

Enjoying quality of life today  
...while creating the desired  
community of tomorrow

## Message from the Mayor

The future will belong to those municipalities that are well prepared to seize opportunities and provide a good quality of life for residents.



Bottom centre: Mayor Cathy Olesen.  
Centre: Councillor Ken Lesniak (Ward 2). Clockwise from Mayor: Councillor Linda Osinchuk (Ward 3), Councillor Brent Jewell (Ward 1), Councillor Alan Dunn (Ward 6), Councillor Glen Lawrence (Ward 7), Councillor Peter Włodarczak (Ward 4), Councillor Jacquie Fenske (Ward 5).

Strathcona County has spent considerable time and energy this past year to ensure that we are on the right track in preparing for our future.

There have been several significant opportunities where we have asked for residents' input. We have worked to be open and inclusive whether it's in getting your thoughts on the Municipal Development Plan, understanding community values as we create a social sustainability framework to guide people services, or hearing from you as to how budget dollars should be spent.

At the same time, work continues to deliver the services residents need today to live safely and enjoyably in this diverse and vibrant community. This Report to the Community shares some of the highlights of our progress.

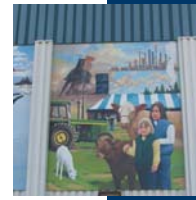
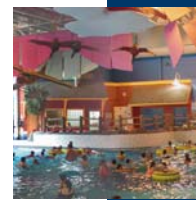
It is an exciting time for this community... a hospital for Strathcona County, Centre in the Park, a booming industrial and business base. Amid the momentum, we realize the need for balance... protecting our natural areas, preserving aspects of our heritage, using energy efficient technologies in the assets we manage.

Your County Council looks forward to the continued involvement of business, industry and the community in shaping and making this special municipality *all* that it is.

Cathy

Cathy Olesen  
Mayor

**Strathcona**  
County



# Strathcona County Report to the Community - 2006

# Strathcona County

## A Specialized Municipality

The Government of Alberta classifies Strathcona County as a Specialized Municipality, one of only

four in the province.

This status recognizes Strathcona County's unique makeup of both a large urban centre and a significant rural area and population.

An advantage of this designation ... the County is eligible

to receive grants and other provincial benefits available exclusively to urban centres, as well as the benefits that are targeted to rural municipalities.

## Is Sherwood Park still a hamlet?

In Alberta, the term *hamlet* is used to describe centres that are governed by a county; it does not reflect population or geographic size. If a municipality governs itself and elects its own Mayor and Council, then population determines a municipality's status as a city, town or village.

In 1987, Strathcona residents voted in favour of preserving a single local government for the entire County. Sherwood Park, and our rural centres (Antler Lake, Ardrossan, Collingwood Cove, Half Moon Lake, Hastings Lake, Josephburg, North Cooking Lake and South Cooking Lake) are all governed by Strathcona County, and therefore are considered hamlets.

## Our Vision

Strathcona County is a safe, caring and autonomous community that treasures its unique blend of urban and rural lifestyles while balancing the natural environment with economic prosperity; and through strong, effective leadership is a vibrant community of choice.

## Award-winning ways

### Chief Commissioner honoured for excellence in public service

Strathcona County's Chief Commissioner Bill Sutherland received one of Alberta's most prestigious honours for public service, The Lieutenant Governor's Award for Excellence in Public Administration in 2005.



### 2005 Minister's Awards for Municipal Excellence – Partnership Award - Beaver Hills Initiative

Strathcona County is proud to share the limelight with Beaver County, Leduc County, Lamont County and 15 provincial, federal and non-government organizations for the collaborative effort to preserve the natural habitat and important ecosystem of the Beaver Hills/Cooking Lake Moraine.



### 2005 Communities in Bloom

Strathcona County won the 50,001 – 100,000 population category of the 2005 National Edition of Communities in Bloom. The judges were most impressed with the involvement of the whole community.



### Premier's Award for Healthy Workplaces

Strathcona County received a Premier's Award for Healthy Workplaces - Award of Merit (500 - 999 employees category). The award recognizes Alberta employers who provide healthy workplace programs that encourage employees to live a healthy and active lifestyle.

### 2005 Consumers' Choice Award

Consumers voted Millennium Place as the recipient of the 2005 Consumers' Choice Award for Business Excellence in the category of Health and Fitness.

