Palliser
Regional Municipal Services
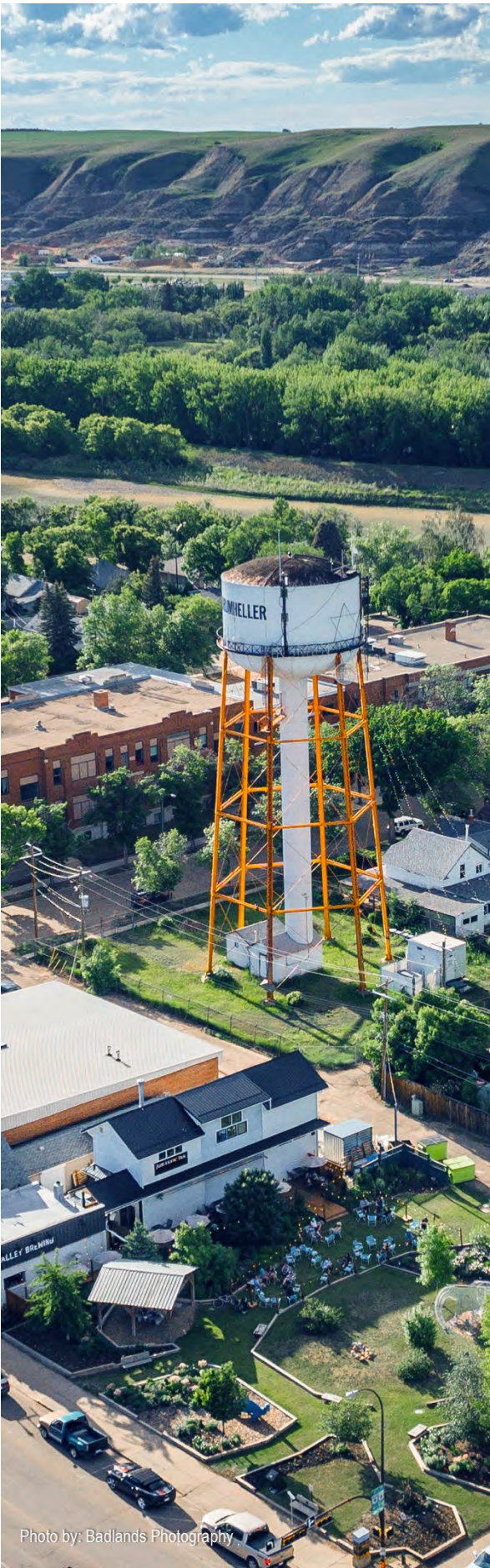
Strategic Plan

2022 - 2027

Our Story

About

Municipally owned, Palliser Regional Municipal Services (PRMS) is a not-for-profit regional planning organization working on behalf of four rural and 21 urban municipalities in south-east Alberta. The organization is funded through a core service requisition agreement while also providing fee-based services to members and non-members as required. The organization also applies for and manages grant applications to fund projects for members. PRMS is managed by a governing board comprised of Council representatives from its municipal membership, which approves its strategic plan and funding framework.

History

Originating as a Planning Commission in the early 1980's, PRMS was created to provide shared planning and related services to smaller municipalities which either could not or chose not to support internal planning and development departments. When regional planning commissions were disbanded across the province in 1995, the organization changed to a municipal agency, with planning powers delegated to it by member municipal councils. In 2007, PRMS was incorporated as a non-for-profit Corporation and various services have been added through the years including safety code services and GIS / Webmap capabilities.

Today

The range of member municipalities - from Towns to Special Areas to villages – represents a wide variety of needs and internal capacity. Smaller municipalities require more support as CAOs often serve as development officers, amongst the many other "hats" they wear. Larger municipalities may have in-house development officers and require less day-to-day help, but still require support in more complex planning projects and processes.

Photo by: Badlands Photography

Municipalities continue to face new challenges in managing planning and development, including large-scale economic shifts driven by government policy like coal-fired generation moratorium to introduction of new technologies and products such as solar and wind farms and cannabis cultivation and sales. Broader economic and population trends impact rural livelihoods and community sustainability; however, specific needs vary by municipality, requiring customized service approaches. Additional requirements introduced through the Municipal Government Act (MGA) including managing subdivision and development appeals places more demands on municipalities. Clients continue to appreciate PRMS' broad scope of services, seeing the agency as a one-stop-shop for planning and development questions.

Plan Horizon

The horizon of this plan is five years (2022-27), with a recommended 'check-in' after three years to adjust where necessary the organization's course including objectives, key service offerings and requisition levels.

Palliser Regional Municipal Services

Our Vision

Vibrant communities benefitting from effective planning and development.

Our Mission

Providing effective and affordable local government services through regional collaboration.

