

RECREATION AND CULTURE STRATEGY

COMMUNITY PROFILE

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

Strathcona County has a rich cultural and economic history, with strong agricultural roots, a robust petrochemical sector, and high quality natural and recreational amenities and is situated within a world-renowned natural biosphere.



POPULATION



The County's population has nearly doubled since 1989. While population growth has slowed slightly, steady growth should be expected moving forward.



By 2036, the County's population may exceed 130,000. Based on national and local trends, it is likely that the proportion of seniors (age 65+) in the County will increase significantly. This will create new demands and pressures for the provision of County infrastructure, as well as health, education, and other services.



Immigration is slowly increasing within the County, with immigrants arriving from a greater diversity of countries, including the Philippines.



73% of the County's population lives within the Sherwood Park urban service area and 27% reside within the rural service area.

ECONOMY



The County's economy has traditionally relied upon the vitality of the petrochemical industry. However, in recent years the County's economy has diversified into retail, construction, and light industrial.



The median household after tax income (\$104,689) is significantly higher than the provincial median (\$80,300).



3.4% of the County households are categorized as low-income.



Approximately 12% of residents' property taxes is allocated towards recreation, parks, and culture. A household that lives in a \$500,000 home (which is the close to the average home resale price in Strathcona County) would pay \$3,475 in property taxes; \$414 of which would go towards funding recreation, parks, and culture.



The County participates on regional boards and committees to help ensure that long-term growth and development continues to provide residents with a high quality of life.

RECREATION AND CULTURE STRATEGY

COUNTY PLANS AND POLICIES



Strathcona County has a long-term vision to become **Canada's most liveable community**.

Many of the plans have broad **goals and objectives** that the Recreation and Culture Strategy can strive to accomplish:



Providing residents with programming that meets changing needs.



Creating opportunities to be healthy and active.



Ensuring accessibility and affordability of cultural, recreational, and social infrastructure.



Creating new strategic partnerships with businesses and community organizations.



Enhancing the accessibility, efficiency, and integration of County trails within a broader multi-modal transportation system.



Fostering community buy-in via innovative and accessible engagement strategies.



Collaborating with other municipalities and institutions to advance innovative solutions to changing needs, make efficient use of infrastructure, and advance economic diversification.

During the development of the Recreation and Culture Strategy, **infrastructure** priorities from various plans will have to be revisited and prioritized:



Aquatic facilities



Cultural facilities



Outdoor aquatics



Heritage facilities



Off-leash dog parks



Parks



Sports fields



Trails

Allocation policies are already in place for ice arenas, pools, and fields.



The County's Municipal Development Plan states that **investment** in infrastructure, quality services, cultural and recreational programs and facilities is a priority.



Partnerships are a key theme in many County planning and policy documents.



Maintaining existing facilities and spaces is a priority identified in County plans.



Some direction for **programming** is provided. Focus areas for programs should include culture, history, heritage, and events.



Active transportation is highlighted as a priority across multiple planning documents.



The inclusion of **public art** is required during infrastructure development and enhancement.



One of the existing plans recognizes that **decommissioning aging facilities** might be required in the near future.

The County's existing plans and policies lay a solid **philosophic foundation** in which the Recreation and Culture Strategy can build upon. Key themes found throughout existing plans include:



Accessibility



Transparency



Inclusion



Fiscal Responsibility



Affordability



Public Engagement



Health and Wellbeing



Environmental Preservation



Safety



Heritage Preservation

RECREATION AND CULTURE STRATEGY

TRENDS






BENEFITS

There are many proven **benefits of recreation and culture**:

-  Essential to personal health and wellbeing
-  Reduces self-destructive and anti-social behavior
-  Is a significant economic generator
-  Provides a foundation for quality of life
-  Builds strong families and healthy communities
-  Reduces health care, social service and police/justice costs
-  Green spaces are essential to environmental and personal wellbeing






RECREATION

Trends in recreation services include:

-  Increased popularity of unstructured spontaneous activities
-  Volunteers are looking for term-defined opportunities to bolster their skills and resumes
-  Aging infrastructure is a major concern for municipalities throughout the country
-  Social inclusion is being considered in facility design
-  Promotion methods to ensure all demographics are being reached

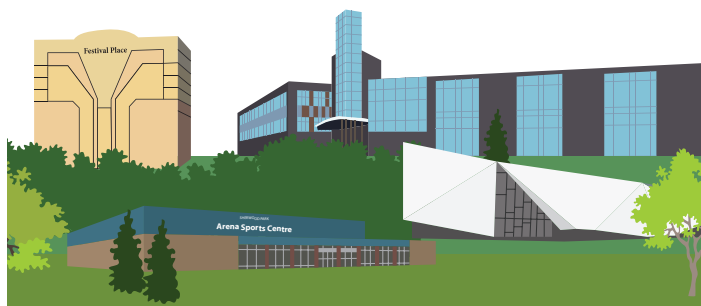
CULTURE

Trends in cultural services include:

