

Hamlet of Suffield
Area Structure Plan Review

OPTIONS REPORT

June 2010

Prepared for Cypress County
by
PLANWELL CONSULTING

Options Report

Suffield Area Structure Plan Review

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Residential Survey

Introduction

Cypress County is having the Area Structure Plan for the Hamlet of Suffield revised. The Area Structure Plan will provide a framework for the future growth and development of Suffield.

In order to provide a useful framework, the Plan needs to be reviewed and should reflect both the aspirations and the concerns of the residents and land owners in the community, and be based on sound and sustainable planning principles.

This report summarizes the information and opinions that were obtained from a residential survey of the community done in late May, 2010, as well as a planning workshop held in Suffield on June 3, 2010. Based on this information and a land use survey, this report examines the development options and the distribution of land uses in the community.

This Options Report will be submitted to County Council in late June, 2010, and will be published on the County's web site for three weeks, inviting comments from the public, hamlet land owners and residents, and other relevant stakeholders in the community.

Survey Results

In May, 2010, a residential survey was conducted in Suffield and approximately 60% of the households were canvassed. This survey was one method of identifying the aspirations and concerns of the hamlet residents.

It also served as an opportunity to invite residents to the scheduled planning workshop to be held on June 3, 2010, as well as providing relevant contact information. The survey was very short, and asked a few demographic questions as well as a few questions about likes and dislikes of living in the community.

A copy of the survey is attached for reference at the back of this report.

Demographics

At the time of the survey, there were 120 dwellings identified in the Hamlet of Suffield. Some of these were unoccupied, and in many cases there was no response when the survey was being conducted. Assuming that 5% of the housing stock was unoccupied, there were 114 households in the community.

A total of 64 surveys were completed, accounting for 56 percent of the households and representing about 60 percent of the population. Based on this representative sample, a number of observations can be made about the demographics of Suffield:

- Household size ranged from one to twelve occupants, with the average being 2.2 people per household.
- The estimated total population for the hamlet is 250 people.
- The majority of households are comprised of 2 people, with only 27 percent of all households having children.
- A quarter of the households are comprised of retired individuals or couples.
- It is estimated that there are just over 100 people in the local labour force - most working at CFB Suffield or in the surrounding area.
- Over 60 percent of the households have resided in Suffield for 5 or more years and

almost 90 percent have lived in the community for at least 3 years. This statistic indicates a very stable community.

Reasons for Living in Suffield

Although a variety of responses were received regarding this part of the survey, there were three common threads through many of the comments:

- Most residents liked the serenity and quiet rural nature of the community.
- For many residents, the proximity of work at CFB Suffield was a key reason for living in the hamlet.
- For many, the people in the community were important, whether relatives and family or just good neighbours who helped to make it a safe place to live.

Other positive comments included the fact that Suffield was quite close to all the services and amenities available in Medicine Hat, while at the same time being quite rural, less restrictive and more affordable than living in the city.

Making Suffield a Better Community

In responding to this part of the survey, there was consensus on a number of concerns, especially those regarding the need for a larger supply of treated water to meet current and future demand. Also high on the list were concerns regarding cable and high-speed internet service, as well as the need for some existing water, sewer, and gas lines to be upgraded or installed properly.

Although not directly related to this planning project, a large number of respondents indicated strong concerns regarding the local community and recreation association and recent events that had occurred with the association board.

Other concerns that were identified by a number of households included:

- animal control (stray cats)
- minimum property maintenance
- no garbage collection
- need for improved roads and parks

Although some residents thought more commercial development would be good, they also recognized that the hamlet was too small to support a wide range of services. Some liked the community the way it is, while others felt that some development and growth would be beneficial.

Planning Workshop

The survey results helped to identify some of the opportunities and constraints that affect this community and the future growth of the hamlet. In order to further expand upon these development matters and explore other options, a Planning Workshop was organized and held at the Suffield Community Hall on June 3, 2010. This gave people from the community a chance to speak, listen, and share ideas about how Suffield might grow and develop in the future. A representative from the Cypress County Planning & Development Department was also present and participated in the workshop.

