



MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF FoothILLS
**High River Regional Airport Business
Development Strategy**

Final

November 3, 2017

Municipal District of Foothills No. 31
309 Macleod Trail
Box 5605
High River, Alberta
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Attention: Mr. Ryan Payne
Director Community Services

High River Regional Airport Business Development Strategy

Dear Mr. Payne:

Dillon Consulting Limited was engaged to conduct several studies for the High River Regional Airport, including a Business Development Strategy (the Strategy), in an effort to develop a long-term strategy for the financial success of the airport.

We have utilized the information provided by the Municipal District of Foothills No. 31 (MD of Foothills), the High River Regional Airport Board members and the community. We believe that the airport is a viable regional resource that should be supported by both the Town of High River and the MD of Foothills. The Strategy, supported by the MD of Foothills policies and revised Land Use District, will provide a road map for growth and development at the airport that will provide revenue for the High River Regional Airport to be a sustainable entity.

Sincerely,

DILLON CONSULTING LIMITED

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Executive Summary

The High River Regional Airport Board (the Board), the Municipal District of Foothills No. 31 (MD of Foothills) and the Town of High River (the Town) engaged Dillon Consulting Limited (Dillon) to prepare a Business Development Strategy (the Strategy) for the High River Regional Airport (the Airport). Working with the Board, tenants, the MD of Foothills and the Town, Dillon's planning team completed research and consultation, and prepared the Strategy.

Airports are critical to the social and economic well-being, and development of communities. Owned jointly by the MD of Foothills and the Town, and operated by the Board, the Airport faces challenges to its growth and survival which are common to many community and regional airports throughout Canada; challenges which make the financial sustainability of the airport very difficult.

Airports are capital intensive projects with limited revenue options. While they can often generate sufficient financial resources for operations, major upgrades or improvement require funding and support from outside the Airport. There are very limited federal or provincial funding sources for small regional airports. Funding is required to keep the airport at a safe operational level.

The Airport has been operating since 1976 when Bylaw 405 was passed by the MD of Foothills to create a joint airport commission between the MD of Foothills and the Town. Ownership of the Airport was transferred from the Province to the MD of Foothills and the Town. In 2003, the Airport entered into a new agreement and created a Part 9 Company under the Companies Act called the High River Regional Airport Limited (HRRAL). The HRRAL was designed to create governance structure which was outside of the Town and the MD of Foothills. At the same time, an Area Structure Plan (ASP) was developed to guide and protect the airport from encroaching uses.

The partnership between the MD of Foothills and the Town, with good long range planning, can provide a foundation for the Board to continue to operate and provide service to the community, while being a financially viable, economic engine, and attracting business to the area.

Building on feedback and information from stakeholders, the Board, the MD of Foothills, and the Town, this Strategy summarizes recommendations to improve operations for sustainable growth.



The Strategy resulted in 36 immediate, short, medium and long-term recommendations for the Board and the Airport.

Table E-1: Airport Recommendations

Recommendation Number	Recommendation	Timeline
SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS		
1)	It is recommended that an airport specific Land Use District be created and adopted by Council. This land use will identify permitted uses at the Airport and allow for future growth. This would rescind the Direct Control District #5 and create a land use district that would apply only to the Airport lands.	Immediate
2)	It is recommended that an airport Land Use District be divided into three "zones": Airside; Groundside; and Operational Reserve.	Immediate
3)	It is recommended that an airport Overlay Land Use District be prepared to protect the area in the vicinity of the Airport by restricting uses that would impact the safe operation of the Airport. This would match the 4 km obstruction free zone as defined by Transport Canada Regulations.	Immediate
4)	<p>It is recommended that the "Groundside" Land Uses that may be considered include the following (noting that clear definitions for each must be created to the satisfaction of the MD of Foothills and added to the Bylaw):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) All Aviation Uses (to be defined in more detail); b) Extensive Agriculture (including Greenhouses); c) Camping (this might be only for overnight pilots); d) Caretaker Suite (one suite on the airport property) for the Purpose of Housing a Person to Act as the Caretaker for the Airport; e) Commercial Uses (this could be narrowed down); f) Contractors Yards (may include some outside storage or parking of vehicles); g) Eating and Drinking Establishments (these may be restricted in size until piped water and sewer is available); h) Emergency Services (fire and ambulance); i) Logistics and Distribution (trucking and transfer of goods and services from one mode of transportation to another for the ultimate delivery of the product); j) Light Manufacturing (it would be preferred if this was aviation related and it not open to factories or any operation that creates steam, smoke, or electronic interference and generally is a minor assembly of parts); k) Air Museum ; l) Outside Storage in Locations Determined by the ASP (this could include RV Storage or some other vehicle storage); m) Parking Lots; n) Aviation Related Repair Shops (all business is conducted inside the building); o) Solar Installations (industrial or commercial); 	Immediate

Recommendation Number	Recommendation	Timeline
	p) Technical/Training Schools; and q) Warehousing (including mini storage).	
5)	It is recommended that the HRRAL continue to lease lots on the Airport and that the Board extend the term of the leases from 25 to 49 years to allow hangar development and financing.	Short-Term
6)	It is recommended that the Town and MD of Foothills continue to support the Airport with a minimum financial donation of \$10,000 per annum.	Short-Term
7)	It is recommended that the Board prepare a recommendation for the MD of Foothills to return a portion of the Airport property taxes to the Board for operation of the Airport.	Short-Term
8)	It is recommended that the Board work with the MD of Foothills Engineering Department to develop a strategy for servicing the Airport with piped water and sewer services.	Short-Term
9)	It is recommended that the Board continue to promote the Airport. Consider a Twitter account that is updated daily and identifies any travel updates, weather conditions and business opportunities.	Short-Term
10)	It is recommended that the Board consider un-manned methods of capturing flights and landings to supplement the flight information, and potentially provide an opportunity to invoice for use of the Airport.	Short-Term
11)	It is recommended that the Airport Board send a letter to the flight schools who currently conduct touch and go's at the airport that they will be invoicing the flight school and follow-up.	Short-Term
12)	It is recommended that a surcharge be added to fuel sales as an additional revenue source.	Short-Term
13)	It is recommended that the HRRAL create a list of key infrastructure replacement and key capital investment requirements to plan over time.	Short-Term
14)	It is recommended that the Board, using the capital project recommendations in this Strategy, develop a capital budget for the next 10 years.	Short-Term
15)	It is recommended that the Board clearly identify mortgage broker services in order to facilitate the process of obtaining a mortgage for development at the airport.	Short-Term
MEDIUM-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS		
16)	It is recommended that the Board, collaborating with the Town and MD of Foothills, negotiate with an internet service to provide better access and higher speed internet connections to existing and future tenants.	Medium-Term
17)	It is recommended that the Board investigate the pricing options to access water from the Cayley Water Line.	Medium-Term
18)	It is recommended that the Board explore a partnership with a flight school to develop a residential campus for flight training.	Medium-Term
19)	It is recommended that the Board explore short-term staffing assistance or summer student support through government programs such as the Serving Communities Internship Program or through high school volunteer hours to create a full tenant and business record, to track take-offs and landings, and to work to improve the website.	Medium-Term
20)	It is recommended that the Board work with other airports in Alberta to promote a chain of airports from the United States Border to the Northwest Territories Border for fuelling and aviation services for general aviation	Medium-Term

Recommendation Number	Recommendation	Timeline
	American pilots who fly to Alaska every summer.	
21)	Explore incentives such as an Airport Revitalization Tax Exemption Program, where new developments could receive tax relief for eligible construction projects.	Medium-Term
22)	It is recommended that the HRRAL put together a leasing package and promote the leases on the Airport website.	Medium-Term
23)	It is recommended that the HRRAL consider joint marketing with the MD of Foothills and the Town to promote the area.	Medium-Term
24)	It is recommended that the HRRAL seek partnerships with youth groups and schools to provide education sessions at the Airport.	Medium-Term
25)	It is recommended that the MD of Foothills investigate growth opportunities with the Regional Growth Board, once mandated.	Medium-Term
26)	It is recommended that the HRRAL complete a review of the rates and fees every five years to ensure they remain competitive and profitable.	Medium-Term
27)	It is recommended that the HRRAL consider a not-for-profit status which would allow more funding opportunities.	Medium-Term
28)	It is recommended that the Board conduct a study to determine the operational constraints of re-opening the cross-wind runway (14/32) and the costs for paving this runway.	Medium-Term
29)	It is recommended that the Board prepare an assessment of the projected future major capital costs such as major runway upgrades.	Medium-Term
LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS		
30)	It is recommended that this Strategy be reviewed by the Board annually to monitor and track the implementation progress.	Long-Term
31)	It is recommended that a full review and assessment of the Airport be completed every 10 years by an external consultant.	Long-Term
32)	It is recommended that the HRRAL, the MD of Foothills and the Town monitor and evaluate the Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program (STIP).	Long-Term
33)	It is recommended that the HRRAL investigate funding options to expand into Phase 3 of future development.	Long-Term
34)	It is recommended that if there is approved piped water and sewer services, that the Airport investigates the potential of individual Caretaker Suites (one suite per hangar, not exceeding 700 sq. ft. of habitable space).	Long-Term
35)	It is recommended that the HRRAL maintain and improve runway maintenance for all runways.	Long-Term
36)	It is recommended that the MD of Foothills and the Town extend the headlease to 99 years upon expiry in 2043.	Long-Term

1.0

Introduction

In 2015, the High River Regional Airport Board (the Board) issued a Request for Proposals to hire a consultant to prepare an Airport Business Development Strategy (the Strategy) for the High River Regional Airport (the Airport). Additional work included updating the High River Regional Airport Area Structure Plan (ASP) and completing a site drainage overview. Dillon was awarded the contract and began work in May 2016.

Scope of work required the consultant to:

- *Review relevant existing policy for the airport;*
- *Examine financial projections;*
- *Identify land for development and lease;*
- *Identify potential revenue sources;*
- *Highlight required upgrades and associated costs; and*
- *Develop short, medium and long-term projections for the Airport.*

This report will provide high level business considerations and present recommendations for the future of the Airport.

1.1

Existing Situation

The Airport is located approximately 3.2 km south of the Town of High River (the Town). The Airport is jointly owned by the Municipal District of Foothills No. 31 (MD of Foothills) and the Town, and operated by the Board. Both the Town and the MD of Foothills provide a monetary contribution to support the Airport's functions; however, the Town and the MD of Foothills have indicated that they will reduce their financial contribution annually until they no longer support the Airport financially.

The Airport's lands are currently leased to the Board. This not-for-profit organization is charged with the responsibility of operating and maintaining the Airport, and the lands. The High River Regional Airport Limited (HRRAL) is run by a board of directors that includes three members from the Airport's leaseholders and two appointed by each of the municipal councils of the Town and the MD of Foothills.

The Airport is currently zoned under a Direct Control District #5 (DC5) which is designed to protect the Airport Lands; *"The purpose and intent of this district is to provide for the protection of the Airport from encroachment of uses that may have an effect on the operational*



safety of the airport facility and to allow Direct Control by the Council over development on the lands” (pg. 226)¹.

The Airport is current classified as a Code 2 B Non-Instrument, Registered Aerodrome. It has a paved runway (07/25) measuring 4150 x 75 ft and a cross wind, unpaved runway (14/32) measuring 3750 X 75 ft.

