



## Black Diamond and Turner Valley Amalgamation Feasibility Study

### A Collaborative Community Initiative

The Towns of Black Diamond and Turner Valley are committed to establishing a sustainable community by working together to share services and align policies and procedures with a shared vision. The towns have entered into a formal arrangement through the Alberta Community Partnership Grant Program, allowing them to advance the Friendship Agreement and explore the feasibility of amalgamation. The term amalgamation in a municipal sense, is the combining of two or more political entities into one. The task before the towns is not to simply explore an either/or scenario of amalgamation or continued collaboration, but to identify realistic and current factors that contribute to the sustainable operation and successful growth of the two towns.

Our traditional government structure was designed for an earlier time and is not equipped to handle the growing challenges of our modern society. It can be argued that local governments play a greater role in our lives today than any other time in history. They have a growing responsibility for delivering services and the availability of resources is becoming more limited. The current situation requires local governments to find innovative solutions to deal with aging infrastructure, new facility requirements, and service regulations, as the funding from higher levels of government has become unpredictable.

There is a growing trend to collaborate at a regional level to effectively and efficiently provide shared service delivery. Two great examples of affordable service delivery are the Sheep River Regional Utility Corporation (water) and the Westend Regional Sewage Services Commission.

### Building on a History of Collaboration

As the timeline illustrates, Black Diamond and Turner Valley have been formally and informally exploring the concept of amalgamation and increased collaboration over the past 30 years.





The friendship agreement, signed in 2012, recognized the opportunity to work together through common connections and interests. The agreement objectives are:

- Increase Inter-municipal Cooperation – promoting a spirit of cooperation over competition.
- Increase efficiency – working together to increase local capacity.
- Increase promotion of the sub-region – unified and consistent message in order to be more effective.
- Sharing responsibility for a positive future - building a collaborative foundation.

By initiating this study the town councils are moving beyond the emotional and hypothetical debates regarding municipal amalgamation and will evaluate the business case scenarios to be more effective and efficient. This recognizes that change may be incremental, testing new ways of sharing services and building towards a unified community structure.

### Sharing Services is Nothing New

In the past 30 years the towns have partnered on many initiatives that deliver essential services more effectively and efficiently. The following table provides an overview of the various services being shared by the towns.

Protective Services	Community Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memorandum of Understanding for protective services to assist each other as needed</li> <li>• Shared Dog Pound</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreation – Friendship Trail</li> <li>• Recreation – Black Diamond Arena</li> <li>• Recreation – Turner Valley Pool</li> <li>• Economic Development – Diamond Valley Days and Parade</li> <li>• Shared Library</li> </ul>
Municipal Services	Operational Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and Development – Inter-Municipal Development Plan</li> <li>• Administration – Aligned Accounting Software</li> <li>• Administration – Shared GIS Staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water – Sheep River Regional Utilities Corporation</li> <li>• Wastewater – Westend Regional Sewage Services Commission</li> <li>• Solid Waste – Garbage Collection</li> <li>• Solid Waste – Foothills Regional Service Commission</li> <li>• Solid Waste – Recycling Depot Agreement</li> <li>• Transportation – Joint Planning and Transit Pilot Program</li> </ul>



## **Moving Forward**

Merging two communities after years of collaborating on delivering services together will follow a logical, sustainable, and fiscally responsible process. If amalgamation is considered a feasible transition, then a series of actions will be outlined to guide the towns through the necessary steps.

The study will provide the municipal decision makers an objective analysis with evidence based recommendations on how to move forward.

Change to the structure of the municipalities will have an effect on the political representation, governance, and service delivery. This reflects the importance of ensuring this is not only an internal exercise examining opportunities, but also takes into account an external perspective, including the citizens of both communities, regional stakeholders, and the province.

## **Planning Success for a Future Together**

When restructuring a local municipal government, consideration will be given to the challenges of amalgamation in relation to the desire to create a more responsive, adaptive, effective, and efficient municipal government. The town councils have agreed to move forward collectively to align their strengths to serve a community that is bound together by a strong sense of belonging following these key objectives:

- Balancing service levels with long term cost.
- Joint decision making that is effective and adaptive and based on honesty and integrity.
- Developing and implementing policies that are up to date and realistically applicable.

The amalgamation process focuses on the mechanics of restructuring two like-minded municipalities into one, which requires coordination with the Province. In addition to the specifics of the process, the Towns are moving forward based on these guiding principles:

- Improved coordination of policies and decisions that help proactively plan for future growth and development.
- Effectively leverage resources to address the collective infrastructure needs.
- Cooperative mindset that eliminates any potential to pit one community against the other for new development.
- Retain the historic community identity regardless of the new municipal structure.
- Increase the economies of scale/efficiencies that can be achieved by jointly working on service delivery and infrastructure investment.
- Attract and retain people, investment, and business in the community.
- Collectively respond to the increasing challenge of delivering high quality services to a changing population.
- Strengthen a collective economic position and political voice in the Calgary region.