible to ensure compatible land uses are achieved, particularly in areas where agricultural uses and non-agricultural uses interface. Mitigation measures shall be incorporated within the area being developed to reduce conflicts.
4. Member municipalities shall strive for reclaimed lands to benefit the agricultural system as a priority in all policy areas with appropriate consideration for the environment, land, water resources and surrounding agricultural operations.
5. Member municipalities shall be responsible to ensure compatibility and connectivity to natural areas. Particularly in areas where agricultural uses and non-agricultural uses interface. Consider the ecological integration of biodiversity, wildlife corridors and conservation of ecological areas. Mitigation measures may include buffers / setbacks between agriculture and natural areas including water features (rivers, streams, and lakes) to protect water quality and mitigate the effects of climate change.

### 5.3 Agricultural System

1. Member municipalities are encouraged to implement strategies to support and enhance the agricultural system when undertaking integrated planning for growth management, including goods movement and transportation planning and identify priority infrastructure to enable growth in agri-foods and value-added agriculture. Ensuring any adverse impacts to the agricultural system are avoided, or if avoidance is not possible, efforts are applied to minimize and mitigate impacts.

## SECTION 5.0 IMPLEMENTATION

2. Member municipalities are encouraged to support the growth and development of agricultural and agri-food sectors by:
  - a. Considering the impacts on the agricultural system when municipal decisions are made on investments, growth, infrastructure, programs, policies, bylaws and services;
  - b. Review and align economic development and tourism strategies with opportunities to promote agriculture and elevate the agri-food sector and a vibrant food culture in the Region contributing to a sense of community connection and placemaking. (e.g. Open Farm Days, Support Local Food hubs, Farm to Fork connections, cultural diversity and heritage);
  - c. Adopt an agricultural lens as part of urban planning: to ensure water conservation/ reclamation/ recharge and encourage a range of approaches to support various forms of agriculture;
  - d. Member municipalities are encouraged to adopt policies fostering “buy local” first approach, including procurement of food and landscaping products;
  - e. Recognize urban agriculture as a land use contributing to municipal resiliency and sustainability helping to mitigating the effects of climate change; and
  - f. Recognize and celebrate the diverse populations that contribute to the heritage and culture of the Region.
3. Member municipalities are encouraged to support the long-term economic prosperity and viability of agriculture and the agri-food sector, for example through:
  - a. Integrate agricultural economic development, infrastructure, goods movement and freight considerations with land use planning;
  - b. Encourage clustering diversified and value-added agriculture to create efficiencies, synergies and economies of scale in support of the growth of the sector;
  - c. Support new forms of agriculture enabled through technology and innovation;
  - d. Engage with producers and agri-food experts, forming advisory committees; and
  - e. Providing outreach and education opportunities to promote the sector and local food connection.
4. Member municipalities are encouraged to adopt policies, incentives and to identify partnerships to leverage agriculture as a source of renewable energy, bio-mass energy, and /or carbon sequestration.
5. Member municipalities are encouraged to develop a regional approach to addressing the disposal of agricultural waste and municipal waste management services to increase composting, lower costs, and divert organics from landfills.

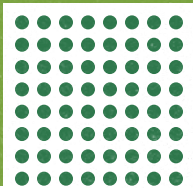
# Monitoring and Reporting

To ensure that RAMP policies are having their desired effect and that the objectives of RAMP are being achieved, a RAMP monitoring and reporting framework is required as a foundation to track RAMP outcomes. Regional monitoring and reporting of agricultural related data and information is an incredibly complex and unique challenge. Currently in the Region, each municipality is at a different starting point for the datasets that are collected and each deploy a different approach to collection, recording, and reporting. This results in an inconsistent approach to monitoring and reporting throughout the Region.

The RAMP monitoring and reporting framework is a critical first step to establish a consistent methodology and approach to data collection, establishing consistent measures across the Region, identifying the frequency of reporting, defining recommended geographies, and identifying potential data sources. *Refer to Appendix B: Monitoring and Reporting Framework: Terms of Reference* for more detailed guidance on the approach and scope required in developing the framework.

→ Work on the RAMP monitoring and reporting framework will be initiated directly following Board approval of RAMP with the goal of having the framework completed and approved by the Board within a year. Once this foundation is established, RAMP monitoring and reporting is enabled through implementation of the framework.