A number of concerns and issues were identified during the workshop discussions which focused on development and land use. As expected, the issue of water supply was a major concern, and the residents fully understand that any development or growth of the hamlet is contingent upon acquiring more water from the CFB Suffield water treatment plant. This requires a new contract with the Base to provide a larger daily volume of treated water, and renegotiating this contract may not be possible. It was suggested that other sources and treatment options should be examined, including the use of existing well water.

In terms of expanded commercial uses, some residents felt that the amount of commercial development should be limited to protect existing businesses, although this is not how land use legislation and planning regulations tend to operate. It is reasonable to limit the amount of available commercial land through the Land Use Bylaw, but it is not expected that certain uses would be excluded to protect existing ones.

Based on some recent experiences with industrial uses in the hamlet, many residents were concerned with this type of expansion. It was felt that industrial development within the hamlet should be service commercial or light industrial in nature and should not involve large storage yards of materials or equipment. The existing HI - Hamlet Industrial District in the north east corner of the hamlet should not be expanded. It was suggested that industrial activities requiring large storage yards should be directed to land on the south side of the CPR tracks that is already designated for industrial uses, or to other designated rural industrial areas.

For many people, the residential appeal of this community is the large parcel size, and while some infill development can be expected, it is not anticipated that many of the existing large residential parcels will be subdivided in the foreseeable future. It was generally agreed that residential expansion should occur on the easterly vacant land (Block Y) between Sixth and Eighth Streets, as well as immediately west of First Street. In both cases, these properties are not designated for residential development and remain in the A2 – General Agriculture District of the Land Use Bylaw. Expansion of the hamlet into these areas will involve the extension of both water and sewer mains. With respect to sewer system expansion, there are topographic and grade issues to be addressed in each of these areas.

In terms of transportation and roads, it was pointed out that, in the long term, direct access to the Trans Canada Highway will be closed and that hamlet traffic will have to use Secondary Road 884 to get onto the highway. This will mean that Ellice Avenue and/or a service road parallel to the highway will be the main connecting routes between the highway and Suffield.

Finally, there was concern raised regarding improvements to the telephone and cable service - and the availability of high-speed internet – as being important to the success of this hamlet as a viable community.

