



Discussion Paper – Highway Commercial Nodes

Client Name: Rural Municipality of Blucher No. 343

Project Name: OCP and Zoning Bylaw Update

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1 BACKGROUND

The RM of Blucher currently supports limited commercial development within the municipality predominantly along Highway 16 directly north of Clavet. Within the context of the current revision and update to the RM's Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw consideration is being made to expand the potential for commercial development directly adjacent to Highway Nos. 5 and 16 at permanent highway access points.

Highway commercial development in the RM of Blucher is commercial development focused along major transportation routes intended to support a broad range of retail and service-related businesses serving local and regional customers. A highway commercial node typically includes lands directly adjacent to the highway intersection, but it can also extend on either side of the intersection using service or frontage roads to provide consolidated access to the permanent highway intersection.

Highway commercial development thrives in areas that are highly visible and easy to access at intersections designed to effectively accommodate on and off-flows of traffic from the highway. Highway commercial development benefits from its proximity to the highway to attract regional customers while also offering a convenient and effective means of transporting products with minimal impacts on municipal roads. These developments require flat, well-drained lands and access to electricity, gas, water, and telecommunication services. The land area required varies for different businesses, but it is typical for rural highway commercial development to require larger lots encompassing multiple acres. These businesses benefit from co-locating in an area with other businesses and residential development to provide a local customer base and create business synergies.

1.1 Access Requirements and Standards

According to *The Highways and Transportation Act, 1997*, direct access to provincial highways is regulated to ensure safety and efficiency. The Ministry of Highways has adopted access management plans for both highway corridors which establish permanent access points along all provincial highways based on the classification of a highway determined by traffic levels. The Ministry's Roadside Manual applies a Level R3 access level to both Highway 16 and 5 which typically applies moderate access control, meaning intersections and access points are managed to balance accessibility and safety. This level supports permanent at-grade intersections at a minimum spacing of 3.2 km and a desirable spacing of 8 km.

Temporary direct access points are allowed at most public highway intersections unless they pose a threat to the safe operation of the broader traffic corridor. Although it is uncommon for the Ministry to close existing temporary intersections, they will closely scrutinize development applications at temporary intersections that have the potential to



generate larger volumes of traffic which would trigger improvements. Defining permanent intersections reduces conflict points where vehicles enter the highway, reducing the potential for accidents. Controlling access also assists in maintaining consistent traffic flows and speeds along the highway corridor.

For this plan, permanent highway access points are measured relative to the intersections of each of the subject highways with Highway 316. Although there are existing intersections within 3.2 km of each along each corridor, these intersections are considered temporary and capable of being closed by the Ministry where they interfere with the operation of the highway. It is important to note that the minimum 3.2 km separation is a minimum and is often exceeded as a result of topographic conditions and existing development patterns. The proposed designation anticipated by the proposed amendments to the RM's Future Land Use Map is not meant to imply subdivision or development approval at these locations but rather to identify areas where the potential may exist subject to a developer undertaking the necessary study, analysis and consultation with the RM and Ministry of Highways.

2 PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

The RM is proposing to amend the Future Land Use Map appended to the Official Community Plan to communicate general support for additional highway commercial development along Highway 16 and Highway 5 as generally illustrated and described in this memo. A future land use designation establishes a long-term vision or expectation for development to guide the decisions of landowners and Council where the use of land is anticipated to change from its current use.

The potential designation of lands at the proposed locations does not guarantee that commercial development will occur. It is simply a means of communicating the Council's support for this potential. Property owners at these locations remain in control of when and if commercial development occurs. Where development is pursued, the applicant is required to prepare and submit a Comprehensive Development Review (CDR) to support a rezoning and subdivision application.

The submission must verify the following;

- A detailed description of the proposed commercial development, including the type of business, structures, and intended uses of the land.
- A comprehensive site plan showing the layout of the proposed development, including buildings, access points, parking areas, landscaping, and any other significant features.
- An assessment of the potential environmental impacts of the development, including measures to mitigate any negative effects.
- A study analyzing the impact of the development on local traffic patterns, including proposed solutions to manage increased traffic.
- Detailed plans for how the development will be serviced, including water supply, sewage, disposal, stormwater management, and shallow utilities.
- A complete analysis of how the proposed commercial development alliance with the official community plan policies, and zoning regulations.
- Evidence of public and regulatory engagements, including neighbouring properties, the Ministry of Highways (Closures), the Water Security Agency and other pertinent provincial regulatory bodies; and
- Any additional technical investigations that may be required by the RM which may include a Geotechnical Investigation, Heritage Impact Assessment, Biophysical Assessment or an Environmental Site Assessment.