# Advocacy



Recognizing the value and economic potential of the agriculture and agri-foods sector in the Region, the EMRB is in a unique position to provide coordinated leadership in building a unified advocacy strategy. One of the challenges facing the sector that has long been recognized is that it is not only resilient and adaptable, it is also diversified, complex, and ever changing in response to technology, innovation and economic opportunities. A prevailing trend is fewer but larger farms resulting in fewer voices to represent the interests of agriculture, and in a lack of a unified voice. An advocacy strategy based on the learnings from RAMP stakeholders should consider the following:

1. Promote the economic importance of agriculture and the agri-foods sector by encouraging the establishment of programs by other orders of government to stimulate investment in technologies to enhance the performance of the sector.
2. Highlight the need to address gaps in essential infrastructure such as rural broadband, irrigation systems and small and medium sized processing facilities and increased investment in agriculture focused research to enable innovation across the sector.
3. Advocate for provincial leadership in areas that will contribute to transformational change in the sector through artificial intelligence, and robotics, as examples.
4. Promote prioritizing the investment in agriculture and value-added food processing as part of local and

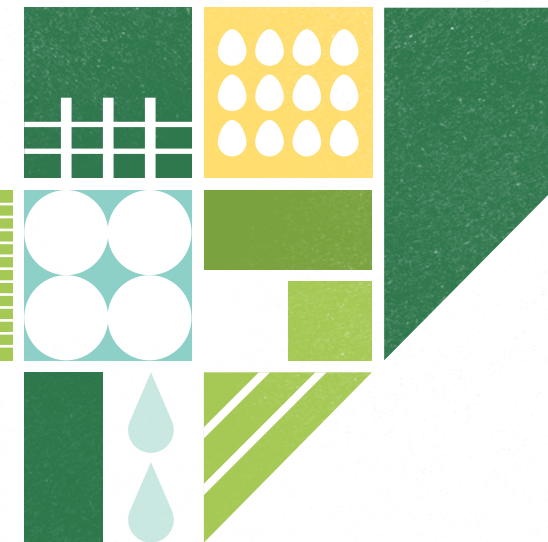
provincial plans for diversifying the economy and creating jobs.

5. Advocate and take action to ensure greater collaboration and coordination among member municipalities to create the conditions for a favorable investment climate, inclusive of a transparent, predictable and timely regulatory framework to attract investment to grow the sector.
6. Advocate for an increase in and a sustainable level of investment funding in post-secondary institutions for both research and development and skills training to keep pace with new and emerging technological advances in the agriculture sector and to attract more youth into the sector.
7. Advocate for keeping export channels open for agricultural commodities and value added agri-foods.
8. Advocate for the creation of incentive programs that recognize the contributions of the agricultural sector as an important sector to sequester carbon through sustainable practices and stewards of the rural lands and to recognize the value of the sector in mitigating the impacts of climate change.

# Recommendations to the Province

While the work in developing RAMP was led by the EMRB, the implementation of RAMP requires approval by the Government of Alberta. The EMRB has shown true leadership in developing the first of its kind plan for agriculture and recognizes the important contribution of the province in completing this work. Much has been learned throughout this process, and the EMR sees this work as part of a longer journey. Agriculture is recognized as our legacy and our future, and at the same time a significant part of the economic potential for this Region.

1. Approval of RAMP to be included as an amendment to the regional growth plan in accordance with Policy 5.2.4.3.
2. That consideration be given to the policy directions and outcomes of the growth plan as part of annexation applications.



# Roles and Responsibilities

## Government of Alberta

To implement the Regional Agriculture Master Plan directed in the agriculture policy area in the growth plan the EMRB is looking for support from the Government of Alberta to:

- Approve RAMP;
- Support the completion of Regional Context Statements by member municipalities to be submitted to the EMRB for information within one year of RAMP being approved by the Government of Alberta;
- Support the request to have the growth plan be considered in annexation decisions;
- Collaborate with the EMRB in the implementation of the vision, guiding principles, policy framework, and policies in RAMP;
- Collaborate with the EMRB on regional advocacy identified in RAMP;
- Support the further work identified for RAMP as part of future reviews of the regional growth plan;

- Consider the RAMP vision, guiding principles, policy framework and policies when planning future investments in infrastructure, programs and enabling legislation for the growth of agriculture and value added agri-foods sector;
- Consider the broader adoption of a Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) analysis in other areas of the Province, in support of the growth of the agriculture sector.

## Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board will need to:

- Maintain the momentum of RAMP and prioritize resources to complete further work identified to define the monitoring and reporting framework for RAMP and work to define the agricultural system in the Region, identify the areas of comparative and competitive advantage in value added agri-foods and develop strategies to enable the growth across the agriculture sector.
- Receive and review RAMP Regional Context Statements, as information.
- Provide comments on Agriculture Master Plans, as specified in the growth plan.



## SECTION 9 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Receive and review amendments to statutory plans, for approval, through Regional Evaluation Framework (REF).
- Collaborate with regional stakeholders in the implementation of an advocacy strategy for agriculture.
- Oversee the integration of RAMP into the regional growth plan, as part of the 5-year interim review.
- Oversee the development and implementation of the monitoring and reporting on the RAMP key performance indicators and provide ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of the RAMP Policies.
- Facilitate future EMRB work based on an evidence-based approach to include and not limited to:
  - Consider the policies and outcomes of RAMP in the 5-year interim review of the regional growth plan and REF.
  - Complete a regional growth study to inform future land requirement for urban growth and to inform the direction of growth considering the economic value and contributions of prime agricultural lands in proximity to urban areas. Further, to support work to delineate the metropolitan area policy tier in conjunction with the RAMP policy area 3.
- Lead further work to:
  - Identify the criteria and governance process to move lands between agricultural policy areas.
  - Review and refine the Terms of Reference for Agricultural Impact Assessment in the growth plan to align with the RAMP Policies.
  - Inform further work on regional policies within the growth plan as a result of the EMR agricultural system work to support the growth in value-added agri-foods sector.
  - Advance the understanding of the issues and opportunities for RAMP identified in *Appendix C*, other considerations for Infrastructure, Digital Infrastructure, Education, Awareness & Communication, Stewardship and Ecological Goods and Services, and Climate Change.
  - Incorporate the worldviews of the First Nation and Metis cultures in the Region with respect to protecting and conserving land and natural resources in further work on RAMP.
  - Future updates to RAMP will be completed in conjunction with updates to the growth plan, starting with the 5-year interim review of the growth plan.
  - Coordinate future updates to LESA, as required.
  - Support to member municipalities in the implementation of RAMP.

### **EMRB member municipalities will need to:**

- Complete a RAMP Regional Context Statement within one year of RAMP approval by the Government of Alberta and submit it to EMRB for information.
- Update their Municipal Development Plan (MDP) to include RAMP within two years of approval by the Government of Alberta, or as part of any updates required by the 5-year interim review of the growth plan, whichever occurs first.
- If required by RAMP, prepare an Urban Agriculture Plan within 2 years of approval by the Government of Alberta and submit it to the EMRB for review and comment.
- Implement the RAMP guiding principles, objectives, policy definitions, and policies of RAMP through statutory plans, and non-statutory plans including agriculture master plans.
- Enable and support the implementation of RAMP.
- Support RAMP advocacy strategy efforts.
- If required, participate in the development of the monitoring and reporting framework for RAMP. Thereafter, submit data and information required to the EMRB on established key performance indicators to support the monitoring and reporting of the effectiveness of RAMP policies.

## Urban Agriculture Plan Guidelines

### Urban Agriculture Plan Context

Policy 1 in Policy Area 4 (Urban Agriculture) of the RAMP requires urban municipalities to prepare an Urban Agriculture Plan (UAP).

The UAP should support the following outcomes:

- Create awareness and public support for urban agriculture,
- Identify opportunities and constraints for urban agriculture specific to each municipality,
- Identify how urban agriculture will be supported in the municipality, with particular attention to the needs of public and private forms of urban agriculture, and
- Ensure that urban agriculture is a vital component of complete communities and is integrated into the social fabric of the municipality.

### Recommended Plan Content

Each municipality may consider providing the following in their UAP:

- Land use policies in support of agriculture.
- Land use policies in support of growth in the value-added sector.
- Policy direction to identify and coordinate infrastructure and services that are needed to support urban agriculture and the value-added sector.
- Policy direction to create a public engagement process for public education about urban agriculture and to minimize conflict over land uses associated with urban agriculture.
- A description of the potential range of urban agricultural uses that could be considered in the municipality and uses that may not be suitable in the municipality.
- Policy direction to ensure that appropriate forms of urban agriculture become an accepted part of complete communities to integrate urban agriculture into the social fabric of the municipality.
- Where appropriate, policy direction to embed urban agriculture as a land use in the municipal planning system of statutory plans and Land Use Bylaws.
- As noted in Policy Area 4 – Urban Agriculture, municipalities are encouraged to prepare Urban Agriculture Plans that reflect the unique attributes and specific characteristics of the municipality.