Existing Development

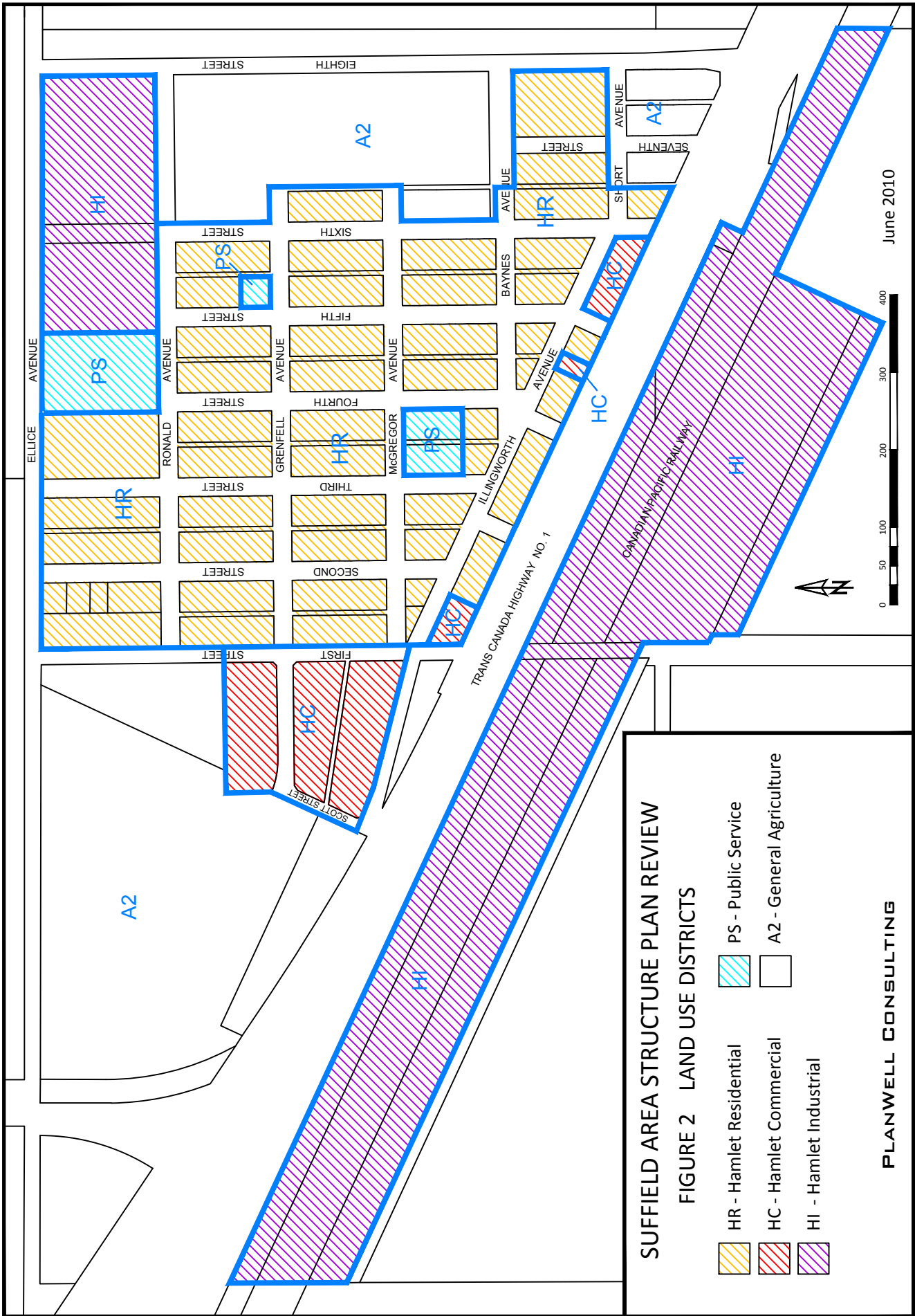
In order to establish a base line of development, a land use survey of all hamlet properties was undertaken. The extent of development in the hamlet is portrayed in the 2009 air photo of Suffield shown in Figure 1 and the current Land Use Districts from the Cypress County Land Use Bylaw are shown in Figure 2. This information was used to categorize each property for the survey.



SUFFIELD AREA STRUCTURE PLAN REVIEW

FIGURE 1 AIR PHOTO - 2009

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SUFFIELD AREA STRUCTURE PLAN REVIEW

FIGURE 2 LAND USE DISTRICTS

- HR - Hamlet Residential
- HC - Hamlet Commercial
- HI - Hamlet Industrial
- PS - Public Service
- A2 - General Agriculture

