

Enclosure 5



Invistec Consulting Ltd.
Suite 1700, 10130 – 103 Street NW
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3N9
Project 2023-050

March 18, 2024

Meghan Thompson
Planning & Development Services
Strathcona County
2001 Sherwood Drive
Sherwood Park, AB T8A 3W7

Dear Meghan:

RE: RA to DC Redistricting Submission Letter
13 23332 Township Road 520 – Colchester – Strathcona County, AB

Please accept this letter in support of the redistricting application for 13 23332 Township Road 520 (Plan 5991NY, Lot C). This application is being submitted by Invistec Consulting Ltd on behalf of the landowners.

Background and Intent

The subject site is located in the Colchester area, northeast of the Highway 14 and Anthony Henday Drive interchange. The subject site is approximately 8.09 ha (19.98 acres) and is currently districted the RA – Rural Residential / Agriculture District. The RA District is intended to promote an agriculture and rural lifestyle, which is currently supported by the existing dwelling built on the site in 1989. The existing dwelling is located in the southwest corner of the subject site, with the remainder of the site generally retained in its natural state.

The intent of this application is to redistrict the subject site from the RA – Rural Residential / Agriculture District to a DC – Direct Control District in order to develop a rural event venue that highlights the natural beauty of the site. The rural event venue is intended support weddings, receptions, and other similar celebrations with no on-site accommodations for guests. The existing dwelling is intended to be retained and occupied by the landowner, who will be managing the proposed rural event venue.

Planning Rationale

The subject site is located within the Agriculture Small Holdings Policy Area in the County's Municipal Development Plan. This policy area is intended to act as a transition from the more urban areas to the lesser density of rural and agricultural uses in the County, including promoting livework opportunities such as nature based tourism, as identified in MDP Policy 5.4.16:



“medium scale agri-tourism and nature based tourism where the proposed development:

- a. is on a parcel with an existing dwelling;*
- b. mitigates environmental impacts;*
- c. is rezoned to a district consistent with the objectives and policies of the applicable policy area;*
- d. is compatible with adjacent land uses; and*
- e. has levels of infrastructure which meet the requirements of municipal and provincial standards and regulations.”*

Rural event venues have become more attractive due to the rising costs of urban event venues, while also providing an experience that can only be achieved in a rural setting. The proposed rural event venue would support nature based tourism through highlighting the pristine qualities of the lands that attracted residents to the Colchester area. Considered options to incorporate into the rural event venue include:

- secluded areas for photographs within nature,
- retainment of the existing tree stands and wetland so guests can connect with nature and embrace the beauty of the natural landscape,
- ceremonies outdoors in nature,
- information to support birdwatching, and
- promoting dark sky principles so guests can stargaze.

These activities are generally more passive in nature, supporting mitigation of potential environmental impacts, compatible with the rural residential nature of the community, and requires limited infrastructure.

The proposed Direct Control aims to achieve the intent of the MDP and the Agriculture Small Holdings Policy Area by embracing nature through activities that highlight the existing natural features on the property, while also providing opportunities for tourism. The landowners will continue to occupy the property, supporting livework opportunities, as they will be the ones responsible for managing the rural event venue.

Public Consultation

Due to the rural residential nature of the existing community, and the rural lifestyle that attract residents to the area, the landowner and Project Team were adamant a high level of public engagement was completed prior to submission of an application. As part of this application, a What We Heard Report was prepared and details the engagement activities held, which included door knocking by the landowners, an open house, three mail outs, and the landowners meeting with interested residents who had questions or concerns.



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Two themes arose from the public engagement: noise and traffic. Noise was a concern that the landowners shared with residents, as their intent is to live on the property with their family. As the party responsible for managing the rural event venue, the landowners investigated a variety of strategies to mitigate noise, such as architecture, planting of additional landscaping, insulation and sound proofing of the future structure, location of the structure, and continuous noise monitors. Meanwhile, traffic is intended to be mitigated through frequent shuttles, as well as on-site parking. Further, opportunities to incorporate regulations into the Direct Control were reviewed to provide residents with additional confidence in these mitigation measures being implemented. More details on the feedback and the engagement process can be found in the What We Heard Report.

Direct Control District

In order to support a rural event venue, and to address the goals and intent of the MDP, a Direct Control District is being pursued to support this application, as the current Rural Residential / Agriculture (RA) District would be inappropriate or inadequate, having regard to existing surrounding developments. The Direct Control was built upon the RA District, maintaining existing uses and development regulations in the Direct Control, such as setbacks. However, as mentioned above, mitigation measures were incorporated into the Direct Control to regulate operation, occupancy, and types of events, in addition to development regulations. In order to support locating the rural event venue away from the smaller country-residential dwellings to the east, a notwithstanding clause was included to increase this setback for rural event venues. Rural event venue is also defined within the Direct Control to limit the types of events to reception halls, event tents, barns, and ceremony spaces, and their accessory structures, as these types of events are more compatible with the rural nature of the community. Hours of operation are also written into the Direct Control to limit late night events to regular and long weekends only.

We trust this information to be satisfactory to review the rezoning application. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the undersigned.

Regards,

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