## RAMP Monitoring & Reporting – Terms of Reference

### Background

Pursuant to Part B. Regional Policies, Policy 6.1.1a of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan, a Regional Agriculture Master Plan (RAMP) is required to support implementation of the growth plan guiding principle: *Ensure the wise management of prime agricultural resources*. Further, following approval of RAMP, Section 6: Monitoring and Reporting, details the critical need for municipalities to monitor and report on land use decisions and changes at the local level to ensure that RAMP is being implemented throughout the Region. Monitoring and reporting will give EMRB and member municipalities evidence and data to understand if RAMP policies are having their desired effect and achieving its objectives. This work should also include understanding the extent to which RAMP contributes to the metrics identified as part of the economic imperative – increase in GDP, and jobs in the Region.

- 6.1 Identify and conserve an adequate supply of prime agricultural lands to provide a secure local food source for future generations.
- 6.2 Minimize the fragmentation and conversion of prime agricultural lands for non-agricultural uses.
- 6.3 Promote diversification and value-added agriculture production and plan infrastructure to support the agricultural sector and regional food system.

Existing KPIs in growth plan (for Policy Area 6: Agriculture), are the starting point for RAMP Monitoring and Reporting. With the approval and adoption of RAMP it is recognized that the KPIs within the growth plan require further work to refine and ensure alignment with RAMP.

1. Total Prime agricultural land consumed
2. Distribution of subdivision acres by land class
3. Value of farm receipts

Regional monitoring and reporting is an incredibly complex and unique challenge. Currently in the Region, each municipality is at a different starting point for the datasets that are collected, and deploy different approaches to collect, record, and store data, resulting in an inconsistent approach to monitoring and reporting.

The RAMP Task Force has defined the intent of RAMP monitoring and reporting (the 'why') and identified the baseline and consistent data that is desired to be monitored (the 'what'). Further work is required and outlined below, in defining the framework to enable a clear and consistent regional approach and process for the data to be collected (the 'how') and reported.



## APPENDIX B

### Proposed Scope and Approach of the RAMP Monitoring and Reporting Framework

The Board will determine the governance structure through the development and approval of a Project Charter and Workplan. It is recommended that this work be completed utilizing the EMRB's existing network of regional land use planners and GIS experts. The Project Charter must consider and enable the successful completion of the identified items below.

The monitoring and reporting outcomes have been determined by the RAMP Task Force, and require further work to define the specific measure (or measures) to achieve each outcome. The work, in defining the specific measures, will be critical for the Board to understand if RAMP policies are having the effect and if RAMP is achieving its objectives.

- 6.1 Identify and conserve an adequate supply of prime agricultural lands to provide a secure local food source for future generations.
  - Total area of all agricultural land available (baseline)
  - Total area of prime agricultural areas (baseline)

6.2 Minimize the fragmentation and conversion of prime agricultural lands for non-agricultural uses.

- Subdivision of agricultural land (including size and reason)
- Change in land use on agricultural land (agricultural use to non-agricultural use)
- Policy Area 1
- Policy Area 2
- Policy Area 3
- Reclamation of land back to agriculture

6.3 Promote diversification and value-added agriculture production and plan infrastructure to support the agricultural sector and regional food system.

- Urban agriculture master plans completed.
- Agriculture farm gate sales
- Value-added agriculture sales
- Agriculture-related uses (agribusiness)
- Infrastructure investment beneficial to the agricultural sector (transportation, irrigation, broadband, etc.)
- Number of jobs

*Note: the bullets above do not represent a specific measure (or measures), but the rather the intent or outcome that the measure should achieve. Further work is required to define the specific measure (or measures) required to achieve the above outcomes, outlined below (including methodology, collection, frequency, unit of measure, etc.)*

In developing the framework (and defining the 'how'), the following is an outline of the proposed scope of work.