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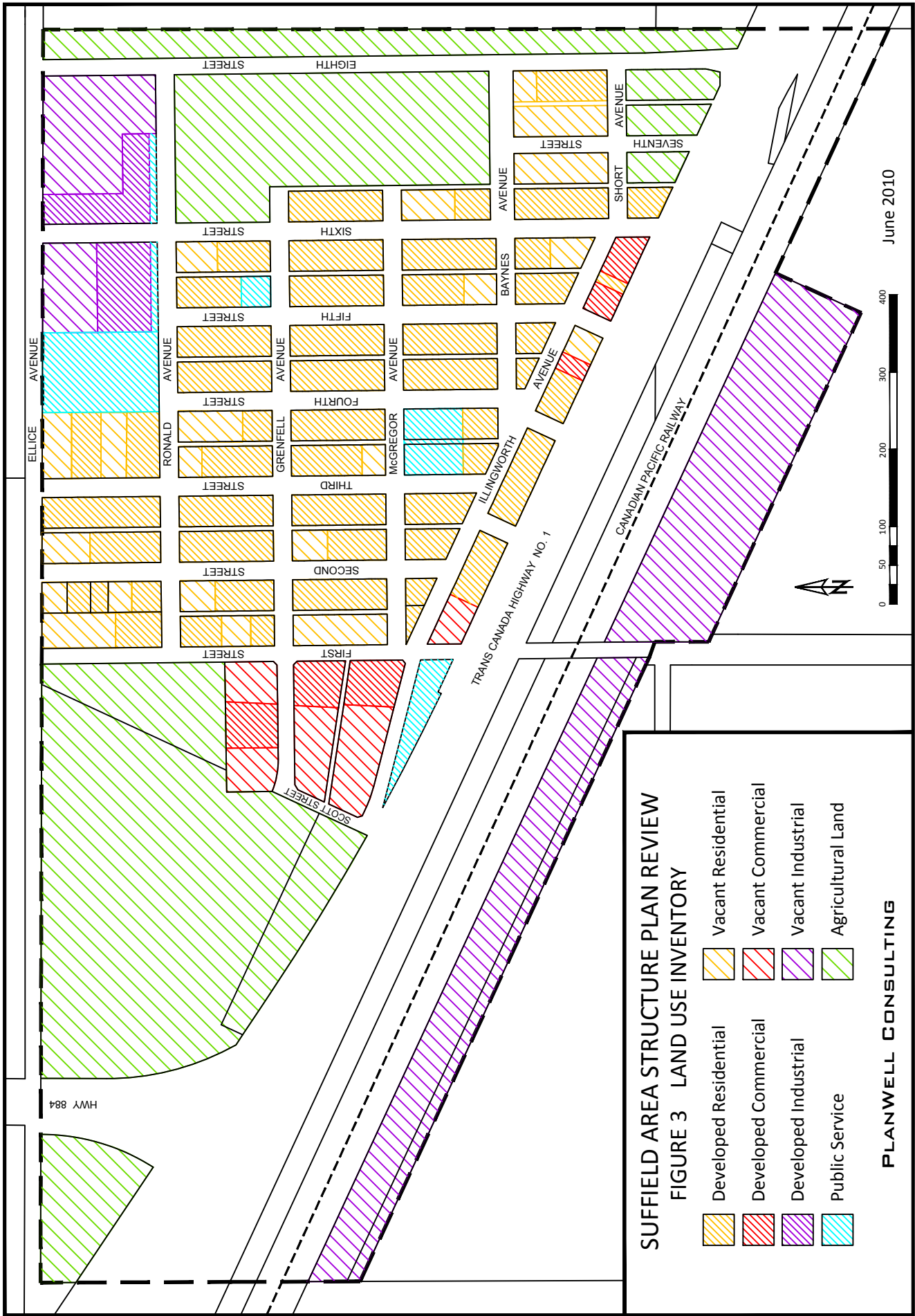
June 2010

The land use inventory is summarized in Table 1 and depicted on the map in Figure 3. The survey was based on existing parcels and land use designations and the survey area is somewhat larger than the area within the current hamlet boundary since a portion of the Hamlet Industrial District south of the CPR right of way is outside this boundary.

It should also be noted that the land use survey identified undeveloped portions of residential blocks that were 0.12 hectares or larger in size as vacant in-fill parcels. It is understood that some of these in-fill sites may never be developed as additional building sites but the potential for this type of expansion is there.

Table 1 Land Use Inventory

Land Use		Hectares	Percent
Residential	Developed	16.37	12.8%
	Vacant	5.15	4.0%
	Total	21.52	16.8%
Commercial	Developed	1.66	1.3%
	Vacant	2.33	1.8%
	Total	3.99	3.1%
Industrial	Developed	1.62	1.3%
	Vacant	14.19	11.1%
	Total	15.81	12.3%
Public Service	Total	2.99	2.3%
Agricultural	Vacant	28.4	22.1%
Rail ROW		10.75	8.4%
Road ROW		44.89	35.0%
TOTAL		128.35	100.0%



SUFFIELD AREA STRUCTURE PLAN REVIEW
FIGURE 3 LAND USE INVENTORY

- Developed Residential
- Vacant Residential
- Developed Commercial
- Vacant Commercial
- Developed Industrial
- Vacant Industrial
- Public Service
- Agricultural Land

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Some observations that can be made from an examination of this inventory data:

- All developed land accounts for only 18 percent of the study area, with two-thirds of the developed property being devoted to residential uses.
- Within the residential area of the hamlet, there are approximately 5 hectares of potential in-fill.
- The density of residential development is very low, with 8 - 10 homes per block being the norm.
- Public parks, reserves and community facilities account for only 2.3 percent of the total area, and about 7 percent of the designated land use area (all residential, commercial and industrial districts).
- Over 40 percent of the total study area is devoted to either road or rail rights of way, due to the Trans Canada Highway and the CPR main line passing through the hamlet.
- Over 20 percent of the study area is vacant undeveloped land that has not been designated for hamlet uses and remains in the A2 – General Agriculture land use district.
- Of the 15.8 hectares of industrial land, approximately 14 hectares (90%) is undeveloped.
- Of the 4 hectares of commercial land, about 2.3 (56%) is vacant and undeveloped.