The CDR must present strategies for how highway commercial development can positively integrate with existing rural development at these intersections and function within the highway corridor through thoughtful planning and design. The RM Council is considering adding land designations to its Future Land Use Map appended to the Official Community Plan to support additional highway commercial development at permanent access points along both highway corridors. The rationale for this change is:

- Promoting commercial development contributes to the diversification of the RM tax base reducing reliance on residential property taxes and providing a more stable financial foundation.
- The proximity of commercial development to a provincial road means that the provincial government is responsible for maintaining the main thoroughfare to support development. This significantly reduces the RM's road maintenance expenses as the wear and tear from increased traffic will primarily affect provincial roads.
- Businesses located near provincial roads benefit from better access and connectivity, as well as visibility along higher volume traffic corridors, making them more attractive to customers in suppliers. This can lead to a higher business success rate and consequently, more consistent tax revenues for the RM.
- Diversified commercial development can attract more visitors and potential residents to the area further boosting the local economy in increasing the demand for local services and amenities.

The RM recognizes that there is currently development at some of the permanent intersections along both highway corridors that may limit or outright prohibit commercial development. For the proposed amendments, the RM is limiting consideration to the intersections where existing commercial development exists or where it could be otherwise supported. This analysis is not intended to imply a current development market. It is expected that a developer would evaluate the feasibility of development on a case-by-case basis to determine whether to pursue development. The proposed designation of these areas is intended to communicate the RM's support for this type of development, paving the way for private investment.

The following locations are currently being considered as suitable locations for highway commercial development.

1. Range Road 3040 (Settlers Ridge Road)/Highway 5



This intersection is situated along the RM of Blucher and the RM of Corman Park boundary and provides access to several multi-lot subdivisions in both communities. This intersection is identified by the Ministry of Highways as part of a planned twinning of the highway. The twinning project is planned to include a variety of intersection improvements and the construction of a service road connecting this intersection with Tower Hill Road to the east.

This opens up a limited possibility to consider a smaller commercial development directly east of the Sasktel tower along this planned service road corridor to offer smaller-scale commercial services designed to primarily support residents in the surrounding country residential developments.



2. Highway 316/Highway 5 to Range Road 3033/Highway 5



Both of these intersections are identified in conjunction with planned upgrades to Highway 5. There is currently development on the east side of Highway 316 which would inhibit the construction of a service road that would parallel Highway 5 but there is the potential to situate a service road along the south boundary of this commercial parcel that could then extend back towards Highway 5, offering access to the undeveloped frontage along this corridor extending to and potentially connecting with a planned service road extending from the west of Range Road 3033.

