

# Ward 6

## UPDATE

August 2010

### Alan Dunn Councillor, Ward 6

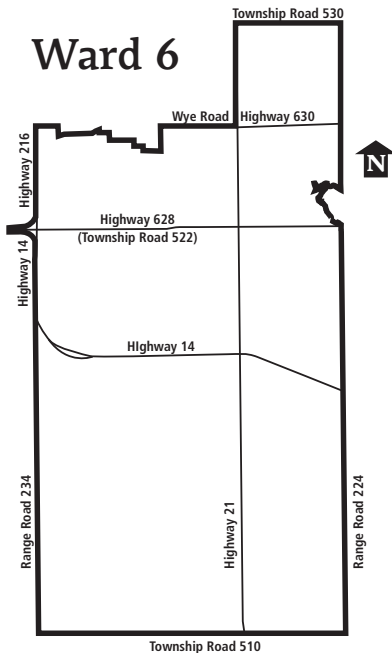
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County

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### Ward 6



#### Distribution of this newsletter

This newsletter is intended for residents of Ward 6, as shown on the map above. To economize, it is being distributed according to delivery zones established by Canada Post, which do not coincide with ward boundaries.

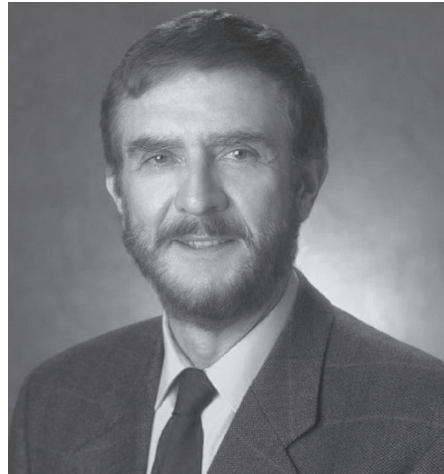
A limited number of households in Wards 5 and 7 may receive a copy as a result. If so, please enjoy the information and make note of the councillor for your area.

Ward 5, Councillor Jacquie Fenske, 780-464-8147  
Ward 7, Councillor Glen Lawrence, 780-464-8003

 This newsletter is also available at [www.strathcona.ca](http://www.strathcona.ca).

**FSC logo**

### from your councillor



Councillor Alan Dunn

### Does Strathcona County have a vision?

A vision is more than slogans and platitudes. "...a vibrant community of choice", is in part how we describe ourselves in our vision statement. This is very nice, but what does it mean and how can we use it to build community? We can all think of a dozen "vibrant communities of choice" in Canada alone, all very different in size, configuration and flavour. There is, however, nothing in this statement to suggest which we are to emulate and why.

Strathcona County does a pretty good job of planning in that we have a comprehensive Municipal Development Plan, an evolving Land Use Bylaw and a fine team of professionals to keep the planning process on the rails. Planning in this sense answers the necessary question of "How?" without addressing the important policy questions of "Why, When and How Much?"

We need a vision that would outline a target population; growth rate; the proportion of residential, commercial and industrial tax base, and demographics. It would be a virtual

picture of a future, better Strathcona. We would not expect that our picture would be realized exactly or in the predicted time frame, but it would serve as a guide to ongoing decision making.

We need a strategic plan to address business planning issues at present largely ignored. How much growth do we need? What will it cost and what will be the benefits in concrete social, financial and environmental terms? At present, we do not even have a systematic way of comparing one proposed development to another to determine which should be preferred.

A strategic plan must include a methodology for dealing with other levels and orders of government, especially the province.

Finally, any plan should make it very clear that there is but one "stakeholder" – that group of folks who live, work and pay taxes in Strathcona County. Everything we deem to be good or useful must be so in relation to the needs of that one stakeholder.

This is more than a mere academic discussion. Unless we develop a vision and strategic plan with real goals and real numbers, we will continue to find it difficult to make forward-looking decisions. The results of such decisions are visible everywhere in the municipality. Every bad decision degrades our standard of living and increases taxes. That is why we should care.

### Development and risk

More and more, Strathcona County is under pressure by special interest groups and by politicians to expand our participation in the development business.

