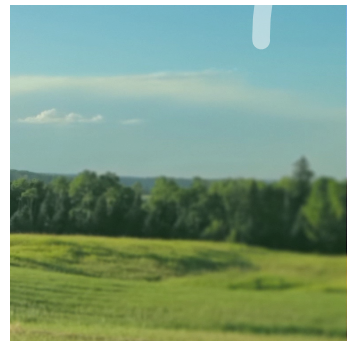


# 2026-2030 **STRATEGIC PLAN**



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# table OF CONTENTS

About the Strategic Plan	3
Council Commitment	4
Vision	5
Council Strategic Goals	
Responsible Development	6
Future Financial Capacity	7
Rural Identity & Agriculture	8
Communication & Trust	9
Next Steps	10

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# about the STRATEGIC PLAN

In February 2026, Clearwater County Council gathered to discuss what the community told them they wanted to see for Clearwater County if they were elected. They also considered current political, environmental, social, technological, legislative and economic influences on achieving and seeing success in a new strategic plan. The result of this time together is this Strategic Plan that provides absolute clarity of future expectations for the community.

Clearwater County as a community stands at an important moment in its history. Blessed with vast landscapes, rugged beauty, and a deeply rooted agricultural heritage, Clearwater County has long been defined by dedication, hard work, independence, and a genuine rural identity. These strengths (our people, our land, and our way of life) remain the foundation on which we build our future.

At the same time, Clearwater County faces real pressures. Aging infrastructure, shifting demographics, rising costs, and increasing expectations from residents and other levels of government all demand thoughtful, disciplined planning. Misinformation, rapid policy changes, and external economic forces add further complexity.

Yet within these challenges lie meaningful opportunities: to strengthen our financial position, to modernize our planning tools, to support agriculture in new ways, and to rebuild trust through clear and consistent communication.

This plan reflects new themes to guide a unified direction for Clearwater County. They reflect our strengths, address our weaknesses, and position us to seize opportunities while managing the threats ahead. Most importantly, they express Council's commitment to a future that is financially responsible, community driven, and proudly rural.

**Responsible Development** ensures that growth happens in a way that respects our rural character, protects agricultural land, and aligns with long term financial capacity. Updating planning documents, guiding tourism responsibly, and setting clear expectations for the right mix of commercial and industrial development will help Clearwater County grow on its own terms.

**Future Financial Capacity** recognizes the need for disciplined fiscal management. Rebuilding restricted surplus balances, prioritizing core services, and planning long term infrastructure investments will position Clearwater County for stability and resilience. Through smarter use of facilities and partnerships with neighboring municipalities, we can reduce costs while maintaining high quality services.

**Rural Identity & Agriculture** reaffirms what makes Clearwater County unique. Supporting agriculture, not just preserving it, means helping farmers keep more value in the community, encouraging local business opportunities, and protecting the west-country lifestyle that draws families here. This theme celebrates the authenticity, independence, and community minded spirit that define our region.

**Communication & Trust** focuses on strengthening the relationship between County Council/Administration and citizens. By improving transparency, simplifying communication, and engaging residents (especially our youth) in a more meaningful way, we can rebuild confidence and ensure decisions reflect community expectations.

This Strategic Plan is not just a document, it is a shared vision for a strong Clearwater County, built by hard-working farming generations who call this place home.

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# council COMMITMENT

Clearwater County is a place defined by its people, its landscapes, and its deeply rooted rural identity. Our residents value independence, hard work, and the freedom that comes with living in a region shaped by agriculture, natural resources, and the west-country lifestyle. As Council, we are committed to protecting these values while preparing the community for a strong and prosperous future.

This Strategic Plan reflects the voices of our residents, the realities of our current environment, and the opportunities ahead. It acknowledges the challenges we face while recognizing the tremendous strengths that set Clearwater County apart.

This document is our commitment to the people of Clearwater County: to govern responsibly, communicate openly, and protect the rural character that makes this region such a remarkable place to thrive collectively with your community - friends and family.