Provide Quality Service

- Be a valued resource for planning and development needs
- Clearly communicate service arrangements
- Provide timely, accurate and relevant services
- Offer good value for money

PRMS holds a unique place, supporting municipalities through a funded, arms-length relationship. We recognize members have choices and PRMS cannot meet all planning and development needs in the region. We seek to offer services members really value within an easy and affordable requisition structure, while offering municipalities flexible fee-for-service projects at competitive rates.

Actions	Results
Stay current with evolving requirements (MGA and other)	Member statutory plans, land use bylaws and PRMS current planning processes meet provincial requirements and good planning practices
Define adequate service levels, track and report progress	Members receive priority services and know where they stand each year on accessing supports
Deliver services within committed timeframes	90% of plans and processes are completed within the targeted timelines
Meet or exceed market rates for comparable services	Fee-for-service rates are equal to or lower than substitutable offerings

<table>
<tr><td>**Strategic Objective**

2</td><td>## Collaborate Effectively

- Support relevant regional initiatives
- Lever relationships to create synergies for the region
- Create opportunities for members to meet and share information
- Champion positive planning</td></tr>
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A key strength in the Palliser region is the way people work together and support each other. PRMS is uniquely positioned as a nexus between communities, developers and other organizations, and we can lever this position to enable information exchange for the benefit of its members and others in the region.

| Actions	Results
Actively participate in planning, community development, environmental and infrastructure initiatives	Members interests are represented in regional initiatives
Share findings for the benefit of all members	Members are up to date on important planning and development trends
Look for innovative ways of working together	Cost savings efficiencies are realized through knowledge sharing
Promote sustainable planning through economic, social, environmental, governance and cultural pillars	Municipalities experience benefits through increased resident quality of life

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Operate Sustainably

- Live within budgetary means
- Manage prudently
- Look for ways to improve service delivery
- Maintain competitiveness

PRMS has refocused on ensuring service levels match member priorities in an affordable model. The newly adopted requisition approach provides financial stability and better defined service levels, providing clarity to members and staff regarding included versus for-fee services. Minimum rates, grouping of membership categories and a regularly updated funding formula facilitates a fair sharing of costs between members.

Actions	Results
Set an adequate operating budget and requisition level	Annual requisitions will cover about 70% of operating costs and reserve draws will be limited to periodic variance in other revenues
Monitor operational spending and stability in staffing levels	Issue areas or trending away from norms will be flagged quarterly for the CEO and Board to address
Utilize processes and tools to expedite service delivery, track progress and monitor quality	Average work completion times will trend downwards (allowing for other factors)
Track project costs and output respective of market standards	Completed projects will be checked against market standards and opportunities for improvement identified
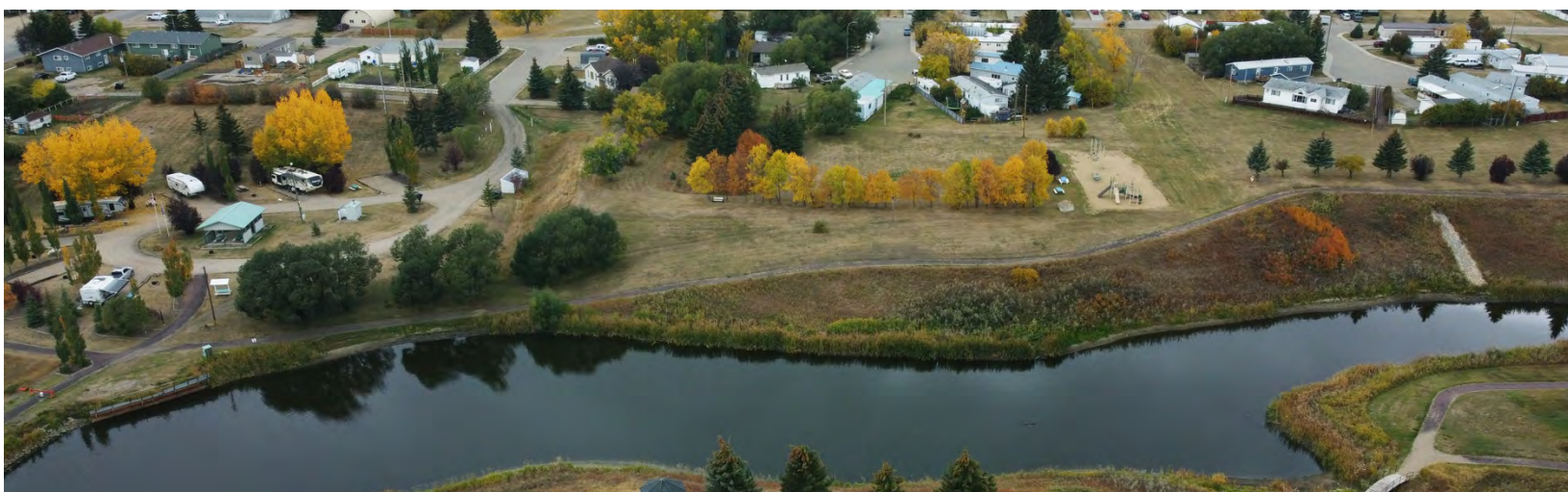
Strategic Objective