1. Use existing EMRB monitoring and reporting, data collection process and platform.
2. Utilize and draw upon the expertise of EMRB's existing regional network of land use, agricultural, GIS experts, and provincial representation.
3. For each of the outcomes identified above, the Framework needs to clearly define a consistent methodology and approach to collection, monitoring, and reporting as follows:
  - a. Define and establish baseline data and year;
  - b. Define consistent data items to be collected for each item (particular data piece, format, methodology);
  - c. Establish a recommended geography (statutory plan, municipal, sub-regional, regional, etc.);
  - d. Establish a consistent unit of measurement for each measure;
  - e. Establish frequency of reporting (annual, bi-annual, five years, etc.); and
  - f. Determine the potential source(s) of data including municipalities, provincial and federal governments, and external organizations.
4. Recommend a final RAMP Monitoring and Reporting Framework for Board approval for implementation within one year.



## Other Considerations

In its work on RAMP, the Task Force recognized a range of considerations that are closely connected to agriculture. The considerations in question are complex, and they speak to the complexity of agriculture.

These considerations could not be addressed in a meaningful way in the preparation of the inaugural RAMP. They are described in this Appendix for consideration in future iterations of RAMP.



We are ideally situated for value-added production. We have the best farmland in western Canada, have access to road, rail, and air, and are close enough to an urban environment that we could create jobs. We are the perfect candidate for value-added industries.

**RAMP ENGAGEMENT STAKEHOLDER**

*December 2020*



## Value Added Agriculture

Although RAMP identifies **value-added agriculture** as a type of land use, the true importance of value-added agriculture is in its role as a type of economic activity in the Region.

The *EMR Economic Imperative for Agriculture* report highlights the importance of the value-added agriculture sector and the potential it has to grow the regional economy. That report is the starting point for further work to enable the economic potential of value-added agriculture.

The work must be led by individuals with expertise in the fields of agricultural production, agricultural economics, economic development and market development. This work could include (but is not limited to):

- Developing a regional view of the value-added agriculture sector;
- Developing a regional view of the agricultural system in the EMR;
- Identifying the Region's existing strengths in the value-added agriculture sector;
- Identifying area(s) with the greatest potential for growth, and what supports may be required; and
- Identifying areas for legislative or regulatory changes to create a more flexible and adaptive business environment for investment.

Further work on value-added agriculture should also recommend the most appropriate role for the EMRB in supporting future growth in value-added agriculture.

### Infrastructure

Infrastructure that serves agriculture in the Region includes (but is not limited to) road, rail, air services, irrigation, and a host of utilities including broadband.

A combination of RAMP and the Integrated Regional Transportation Master Plan (IRTMP) will help to identify the future actions and measures related to infrastructure that need to support the agriculture and agri-food sector in the Region. RAMP and the IRTMP will inform each other in making significant contributions to the forthcoming growth plan 5-year interim review (s.5.2.5.2).

Other EMRB projects related to infrastructure (e.g., Metropolitan Regional Servicing Plan [MRSP], Broadband Situational Analysis) will inform the infrastructure needed to support the growth and sustainability of the agriculture sector in the Region. Referral of non-statutory agricultural and transportation master plans to the EMRB per s.5.2.3 of the growth plan will also support the industry.

At a grassroots level, the EMRB is aware of the importance of local road networks for agricultural producers. This was identified in the first RAMP engagement process in November and December 2020. Agricultural producers spoke frequently about the lack of understanding in the general public about the critical importance of local roads for day-to-day operations, including but not limited to the movement of agricultural equipment.

### Digital Infrastructure

Agriculture relies on digital infrastructure. Big data, robotics, artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, the Internet of Things, Blockchain, and adaptive systems are emerging as the fourth industrial revolution that is having a major impact on agriculture and the agri-food sector.

Rural access to reliable broadband is increasingly important for the sustainability and growth of the agriculture sector. Agricultural producers are focused on achieving efficiencies and increasing yields and profitability through the adoption of new and innovative technologies. Broadband is key to their ability to do this.

Work completed by the EMRB on the state of broadband in the Region confirmed that rural areas are at a disadvantage in their ability to access reliable broadband. Following the adoption of RAMP, and as future iterations of RAMP are developed, the EMRB will need to develop partnerships with other orders of government, educational institutions, agricultural organizations, and economic development organizations, among others, to advocate for improved broadband services in rural areas of the Region to better serve agricultural producers and rural communities.

### Education, Awareness & Communication

During the first RAMP engagement process in November and December 2020, many stakeholders spoke to the general public's lack of knowledge about agriculture, and where food comes from.