The Airport’s lands make up approximately 157 acres. There are currently 38 private hangars and five commercial hangars. In addition, there are 17 undeveloped private lots and 14 undeveloped commercial lots. The Board recently created a tie-down parking area that can accommodate up to 15 aircrafts, all of which provide access to a power source. There is additional space to double this capacity.



The Board has struggled with a vision and business strategy to increase revenue per year. The goal of this document is to provide strategic business direction in order to increase the viability of the Airport.

1.2 Historical Growth

Over time, the Airport has seen substantial growth. Below are aerial photographs of the Airport, obtained through the MD of Foothills’ GIS Department.

Figure 1: High River Regional Airport 1980



¹ Municipal District of Foothills (2014) Land Use Bylaw Direct Control District #5 page, 226.
<https://www.mdfoothills.com/services/planning-and-development/municipal-plans/land-use-bylaw-review.html>

Figure 2: High River Regional Airport 2000



Figure 3: High River Regional Airport 2005



Figure 4: High River Regional Airport 2012



Figure 5: High River Regional Airport 2015



1.3 Sell or Lease Lots

Dillon was asked to consider the issue of selling lots at the Airport. Some tenants and the Board were interested in being able to purchase their lots. The argument from the tenants was that ownership would encourage more investment on the Airport. At the time, it was recommended that while the

initial cost recovery of selling the lands was enticing, it was a one-time financial benefit. It was recommended that the Airport continue to lease the land to the tenants. While the sale of the lots provides a one-time cash influx to the Board, the Board would still require regular income to operate the Airport. If the lots were sold, the Board would still have to charge user and access fees to cover the operating costs of the Airport (i.e., bareland condo, lot owner's fee). This would incur more administration fees for the Board. In addition, selling lots decreases the development controls that can be used to regulate building use and tenants.

Dillon has reviewed the options and stands behind our initial recommendation, and reiterates that the Board should continue to lease lots. However, to encourage investment on the Airport, it is recommended that the leases be renegotiated for longer terms from 25 to 49 year terms with the option to renew. It has been clearly demonstrated at other airports that leases over 25 years with renewals are sufficient to access bank financing, and support growth and development at airports. In addition, Dillon recommends that the MD of Foothills and the Town extend the headlease to 99 years upon expiry in 2043. While there are airports that sell their land, most airports in Canada do not. It can be seen from the growth and development at airports, such as Springbank, that lot ownership is not mandatory for the development of hangars and businesses. This includes High River. There have been several new hangars developed at the High River airport on the leased lots. This Strategy and the revised ASP provide a long range land development plan which will identify strategic locations and servicing for new hangars.

1.4 Planning Framework

1.4.1 Municipal District of Foothills, Municipal Development Plan

The MD of Foothills adopted their Municipal Development Plan (MDP) in 2010. This plan is intended to guide growth and land use across the MD of Foothills. In addition, the plan outlines robust transportation goals and objectives to support future populations. Its vision states:

"The MD of Foothills encompasses a diverse rural landscape in which leadership and planning support a strong agricultural heritage, vibrant communities, a balanced economy and the stewardship of natural capital for future generations" (pg. 4)²



In order to fulfill this vision in part, the MD of Foothills has recognized the value in supporting the Airport as it provides a vital link and access to their municipality. The Airport provides recreation and education opportunities,

² Municipal District of Foothills (2010) *Municipal Development Plan*. <https://www.mdfoothills.com/services/planning-and-development/municipal-plans/municipal-development-plan.html>

as well as facilitates efficient movement of goods and people, and farm management operations.

It is critical that airports are recognized as an integral part of the transportation system. Maintaining the Airport's viability supports the goal of developing and maintaining a safe, sustainable, and efficient transportation system. The support of the Airport also demonstrates forward thinking on the part of the MD of Foothills by linking it to the rest of Canada. A popular phrase that is quoted regularly in airport circles is that with a mile of road you can drive a mile; with a mile of runway you can access the world.

1.4.2 Town of High River, Municipal Development Plan

The Town adopted their MDP in 2009. It was developed to guide decision making and the development of the Town into the future. While outside of its municipal boundaries, the Town benefits from the Airport through its connection to the broader region, the direct economic benefits and emergency service access through the Airport. The Town's MDP highlights the Airport's benefit for job creation and building on the Town's existing resources as economic generators.

"Encourage the development of the airport as a catalyst for creating new jobs within the Town"³



The Town also benefits from the location and services of the Airport. The Airport provides vital emergency access to the Town during emergency situations as was demonstrated during the flood of 2013. In its MDP, the Town encourages improvement and expansion of the existing Airport. The Town's MDP also highlights the benefit of the Airport to its existing transportation network and mobility strategy.

"Encourage improvement and expansion of the existing airport"⁴

1.4.3 Intermunicipal Development Plan

The Town and the MD of Foothills Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP) provides an opportunity and a framework for both municipalities to guide decision making along common boundaries. While the Airport is located outside the IDP area, it was agreed by the two municipalities that it is of sufficient mutual interest that some policy, with respect to the Airport, should be included in the IDP. This document is used to provide decision making support and provide long-term infrastructure planning. Within this plan, the MD of Foothills and the Town have identified long-term strategies for the Airport, including wastewater service and a waterline to the Airport's lands. There is



³ Town of High River (2009) High River Town Plan. Policy 2.3.7.3, page 13. http://www.highriver.ca/images/Planning/2013/13-03-11_Town-Plan_final_mar4-2013.pdf

⁴ Town of High River (2009) High River Town Plan, page 17 policy 2.5.1.9. http://www.highriver.ca/images/Planning/2013/13-03-11_Town-Plan_final_mar4-2013.pdf

an existing waterline which runs from the Town to the Hamlet of Cayley, and the cooperation between the Town and the MD of Foothills is essential for promoting sustainable growth at the Airport. Coordination of events, marketing and development incentives will help the Board increase its competitive advantage over neighbouring airports in the future.

1.5 High River Airport Area Structure Plan

In 2002, the MD of Foothills, in consultation with the Town, developed the Airport ASP with approval in 2003. This plan has served as the land use guide for the Airport for the past 14 years; governing form, nature, and location of future land use and development.

The goal of the ASP was to protect the Airport's lands from encroaching land use and identify, at a high level, lands available for development. The ASP fulfilled its basic duty to guide development in the area around the airport; however, it did not address the day to day functioning of the Airport facilities or the future growth, development, and expansion of the Airport. In addition, the ASP is out of date. An ASP, under the Municipal Government Act, is supposed to plan for future growth and development. The existing ASP was not forward thinking and did not identify the growth opportunities for the Airport.

The purpose of this Strategy will be to provide direction for the Board to increase revenue options. This will have significant implications on the land use. It will work in conjunction with an updated ASP, which will identify the land available for development. Through analysis, the updated ASP will look at the most suitable development locations, future infrastructure and development phasing.

1.6 Vision and Guiding Principles

As previously stated, the MDPs of the Town and the MD of Foothills, as well as the IDPs, outlines policies relating to the Airport.

While these documents acknowledge the Airport, they do not provide direction, guidance for growth and development, or policies for clear direction. For that reason, development of a clear, concise and forward thinking ASP and a Strategy that assigns the activities of the Airport's management to forward/promote the Board and lease all of the Airport's land for the development of businesses and/ or services is recommended. The future of the Airport could be improved by more direct land use policies.

Guiding Principles for airports should include the following:

- **Safe Operation of the Airport** – Under Transport Canada regulation, an airport must be operated in a safe manner. All airport operators want to run a safe airport that is not experiencing incidents or accidents, and has the confidence in the travelling public and businesses that use that airport.

- Sustainable Development – Airports are long-term developments and air travel is embedded in Canada’s fabric. However, they are also capital intensive operations. Sustainable development will ensure sufficient funding sources; infrastructure that is well managed and maintained.
- Community Oriented Organization – Regional airports are considered to be significant contributors to the economy and the success of a community.
- Business Organization – Prior to the Federal Government transferring airports to municipalities, airports were considered a significant part of the national transportation network. Transport Canada trained airport managers and staff to ensure that the airports were operated in a safe and efficient manner. They were considered a public service and were not expected to pay for themselves. Once transferred to local municipalities, the reality of the costs of airports became all too real. Airports are now expected to earn the revenue to support the airport, not just for the operation, but for the future capital upgrades. The airport manager today is not just responsible for the safe operation of the airport but of the operation of a successful and viable business.

While the airport strives to reach financial self-reliance, the Town and the MD of Foothills contribute minimal and decreasing financial funding and services to the Airport. The Airport is a major transportation link for the residents and visitors of the Town and the MD of Foothills, and the region as a whole.

Consultation

Stakeholders can provide valuable input at each step of the process, providing information about context and background from different perspectives. This helps to identify issues and needs associated with airport facilities. As well, it provides information that is used for study analysis and the recommendation phases. Engaging stakeholders helps ensure that multiple perspectives can be brought into the airport planning process.

To complement and support the development of the Strategy and the ASP, an external stakeholder engagement plan was developed. For the purposes of the Strategy, stakeholder engagement included consultation of key stakeholders through an online survey and an open house.

A survey was posted to the Airport's website and emailed to the key stakeholders through a mailing list. In addition, a hard-copy version of the survey was brought to the open house for participants to complete. These surveys were carried out to develop input into the Strategy. The survey was launched on October 1, 2016 and was advertised on the Airport's website. The survey was online for over three months to ensure that key stakeholders had ample opportunity to provide feedback. The survey received 22 responses.

The Strategy information open house was held on Saturday November 26, 2016 at the Cadets building on the Airport's grounds. The open house was held from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. Participants were notified through the Airport's mailing list and the open house event was also advertised on their website.

The results of the open house and survey are summarized in Appendix A.

In addition to the external stakeholder consultation, the Dillon team met on numerous occasions with the Board and staff from both the MD of Foothills and the Town.

3.0 Economic Climate

In a 2005, in a study analyzing the economic impact of regional and local airports in Alberta prepared by RP Erickson & Associates, it was identified that Tier II airports (e.g., the Airport) “provide significant economic benefits to the communities they serve. In 2003, on average, each Tier II airport provided roughly 30 direct FTE⁵⁵, a labour income of nearly \$2 million, and a total impact of over \$7 million” (RP Erickson & Associates , 2005). In the case of the Airport, this benefit would have been provided primarily to the Town and local businesses.

While these airports contribute significantly to the local economy, many run on tight budgets, without contingency funds for major capital projects or improvements. In order to remain competitive, airports rely on external funding or need to determine ways of increasing their revenues. A business development strategy helps identify future cost scenarios, creates a plan to overcome costs and remains up to date with current standards.

3.1 High River Airport Competitive Advantage

To increase the business opportunities at an airport, it must be marketed to the potential businesses and users. To market an airport, it is important to be able to present the competitive advantage of the High River region and to businesses thinking of locating in the area. Based on the consultation and research completed, the competitive advantages of the Airport are:

- **Location** – The Airport is located in close proximity to the Town and the City of Calgary. There is an existing transportation network, Highway 2, 2A, Class 1 rail systems, and proximity to a planned regional commercial/ industrial corridor.
- **Competition** – As a result of the continued increase in prices, lack of vacant lots at Springbank Airport and the lack of other airports in the Calgary region, the Board is well situated to provide a regional airport service.
- **Airspace** – The Airport is outside the City of Calgary International Airport’s Mode C Airspace.
- **Land Price** – The Airport land lease rates are lower than some of the other regional airports (e.g., Springbank Airport).
- **Runway** – Paved runways and gravel cross wind runways facilitate landings in different weather conditions, with some space to expand.
- **Room to Grow** – The Airport has undeveloped land on the Airport’s property and is surrounded by farmland. This indicates that this area has potential to grow into a larger service airport for the region.