-  Transformation of public spaces for events and activities
-  Encouraging local artists to shape the character of neighbourhoods
-  Less reliance on new physical infrastructure
-  Greater engagement with the private sector
-  Cultural mapping to promote opportunities

COMPARISON

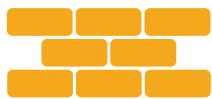
Compared to other municipalities and regions in western Canada, Strathcona County provides many facilities and spaces at a better provision rate (i.e. residents per facility). Fewer off-leash dog parks and skateboard parks are seen in the County as compared to the other municipalities. The County is not lacking in the provision of indoor facility spaces. Strathcona County has a relatively high cost recovery and low net spending per person compared to other Alberta municipalities.



RECREATION AND CULTURE STRATEGY

BROADER PLANNING REVIEW

NATIONAL



National and provincial planning documents and frameworks can provide a foundation for recreation, parks, and culture services in municipalities.



The Framework for Recreation in Canada calls upon all service providers to increase inclusion and access to recreation for populations that face constraints to participation.



Parks for All is an action plan for Canada's parks community. It provides direction on connecting people to nature, conserving and enhancing park systems, and collaborating with others to achieve common goals.

REGIONAL



To varying extents, all of the municipalities in the Capital Region have planning in place for community services such as recreation, parks, and culture.



Nine of the thirteen municipalities/entities in the Capital Region are currently developing, or strongly considering, major capital projects for recreation and culture.

PROVINCIAL



The Modernized MGA requires municipalities to explore how they can work with regional neighbours in providing recreation services (among others).



The Government of Alberta, as expressed through the Spirit of Alberta policy, envisions an Alberta where all citizens feel a sense of belonging and pride, and participate in cultural activities that reflect their diverse heritage and enrich their lives.



The Active Alberta policy encourages municipalities to advocate on behalf of community-based recreation, active living and sport initiatives to other levels of government.

LOCAL



Local community groups are advocating for new facility development. Such initiatives include the potential enhancement or replacement of existing facilities as well as the introduction of new spaces.

RECREATION AND CULTURE STRATEGY

FACILITIES AND SPACES

INDOOR AND OUTDOOR



There are approximately 60 publicly supported indoor recreation and culture spaces in the County including:

- 3 fitness centres
- 3 aquatics facilities
- 7 ice arena facilities (11 ice sheets)
- Wilderness centre
- Performing arts theatre



Strathcona County's indoor recreation and culture assets have a modernized replacement value of over \$400 million.



Strathcona County offers nearly 2,000 hectares of open space, 280 km of trails, and over 450 outdoor recreation and sport spaces including:

- 147 playgrounds
- 105 sports fields
- 75 ball diamonds
- 29 outdoor rinks
- 21 pickleball courts
- 9 beach volleyball courts
- 2 year-round dog parks



The modernized replacement value of outdoor infrastructure in the County is approaching \$100 million.



Many facilities are operated through agreements with community groups, including:

- 14 community halls
- 3 seniors centres
- 3 curling rinks
- Museum

UTILIZATION

Community facilities accommodate over 1.2 million visits a year



630,000+ annual fitness centre visits



Prime time ice utilization is at 93%. Over 1,000 hours remains available for rent.



14% of residents have a Millennium Card

Over 14,000 Millennium Card holders



3,500 annual museum visits



18,000 annual art gallery visits



85 performances hosted by Festival Place annually

87 performances at Festival Place hosted by community organizations and schools annually



22,110 annual performance attendance

RECREATION AND CULTURE STRATEGY

COMMUNITY PROFILE

GENERAL FINDINGS



Recreation and culture are important elements of people's lives and to the community.

Benefits accrued include health, stress reduction, enjoyment and fun, and involvement with the outdoors.



People are quite satisfied with the recreation and culture opportunities currently available to them.



Recreation generally has a higher profile and is seen as being more established and broadly supported than is culture.



Barriers to participation include cost, awareness of the opportunities, program availability, and physical accessibility.



There is a sizeable proportion who are unsure about their willingness to pay additional property taxes. A significant minority does exist who would support an increase in property taxes.



There is a greater acceptance of paying increased user fees to support enhanced opportunities than increased property taxes.

FACILITY AND SPACE PRIORITIES

Indoor



Indoor Field Spaces / Field Houses



Fitness / Wellness Spaces



Gymnasiums



Ice Arenas



Swimming Pools

Cultural



Performing Arts Theatres



Event Grounds

Outdoor



Trails (non-mechanized)



Dog Off-Leash Parks and Areas



Campgrounds



Swimming Pools



Natural Areas



Public Art

COMMUNITY GROUP AND STAKEHOLDER CONCERNS



The provision of services in rural areas



Having sufficient access to facilities and spaces to adequately provide programming and address demands



The recruitment and retention of volunteers



Partnering and coordinating efforts of organizations, particularly volunteer groups, and especially cultural organizations