Following the adoption of RAMP, and as future iterations of RAMP are developed, the Board will need to develop partnerships with other orders of government, educational institutions, agricultural organizations, and economic development organizations, among others, to increase public awareness and understanding of the importance of agriculture to the Region:

- As a secure local food source.
- As a major economic activity that creates primary commodities and value-added agricultural products for export regionally, nationally, and globally.
- As a major economic activity that creates employment and contributes to the economic growth of the Region.
- A contributor to mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Increased public awareness will provide the social license that agriculture and the agricultural sector will need to be able to operate with public support, and for RAMP to succeed.

### Stewardship, and Ecological Goods and Services

RAMP creates a policy framework for conserving prime agricultural lands, and for maintaining all other agricultural areas in the Region for agriculture uses. RAMP builds on the stewardship carried out by agricultural producers who protect their land to maintain its agricultural viability.

When RAMP is integrated into the growth plan, it will complement Policy Area 2 – Natural Systems - and the policies that address air, water quality and quantity, land and watershed management. Combining these measures with a secure agricultural land base will allow producers to make long-term investment decisions for their agricultural operations, and to continue to use their lands sustainably.

This framework can be enhanced with greater knowledge and understanding of the ecological goods and services (EG&S) that are provided by natural living systems in the Region. Ecological goods and services such as water filtration, flood protection, wildlife habitat, climate regulation, carbon capture, and pollination are economically and socially valuable. Ecological goods and services provide important benefits to agriculture and to the Region.

Following the adoption of RAMP, and as future iterations of RAMP are developed, the

Board will need to develop partnerships with other orders of government, educational institutions, agricultural organizations, and economic development organizations, among others, to increase knowledge and understanding of ecological goods and services in the Region.

### Climate Change

Climate change is already effecting agriculture in the Region and will continue to do so.

The challenge for the EMRB will be to acquire greater knowledge and understanding of how climate change currently impacts agriculture and the regional agricultural system, in order to identify specific actions, initiatives and policies that can be taken at a regional level to mitigate the impacts of climate change on agriculture and agricultural producers.

Following the adoption of RAMP, and as future iterations of RAMP are developed, the Board will need to develop partnerships with other orders of government, educational institutions, agricultural organizations, and economic development organizations, among others, to identify the specific regional actions, initiatives and policies that will mitigate the impacts of climate change.

## Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) Technical Analysis

To review the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) Technical Report in its entirety, please visit [www.emrb.ca/agriculture](http://www.emrb.ca/agriculture).

[VIEW THE REPORT](#)



## RAMP Regional Context Statement Template

Following approval of RAMP, regional context statements will be a critical component to support implementation by identifying how the objectives and policies within the RAMP will impact municipal plans.

This template is intended to provide member municipalities with a basic structure for the completion of a RAMP regional context statement in accordance with RAMP Section 9: Roles and Responsibilities. EMRB member municipalities will need to, *Complete a RAMP Regional Context Statement within one year of RAMP approval by the Government of Alberta, and Update their Municipal Development Plan (MDP) within two years of approval by the Province of Alberta, or as part of any updates required by the 5 Year Interim Review of the growth plan, whichever occurs first.*

Members are required to demonstrate how their existing municipal development plans (MDPs) conform with or diverge from the new policies and objectives within RAMP, and indicate how they plan to bring their MDPs into compliance. This template represents the minimum information required to be submitted, members may choose to provide a more detailed regional context statement. In some cases, municipalities may consider changes to their land use bylaws, as a way to implement RAMP policies.

In Part 1: RAMP Framework, Policy Areas and Agricultural Areas, members are required to indicate the relevant RAMP policy areas and identification of prime agricultural areas that apply to their municipality as per Schedule B and Schedule G. Additionally, municipalities are to review MDPs to ensure consistency with the RAMP framework, including policy definitions and policies that have been developed.

In Part 2: RAMP Policies, under 'Consistency Requirements' members are required to identify the policies that are applicable based on the relevant policy area and identification of prime agricultural areas.