4

Govern Appropriately

- Adequately inform the Board for its oversight duties
- Chart a relevant course
- Champion the agency as a regional asset
- Build and maintain strong relationships with members

The PRMS Board is comprised of a mix of appointed and elected municipal councillors. These representatives may change in any given year, allowing for the possibility of significant turnover. Board members are expected to represent the interests of the agency while also balancing wearing their 'Council hats', which may involve individual municipal interests. Past Boards have helped the agency navigate internal issues; the need now is for guidance and championing of PRMS in fulfilling our role as a regional asset.

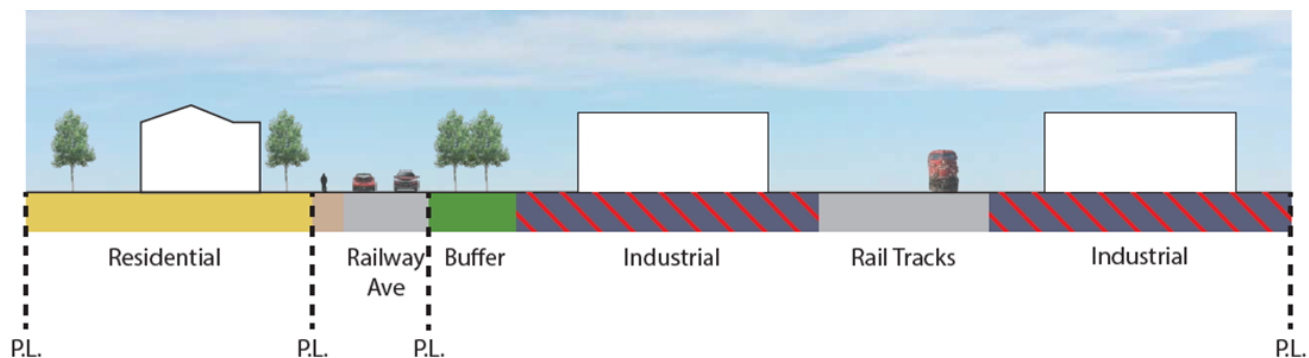| Actions	Results
Receive input and inform Board members on progress and challenges	Board members feel informed and listened to
Guide administration in setting priorities and monitor progress	Strategy and operational activities are confirmed by the Board through validation with the membership
Support and equip Board members to fulfill their leadership role	Board members are engaged and providing informed guidance
Engage with Councils to gather feedback and represent agency interests	Member councils are adequately engaged by Board members and the CEO to both be heard and to hear PRMS' viewpoints

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Service Offerings

PRMS holds a unique place, supporting municipalities through a funded, arms-length relationship. We recognize members have choices and PRMS cannot meet all planning and development needs in the region. We seek to offer services members really value within an easy and affordable requisition structure, while offering municipalities flexible fee-for-service projects at competitive rates.

Long Range Planning

Services	Core Service	Fee For Service
Land Use Bylaws (LUB) **Intermunicipal Development Plans** (IDP) **Municipal Development Plans** (MDP) **Area Structure Plans** (ASP) **Area Redevelopment Plans** (ARP) **Other planning related projects** (e.g., parks planning, concept designs, research projects etc.)	• 1 major project up to 225 hours every 3 years (every 5 years for small villages) • Minor update (up to 20 hours) to a statutory plan or LUB every 3 years • Periodic assistance with updates to LUBs to reflect latest Municipal Governance Act (MGA) requirements (memo style with bylaw template)	• Additional LUB updates • Other long-range planning & research projects

Residential   Railway Ave   Buffer   Industrial   Rail Tracks   Industrial

P.L.   P.L.   P.L.   P.L.

Current Planning

Services	Core Service	Fee For Service
Subdivision Applications	• Processing of applications for subdivision approval and finalization in accordance with legislative requirements • Subdivision advice for municipalities and residents	• Application fee to municipality and developer applies
Development Services	• Direct assistance to municipal staff on planning and development questions (up to 20 hours) • Annual topic-based training sessions • Annual MPC Orientation (group-based) • General guidance on development related enforcement processes • Tools and templates for development officers	• Additional time for direct support available • Drafting specific notices

Amendments / Rezonings	• Processing applications for developer- initiated LUB or Statutory Plan amendments
	  o includes circulation and notification processes, bylaw and map drafting, council reports and presentations
	  o developer application fee applies
	• Processing municipal initiated LUB or statutory plan amendments (for specific development initiatives)	