⁵⁵ Full Time Equivalent employment positions

- Municipal Policy – Both the MD of Foothills and the Town’s long range policy documents support the continued operation of the Airport; however, the headlease indicates reduced financial contributions going forward.

Disadvantages:

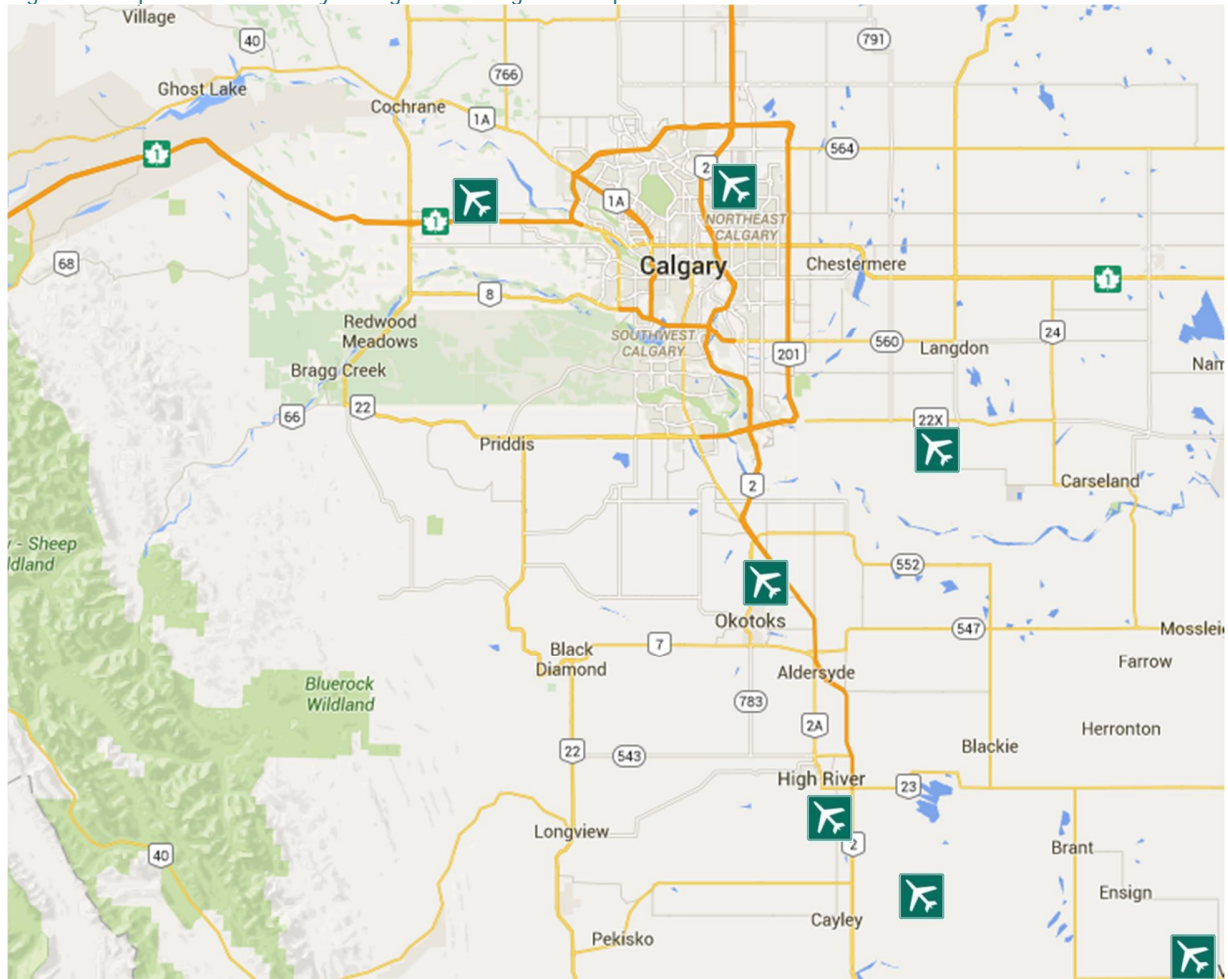
- Limited Revenue Sources – There are no federal grants unless there are regularly scheduled flights. Provincial grants are minimal and the Town is reducing their financial support.
- Competition – There is some competition from other airports in the Calgary region, although very few south of the City of Calgary.

3.1.1 Location

The Airport is located immediately south of the Town and approximately 67 km south of downtown Calgary, giving it access to the largest population base in Alberta. In addition, the Airport is located along a major transportation corridor. There are several other small airports in the Calgary region, including the Okotoks Air Ranch Airport. However, during the summer of 2016, the Okotoks Air Ranch Airport suspended operations after Transport Canada found it was in violation of operating procedures. The Okotoks Air Ranch Airport was in danger of losing their certification. As a result, the HRRAL and the Board has attracted some of the businesses and general aviation business which operated out of the Okotoks Air Ranch. More discussion on the Okotoks Air Ranch Airport is included in Section 4.1.1.

There are six other airports in proximity of the Airport, including the Calgary International Airport, Springbank Airport, Indus/ Winters Aire Park, Okotoks Air Ranch, AJ Flying Ranch Airport and Vulcan Airport. Figure 6 shows the location of the airports in proximity to the High River Regional Airport.

Figure 6: Airports in Proximity to High River Regional Airport



3.2 Local Business Climate

The collapse in global oil prices that began in late 2014 is continuing to have an impact on Alberta's economy, echoing previous boom and bust cycles. The most recent downturn in oil prices has contributed to a renewed focus on diversifying Alberta's economy, and has been a strategic focus at Federal, Provincial and Municipal levels of government. At a local level, the historic 2013 flood has led to revitalization efforts in the Town and the MD of Foothills that has demonstrated the strength of the local community and businesses.

The Town and the Foothills region has a diversified economy that is well positioned to continue to adapt to Alberta's changing economy because of a strong agricultural and a growing industrial sector, in

addition to cultural and tourism industries. One of the Town's strategic focus areas for 2015-17 is sustainable economic growth, with the goal to "Attract people and sustainable industry to High River"⁶ with an Economic Development Plan coming as a 2015-17 priority.

3.3 Population Projections

Population in the area is important to consider as these are the ultimate users of the Airport and its services/facilities. As a result of its proximity to the Town, the Town's population can be used as a projection indicator of economic support.

Table 1 shows the population of the Town and the surrounding area has continued to increase as a result of the increased population of Calgary. According to statistics provided by the Calgary Regional Partnership, the population of the Town (16, 526) is expected to grow at a rate of 2.3% over the next 60 years to a population of 38,920 by 2076 (Calgary Regional Partnership).

Table 1: Population Statistics (2016 Population Data Received from Statistics Canada; Population Projection Data Provided by the CRP)

Year	High River	Calgary	Okotoks	Foothills
2016 ⁷	13,420	1,237,656	28,881	22,766
2026	23,737	1,528,694	40,697	27,916
2036	27,680	1,764,183	46,938	32,553
2046	31,138	2,018,460	58,000	36,620
2056	33,732	2,171,932	66,817	42,661
2066	36,326	2,371,676	75,635	48,702
2076	38,920	2,571,419	84,452	54,743

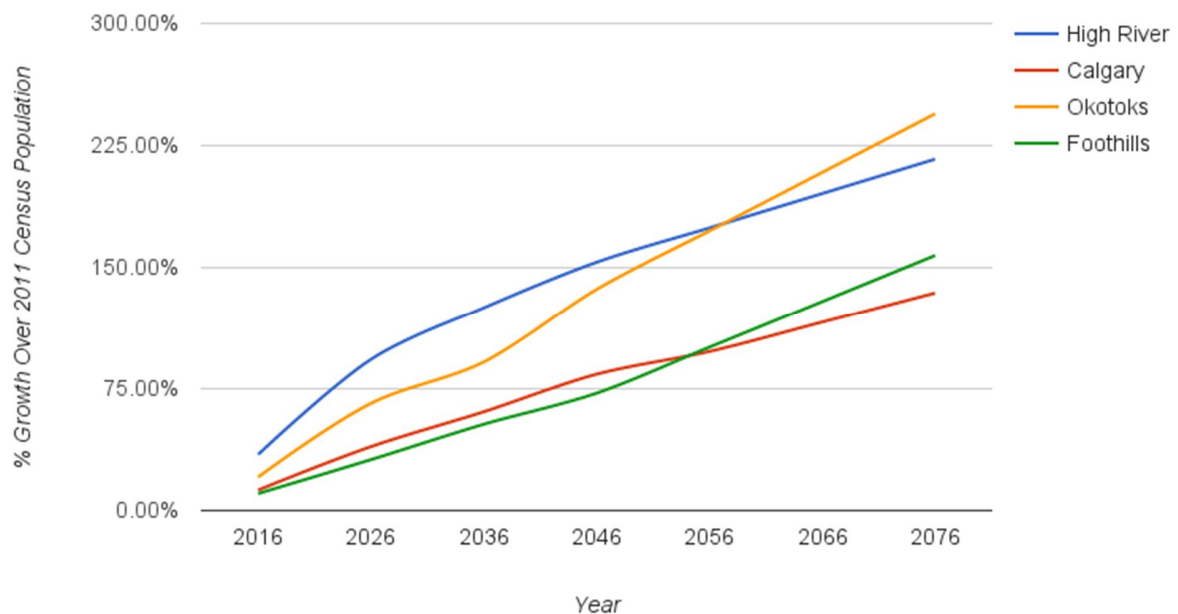
Municipalities in the area such as Okotoks and Turner Valley have also forecasted significant growth over the next decade. Figure 7 illustrates the current population growth forecast for the Calgary Region.

⁶ Town of High River (2015) Corporate Strategic Plan 205 – 2017, page 11.

http://www.highriver.ca/images/Leg_Services/corporate-strategic-plan_2015_-_2017.pdf

⁷ Statistics Canada (2016) Census Profiles (High River, Calgary, Okotoks, MD of Foothills) <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=POPC&Code1=0115&Geo2=PR&Code2=48&Data=Count&SearchText=calgary&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All>

Figure 7: Projected Regional Population Growth



The area's population growth rate is forecasted by the Calgary Regional Partnership at 1.8% per year. The Airport should anticipate future growth as a result of population increases.

3.4 Airport Contribution to the Local and Regional Economy

Generally, the key contributions that airports typically provide to local/regional economies include:

- Direct Employment – Jobs operating and maintaining the Airport, as well as employment by businesses located at the Airport (i.e., agriculture, tourism, hospitality, creation, manufacturing). Based on conversations at the open house event it is estimated that there are 12 full-time equivalent employment positions at the Airport, and 10 of those reside in the Town with their families.
- Indirect Employment – Airport based employees and travellers purchase goods and service in the community and region in all sectors of the economy. There have also been a number of hangars constructed at the Airport in the past five years, giving more opportunity to local trades.
- Airport Businesses – Businesses at the Airport purchase goods and services from suppliers in the region and community. For example, the construction of a new hangar at the Airport will use local trades, purchase materials in the Town, and use local firms for insurance and other services. As an example, a hangar will cost an estimated range of between \$80 and \$100 per sq. ft. to build with the average private hangar being 5,000 sq. ft. This represents a large investment in the community.
- Aviation Support Services – Freight, specialized skills and time sensitive delivery to the community/region by air. The Airport is a hub in security (e.g., firefighting, search and rescue, medical emergency movements).