Development Option and Conclusions

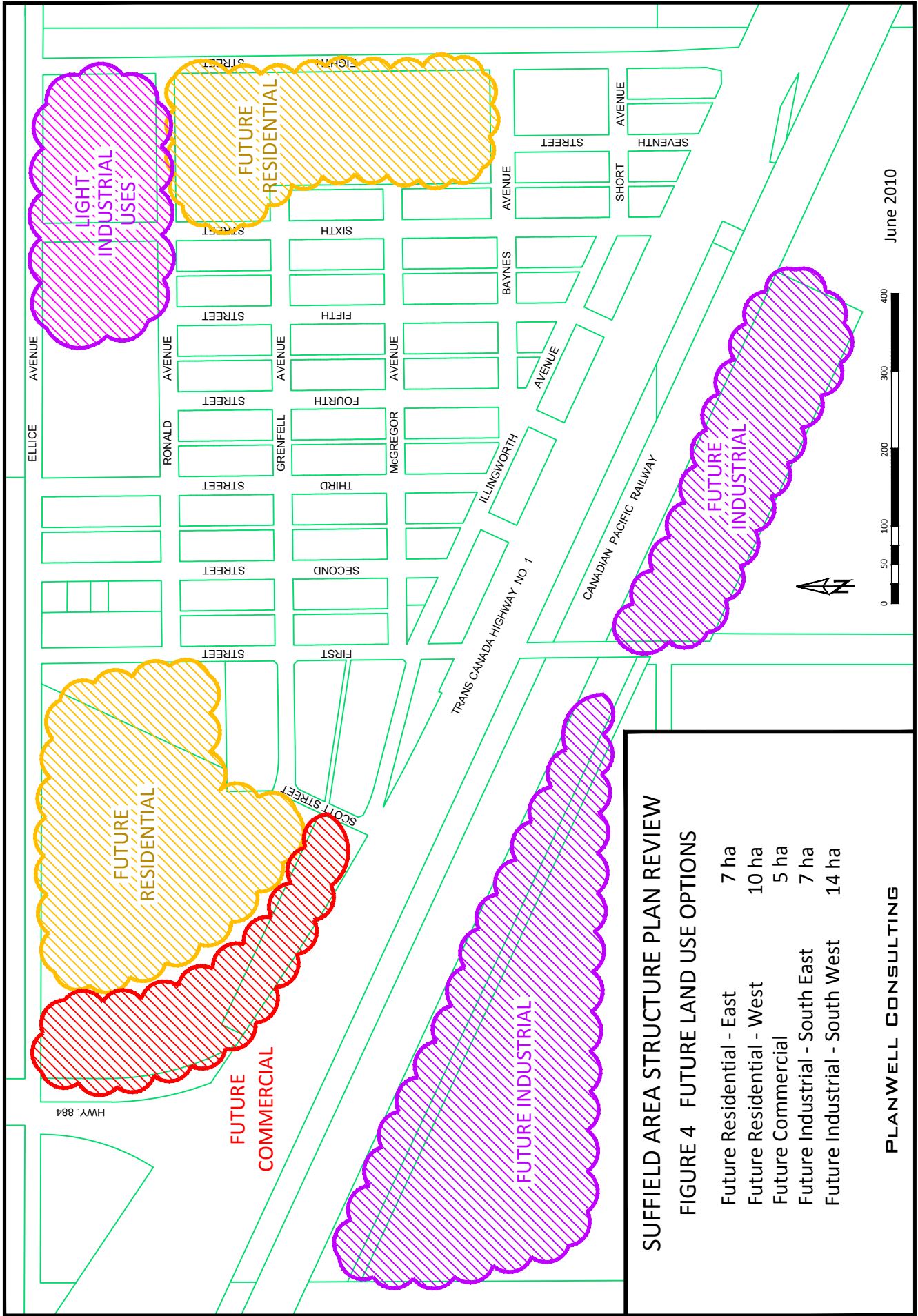
After reviewing the information collected through the land use survey and workshop process, and evaluating the constraints affecting the physical expansion of the hamlet, two options became apparent, at least for residential expansion of the hamlet.