Municipal Planning Commission (MPC) **Meetings**	• Attendance at municipal MPC meetings as requested	

Current Planning Con't

Services	Core Service	Fee For Service
New Council Orientations	• Service overview and 'Planning 101' Orientation presented to council once every four-year term	• Additional council training sessions
Intermunicipal Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (ISDAB)	• Coordinating framework for an ISDAB • Coordinating Appeals • Annual legal training session for board members and clerks (cost recovery fee charged to ISDAB members)	
Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) **/ Land and Property Rights Tribunal** (LPRT)	• Staff reports and presentations at subdivision appeals processed by PRMS	

Safety Codes

Services	Core Service	Fee For Service
Safety Code Permitting (Building, Gas, Electrical, Plumbing, Private Sewage)	• Processing permit applications (permit fee applied; permits provided via Town of Drumheller) • Safety code inspection services (subcontracted) • Maintaining a Quality Management Plan with the Alberta Safety Codes Council • Annual safety code audit • Basic eSite Training	

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GIS

Services	Core Service	Fee For Service
Palliser Webmap	• Private webmap for municipal staff • Webmap for public access • Basic webmap tools (draw, measure, print) • Advanced webmap tools (search functions, layer editing, auto dial) • Cemetery module • Training	• Aerial & satellite imagery (potentially grant funded) • Property assessment reports • Layers for development officers • Data editing • Cemetery mapping or module configuration • Development of new tools/modules
Civic Addressing & AMSP	• Representation on the Alberta Municipal Data Sharing Partnership (AMDSP) • Webmap layers for civic addressing • Editing and uploads • Training for civic address review	• Infield address validation
Webmap-Based Asset Management	• Standardised layers and tools • Document management tools • Training	• Non-standardized/custom layers • Data conversion • Mobile App • Field inspection module • Field data collection
Grants, Research and Networking	• Coordinate regional GIS initiatives • Networking and best practices research • GIS-related grants majority of members are eligible for	• Grants most members are not eligible for

NOTE: For all GIS services, projects not benefitting the majority of membership are typically FFS

Value Proposition

PRMS effectively levers on strength in numbers to deliver great value for its membership base, the majority of which are smaller municipalities lacking in-house planning and development capacity. Through support from its two largest members, PRMS is able to deliver a service package at much lower costs than municipalities could access if they provided services inhouse or sought external support. The following table summarizes the membership advantage, base on average annual service draws by members as tracked by PRMS over time.

Annual Fee Structure

Member-based, PRMS operates on an annual requisition basis, targeted to cover 70% of operating costs (with remaining funds coming from subdivision and building permit fees, cost-recovery projects (FFS) and special projects. Reflecting an 'all in it together' attitude, the annual requisition is based on member needs for service and capacity to pay, estimated through proxies of equalized assessment and population and rounded by community category for ease of application.

Municipality Type	Typical Community Characteristics		Annual Requisition
	Equalized Assessment ($M)	Population	
Urban			
Small Village	< $20 M	< 300	$5,000
Medium Village	$20 – $50 M	300 – 500	$10,000
Large Village	$50 - $100 M	500 – 800	$15,000
Small Town	$60 – $80 M	700 – 900	$20,000
Small/Medium	$80 – $100 M	900 – 1,000	$25,000
Medium Town	$100 – $300 M	2,000 – 4,000	$50,000
Large Town	$800 – $1,200 M	7,000 – 10,000	$125,000
Rural			
Small County	$50 - $100 M	400 – 800	$15,000
Small/Medium	$500 - $700 M	1,700 – 1,900	$60,000
Medium County	$700 – 1,100 M	4,000 – 5,000	$70,000
Special Area	$3,500 – $4,000 M	4,000 – 5,000	$230,000

Service Value – What Members Receive Versus What They Pay (Requisition)

Service Area	Average Annual Service Value (est.)		
	Small Village	**Medium-Large Village / Small – Medium Town**	**County / MD**
Long Range Planning	$9,000	$14,000	$30,000
Current Planning	$8,000	$8,000	$27,000
GIS	$18,000	$18,000	$18,000
Safety Codes	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000
Total Value	**$45,000**	**$50,000**	**$85,000**
Membership Cost (Annual Requisition)	$5,000	$10,000 – $25,000	$15,000 – $70,000
Member Savings (Average Annual)	**$40,000**	**$25,000 - $40,000**	**$15,000 – $70,000**

Notes: Based on third party verification, analyzing minimum equivalent costs to provide/source services; based on typical service usage presented on an annual average basis. Actual service levels vary year-to-year depending on development activity and major plans schedules.

Other Advantages to Membership

- Planning expertise
- Region-specific knowledge
- Lower-cost access to services
- Service enhancements addressing key needs
- Training, tools and capacity building
- Networking

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