## Part 1 RAMP Framework, Policy Areas and Agricultural Areas

RAMP Framework	Consistency Requirement	MDP Response	Action Required
Policy Definitions			
Identify relevant RAMP Policy Areas			
Identify relevant Prime Agricultural Areas			
Identify relevant All Other Agricultural Areas			
Identify relevant Specialty Agriculture Lands			

## Part 2 RAMP Policies

Policy Area	RAMP Policy	Consistency Requirement	MDP Response	Action Required
<b>Policy Area 1: Rural Agriculture</b>	1. Agriculture is the priority land use in Policy Area 1.			
	2. Policies must be included in statutory plans to enable the continuation, development, and expansion of all types, sizes and intensities of agriculture throughout Policy Area 1.			
	3. Agricultural uses that follow generally accepted agricultural practices must be able to operate in suitable locations without being unduly encumbered or hindered by non-agricultural development, or by adjacent land uses in neighbouring Policy Areas.			
	4. Prime agricultural lands will be conserved in prime agricultural areas to provide a secure, long-term local food source for future generations.			
	5. Prime agricultural areas and all other agriculture areas will be informed by the outcomes of the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) tool and designated in statutory plans.	<i>Designation of Prime Agricultural Areas</i>		
	6. Specialty agricultural land may be identified in either prime agricultural areas or in all other agricultural areas.			

Policy Area	RAMP Policy	Consistency Requirement	MDP Response	Action Required
	7. Two or more municipalities that share a prime agricultural area(s) must coordinate the designation of the area to recognize the geographic continuity.	<i>Identification of relevant areas</i>		
	8. Agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses, value-added agriculture uses, and on-farm diversified uses are supported throughout Policy Area 1.			
	9. Notwithstanding Policy 8, agriculture-related uses and value-added agriculture uses must not hinder agricultural operations in the surrounding area.			
	10. Agriculture-related uses and value-added agriculture uses should be directed to lower capability agricultural lands when possible.			
	11. Development of agriculture-related uses and value-added agriculture uses should minimize the amount of agricultural land taken out of production.			
	12. Consideration should be given to directing agriculture-related, and value-added agricultural uses to cluster sites.	<i>Identification of cluster sites</i>		
	13. Non-agricultural uses are discouraged in prime agricultural areas.			

Policy Area	RAMP Policy	Consistency Requirement	MDP Response	Action Required
	<p>14. Non-agricultural uses may be considered in all other agricultural areas and should be minimized to maintain agriculture as the priority land use pursuant to Policy 1. Designation of All Other Agricultural Areas</p>			
	<p>15. Consideration should be given to directing non-agricultural uses to lower capability land, where possible or to cluster sites</p>			
	<p>16. In prime agricultural areas, development of in-situ, resource-based economic assets such as coal, sand and/or gravel, marl, and peat may be considered.</p>			
	<p>17. In prime agricultural areas, other non-agricultural uses may only be considered, preferably on lower capability land if it can be demonstrated that other locations in all other agricultural areas or at cluster sites are not feasible. An Agricultural Impact Assessment is required to confirm the proposed use will not hinder the agricultural operations in the surrounding area.</p>			

Policy Area	RAMP Policy	Consistency Requirement	MDP Response	Action Required
	14. Non-agricultural uses may be considered in all other agricultural areas and should be minimized to maintain agriculture as the priority land use pursuant to Policy 1. Designation of All Other Agricultural Areas			
	15. Consideration should be given to directing non-agricultural uses to lower capability land, where possible or to cluster sites			
	16. In prime agricultural areas, development of in-situ, resource-based economic assets such as coal, sand and/or gravel, marl, and peat may be considered.			
	17. In prime agricultural areas, other non-agricultural uses may only be considered, preferably on lower capability land if it can be demonstrated that other locations in all other agricultural areas or at cluster sites are not feasible. An Agricultural Impact Assessment is required to confirm the proposed use will not hinder the agricultural operations in the surrounding area.			

Policy Area	RAMP Policy	Consistency Requirement	MDP Response	Action Required
	<p>18. Subdivision Policy Criteria:</p> <p>Prime agricultural areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Subdivision of a residential parcel for an existing Farmstead should be considered.</li> <li>b. Subdivision of land for agriculture, agriculture-related, and value-added agriculture uses may be considered.</li> <li>c. Subdivision for a new residential parcel from a quarter section with no existing residential use may be considered subject to Policy 15.</li> <li>d. Subdivision for non-agricultural uses is discouraged and may only be considered subject to Policies 15 and 17.</li> </ul> <p>All other agricultural area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e. Subdivision of a residential parcel for an existing Farmstead should be considered.</li> <li>f. Subdivision of land for agriculture, agriculture-related, and value-added agriculture uses may be considered.</li> <li>g. Subdivision for a new residential parcel from a quarter section with no existing residential use may be considered subject to Policy 15.</li> <li>h. Subdivision for non-agricultural uses may be considered subject to Policy 15.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Identify MDP subdivision policy and how RAMP subdivision criteria will be implemented</i></p>		