What this participation would mean is that the municipality would fund new residential, commercial and continued on page 2

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## UPDATE

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industrial development by paying up front for required infrastructure such as roads, sewers and water, and then recover the investment with a handsome profit as lots are sold. What could be wrong with this? After all, we all know that developers make tons of money. For the most part, they drive nicer cars and belong to better country clubs than the rest of us. Why shouldn't the County participate in this largesse?

Risk is the reason we may wish to think this through. Everyone assumes that property values will continue to rise indefinitely and maybe they do over the long term. Over the short or intermediate term, as the current recession has shown us, it can be messier. Developers often see costly projects sitting idle for years if the lots are not purchased, or have to sell out at fire sale prices if cash flow is becoming a problem. Meanwhile, the interest on borrowed money continues to build, which is fine if the developer has deep enough pockets to weather the bad times.

We as a municipality do not have such deep pockets. We collect just enough taxes and fees for our current capital operations and debt servicing requirements, plus a bit more for rate smoothing. I do not believe residents and taxpayers would accept the wild swings in cash requirement that a heavy participation in development would entail. And, to those who argue that nothing like this could happen, I would point out that it already has. We have recently been asked to amend the current budget by over \$6 million to cover a shortfall in land sales at Centre in the Park. Land development is a gamble. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose.

I take it as axiomatic that unless there is a significant benefit to all members of the community, we should only use public money to provide necessary services, not to risk it at the development craps table.

### 2011 Budget

Preparation of the annual budget for the County is always untidy during an election year. There is the added

inconvenience of two different Councils dealing with the same budget. The budget process begins in the spring of the year; by the time the end product is ready to be approved at year end, a new and possibly quite different Council has been sworn in, leading to the potential of significant last-minute changes proceeding from differences in philosophy. The time required to prepare an accurate budget together with the election and the fiscal year end, both dates defined by statute, make it impossible to do anything about this anomaly.

Therefore, in the interests of efficiency, we need to recall that budgeting resolves to a simple question:

**This is what we want (services); how much do we have to pay (taxes and fees)?**

We rarely like the answer, so we then turn the question around:

**This is what we are willing to pay; what can we get?**

The budget process bounces back and forth between these two expressions until we narrow the answer down to a result that nobody loves, but most can live with. Where this relatively straightforward process breaks down is when this question, in either of its forms, is replaced by the statement:

**Here is what we want AND this is what we are willing to pay.**

This implies that the taxes and services are somehow independent of one another. The interdependence of what-you-get versus what-you-pay wastes a vast amount of time and effort looking for a pot of gold to close the gap. Reserves, borrowing limits, provincial grants and developer levies exist, but they are not simply loose change lying around for us to dip into for every project. Each of these funds has a definite purpose with specific limitations as to how it may be spent.

Meanwhile, the debate rages on within Council and elsewhere, searching for the silver bullet that will allow us to have everything we desire without paying for it. At the end of the year, the budget will be what it will be – reality always wins in the end. Goods and services cost what they cost, no matter what promises are made.

All that will result from engaging in this is the hangover of disappointed

• activities for all ages  
• family fun



• free BBQ  
• make connections

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expectations. What we need now and in the future is some frank discussion as to whether we are prepared to pay for our current levels of service or whether we need to adjust our expectations.



## Water rebates a hit with County residents

Strathcona County's water rebate program is now finished for the year. Since January, the County provided rebates for the purchase of over 800 front-load washing machines and 400 low-flush toilets to encourage County residents to save water.

In total, over 1,200 rebates were provided to County residents, making it the first year since the program began that all of the rebates were allocated.

Residents who have already had their rebate application approved will still receive a rebate. The Alberta Government also has a \$100 rebate for front-load washers available that Albertans can apply for, while quantities last. Details are available at [www.climatechangecentral.com](http://www.climatechangecentral.com) or by calling 1-888-537-7202.

The Government of Alberta's Water for Life strategy asks that all municipalities reduce their water use by 30 per cent over the next five years. The rebate program is an important part of achieving this goal and Strathcona County hopes to offer it again in 2011.