- **Transportation Logistics** – Growing business in employing airports as intermodal hubs for both passengers and freight (e.g., air, rail, highway) modes can be integrated at or adjacent to the airport.
- **Land Banks** – Airports provide land banks for aviation and non-aviation employment districts, providing direct revenue opportunities through lease. As the Town and MD of Foothills leases the lands, they will always have the lands as an asset.
- **Tax Base** – As potential employment districts, airports can provide contributions to the local and regional “non-residential” tax base.

Through indirect and direct streams referenced above, the Airport has had a significant monetary contribution to the local and regional economy as an aviation transportation hub. It has continued to provide services for aviation businesses, local hangars, flight school and aviation training, and the Flying Club. In addition, during the flood in 2013, the Airport was an essential location out of the flood area that provided emergency access in and out of the community, and acted as a command post location for the Town. Leaseholders at the Airport also contribute to the local and regional economy through annual lease fees and local tax contributions.

4.0 Aviation Trends

4.1 Flight and Passenger Trends

The flight volumes at the Airport are difficult to predict as detailed records are not kept, and they fluctuate based on the season as well as the regional economy. For insurance purposes, in 2015, the Board estimated the number of movements per year at 8,800. These numbers were provided through the following estimated calculations: Through the week there are approximately 25 aircraft movements per day. However, on Saturday's there are approximately 50 aircraft movements per day, given the conditions. The increase on Saturday is due to the recreational air travel and airplane enthusiasts. Table 2 shows the estimated aircraft movements at the Airport.

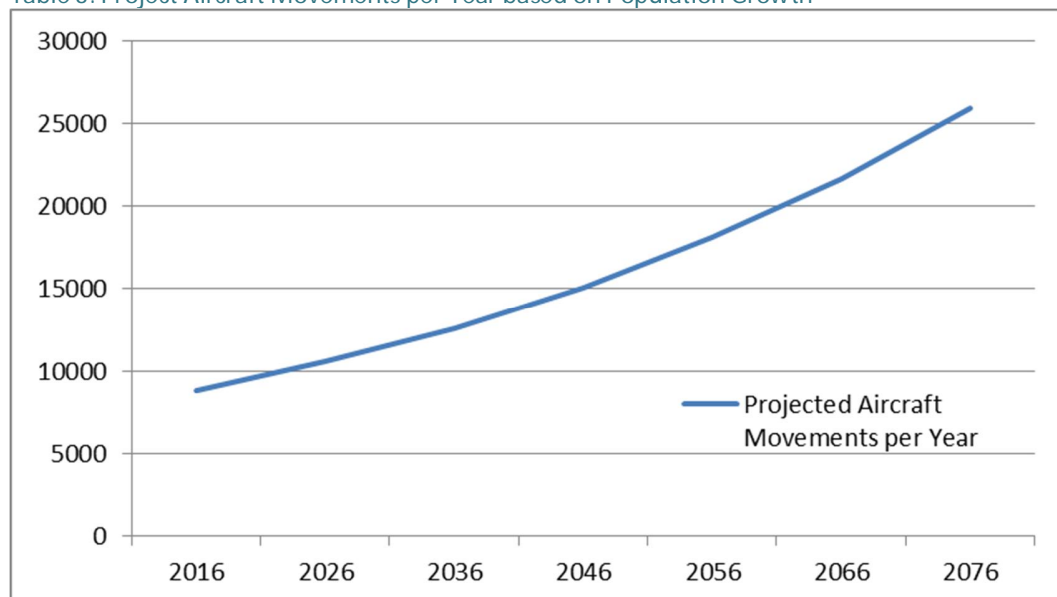
Table 2: Approximate Aircraft Movement at High River Regional Airport (2015)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25	25	25	25	25	25	50

Due to recent hangar expansions, the Airport has experienced an increase in air traffic movements. More detailed records are needed to be recorded over a couple of years to accurately anticipate traffic forecasts.

It is difficult to compare the aircraft movements at the Airport to other airports in the area, such as Springbank Airport, because of the size and scale. Springbank Airport is owned and operated by the Calgary Airport Authority and operates 24 hours seven days a week. However, projections of aircraft movements can be made based on population projections. As previously mentioned, the population in the Calgary region is expected to grow by an average of 1.8% per year. Given this growth forecast, a similar projection can be applied to annual aircraft movements at the Airport. Table 3 below illustrates the projected annual aircraft movements at the Airport.

Table 3: Project Aircraft Movements per Year based on Population Growth



4.1.1 Okotoks Air Ranch Airport

As previously mentioned, the Okotoks Air Ranch Airport is located approximately 25 km north of the High River Regional Airport. Over the years, the Okotoks Air Ranch Airport was developed as a residential air park and services a number of commercial aviation and recreational fliers. However, on April 18, 2016, Okotoks Air Ranch Airport was forced to close its runways and halt operations because it failed to maintain standards of safety that comply with Transport Canada regulations. Some of the violations included wildlife activities on and around the airport, minimum staffing requirements and security.

The Okotoks Air Ranch Airport has re-opened in April 2017; however, many businesses have relocated to other airports in order to continue operations. The High River Regional Airport has been a suitable option, given its location and proximity to the Okotoks Air Ranch Airport.

The temporary closure of Okotoks Air Ranch Airport has increased the number of users at the High River Airport. According to the Board president, there could be as many as 15 more aircraft located at the Airport as a result of the licence suspension.

The Airport needs to continue to be prepared for a future increase in commercial operations and recreational activity due to the growth constraints at the Okotoks Air Ranch Airport.

4.2 General Aviation

The Airport is a Registered General Aviation (GA) airport and it is not proposed that this airport attract regularly scheduled passenger flights. However, it is proposed that this airport grow and see an increase in number of flights including itinerant, general aviation, charter and flying school flights.

GA airports provide an indispensable link to local, regional and provincial transportation systems. This transportation link contributes to local and regional economies that in turn promote and sustain the GA airports. In 1993, it was calculated in the US that the annual economic activity from GA airports contributed an estimated \$18.5 million to the national economy ("The Economic Impact of Civil Aviation on the U.S. Economy Update '93," prepared for the FAA and Lockheed Martin, by Wilbur Smith Associates, April 1995).

In addition to the economic benefits contributed by GA airports, other vital GA activities include emergency medical flights, police and fire support, search and rescue operations, traffic reporting, and agricultural and environmental management operations. Most GA airports were constructed with runway lengths of 3,000 to 4,000 ft. The airports were located away from communities, and were generally surrounded by agricultural or industrial land uses. While the primary users of the Airport may be perceived to be recreational flyers, and it is generally the flying clubs that donate hundreds of volunteer hours to operate and maintain the airport, there are many other users of GA airports. The increase in corporate users is placing pressure on these airports to extend their runways and expand their on-airport services.

The philosophy for the continued operation of the Airport is to maintain the GA registered aerodrome status, while planning for a runway extension, and continued growth and development of the airport lands including the extension of taxi ways, increase in tie down area, increase in apron area, and construction of more hangars. More information on potential expansion opportunities under the current Transport Canada classification is included in Section 5.4. The High River Regional Airport can provide an alternative location to the Springbank Airport, as well to Okotoks Air Ranch Airport.

5.0 Current Airport Operations

5.1 Current Operations

Currently, the airport has a number of revenue streams including; lease revenue ramp parking fees, water and sewer income (only one), and leaseholder airport user fees. A more detailed financial analysis is included in Section 5.5. The Airport does not have an Airport Improvement Fee and does not charge for vehicle parking.

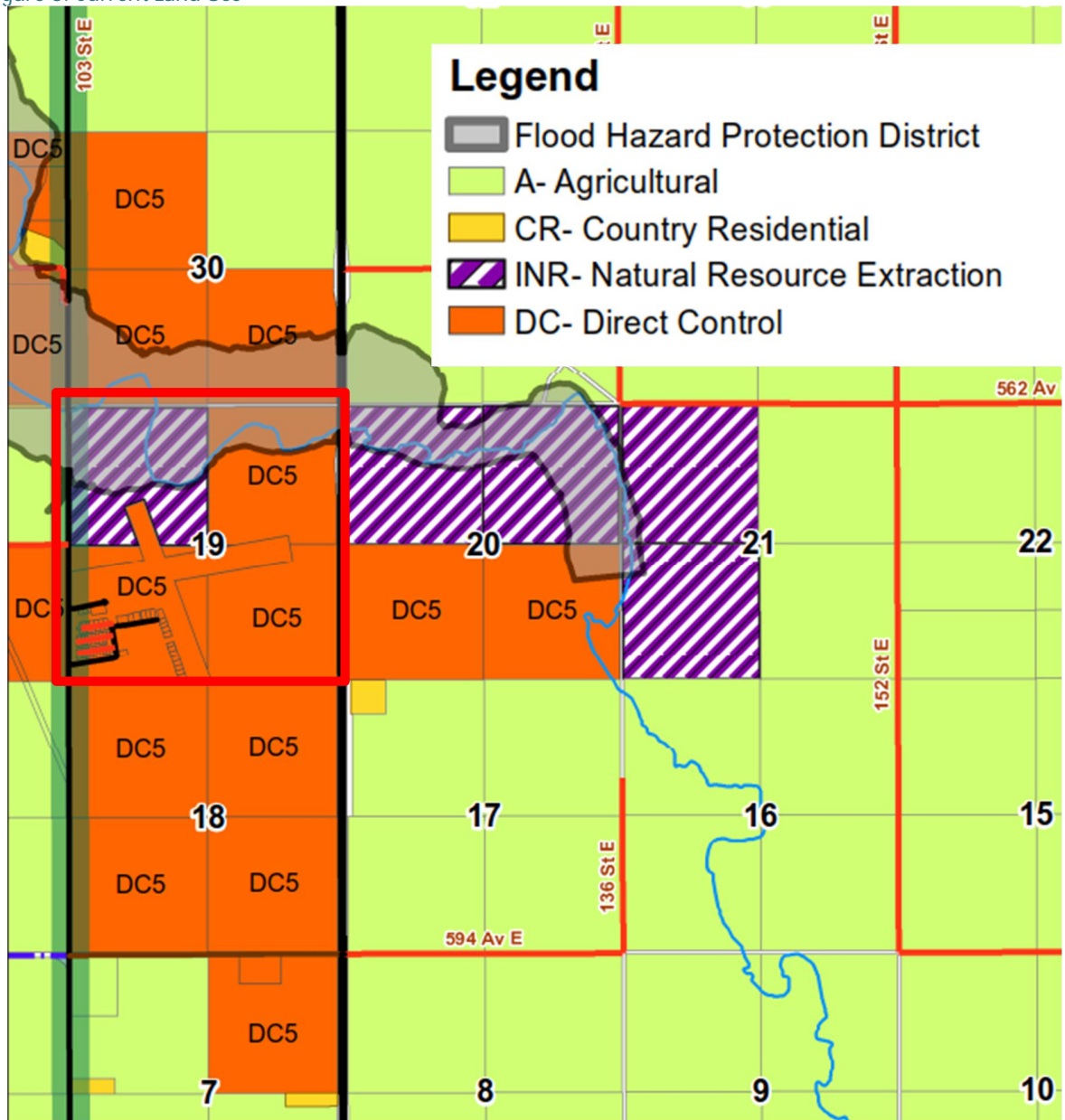
Our experience shows that most airports collect significant revenue from landing fees, fuel charges, parking, car rental, taxis and concessions. Section 6.0 of this report includes a high level review of 27 comparison airports throughout Alberta.

