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Investigating the feasibility and acceptability of TDC's in the BHI

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Future growth is an important factor that must be considered when it comes to city planning. Strathcona County, Alberta is a unique case in that it has experienced high rates of growth in the past decade and they are expected to continue into the next 20 to 30 years. This area is also unique in that it is comprised of a number of different lifestyles (e.g. urban, estate, rural) and a number of different types of land (e.g. developed, agricultural, protected and unprotected natural habitat, private and public lands). As a result, there are many competing factors that will influence how development happens on the landscape, and the subsequent effects of development on the environment and the social community.

In order to accommodate the additional population that is expected to immigrate into Strathcona County, a Transfer of Development Credit (TDC) program has been proposed as a tool to manage growth and protect environmental amenities. In this study, a simulation model was developed to compare different TDC scenarios (4) with the base case scenario which assumed current city planning densities over a 20 year period. It was found that, after 20 years, the implementation of a TDC program was able to accommodate the additional growth while limiting the conversion of natural lands, as well as increase tax revenues to the city. The degree of these figures differed between the different TDC scenarios tested.

Another important aspect of these development scenarios is the public support for development in the area. To investigate this issue, a stated preference choice experiment was developed to illicit the publics' willingness to trade-off the protection of natural lands with development and residential density. Levels for attributes were derived from the simulation exercise. It was found that the public preferred low density development, and conservation of natural areas. This information will aid in the development of a TDC program (or other planning programs) that is acceptable to the public.