

Subject: **2024 Horseshoe Canyon Master Plan**

Meeting Date: Tuesday, June 18, 2024

Prepared By: Fallon Sherlock, Manager of Parks & Agricultural Services
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Presented By: Fallon Sherlock, Manager of Parks & Agricultural Services
Wendy Gerbrandt, Economic Development Manager

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Committee of the Whole request that administration present the 2024 Horseshoe Canyon Master Plan with recommended amendments to Council for consideration.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT: (Check all that apply)

	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
High Quality Infrastructure		Economic Resilience		Quality of Life		Effective Leadership		Level of Service	

RELEVANT LEGISLATION:

Provincial (cite)- Alberta Tourism Act

Council Bylaw/Policy (cite)- Municipal Development Plan; Land Use Bylaw; Trails & Pathways Policy;

BACKGROUND/PROPOSAL:

At the February 20, 2024 Committee of the Whole meeting administration brought forward a discussion on Horseshoe Canyon, the associated 2019 Master Plan (which was approved in principal), the 2021 Focus Group recommendations, and past and current activities and improvements that have occurred at the Canyon.

Based on the information provided by the Council at this meeting, Administration has amended the Master Plan to incorporate the details as we understood them. The attached 2024 Master Plan was designed to includes an actionable 5-year implementation plan with a 20-year vision for the site.

The 2024 Horseshoe Canyon Master Plan (2024 HSCMP) is a collaboration of the 2019 Master Plan, the 2021 Focus Group recommendations and Council’s direction through the Committee of the Whole discussions. Once approved by Council, the 2024 HSCMP will provide Administration with the direction needed to bring forward initiatives that support Council’s vision for the site as well as Council’s strategic plans for the County.

DISCUSSION/OPTIONS/BENEFITS/DISADVANTAGES/OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

The purpose of this presentation is to present Council with potential opportunities for the future of Horseshoe Canyon for discussion and for Council’s future approval.

2024 Horseshoe Canyon Master Plan

Kneehill County is host to the breathtaking views and landscapes of the Horseshoe Canyon (the Canyon). The Canyon is frequently enjoyed by visitors and has become increasingly popular as visitors seek alternative destinations and experiences from Alberta’s traditional tourism product. The Canyon’s current



offerings include stunning viewpoints, trails, camping accommodations at adjacent land sites and a multitude of budding experiences and stays within Kneehill County and surrounding regional communities.

Kneehill County Administration worked diligently to review previous documents and public consultation, project results and collaborated with Council to develop the revised 2024 Horseshoe Canyon Master Plan (Master Plan). The revised Master Plan outlines a strategic roadmap to enhance and support the future development of visitor experiences, aiming to establish the Canyon as a sought-after destination for visitors to the County and surrounding area.

This Master Plan is a supportive set of strategies and actions for the County, businesses, and stakeholders to consider and/or undertake through the development process. The Master Plan establishes a foundation for the stewardship of this natural land asset while recognizing its potential economic benefits. It aims to create a vibrant and welcoming destination that could be enjoyed for many years to come.

Objectives of the Master Plan

Horseshoe Canyon has the opportunity to become a signature must-experience gateway to the Badlands and an introduction to Kneehill County. It is designed to plan and create an opportunity to evolve from a simple short “stop and see” experience to an experience that motivates travel to the Canyon and throughout the broader region. Targeting families and nature focused special events, Horseshoe Canyon has the potential to provide visitors with soft-adventure day use and overnight experiences that allow visitors to have close up experiences that are unavailable at other well-known Badlands destinations.

Horseshoe Canyon as an asset of Kneehill County has the opportunity to be a cornerstone of economic development in the region setting the tone for further growth in the area. The following three outcomes enable the Canyon to become a signature, must-experience gateway to the Badlands.

Positive Visitor Experiences

- Diversified and greatly enhanced the memorable visitor experiences available at the Canyon.
- Developed the Canyon into a destination that motivates travel to Kneehill County, the Badlands and the province.

Economic Benefit

- Extended the length of stay of visitors and established the Canyon as a destination where visitors “stay and play” rather than “stop, look and leave”.
- Increased the direct and indirect economic contributions the Canyon and tourism is making to Kneehill County and region.
- Achieved reasonable rates of return on our investments in the Canyon.
- Stimulated greater employment as well as private sector investments.

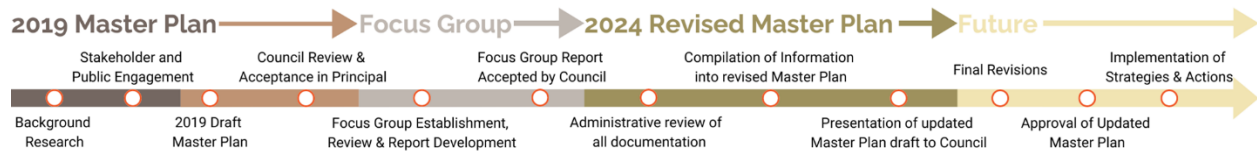
Responsible Management

- Effectively managed the infrastructure development and visitor use to minimize impacts to the Canyon’s ecological and historic resource values and conflicts between visitors.
- Minimized the negative impacts of development and visitation on County residents and adjacent landowners.
- Established a positive and collaborative relationship with adjacent landowners and the broader Badlands tourism region.