5.2 Current Zoning

As previously mentioned, the Airport's lands are currently zoned DC5 which controls development and protects the Airport from encroaching land use. Additionally, there is a quarter section of land north of the Airport which is zoned for Natural Resource Extraction and a portion of the Airport's lands which fall under the Flood Hazard Protection District. Figure 8 shows the current zoning for the Airport's lands.⁸

⁸ MD of Foothills (2014) Land use Map Book Updated 2017, page 39. <https://www.mdfoothills.com/services/planning-and-development/development-of-land/land-use-maps.html>

Figure 8: Current Land Use



5.3 Transport Canada Regulations

5.3.1 Noise Exposure Forecast (NEF) Contours

NEF contours are developed for airports to project the potential noise, and to provide municipalities and authorities with an indication of when noise complaints may be anticipated. Transport Canada (TP1247) uses a NEF contour system to provide measurement of the actual and forecasted aircraft noise in the vicinity of airports.⁹ This system factors in the subjective reactions of the human ear to specific aircraft noise stimulus and considers decibels, frequency, duration, time of occurrence, tone, wind direction, aircraft type, etc. This metric provides a gauge of a community's response to aircraft noise. Generally, if the NEF level is greater than 35, it is likely to cause high levels of disturbance, and anything above 25 will likely produce some general level of annoyance. Aircraft noise can disturb sleep, privacy, rest, communication, and can cause hearing loss; and therefore, may be potentially harmful to health. Transport Canada recommends that new residential development should not proceed where the NEF contour exceeds 30.

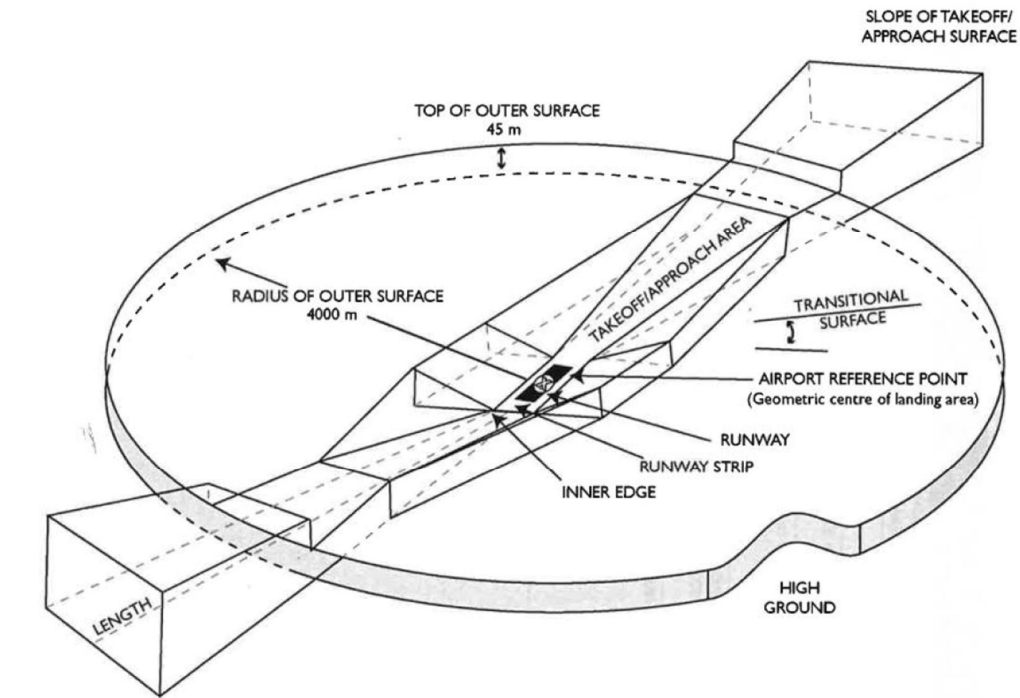
Identifying the NEF contours for an airport establishes an area surrounding the airport where land use is restricted due to aircraft movements. This also provides assurance to airport users and long-term airport security. In addition, NEF contour line provides protection for future airport growth and provides assurance to the MD of Foothills when reviewing development applications in proximity to the airport. Land owners and developers will be able to understand growth limitations or opportunities in the areas surrounding the airport.

5.3.2 Obstacle Limitation Surfaces

Height at airports is pursuant to Transport Canada's Outer Surface Limitations. An outer surface is established around an airport for the protection of aircraft conducting a circling procedure or manoeuvring in the vicinity of an aerodrome (Figure 9). In addition, the Obstacle Limitation Surface sets a maximum height for structures of 45 m.

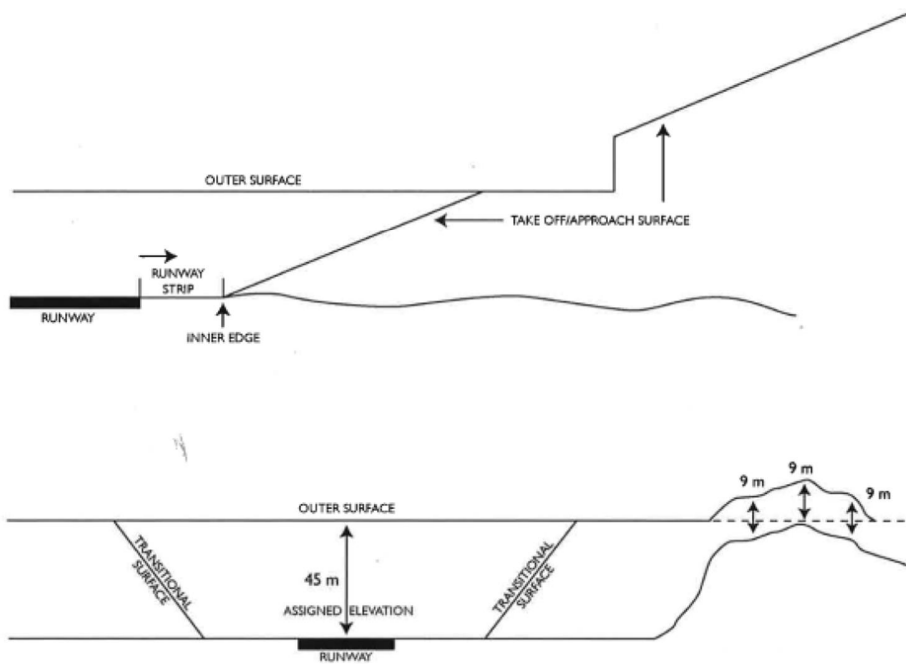
⁹ Transport Canada (2013/14) TP 1247E Aviation – Land Use in the Vicinity of Aerodromes
<https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/civilaviation/publications/tp1247-menu-1418.htm>

Figure 9: Transport Canada - Obstacle Limitation Surfaces



OBSTACLE LIMITATION SURFACES

Figure 2



OBSTACLE LIMITATION SURFACES (SIDE VIEW)

Figure 1

5.4 Current Designation

Transport Canada TP312 provides standards and recommended practices on the code of an airport. Under TP312, “the certification level of service will be established based on the aircraft using the site (dimensions and approach speed), or planned usage as declared by the airport operator. Runway length will no longer be of prime consideration in the overall concept. This change will put the level of service decision in the hands of the airport operator since it is ultimately their business decision.”¹⁰

Airport certification is based on:

- The size of the critical aircraft;
- The type of runway; and
- The aerodrome operational visibility limits.

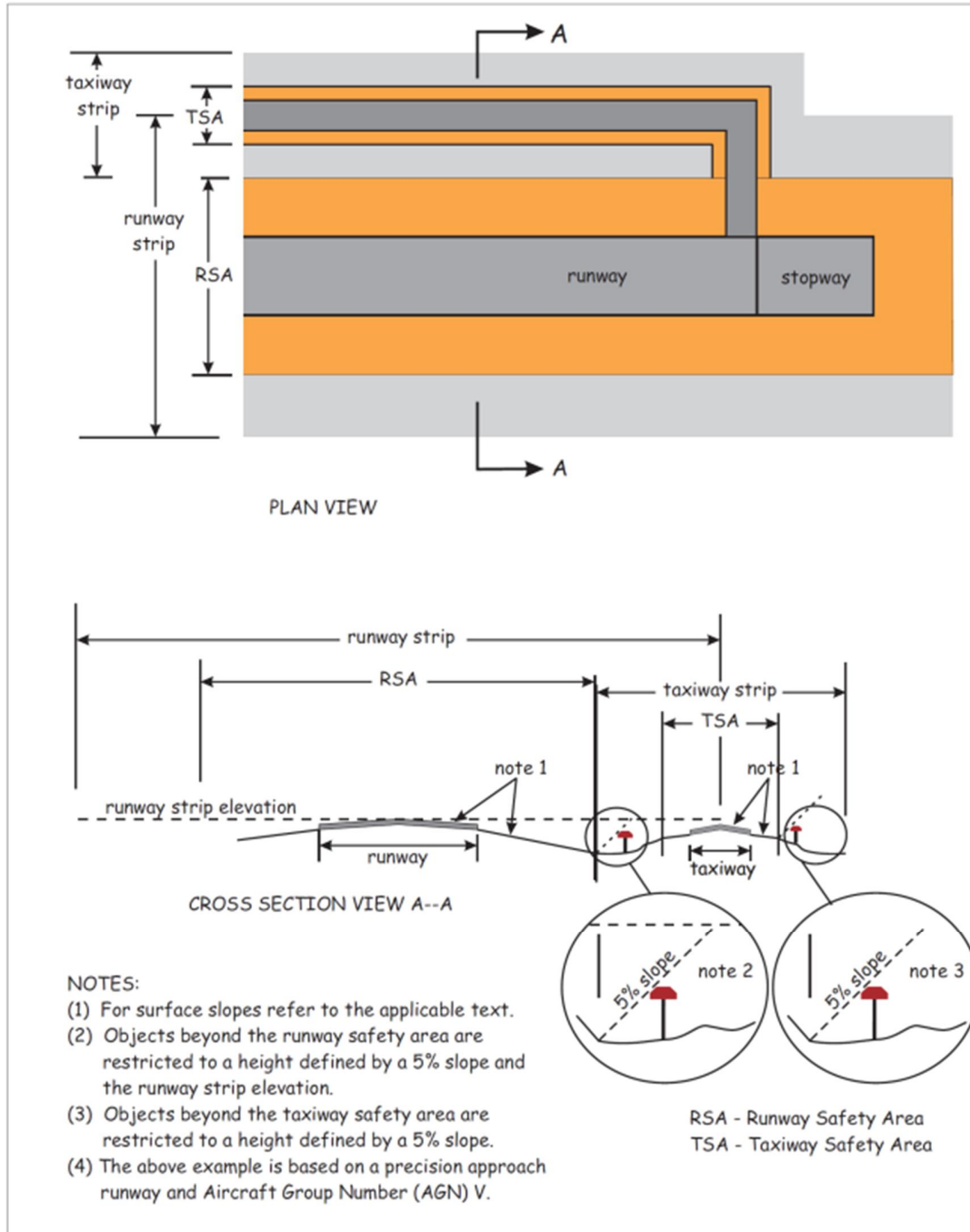
This sets the minimum requirements for an aerodrome to be certified. The Airport is current classified as a Code 2 B Non-Instrument, Registered Aerodrome. It has a paved runway (07/25) measuring 4150 x 75 ft and a cross wind, unpaved runway (14/32) 3750 X 75 ft.