Based on this preliminary analysis, two long term residential expansion options were identified, one to the west of First Street and the other to the east on Block Y, between Sixth Street and Eight Street. The major constraint to expansion in each of these areas is the sewer system, requiring either significant re-grading or the installation of lift stations. More analysis of this system will be required.

In the shorter term, the major constraint to any type of new development in the hamlet is the limited water supply. Until more water is available in the hamlet, there will be few opportunities to grow or expand. Further evaluation of this system is required.

Given the long term changes that will occur regarding the upgrading of the Trans Canada Highway to a limited access freeway, future development plans for the hamlet must acknowledge that access to the hamlet will come from Secondary Road 884 to the west, and this is the area of the hamlet most suited for future commercial development to serve the community as well as highway traffic.

While there is some opportunity to develop industrial land in the north-east corner of Suffield, future industrial development adjacent to residential areas needs to be strictly regulated and should be light industrial or service commercial in nature with minimal impacts on adjacent properties. Other industrial activities should be located either south of the CPR tracks, or in other rural industrial districts.



SUFFIELD AREA STRUCTURE PLAN REVIEW

FIGURE 4 FUTURE LAND USE OPTIONS

Future Residential - East	7 ha
Future Residential - West	10 ha
Future Commercial	5 ha
Future Industrial - South East	7 ha
Future Industrial - South West	14 ha

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June 2010

APPENDIX

Residential Survey



**Residential Survey – Hamlet of Suffield
May 2010**

Introduction

Cypress County has hired PlanWell Consulting to revise the Area Structure Plan for the Hamlet of Suffield. This revised Area Structure Plan will provide a framework for the future growth and development of Suffield. In order to provide a useful framework, the Plan must reflect both the aspirations and the concerns of the residents and land owners in the community.

This survey is being conducted as one way to identify some of these aspirations and concerns, and your participation in this survey is very important to Cypress County. It is quite short and will only take a few minutes of your time. This copy will be left with you as an invitation to the up-coming Workshop and Open House.

And if you think of something that we did not cover in the survey, please contact either PlanWell Consulting, or Cypress County (contact information is provided below).

Invitation

There will be a number of opportunities to provide comments regarding this Area Structure Plan:

1. **Planning Workshop** - June 3, 2010 from 7:30 to 9:00 PM, at the Suffield Community Hall. This will give everyone a chance to speak, listen, and share ideas about how Suffield may develop in the future.
2. **Open House** to review the results of the survey and the draft revised Area Structure Plan - mid September - date to be confirmed.
3. **Public Hearing** later in the Fall when County Council considers the revised plan for adoption - date to be confirmed.

This plan is for you and your community. Please take the time to attend the Workshop and the Open House. If you can't get to both, then try to attend one of these sessions. Your opinions and views are important to the success of this Area Structure Plan.

We will be sure to let you know the dates, times and places for the Open House and the Public Hearing, once these are established.

Contacts

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RESIDENTIAL SURVEY – HAMLET OF SUFFIELD - MAY 2010

1. Demographics

- a. How many people live in this household? ___ people
- b. How many school-aged children live here? ___ children
- c. How many people work outside the home? ___ workers
- d. Where do they work? _____
- e. How long have you lived in Suffield? < 1 yr. 1-2 yrs. 3-5 yrs. > 5yrs.

2. Opportunities

- a. Why do you live in Suffield? _____

- b. What do you like best about living in Suffield? _____

- c. What other things make Suffield a nice community? _____

3. Concern

- a. What do you think would make Suffield a better community?

- b. What is the biggest issue facing this community? _____

Final Comments - Any other comments you wish to make regarding Suffield and this plan?

THANK YOU