The low-flush toilet rebate program began in 2004. In 2009, the program expanded to include front-load washers. Strathcona County partners with Climate Change Central to administer the rebate program.

## 2009 Annual Report available

Strathcona County's 2009 annual report, containing Financial Statements for the year ending December 31, 2009, and highlighting some of the key accomplishments during the last year, is now available on the County website. Go to: [www.strathcona.ca/departments/Financial\\_Services/annual-reports.aspx](http://www.strathcona.ca/departments/Financial_Services/annual-reports.aspx)

## Public engagement policy approved

Council approved a public engagement policy and supporting framework June 22 to guide the ongoing design and implementation of its public engagement activities.

Strathcona County recognizes that public engagement is beneficial and important to its decision making. It also recognizes that to be most effective, engagement must be transparent and accountable, clear in its purpose and the public's role, carefully planned and implemented, and respectful of the public and its input. Ideally, Strathcona County citizens of all ages will be meaningfully engaged in civic life, such that their voices strengthen decisions and their involvement helps build the community in which they live, work and play.

The public engagement framework reflects these eight principles:

1. Involving the public leads to better decisions
2. Public engagement processes are equitable
3. Public engagement is inclusive
4. The public understands its role in the process
5. The public is informed
6. Communication with the public is effective
7. Public engagement is proactive
8. Public engagement is transparent and accountable

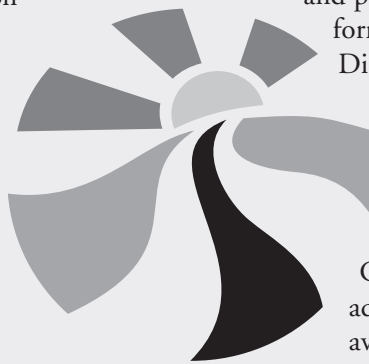
The framework also defines four different degrees of public involvement – input, listen and learn, collaborate, and empower – and is an important tool for ensuring the public is aware of how their participation and input will be considered in making the final decision.

### Reaching out to seniors

As the older adult population continues to grow, Strathcona County is actively rolling out its Older Adults Plan. This plan sets out goals and strategies that focus on meeting current and anticipated needs of older adults.

The Seniors Outreach Program was developed as part of the Older Adults Plan to assist seniors and their families to maintain wellness and independence. An outreach worker visits seniors in their home and provides emotional supports, advocacy and referrals to assist with areas such as emotional well-being, housing, social isolation, grief and loss.

To discuss your needs or the needs of a senior you know, please contact Strathcona County Family and Community Services at 780-464-4044 or [familyandcommunity@strathcona.ab.ca](mailto:familyandcommunity@strathcona.ab.ca).



### Resource Directory for seniors

A goal in Strathcona County's Older Adults Plan is to ensure older adults receive clear, user-friendly information about services and programs in a variety of formats. The Seniors Resource Directory provides seniors and their caregivers with information on the various programs, services and activities available in Strathcona County to support older adults. Information is available on a wide range of topics such as housing, home supports, health services, social and recreational activities, program subsidies, and caregiver supports.

Seniors can pick up their copy of the directory at various locations throughout Strathcona County such as Family and Community Services, seniors centres, health clinics, the Information and Volunteer Centre and the library.

Further information is available at [www.strathcona.ca/seniors](http://www.strathcona.ca/seniors).

## Large item pickup

Do you have large items that are no longer useable? Coming in September, residents who subscribe to waste collection services from Strathcona County can put out two large items at the front curb or end of their driveway on their regular collection day and we will haul them away for you.

There is a limit of two items per household. Please have items out by 7:30 a.m. on collection day.

All items must be less than six feet by three feet (1.8m x 0.9m) and weigh less than 200 lb (90 kg). Please remove doors and lids to fridges and freezers, and make sure the coolant system is not damaged. Items with fuel or oil tanks (barbecues, lawnmowers etc.) must have tanks

## Large item collection days

Regular collection day	Large item pickup
Monday	September 13
Tuesday	September 21
Wednesday	September 15
Thursday	September 23
Friday	September 17

removed. Fuel and empty fuel tanks can be taken to an Enviroservice event.