### 2005 National Environmental Education and Communication (EECOM) Award

Strathcona Wilderness Centre received the 2005 EECOM award in the Government Agency category for excellence in environmental education. The honour cited: strong environmental leadership, quality programs and overnight camping experiences.

### 2005 International Council of Active Aging Award

Millennium Place and the Glen Allan Recreation Complex received "age-friendly facility" designations from the International Council of Active Aging.



### Visit the Country guide tops in promotion

The *Visit the Country* guide won the Tourism Marketing award from the Economic Developers' Association of Canada - selected from a competition of 189 national brochures.

# Our Strategic Plan

Three years ago, Strathcona County adopted a Strategic Plan as the foundation for responsible municipal planning and allocation of resources.

Through this Strategic Plan, a number of significant policies and plans have been adopted, or are in development, moving Strathcona

County toward its vision ... creating the community of the future.

**Framed within the five key perspectives of the Strategic Plan, we highlight some of the plans, programs and services delivered in 2005, and what's in store for 2006.**

## Perspective 1 Governance

To provide for the long-term viability of an autonomous Strathcona County through the provision of effective governance based on clearly defined municipal roles, sound policies and plans, and effective two-way communication with community stakeholders.



### Municipal Development Plan

How our community grows and develops over the next 20 years will be shaped by the direction approved in the new Municipal Development Plan.

The plan's key priorities are to:

- maintain the character of our existing community
- balance the distribution of land uses
- manage growth
- preserve the environment—water, soil and air
- maintain and enhance options for agriculture
- direct development to the most suitable locations
- incorporate safety as part of land use planning

Still in the draft stage, extensive research, planning and public input went into the development of the plan.

From the concept of creating a brand new community in Strathcona County to expanding the protective area of the Beaver Hills Moraine, there is a wealth of development-related information and proposed direction in the plan.

### Active support for regional cooperation

There are many positive examples of how we work together with our Capital Region neighbours for the good of our residents and our region such as:

- the coordination of regional transit systems to move riders between communities



- mutual aid agreements between the region's fire and police departments
- joint work through the River Valley Alliance to ensure the North Saskatchewan River valley is a natural resource that can connect and benefit us all

The Alberta Capital Region Alliance (ACRA), of which Mayor Olesen is currently Vice Chair of the board, is another significant way that municipalities discuss and explore regional matters. For instance, through ACRA:

- the Anthony Henday Drive extension was elevated as a regional priority
- a new Regional Geographic Information System (RGIS) will be developed to allow municipalities to share GIS data and leverage each other's systems through a common approach

### 2005 Municipal Census

Strathcona County continues to be Alberta's third largest municipality and a choice community according to the municipal census, which the County conducted in May 2005. From 2003 to 2005, the population increased by 5.6 per cent.

**2005 County population: 80,232**

55,063 live in Sherwood Park

25,169 live in the County's rural areas (farms, acreages and rural hamlets)

# Perspective 2

## Community Development

### Well-being

To foster a community of caring, respectful and responsible citizens who feel and are safe, have a sense of neighbourhood, and enjoy a broad range of opportunities for healthy lifestyle choices.

### Social Sustainability Framework

Development of the Social Sustainability Framework began in 2005. The process has included input from more than 600 people on issues such as poverty, social isolation, needs of the elderly, positive environments for children and affordable housing. The plan will guide how social services are delivered, and define the County's role in delivering them.

### Now that's Wellpower

Strathcona County was named one of the healthiest communities in Alberta by Alberta's Ministry of Health and Wellness after 3,000 residents participated in the Wellpower Challenge last winter.

Out of 62 participating communities, the County was one of nine Alberta communities recognized for its commitment to improving the health of residents. Residents took over 2.4 million steps and

an average of 73 per cent of participants followed Canada's Food Guide during the challenge.

### Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy

The Strathcona County Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy Committee, involving 23 community partners, is producing a series of articles to increase public awareness and knowledge about drug and alcohol issues. The committee continues its work on strategies toward prevention, early intervention and treatment, and provides a link into regional issues and concerns.

### Parent Link

Together, the County and the Boys and Girls Club opened the Parent Link Centre to give parents opportunities to enjoy play with their preschool children and learn about child development and community resources. Activities are offered in Sherwood Park and rural Strathcona County.



### Sustainability

To sustain and preserve the County's unique urban/rural community and natural environment by directing and managing growth through proactive plans and sustainable development policies that display a strong sense of stewardship.

