





Subject: **2024 Horseshoe Canyon Master Plan**

Meeting Date: Tuesday, March 26, 2024

Prepared By: Fallon Sherlock, Manager of Parks & Ag Services
 Wendy Gerbrandt, Economic Development Manager
 Jenna Kester, Economic Development Officer
 Jennifer Kolton, Community Services Administrative Assistant

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

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 principle), 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 amended the Master Plan to incorporate the details as we understood them. This new draft Master Plan was then presented at the Committee of the Whole meeting on June 18 where further feedback and direction were provided by Council to Administration. The final draft incorporating the recommended adjustments is the document brought forward today.

The final draft of the 2024 Horseshoe Canyon Master Plan (2024 HSCMP) brought forward today 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 review the changes made and the components of the 2024 Horseshoe Canyon Master Plan for Council’s final recommendations and approval.

Updates and Changes

- Changes made since the Committee of the Whole presentation include:
- Adding references to the 2021 Focus Group initiative assessment questions on pages 6, 9, 78 and 84:
 - Does the initiative preserve the spirit of place at Horseshoe Canyon?
 - Does the initiative sustain and protect the natural state of Horseshoe Canyon?
 - Is the initiative economically and financially feasible and sustainable over time?



- Adding in the foreword thanking all those who have worked on this project through the years.
- Added updated graphs and statistics to the existing visitation section
- Updating numbering and fixing grammatical errors.

Outline Of The Final Draft Of The 2024 Horseshoe Canyon Master Plan

Foreword

This revised Horseshoe Canyon Master Plan is the result cumulative of efforts by multiple individuals and organizations over many years. As such, we would like to thank:

- McElhanney
- Legacy Tourism Group
- SWM Consulting Services
- The many members of the public who participated in the variety of surveys and as members of the 2020-2021 Focus Group
- The many Kneehill County staff members who have contributed their time, efforts and passion towards this project

Executive Summary

Kneehill County is host to the breathtaking views and landscapes of the Horseshoe Canyon (the Canyon). The Canyon is frequently enjoyed by visitors and local residents and has become increasingly popular as visitors seek alternative destinations and experiences from Alberta's traditional tourism products. The Canyon's current offerings include stunning viewpoints, trails, camping accommodations at adjacent land sites and a multitude of budding experiences and stay within Kneehill County and surrounding regional communities.

Kneehill County administration worked diligently to review previous documents and public consultation project results and collaborate with Council to develop the revised Horseshoe Canyon Master Plan 2024 (HSCMP 2024). Throughout the development of the Master Plan's discussions, strategies and tactics, three questions were created to unify and analyze any initiatives being brought forward.

1. Does the initiative preserve the spirit of place at Horseshoe Canyon?
2. Does the initiative sustain and protect the natural state of Horseshoe Canyon?
3. Is the initiative economically and financially feasible and sustainable over time?

The Master Plan will address these foundational questions as an ongoing commitment to the thoughtful roadmap to unleash and support the future development of visitor experiences, establishing the Canyon as an iconic destination desired by visitors to the County and surrounding areas.

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. It provides a foundation of stewardship of this natural land asset while realizing the potential economic benefit to the County, creating a vibrant and welcoming destination that will be enjoyed for many years to come.

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.



Outcomes

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 Horseshoe Canyon Focus Group created three questions to unify and analyze any initiatives being brought forward.

1. Does the initiative preserve the spirit of place at Horseshoe Canyon?
2. Does the initiative sustain and protect the natural state of Horseshoe Canyon?
3. Is the initiative economically and financially feasible and sustainable over time?

These questions relate to the initiatives and strategies back to the three outcomes described below, which 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.

Introduction

This section provides an overview of the Purpose of the Master Plan, the Planning Process, and the Engagement Activities that have occurred.

Site Context Details

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

Existing Site Conditions

The first part of this section provides the 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 Historical resources found in the Canyon primarily focus on the 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 who would be in the target market. It also describes what visitors and local stakeholders are looking for in the Canyon's deliverables.

Competitive Landscape

Here, we look at the competition for Canyon both locally and globally and how Canyon can differentiate itself from its competitors.

Destination Analysis

Butler's 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

Horseshoe Canyon's 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 principles 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

This section lists potential visitor experiences based on various considerations and the target market profiles, along with a map of development areas.

Strategies and Actions

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



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

Initial Strategies (next 5 years)

These are items that may already be occurring. They set 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 implementing 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 and 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. Attract target markets to the Canyon.
13. Encourage private sector opportunities that ensure a reasonable return on investment for the County.

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 be presented to Council for further deliberation.

Implementation Plan

The implementation plan includes a potential timeline for all of the strategies and actions, which may differ depending on many environmental influences.



Appendixes

The final part of the plan is dedicated to appendixes including Restrictive Covenant, Engagement Summary, and Focus Group Recommendation Report.

RFP Conclusion

With the approved Horseshoe Canyon Master Plan, Administration will begin implementing strategies and actions by bringing specific projects to Council for consideration.

FINANCIAL & STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

The resulting projects from the Master 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.

RECOMMENDED ENGAGEMENT:

Directive Decision (Information Sharing, One-Way Communication)

Tools:	Public Notification	Other:	
--------	---------------------	--------	--

ATTACHMENTS:

- 2024 Horseshoe Canyon Master Plan
- July Presentation 2024 Horseshoe Canyon Masterplan

COUNCIL OPTIONS:

1. Council may approve the 2024 Horseshoe Canyon Master Plan as presented.
2. Council may approve the 2024 Horseshoe Canyon Master Plan as amended.
3. Council may request additional information to be brought to a subsequent meeting.

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

That Council Approves the 2024 Horseshoe Canyon Master Plan as presented.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS:

Administration brings potential projects in the 2025 Budget process.

APPROVAL(S):

Mike Haugen, Chief Administrative Officer

Approved-