Refer to your 2010 waste collection calendar or our website for a list of acceptable and unacceptable items. Questions? Go to [www.strathcona.ca/utilities](http://www.strathcona.ca/utilities) or 780-449-5514.

## Dog park update

Many people may be wondering what is happening at the corner of Highway 21 and Township Road 522, where a popular off-leash area used by residents and dog-owners is located.

Between 1959 and 1978, this area was a regional landfill. Over time, excavations created during landfill operations filled with water, creating wetlands. Strathcona County recently monitored the area, seeking advice from Alberta Environment and Capital Health.

Assessments confirmed that some environmental contamination had occurred, consistent with what might be expected of a landfill site operating during that time. Concentrations of oil and grease (hydrocarbons) were found east of the wetland, and in the wetland itself.

To date, the County has completed the following:

- wetland drained, excavated and material placed on earthen berm
- contaminated material excavated and sealed within a clay berm creating a gentle hill
- water treated and the contaminated sludge beneath removed
- previous wetland area back-filled
- all drainage work completed
- topsoil and fencing

Access to the construction area is still restricted due to the recent seeding and proposed walkway construction. We appreciate your patience while we make this a cleaner area for you and your dogs to use.

## Enviroservice events

Every day new products can be found on store shelves that help make cleaning and other tasks around the home a little easier. Disposal of these materials; however, needs to be a conscious effort.

Many paints, cleaners, automobile care products, solvents, pesticides, herbicides, stains and varnishes contain toxic or hazardous components. Once exposed to the environment, these substances may threaten living organisms. Small quantities accumulate over time and contaminate the air, water, and soil. Products that are flammable, corrosive, explosive, or toxic should not be disposed of in landfills or sewage systems.

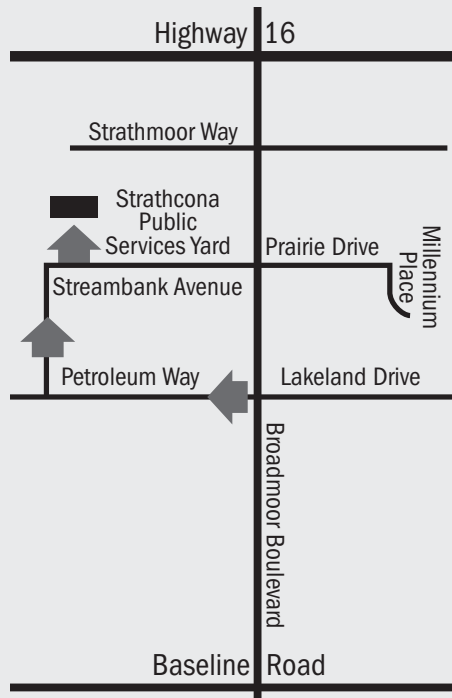
### Rural Enviroservice event

On Saturday, September 16, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, there will be an event at Fire Station #3 Ardrossan, located at 6 Main Street, Ardrossan.

Please note: Appliances and waste will not be accepted at this event. Please bring these items to the Enviroservice event on Streambank Avenue.

### Sherwood Park Enviroservice events

Enviroservice events are held at 420 Streambank Avenue (see map) in Sherwood Park every two weeks from May to October. Check your collection calendar or the County website for dates and acceptable items.



## Controlling Strathcona beaver population

Strathcona County places great value on wildlife. A natural environment is something our residents appreciate, especially those in rural areas. While watching wildlife can be a highlight of life in the country, there are certain animals that can be considered a pest or nuisance. Sometimes beavers fall into this category, especially when they are building dams or cutting trees in close proximity to human habitation or road infrastructure.

Although we have not experienced high rainfall events until recently, this can

happen quickly, with little warning. Our drainage systems need to be functioning as designed to ensure that flooding does not occur to nearby properties.

While we support, and in fact welcome beaver activity in many areas of rural Strathcona County, there are key areas where we cannot allow beavers to set up home. When public infrastructure systems are endangered, or if public buildings or private roads are impacted by beavers and their activity, they must be controlled.