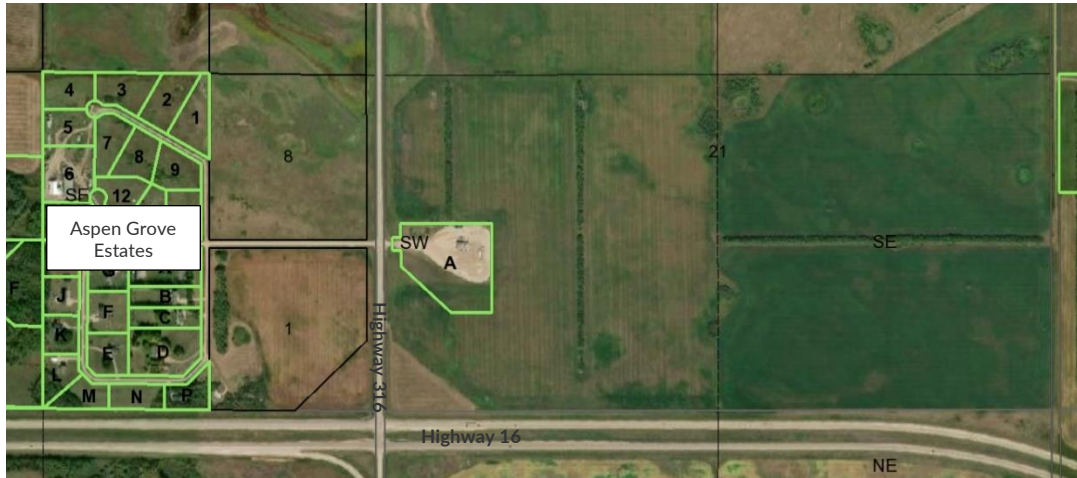
3. Range Road 3032/Highway 5



The current Future Land Use Map has designated the lands west of undeveloped Range Road 3032 and south of Highway 5 as High Density Residential. Development adjacent to the highway at this location has included a mix of residential and commercial development extending along an existing service road which includes Driven Industries and a commercial storage and RTM business. Based on the current development pattern in this area, Parcel X

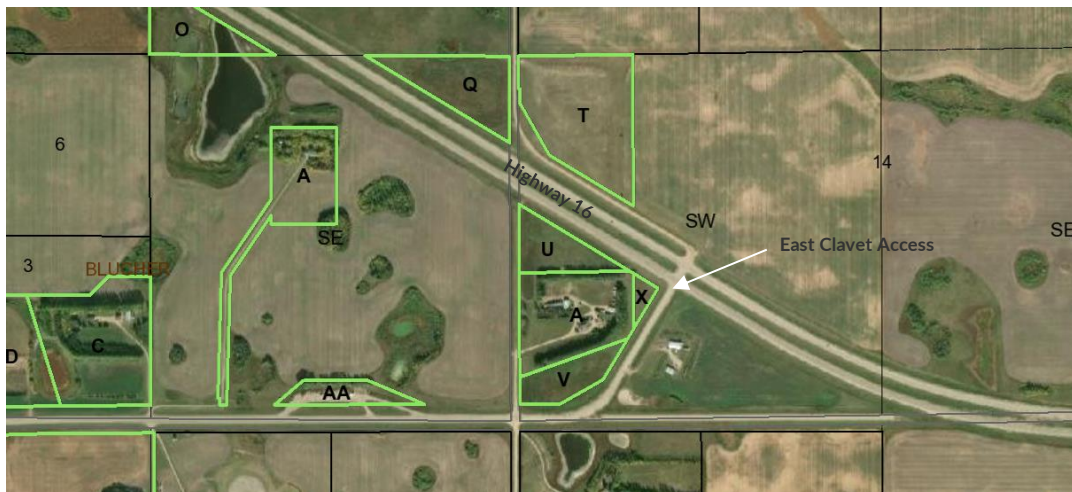
presents an opportunity to add additional commercial development. Blocks 2 and 3 within this subdivision could potentially be considered for additional commercial development as a continuation of development in this area.

4. Highway 316/Highway 16



The lands along the east side of Highway 316 and north of Highway 12 in the S ½ 21-35-3-W3M exhibit characteristics that are potentially suitable for highway commercial development. These properties are situated at a high-functioning intersection at the intersection of two provincial highways and near the west entrance to Clavet. A portion of the area is currently developed for commercial purposes as a truck stop. The site lies near existing residential development and at the south entrance to a future rural industrial area which will provide a local customer base to complement customers travelling along Highway 16.

5. East Clavet Access/Highway 16



Lands within the SW 14-35-3-W3M and along the north side of Highway 16 at the intersection with the east access to Clavet offer a potential opportunity to develop a highway commercial node. The location can attract a mix of local and regional traffic to potentially support a mix of highway commercial businesses.



6. Highway 397/Highway 16



Highway commercial development along the north side of Highway 16 in NE 8-35-01-W3M and in the N ½ 9-35-01-W3M would represent the continuation of commercial development in the area which includes Nutrien Ag Solution and Combine World. Highway 397 is the primary route to the Alan Potash Mine to the south, offering a significant local customer base along with the residents in nearby Elstow. Being near a major industrial facility like Nutrien Ag Solution can create opportunities for complementary businesses, fostering business synergies that benefit from mutual support and a shared customer base.