Policy Area	RAMP Policy	Consistency Requirement	MDP Response	Action Required
	<p>19. Subdivision of agricultural land should result in parcels sized appropriately for the type of agriculture use(s) common in the area and sufficiently large to maintain flexibility for future changes in the type or size of agricultural operations.</p>			
	<p>20. Subdivision for any purpose should minimize the amount of agricultural land taken out of production and must not hinder the operation of surrounding agricultural land uses.</p>			
	<p>21. Consideration must be given to directing subdivision for agriculture-related, value-added and non-agricultural land uses to cluster sites and wherever possible to lower capability land.</p>			
	<p>22. Subdivision policies for prime agricultural areas apply to specialty agriculture land.</p>			



Policy Area	RAMP Policy	Consistency Requirement	MDP Response	Action Required
<p><b>Policy Area 2: Agriculture Co-exists with Other Land Uses</b></p>	<p>1. Agricultural lands co-exist with existing designated land uses and shall remain in agricultural use until required for conversion.</p>			
	<p>2. Reclaimed lands should be rehabilitated for agriculture uses. Where it may be more appropriate, reclaimed lands may be rehabilitated for environmental or ecological purposes, or for commercial, industrial, institutional or recreational uses that can leverage existing infrastructure.</p>			
	<p>3. When applications are made to re-designate and/or re-district non-agricultural lands, consideration must be given to re-designating and/or re-districting the lands for agricultural uses.</p>			
	<p>4. Agriculture related and value-added agriculture uses may be considered but must not hinder the operation of agricultural operations in the surrounding area, nor hinder the development of a designated non-agricultural use.</p>			
	<p>5. Existing agricultural operations shall be given consideration to be kept as an existing land use within statutory plans.</p>			

Policy Area	RAMP Policy	Consistency Requirement	MDP Response	Action Required
<p><b>Policy Area 3: Agriculture in Future Transition Lands</b></p>	<p>1. Agricultural lands in Policy Area 3 will remain in agriculture use until the lands are needed for population and/or employment growth.</p>			
	<p>2. Subdivision and development should be limited to maintain large parcel sizes to support ongoing agricultural operations until the lands are needed for population and/or employment growth.</p>			
	<p>3. Until the lands are needed for population and/or growth, agricultural producers must have access to their agricultural lands to farm their lands. This includes but is not limited to maintaining field approaches and local roads sufficient to accommodate agricultural machinery.</p>			
	<p>4. Consideration must be given to public education about the daily and seasonal operational needs of agriculture and agricultural operators, in order to increase awareness and understanding and reduce conflict.</p>			
	<p>5. Existing agricultural operations shall be given consideration to be kept as an existing land use supported by an urban agriculture plan.</p>			

Policy Area	RAMP Policy	Consistency Requirement	MDP Response	Action Required
<b>Policy Area 4: Urban Agriculture</b>	1. Urban agriculture plans will be prepared for each member municipality with an urban or rural center and is encouraged for Hamlets with a minimum population of 500. (See Appendix 1 – Urban Agriculture Plan Guidelines).	<i>Identify the requirement for an Urban Agriculture Plan</i>		
	2. Existing agricultural operations shall be given consideration to be kept as an existing land use and supported by an urban agriculture plan.	<i>Identify potential operations for consideration</i>		
	3. Policies must be included in statutory plans to enable urban agriculture in suitable locations throughout Policy Area 4.			
	4. Value-added agriculture uses will be considered in this policy area.			
<b>Implementation</b>	5.1 Agricultural Land and Soils			
	5.2 Land Use			
	5.3 Agricultural System			

## Contributors

The development of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Regional Agriculture Master Plan was made possible through the contributions of many. On behalf of the RAMP Task Force, we wish to thank everyone for their contributions in completing this work.

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## APPENDIX F

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## APPENDIX F

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### **References and Contributions**

Photos throughout this document were retrieved from the following referenced organizations:

- Burningham Trucking, retrieved online, 2021
- Edmonton Corn Maze, retrieved online, 2021
- Stony Plain Seed Cleaning Association, retrieved online, 2021
- Unsplash, retrieved online, 2021

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- City of Edmonton
- Strathcona County
- Sturgeon County