Category B aircraft constraints include:

- Aircraft wingspan 14.94 m up to but not including 24.10 m.
- Speed 91kt or more but less than 121 kt.
- Runway guidelines (Figure 10):
 - Runway Strip Length = 60 m beyond runway threshold
 - Runway Strip Width = 40 m from the runway centreline
 - Obstacle free = 40 m
 - Runway Safety Area = 40 m


¹⁰ Transport Canada (2015) TP 312 5th Edition Aerodromes Standards and Recommended Practices, page 12).

Figure 10: TP312 Runway Requirements



5.4.1 Runways

Table 4: High River Regional Airport Runways

Runway	Material	Size	Image
07/25	Paved	4150 ft x 75 ft (1265 m x 22.86 m)	
14/32	Gravel	3750 ft X 75 ft (1143 m x 22.8 6m)	

5.4.2 Room to Grow

The minimum runway width for Code 2 Non – Instrument is 23 m. Any changes, such as becoming a precision runway or increasing to Code 3 would require a runway width of 30 m.

In developing this Strategy, it was indicated by the Board that there was desire to extend Runway 07/25 to 5500 ft (1676.4 m) to accommodate larger aircraft. This would result in a 1350 ft (411 m) extension to the existing runway. Currently, this runway is restricted by the proximity of 104th Street to the west. While proper engineering and surveying would need to occur, it appears that there is potential to extend Runway 07/25 200 m on the east end of the runway bringing it to 4350 m without changing the width of the runway. In order reach 5500 ft, the municipal road would



have to be realigned or closed. Runway 14/32 could be extended 100 m – subject to land boundary. However, keeping runway 14/32 under 1200 m would reduce the need for the runway end safety area.

5.5 Current Financing

Currently, the Airport receives \$8,000 from the MD of Foothills and \$8,000 from the Town for a total of \$16,000. However, the Town and MD of Foothills have indicated that they want to reduce funding over the next few years until it no longer supports the airport, based on the terms of the headlease agreement.

Based on the 2016 projected budget, the airport will experience an increase in revenue, primarily because of increased new hangar development and lease revenue. However, it is expected that 2016 expenditures will increase when compared to 2015 because of the need for paving.

Table 5 illustrates the 2015, 2016 actual budget and the 2017 projected budget for the Airport. In 2016, due to new lot developments, the Airport was profitable, recording net revenue of over \$150,000. The 2017 budget includes a number of larger capital projects which result in a projected net loss of over \$25,000. It is recommended that the Board identifies key capital projects and requirements over a ten year period in order to anticipate revenue and plan over time.

Financial statements provided at monthly Board of Director meetings indicate that they are currently operating under budget on a number of expenses and have generated more income this year. As of July 2017, the Airport had almost reached its projected revenue target of \$148,358.

It is evident in this budget that the Board has no Airport Reserve to manage larger projects. With the future need for runway resurfacing, construction of new taxiways to service new lots, the Airport will be dependent upon other sources of funding. Revenue must increase a minimum of \$30,000 per year just to fund operations. It is recognized that the MD of Foothills provides a number of maintenance services for the Airport at no additional charge. However, capital projects must be planned for. It is recommended that the Board increase its revenue by a minimum of \$100,000 per year and put that additional review into a capital project fund to pay for major airport upgrades in the future. It is also recommended that the Board complete a 10 year capital program with cost estimates to demonstrate the funding shortfalls, and allow the Board to justify revenue generation and to develop relationships/partnerships that may help with future funding.

Table 5: Airport Financing
2015 – 17 Airport Financials

	2015	2016	2017 budget
Revenue			
Lease Revenue	\$69,672	\$79,583	\$86,135
Ramp Parking Fees	\$12,410		
Grant (Operational)	\$20,000	\$18,000	\$16,000
Renter Airport User Fees	\$1,600	\$4,800	
Water & Sewer Income	\$1,800	\$1,800	\$1,800
Tie Down Lease		\$17,354	\$17,350
New Lots		\$135,408	\$44,000
Fire Suppression	\$8,000		
Interest Revenue	\$863		
Hay		\$6,300	\$6,000
Misc. Revenue	\$1,750	\$1,954	
Gross Revenue Total	\$116,095	\$260,399	\$171,285
Expenditures			
Paving/ Roadways	\$5,678		
Capital Reserve Contribution	\$5,000		
Build Tie Downs		\$50,000	
Topping of Tie-downs			\$50,000
Taxiway Asphalt Repairs			\$20,000
Electrical to new P Lots			\$25,000
Spray and Reseal Runway (14/32)			\$50,000
Total	\$10,678	\$50,000	\$145,000
Operational Expenses			
Bookkeeping	\$5,791	\$6,415	\$6,000
Audit	\$1,650	\$1,675	\$1,700
Advertising and Promotion	\$0		\$800
Legal Expense	\$166	\$3,003	\$3,000
Bad Debts	\$0		
Engineering Expense			\$281
Insurance	\$7,221	\$4,800	\$6,877
Bank Service Charges	\$304	\$226	
Interest Charges	\$5		

2015 – 17 Airport Financials

	Office Supplies	\$500	\$386	\$600
	Dues & Memberships	\$190	\$200	\$200
	Radio License	\$41	\$41	\$41
	Misc. Expense	\$500		
	Website Design	\$2,266	\$800	\$1,200
	Internet Services	\$180		
	Electrical			\$1,440
	Terminal Rent	\$7,200	\$7,200	\$7,200
	Donation	\$2,730	\$3,168	\$3,124
	Snow Removal/ Grass Cutting	\$13,854	\$14,000	\$20,000
	Repair & Maintenance	\$5,908	\$2,422	\$311
	Water Storage	\$8,000		
	Telephone	\$492	\$402	\$200
	Total Operating	\$56,997	\$50,734	\$51,909
	Grand Total	\$67,675	\$100,734	\$196,906
	Net Revenue	\$48,420	\$159,665	-\$25,621

5.6 Current Sub-leaseholders

The Airport has a number of sub-leaseholder that pay rent, participate in general aviation, and some provide services to the airport and broader community. However, there is currently no process for record keeping of the tenants and services. It is recommended that the Board keep better records of tenants and leases. This information could be used on the Airport's website to promote the services they offer.

The current leases are not consistent and are short-term. It is recommended that the term of the leases be extended to 25 to 49 years.

5.7 Current Staffing

Currently, outside the Board, there are no full-time staff members that work for the Airport. However, according to the stakeholder consultation survey, there are a number of full-time employees, part-time employees, as well as volunteers that are based out of the Airport.

5.7.1 Staffing Opportunities

While there may not currently be a good financial case for a permanent hire of an airport manager position, there could be an opportunity to hire a student throughout the summer or part-time during the school year. Students could update leases and tenant lists, track aircraft landing and invoicing. This could promote the Airport's benefits within the community and encourage students who are interested in aviation to get experience. There are also a number of government grant programs which would make this position funded such as the Serving Communities Internship Program (SCiP).¹¹ The SCiP brings Alberta's non-profit organizations and post-secondary students together to make a difference in their communities. SCiP internships are meaningful, skill-based opportunities providing mutual benefit to both non-profit organizations and post-secondary students. Non-profit organizations gain added talent and human capacity so that they can better achieve their missions. Post-secondary students gain skills, experience and networks, along with a \$1,000 award. The SCiP is a partnership of Volunteer Alberta and the Government of Alberta.

There is also a provincial funding opportunity through the Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP).¹² STEP is a 4 to 16 week wage subsidy program that provides funding to eligible Alberta employers to hire high school or post-secondary students into summer jobs from May to August. Summer positions created through STEP provide students with the opportunity to build meaningful work experience, increase their skills and workplace insight, and help prepare them for the future. A standardized wage subsidy of \$7.00 per hour to a maximum of 37.5 hours per week will be provided to approve applicants.

¹¹ Serving Communities Internship Program (accessed: <https://www.joinscip.ca/>)

¹² Summer Temporary Employment Program (accessed: <http://www.albertacanada.com/opportunity/employers/summer-temporary-employment-program.aspx>)

6.0 Comparison Airports

Alberta has approximately 170 regional, community, private, corporate and forestry airports. For this study, Dillon completed a high level review on 27 airports of comparable size and operations to the Airport. Table 6 lists the comparison airports.

Table 6: Comparison Airports

Comparison Airports

Athabasca Regional Airport (CYWM)	Hanna Airport (CEL4)
Barrhead Airport (CCEP3)	Innisfail Airport (CEM4)
Bassano Airport (CEN2)	Olds-Didsbury Airport (CEA3)
Beaverlodge Airport (CEU2)	Pincher Creek Airport (CZPC)
Beiseker Airport (CFV2)	Ponoka Industrial Airport (CEH3)
Bonnyville Airport (CYBF)	Rocky Mountain House Airport (CYRM)
Brooks Airport (CYBP)	Slave Lake Airport (CYZH)
Camrose Municipal Airport (CEQ3)	Springbank Airport (CYBW)
Claresholm Industrial Airport (CEJ4)	Stettler Airport (CEJ3)
Drayton Valley Industrial Airport (CER3)	Sundre Airport (CFN7)
Drumheller Municipal Airport (CEG4)	Vegreville Airport (CEV3)
Edson Airport (CYET)	Vulcan Airport (CFX6)
Fairview Airport (CEB5)	Wetaskiwin Regional Airport (CEX3)
Fort Macleod Airport (CEY3)	

The above airports were reviewed for governance (owner and operator), funding, registration status (e.g., registered or certified), location (i.e., in or near municipality), air-side facilities (e.g., runway, hangars, fuel), services (e.g., terminal buildings, taxi phone, courtesy car), fees and traffic counts. The review found the following:

- 24 of the 27 airports are Registered Aerodromes – Bonnyville, Wetaskiwin and Springbank are Certified Airports.
- 22 of the facilities are owned and operated by municipalities, often joint rural and urban – Drumheller, Innisfail, Stettler and Beaverlodge are owned and/or operated by private groups (such as flying clubs).
- Five of the facilities report collecting landing fees – Bonnyville, Edson, Olds/ Didsbury, Slave Lake and Springbank; usually from commercial, industrial, forestry, or emergency landings.
- Four facilities have aircraft traffic counts available – Athabasca, Barrhead and Wetaskiwin.
- Six facilities have either a flight school or skydiving – Beiseker, Camrose, Drumheller, Innisfail, Olds/ Didsbury and Springbank.

- During the investigation of Airports, only Bassano, Wetaskiwin and Stettler were identified as selling airport lots. All other airports lease their lots.
- Airport parking fees vary across Alberta airports. It is recommended that the Airport increase airport parking fees 3% yearly.
- The High River Regional Airport lease rate of \$2.10 should be increased yearly by 3%.

More detailed notes on the airport review are included in Appendix B.

7.0 Strategic Plan

7.1 SWOT Analysis

As a result of the discussion and feedback from the Airport's open house, as well as conversations with the Airport Committee, a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was completed. It provided the following highlights. Other opportunities were added based on the open house and survey hosted at the Cadets Building.