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# vision STATEMENT

**Rural roots** grow strong here!

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# mission STATEMENT

To provide effective, fiscally responsible governance that supports agriculture, protects rural identity, maintains critical infrastructure, and builds trust through clear and consistent communication.

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# council STRATEGIC GOALS

Council has identified four focus areas to guide decision-making and implementation activities over the next four years. Each focus area has an intended outcome and series of measurable actions to guide Administration in achieving the vision for Clearwater County.



# RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT

*Guiding growth in a way that respects rural character, protects agriculture, and aligns with long-term capacity.*

Clearwater County will support development that is fiscally responsible, environmentally appropriate, and aligned with community expectations. Growth must enhance (not erode) the County's rural identity.

## **Objectives:**

- Change planning documents (MDP, LUB) to reflect community values
- Support responsible tourism and economic diversification
- Ensure development aligns with infrastructure capacity and long-term costs
- Provide clear direction for right mix of commercial and industrial development

## **Key Actions (Success Measures):**

- Complete a Hamlet Country-Residential (CR) Strategy
- Identify targeted areas for the right mix of commercial and industrial development
- Increase availability of shovel-ready development sites
- Strengthen development standards to protect agricultural land and rural character

# FUTURE FISCAL CAPACITY

*Building long-term fiscal sustainability through disciplined planning and effective operations.*

Financial resilience is essential for maintaining services, supporting infrastructure, and preparing for future needs. Clearwater County must rebuild restricted surplus balances, prioritize core services, and manage costs responsibly.

## **Objectives:**

- Rebuild restricted surplus balances to support long-term stability
- Prioritize legislatively required services and clarify the County's mandate
- Develop a long-term capital infrastructure plan informed by effective asset management
- Thorough efforts to align to our programs to achieving success in our priority goals

## **Key Actions (Success Measures):**

- Consolidate facilities where feasible to reduce administrative overhead
- Implement a long-term road and bridge investment strategy
- Explore shared services and partnerships with neighboring municipalities

# RURAL IDENTITY & AGRICULTURE

*Protecting and strengthening the authentic rural character that defines Clearwater County.*

Agriculture is the backbone of Clearwater County. Supporting farmers, protecting agricultural land, and promoting the west-country lifestyle are essential to maintaining the County's identity and economic resilience.

## **Objectives:**

- Support the agricultural sector through practical, community-focused initiatives
- Reinforce the County's rural identity and lifestyle
- Encourage family-oriented, community-minded growth
- Help local producers retain more economic value within the County

## **Key Actions (Success Measures):**

- Explore opportunities to restore or attract agricultural services (e.g., auction mart, butcher, parts suppliers)
- Promote hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation as part of the County's identity
- Protect agricultural land in appropriate locations through updated planning policies
- Support local employers in attracting and retaining staff

# COMMUNICATIONS & TRUST

*Strengthening relationships through transparency, clarity, and meaningful engagement.*

Clearwater County residents expect open, honest communication and a government that listens. Building trust requires consistent, simple messaging and opportunities for residents (including youth) to participate in shaping the future of the entire community.

## **Objectives:**

- Improve resident satisfaction and confidence in County decision-making
- Increase public participation in surveys, engagement sessions, and planning processes
- Strengthen youth involvement
- Combat misinformation through proactive, clear communication

## **Key Actions (Success Measures):**

- Enhance County-wide communication strategy with a focus on increasing clarity and accessibility
- Create youth engagement strategy
- Implement regular feedback mechanisms to measure resident satisfaction
- Provide transparent updates on major projects, finances, and development decisions

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# next STEPS

- Council approved May 26, 2026.
- Administration to revise Requests for Decision (RFDs) to include the new direction in the strategic plan.
- Annual strategic planning session with Council to discuss the new environment surrounding us and consider potential adjustments to the plan.

## **REVISIONS:**

# strategic PLANNING FRAMEWORK