Planning Process

This document has been an evolution through many years of consultation and development in co-operation with administration, Council, residents, stakeholders, partners, and industry experts.



Site Context Details

This section highlights the location of the site in relevance to larger urban centers as well as local towns and attractions. The following pages reviews the recorded history of Horseshoe Canyon as a recreation space as it moved from private ownership into ownership by Kneehill County.

Existing Site Conditions

The first part of this section provides context of the current land ownership and zoning along with delineating where the restrictive covenant applies. Next it reviews the current activities, amenities and trails available for visitors. This is followed by a map of the existing utility lines. An inventory of the ecological resources details the landscape, vegetation, and wildlife located in and along the canyon. The Historic resources found in the Canyon primarily focus on the significant paleontological significance of the site due to recent finds being excavated by the Royal Tyrell Museum. Visitor impact on the ecology of the canyon is also reviewed. The final part of this section covers economic development and local and regional tourism plans.

Economic Development

Here the environment of the local economy and tourism industry is described along with the various opportunities available for the Canyon to fill needs in niche markets and collaborate with others in the tourism industry.

Target markets & market expectations

This section utilizes data collected from Horseshoe Canyon along with provincial data from various sources to describe the visitors coming to the Canyon and those that would be in the target market. It also describes what visitors and local stakeholders are looking for when it comes to the deliverables of the Canyon.

Competitive Landscape

Here we look at the competition both locally and globally to the Canyon and how the Canyon can differentiate itself from it's competitors.

Destination Analysis

Butlers destination life cycle model provides insight into how a destination evolves and is utilized in the plan to demonstrate that the Canyon falls in the early stages of a destination life cycle. The plan then goes on to provide a Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats analysis listing off the components existing at the Canyon for each.

HSC Future

The future vision for Horseshoe Canyon in Kneehill County and the region is described here, focusing on the ability of the site to provide "engaging, authentic and memorable experiences" for visitors. The unique selling proposition and role of the Canyon in the region includes: the close proximity to population centers



and travel hubs; its location as an initial “gateway” point into the badlands region and Kneehill County, the opportunities for diverse and immersive experiences; and the “blank canvas” for establishing development in the area that is tailored to the target markets.

The following guiding principals were used to inform the preferred future design of the site and may also be used to guide the ongoing development and management of the Canyon.

- Iconic, Differentiated & Market Driven
- Diverse Experiences
- Leveraging the Natural Asset
- Inclusive Experiences
- Gateway Experience
- Connectivity
- Access
- Sense of Place
- Compliment & Integrate with Adjacent Lands
- Sustainability
- Return on Investment

Potential visitor experiences based on a variety of considerations and the target market profiles are listed in this section along with a map of development areas.

Strategies

The strategies listed below provide measurable implementation to achieve the overall objectives listed in order of priority. The Focus group had implemented this structure as a way to prioritize the development of the site.

The order in occurrence of any of the below strategies can/may change based on the availability and interest of funding and investment opportunities.

Initial Strategies (next 5 years)

These are items that may already be in occurrence and are an overall standard for the canyon and provide direction to other activities.

1. Ensure all operations protect the natural ecology of the Canyon.
2. Enhance brand recognition by utilizing an approved brand and logo and implement for wayfinding and promotion in advertising and merchandise.
3. Increase and align signage for information and wayfinding throughout the Canyon.
4. Integrate and collaborate with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and other adjacent landowners.
5. Establish a voluntary “Friends of Horseshoe Canyon” group.
6. Implement a visitor pavilion with washrooms and other amenities.
7. Continue parking fee collection, explore automated collection options.
8. Continue trail development, enhancement, and maintenance within and around the perimeter of the Canyon.
9. Continue to enhance the multi-use, market and event spaces and implement furnishings, fixtures and amenities.
10. Continue to actively manage visitors and visitor use of the Canyon through on-site ambassadors.

Secondary Strategies

These depend on if there is space, budget, time, availability, interest from others, and completion of the initial strategies.

11. Consult and develop an Area structure Plan for further development.
12. Encourage private sector opportunities that ensure a reasonable return on investment for the County.



13. Attract target markets to the Canyon.

Additional Strategies (for future consideration).

Long-term items that would still be up for consideration but may require third party involvement.

14. Collaborate with nearby, regional tourism locations.

15. Strengthen the focus on Indigenous relationships and history and develop relationships with Indigenous leaders.

16. Allow a diversity of overnight experiences to be implemented and operated by a third party.

The Master Plan shows potential actions aligned with the above strategies as items that may come forward to Council for further deliberation. The implementation plan includes a potential timeline for all of the strategies and actions which may differ depending on many environmental influences.

The final part of the plan is dedicated to appendixes including: Restrictive Covenant; Engagement Summary; Focus Group Recommendation Report

RFP Conclusion

Once the final edits of the Committee of the Wholes recommendations have been completed, then Administration will bring the final draft to Council for review and approval. With an approved Horseshoe Canyon Master Plan in place Administration will be able to utilize it to provide direction for initiating future projects and budgetary items to bring forward to Council.

FINANCIAL & STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

Resulting direction from the plan can have varying degrees of financial and staffing impact. Any projects that align with the Master Plan will be brought to council through the budgetary process.

ATTACHMENTS:

2024 Horseshoe Canyon Master Plan Draft

APPROVAL(S):

Mike Haugen, Chief Administrative Officer

Approved-