Table 7: Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths Internal to the Organization	Weaknesses Internal to the Organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural base • Ease of access – off the highway • Land for development • Length and width of runway • Ownership by the MD of Foothills and Town • Central location, south of the City of Calgary • Close to High River • Access to Jet Fuel (Jet A and 100 Low Lead) • Van for pilots • Free Parking • Existing infrastructure • Open minded, business friendly • 24hr self-serve fuel – credit card • Two maintenance shops • Pilots lounge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No car rental • Need to bring water, sewer for new development • No food or beverage • Subsidized by the Town and the MD of Foothills, and this is being reduced • No equipment to off-load freight • No instrument landing system • No public transit to the Airport • No direct taxi phone • Lack of marketing and promotion • No facilities

Table 8: Opportunities and Threats

Opportunities External to the Organization	Threats External to the Organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USA flight path route to Alaska • Lower fuel prices • Increasing number of tenants • Okotoks Air Ranch Airport Suspension • Relatively more affordable hangar space • No landing fees • Expanding runways • GPS landing • Linked with Highway 2A Commercial/Industrial corridor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberta economy • Lack of oil and gas exploration and extraction • Fewer private aircraft • Potential decreased airport usership • Increased movement of goods and people through highways and trucking • Alberta Health policies and contracts

8.0

Opportunity Development

As previously discussed, Alberta is facing increased pressure to diversify its economic strategy in order to remain competitive in a changing and fluctuating economy.

One of the concepts assumed by the development of these economic initiatives is that oil and gas will play a smaller role in the emerging Alberta economy.

Alberta has been talking about economic diversification for decades, but oil and gas has always been an easy option for obvious economic benefits. With reduction in the prices of oil and gas, and the fallout that has occurred across Alberta and the country, it is critical that economic development look at other opportunities in the province.



Diversification strategies have included looking at forecasts for agriculture, transportation, tourism and education. The sections below discuss the opportunities for future economic development at the Airport. The opportunities for development are supported by the stakeholder feedback received at the open house and the online survey.

The development opportunities listed in the next section are just potential opportunities that have been explored by the Dillon project team. They do not necessarily represent the future development scenarios, but rather present options for the Board to consider as opportunities for development.

8.1 Airside Services

These services refer to services that directly support aircrafts and most likely have direct airside access. Currently, the Airport does not charge landing fees. While the monitoring and collection of the fees require manpower and resources, there are ways of recording the flights and invoicing the pilots for the landing fees. It is strongly recommended that the airport investigate a recording process to allow itinerant pilots, flight schools, commercial/corporate, and government flights to be billed for landing fees. This would not apply to the tenants, hangar owners, the Town or the MD of Foothills business flights. While this may not total significant revenue for the Airport, it would reflect a regular income for the Airport that would assist in covering operational expenses.

8.1.1 Airside Businesses

There are opportunities with respect to commercial aviation businesses on the airside land for hangar construction, employment, increased revenue for the airport, and general economic benefit to the region. These uses could include: aircraft mechanical maintenance, avionics, aircraft upholstery and distribution. By increasing the number of commercial hangars available, the Airport is opening up opportunities to grow within airside businesses.

8.1.2 Cleaning

An airplane cleaning service could be run out of a hangar and offer promotional deals, such as getting your airplane cleaned while the pilot is in town. A cleaning service was mentioned in the survey as an airport business opportunity. This service of detailing would not necessarily include external washing and if it does, it might look at water recycling to reduce total water use.

8.1.3 Hangar Development

The Board should promote increased hangar rental space with a variety options such as T-hangars and short-term rental options. The Airport has the opportunity to offer a variety of aircraft storage and pricing options to attract a variety of tenants. The concept of T-hangars provides inexpensive covered storage for aircraft. The Board could either promote the development of T-hangars or fund the development, and rent out the spaces as a revenue generator for the Airport.

8.1.4 GPS Approach

It is Dillon's understanding that the feasibility of a GPS (RNAV) approach has been reviewed and the Board is moving ahead with installing a GPS approach. The GPS (RNAV) approach helps the Airport remain current with changing aviation technology, and continue to facilitate training exercises and landings. This new approach is schedule for installation and operation in 2018.

8.1.5 Terminal Building

The Airport should look to improve a terminal space for itinerant pilots use. A terminal building would also provide a waiting area or meeting area for aviation enthusiasts, clients, and passengers.

8.2 Aviation Business

8.2.1 Avionics

A growth opportunity for the Airport could be in aircraft electronics and avionics. With increased aircraft traffic and movements, there is an opportunity to develop an avionics shop and repair facility. If this is marketed to recreational flyers in the area, people might be inclined to land in Town to have general maintenance completed on their aircraft. This could potentially generate additional landing and parking fees.

8.2.2 Taxi Service

There is opportunity to partner with the local taxi company to have a discounted rate for pilots stopping in Town. This would increase the number of pilots who come into the Town for food or other services. Groundside land could be used for a taxi company to park vehicles and run the business.

8.2.3 Campground

A growing trend in the aviation industry is fly-in fly-out campgrounds. There are multiple examples of successful campground locations in the United States as recreational pilots enjoy visiting new airports and communities during the summer months. The Airport has the opportunity to market itself as a fly-in fly-out campground and can accommodate overnight camping at a relatively low cost to the airport. In order to be set-up for this activity, the airport would need to designate small parking pads as well as build washroom facilities. This use could generate landing fees, fuel sales and other airport service uses. Additionally, this will continue to market the Airport to recreational pilots throughout Canada and the United States.



8.2.4 Alaska Route

In 1942, a flying route called the Northwest Staging Route was developed using a series of airstrips built throughout Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon to transport military support during World War II. Today, many recreational aviation enthusiasts fly north from the United States to Alaska yearly. There is opportunity to embrace the Alaskan Fly Route by promoting the Town as a key stop on the way north. There are several other airports in Alberta, including Lacombe and Peace River, who have expressed interest in a potential partnership between airports. There is also opportunity to look at other airports along the route from Montana to Alaska. This could generate landing fees, fuel sales and airport services use. It could also assist with tourism in general through car rentals, hotels, restaurants and retail sales.

8.2.5 Flight Schools

There is an extreme demand for airline pilots and airline technicians. Boeing suggests that in taking a closer look at the numbers, the largest projected growth in pilot demand is in the Asia Pacific Region, which will require an estimated 226,000 new pilots over the next 20 years. Europe and North America will require 95,000 each, the Middle East will require 60,000 and there will be another 82,000 pilots required around the world. In addition, there will be demand for 609,000 aircraft technicians. There are several organizations that are looking to open flight training schools. The Airport would be a desirable location due to the open air space.

ATP Flight Services are a large flight school out of the United States (1-800-255-2877), consisting of 42 schools. They have expressed an interest in a school in Canada, looking to Western Canada. They are interested in areas where there is open, unrestricted air space for training purposes. They provide pilot training and aircraft dispatch. This would be a significant contribution to the local and regional economy, and would support existing infrastructure.

Additionally, colleges and universities in Alberta offer a number of training and certification courses related to aviation. This presents a partnership opportunity for the Airport. The Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) and the University of Mount Royal offer a number of courses including:

- Aircraft Maintenance Engineer Technology;
- Aircraft and Helicopter maintenance and certification courses; and
- Aviation Diploma.

There is also opportunity to partner with SAIT and Mount Royal University to offer training areas or discounted parking rates to students building their flight hours.

8.2.6 Agriculture

The Airport continues to bring additional revenue from agricultural crop production on vacant airport land. It is recommended that the airport continue to sell hay to generate revenue yearly.

8.3 Non-Aviation Businesses

The following uses are non-aviation uses which are brought forward as innovative, out of the box and unique uses that could set the Airport apart, and bring in additional revenue.

8.3.1 Food Truck Festival

Food trucks are gaining popularity as options for food businesses because of lower upfront investment costs and mobility. Given this trend, there is opportunity to host and market a food truck festival at the Airport. There are several examples of food truck festivals at regional airports throughout the United States. Additionally, a food truck festival was held at the Kamloops Airport in 2016 and raised \$8,912.60 for the Kamloops Therapeutic Riding Association. The money was raised through event admission. There is opportunity to replicate the food truck festival idea and generate money for the Airport, and potentially a local charity partner. This event could increase the profile of the Airport and its contribution to the community. There are currently no food truck festivals in the Town.

8.3.2 Greenhouses

While climate change may alter growing seasons in the years to come, the cost of produce continues to climb. The installation of a greenhouse operation that produces fresh produce distribution would be a benefit to the region as well as an entrepreneurial opportunity. While there is opportunity to construct greenhouses in the rural areas off airport lands, the critical component to having the greenhouses on

airport lands is to take advantage of “just-in-time” delivery of the perishables. In addition, this would be the first step in developing the Airport as a small intermodal (truck and aircraft) delivery point that could expand over time. It is possible that the greenhouse operator could negotiate a distribution agreement with a grocery store chain. This could reduce the cost of fresh produce for the people of the region, as well as create employment, taxes and use of the skills that are currently available in the region.

8.3.3 Medical Marijuana

There are several medical marijuana operations now approved and expanding in Alberta, including a facility north of the City of Calgary in Mountain View County. Municipal requirements for the location of these facilities generally include separation distances from schools, residential and outdoor recreation. Lands at the Airport would comply with these separation distances.

8.3.4 Vehicle Storage

There is opportunity to create groundside storage uses such as an RV, boat and trailer storage area. The storage use is low maintenance and could generate additional income for the airport to further develop airside lots, internal roads, and runways.

8.3.5 Industrial Contractors

Industrial contractors need storage facilities and laydown yards. These uses could bring additional revenue to the Airport through leasing fees. This non-aviation use would be simple to build and maintain, and would not interfere with the Airport’s operations.

8.3.6 Solar Energy Installation

Solar ground mount installations have become a popular addition to airport lands or lands adjacent to airports. The height of the installation does not post any issues. The potential for glare has been analysed and with over 30 solar projects operating at airports in 15 different states, the success of airport solar partnerships has been well established in the United States by the Federal Aviation Administration. There is a process to assess any glare impact, called the Solar Glare Hazard Analysis tool, but generally the only time it may be an issue is if the solar installation is directly in the flight path of the airport. Therefore, an installation on the south side of the Airport would have minimal impact on the operation of the Airport, could pay significant lease payments to the Airport and provide a sustainable alternative energy source.

8.3.7 Movie Set

In the past, the Airport and its facilities have been used as a movie set. Continuing to promote the use of the Airport to the film industry could bring additional revenue to the Airport.

8.4 Future Land Use Plan

Land use on airports, under the Transport Canada regulations, is controlled by the owner and/or the operator of the airport. However, Transport Canada offers guidance on the appropriate land uses. Transport Canada's Land Use in the Vicinity of Aerodromes (TP1247)¹³ outlines other restrictions for development on airports including take-off and approach area, transition area and outer surface.

There are three categories of land uses on airports:

- Airside - Uses that have direct access to the taxiways, runways and aprons;
- Groundside - Uses which are located on airport property but do not have direct access to the taxiways, runways or aprons; and
- Operational - Uses including navigational aids, terminal buildings, equipment and fire halls.

Uses inappropriate for airport lands or lands in the vicinity of airports should not:

- Cause dust, smoke or steam that could impact visibility;
- Unduly attracts birds (e.g., water, landfill sites);
- Have structures that are higher than 45 m or that might penetrate the obstruction zone, the transition zone, or the take-off and approach zone; or
- Any use that creates electronic interference.

The outer surface shall be established where required for the protection of aircraft conducting circuit procedures or manoeuvring in the vicinity of an aerodrome. The outer surface establishes the height above which it may be necessary to take one or more of the following actions:

- a) Restrict the height of new structures which would create an obstruction; or
- b) Remove or mark obstacles to ensure a satisfactory level of safety and regularity for aircraft manoeuvring visually in the vicinity of the airport before commencing the final approach phase.

Take-off and approach is established for each runway direction intended to be used for the take-off and landing of aircraft.

- a) An inner edge, perpendicular to the runway, begins at the end of the runway strip (normally 60 m from the runway threshold). The length of the inner edge is dependent on the strip width.
- b) Two sides originate at the ends of the inner edge and diverge uniformly at either 10% or 15% from the extended runway centre line.
- c) Final width will be the product of the divergence and length of the area, and will be parallel to the inner edge.

¹³ Transport Canada (2013/14) Land Use in the Vicinity of Aerodromes. Retrieved from: <https://www.tc.gc.ca/media/documents/ca-publications/tp1247e.pdf>

Transitional surface is a complex surface along the sides of the runway strip and part of the approach surface that slopes up to the outer surface. Its purpose is to ensure the safety of aircraft at low altitudes displaced from the runway centre line in the approach or missed approach phase. The slope of a transitional surface measure in the vertical, perpendicular to the runway shall be:

- a) 20% for Non – Instrument runways, Code 1 and 2.

While the Airport is currently a Code 2 B Non-Instrument runway, it is important when planning for future growth to make sure that any development located on or surrounding the lands meets the highest standards from Transport Canada as future circumstances may change, resulting in the airport needing to meet these new standards.

The land use plan (Figure 11) identifies the proposed Airside and Groundside areas for development and Figure 12 illustrates the proposed phasing of future development.

Figure 11: Proposed Land Use Plan



Figure 12: Proposed Future Development Phasing



9.0 Sources of Funding

Below are potential sources of funding from the municipal, provincial and federal levels. Dillon has also added potential partnerships which could increase funding. It should be noted, that the HRRAL should investigate a not-for-profit status in order to be able to access more funding opportunities.

9.1 Municipal

Current funding is provided by the MD of Foothill and the Town each contributing \$8,000. This is shown in the budget as an operational grant (Table 5). However, as previously mentioned, the Town and the MD of Foothills have indicated that they want to reduce their contribution yearly until they no longer contribute to the operations of the airport, in accordance with the terms of the headlease to HRRAL. It is encouraged that this be revisited, and that the Town and the MD of Foothills continue to support the operations of the Airport as a vital link within the region's transportation network.

Non-monetary support from the MD of Foothills includes Airport Board Admin support, crack sealing, pumping water in high flow events, snow plowing roads, and other odds and ends related to maintenance.

9.2 Provincial

Community Airport Program (CAP), provided through the Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program (STIP), provides funding assistance to community-owned, public-use airports for their rehabilitation and construction requirements. A total of \$2 million in CAP funding has been allocated for 2017-2018 for the entire province. Approved projects will be provided on a 75 per cent provincial/25 per cent municipal basis. For existing airports, eligible projects include:

- Runway lighting (new)
 - Capital projects on the airside portion of the runway, including primary runway, apron and primary taxiway.

Typical projects are focused on airport rehabilitation to maintain airport operations. However, consideration will be given to runway extensions where benefits can be demonstrated and funding changes to one-third from the province.

9.3 Airport Revitalization Tax Exemption program

An innovative initiative that is used at other regional airports to encourage investment and business at an airport is an Airport Revitalization Tax Exemption Program. These programs are typically created as an economic stimulus to encourage capital investment at an airport and to create additional employment opportunities in the community. The program provides relief from general municipal property tax to owners of eligible projects constructed on parcels within the determined Tax

Revitalization Area. The amount of property tax relief can be negotiated with the MD of Foothills. The Tax Exemption Program can be actively promoted and advertised as part of the package for companies to locate or relocate to the Airport. This program can be used as an incentive to attract airport businesses that may be looking at multiple airport options such as the Okotoks Air Ranch Airport or the Springbank Airport.

9.4 Partnerships

There is also opportunity for the Airport to explore partnerships with external corporations who can provide funding support through contributions. It is recommended that the Airport explore partnership opportunities. Partnerships could include flight schools or private corporations.

10.0 Recommendations

Throughout this report, Dillon has made strategic recommendations on the direction of the Airport. For ease of implementation and efficient use of resources, Dillon has grouped these recommendations into immediate, short-term, medium-term and long-term recommendations. The HRRAL can track the progress of these recommendations using the table below.

Table 9: Airport Recommendations

Recommendation Number	Recommendation	Timeline
SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS		
1)	It is recommended that an airport specific Land Use District be created and adopted by Council. This land use will identify permitted uses at the Airport and allow for future growth. This would rescind the Direct Control District #5 and create a land use district that would apply only to the Airport lands.	Immediate
2)	It is recommended that an airport Land Use District be divided into three "zones": Airside; Groundside; and Operational Reserve.	Immediate
3)	It is recommended that an airport Overlay Land Use District be prepared to protect the area in the vicinity of the Airport by restricting uses that would impact the safe operation of the Airport. This would match the 4 km obstruction free zone as defined by Transport Canada Regulations.	Immediate
4)	It is recommended that the "Groundside" Land Uses that may be considered include the following (noting that clear definitions for each must be created to the satisfaction of the MD of Foothills and added to the Bylaw): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) All Aviation Uses (to be defined in more detail); b) Extensive Agriculture (including Greenhouses); c) Camping (this might be only for overnight pilots); d) Caretaker Suite (one suite on the airport property) for the Purpose of Housing a Person to Act as the Caretaker for the Airport; e) Commercial Uses (this could be narrowed down); f) Contractors Yards (may include some outside storage or parking of vehicles); g) Eating and Drinking Establishments (these may be restricted in size until piped water and sewer is available); h) Emergency Services (fire and ambulance); i) Logistics and Distribution (trucking and transfer of goods and services from one mode of transportation to another for the ultimate delivery of the product); j) Light Manufacturing (it would be preferred if this was aviation related and it not open to factories or any operation that creates steam, smoke, or electronic interference and generally is a minor assembly of parts); k) Air Museum ; 	Immediate

Recommendation Number	Recommendation	Timeline
5)	<p>l) Outside Storage in Locations Determined by the ASP (this could include RV Storage or some other vehicle storage);</p> <p>m) Parking Lots;</p> <p>n) Aviation Related Repair Shops (all business is conducted inside the building);</p> <p>o) Solar Installations (industrial or commercial);</p> <p>p) Technical/Training Schools; and</p> <p>q) Warehousing (including mini storage).</p> <p>It is recommended that the HRRAL continue to lease lots on the Airport and that the Board extend the term of the leases from 25 to 49 years to allow hangar development and financing.</p>	Short-Term
6)	It is recommended that the Town and MD of Foothills continue to support the Airport with a minimum financial donation of \$10,000 per annum.	Short-Term
7)	It is recommended that the Board prepare a recommendation for the MD of Foothills to return a portion of the Airport property taxes to the Board for operation of the Airport.	Short-Term
8)	It is recommended that the Board work with the MD of Foothills Engineering Department to develop a strategy for servicing the Airport with piped water and sewer services.	Short-Term
9)	It is recommended that the Board continue to promote the Airport. Consider a Twitter account that is updated daily and identifies any travel updates, weather conditions and business opportunities.	Short-Term
10)	It is recommended that the Board consider un-manned methods of capturing flights and landings to supplement the flight information, and potentially provide an opportunity to invoice for use of the Airport.	Short-Term
11)	It is recommended that the Airport Board send a letter to the flight schools who currently conduct touch and go's at the airport that they will be invoicing the flight school and follow-up.	Short-Term
12)	It is recommended that a surcharge be added to fuel sales as an additional revenue source.	Short-Term
13)	It is recommended that the HRRAL create a list of key infrastructure replacement and key capital investment requirements to plan over time.	Short-Term
14)	It is recommended that the Board, using the capital project recommendations in this Strategy, develop a capital budget for the next 10 years.	Short-Term
MEDIUM-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS		
15)	It is recommended that the Board, collaborating with the Town and MD of Foothills, negotiate with an internet service to provide better access and higher speed internet connections to existing and future tenants.	Medium-Term
16)	It is recommended that the Board investigate the pricing options to access water from the Cayley Water Line.	Medium-Term
17)	It is recommended that the Board explore a partnership with a flight school to develop a residential campus for flight training.	Medium-Term
18)	It is recommended that the Board explore short-term staffing assistance or summer student support through government programs such as the Serving Communities Internship Program or through high school volunteer hours to create a full tenant and business record, to track take-offs and landings, and to	Medium-Term

Recommendation Number	Recommendation	Timeline
	work to improve the website.	
19)	It is recommended that the Board work with other airports in Alberta to promote a chain of airports from the United States Border to the Northwest Territories Border for fuelling and aviation services for general aviation American pilots who fly to Alaska every summer.	Medium-Term
20)	Explore incentives such as an Airport Revitalization Tax Exemption Program, where new developments could receive tax relief for eligible construction projects.	Medium-Term
21)	It is recommended that the HRRAL put together a leasing package and promote the leases on the Airport website.	Medium-Term
22)	It is recommended that the HRRAL consider joint marketing with the MD of Foothills and the Town to promote the area.	Medium-Term
23)	It is recommended that the HRRAL seek partnerships with youth groups and schools to provide education sessions at the Airport.	Medium-Term
24)	It is recommended that the MD of Foothills investigate growth opportunities with the Regional Growth Board, once mandated.	Medium-Term
25)	It is recommended that the HRRAL complete a review of the rates and fees every five years to ensure they remain competitive and profitable.	Medium-Term
26)	It is recommended that the HRRAL consider a not-for-profit status which would allow more funding opportunities.	Medium-Term
LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS		
27)	It is recommended that this Strategy be reviewed by the Board annually to monitor and track the implementation progress.	Long-Term
28)	It is recommended that a full review and assessment of the Airport be completed every 10 years by an external consultant.	Long-Term
29)	It is recommended that the HRRAL, the MD of Foothills and the Town monitor and evaluate the Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program (STIP).	Long-Term
30)	It is recommended that the HRRAL investigate funding options to expand into Phase 3 of future development.	Long-Term
31)	It is recommended that if there is approved piped water and sewer services, that the Airport investigates the potential of individual Caretaker Suites (one suite per hangar, not exceeding 700 sq. ft. of habitable space).	Long-Term
32)	It is recommended that the HRRAL maintain and improve runway maintenance for all runways.	Long-Term
33)	It is recommended that the MD of Foothills and the Town extend the headlease to 99 years upon expiry in 2043.	Long-Term

11.0 Summary

The preparation of this Business Development Strategy has offered a number of short-term, medium-term and long-term recommendations to increase the Airport revenue and encourage sustainable growth. This plan, in combination with an updated ASP, will protect the Airport for future growth.

Airports are a business. They must be operated as such. If the airport is to be self-sustaining financially, the Board, the MD of Foothills, and the Town must promote and market the Airport, encourage development and create revenue to maintain their operations, and to generate a capital reserve to ensure that the long-term projects can be financed and costs controlled.

Appendix A

Stakeholder Summary

Appendix B

Comparison Airports

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