### Centre in the Park community energy system

Centre in the Park, a multi-use area now under construction in the heart of Sherwood Park, will include residential buildings, retail services and public spaces including a central walkway and plaza.

An innovative community energy system will heat the new Centre in the Park buildings and existing County buildings in the area using hot water piped underground from a central source. It is expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 18 per cent per year compared with individual conventional systems. Operated as a utility, all costs will be paid by user fees. The project has already gained international attention as a model of sustainable development.





## Conservation

Strathcona residents place a high value on conserving our special natural spaces. Various landowners have entered into 98 conservation agreements with the County, conserving 3,153 acres of wildlife habitat on private property. The County manages an additional 60 environmental reserves totalling 372 acres, and 284 municipal reserves totaling 4,267 acres for conservation purposes.

On the water conservation side, the County is one of the partners working with Petro Canada to operate a recycled water pipeline from the Gold Bar Wastewater Treatment Plant. Also, several counties, including Strathcona, are together exploring alternative water supplies rather than using drinking water for the agriculture industry.

## Waste Management Services Plan update

In 2006, the Waste Management Plan will be updated with opportunity for public input. Strathcona County has decreased waste going to landfill by 50 per cent since 1989. Refinements to the plan will aim to achieve even higher waste reduction, recycling and composting levels through leading practices and continued community commitment.

## Economic viability

To support and contribute to a healthy economy that benefits residents, businesses and industry.

### Strong economic growth

- In 2005, Strathcona County recorded:
  - 767 new jobs
  - 138 new businesses
  - 1,733 building permits issued
  - 1,185 residential housing starts
- Of the \$14.5 billion worth of major industrial projects scheduled for the metro-Edmonton area – Strathcona County claims \$9.7 billion of that total.
- Alberta's Industrial Heartland continues to attract national and international companies to locate and invest in the area.

### 2007 Western Canada Summer Games

In just over a year, August 3 - 11, 2007, the largest sporting event to ever come to Strathcona County will be here. Over 2,700 athletes, ages 12 - 33, will compete in 17 sports, and exciting cultural programs will add celebration to the games.



Estimated regional economic impact – \$10 million



# Perspective 3

## Service Delivery

To demonstrate excellence in customer service through the planning and delivery of programs and services that reflect community priorities and are based on the principles of effectiveness, efficiency, economy and fairness.

### A community on the go

- In 2005, Strathcona Transit ridership increased to over 2 million.



- More mini buses are being used in peak and off-peak times on local routes. Mini buses offer greater fuel economy, cost less to buy and maintain, are easier on the roads and better suited to lighter volumes than standard buses.

- Within the Rural Road Master Plan, base repair and resurfacing was completed on 13 country residential subdivision roads, and 51 kilometres of grid roads. Three kilometres of hamlet roads were resurfaced in 2005.
- Over 1,800 metres of sidewalk were repaired and over 3,000 tonnes of asphalt was placed, 1,353 signs were repaired, 6,000 tonnes of sweepings were collected and 32,600 metres of road line painting was completed.
- The Baseline Road and 17th Street intersection “jughandle” was completed, improving intersection traffic flow.
- Six modern traffic circles called roundabouts were constructed in residential areas and Centre in the Park.
- Sherwood Drive twinning from north of Baseline Road to Centennial Park is gearing up for construction.



- The first two lanes of the four-lane Lakeland Drive, from Sherwood Drive to Broadmoor Boulevard, will begin construction in 2006.
- Intersection improvements on Petroleum Way at 17 Street and at Broadmoor Boulevard will begin.

### This land is our land

- From a workshop on raising fish in ponds and dugouts to pasture management, the County, together with various partners, presented several rural living educational opportunities.
- The Agricultural Service Board sponsored the new Environmentally Friendly Rural Yard Contest. Congratulations to the Coatta family, the 2005 winners, who collect rainwater for their garden, place mulch in their flowerbeds and compost horse manure for their land.
- A new information series, *A Citizen's Guide to Planning Practices*, was offered to help residents better understand municipal planning, from subdividing, to building a house, to starting a business.
- In 2006, grass cuttings will increase to 16 cycles – four more a season – for better groomed sports fields and green space.

### Utility essentials ... water and waste

- Electronics recycling was added to the Household Hazardous Waste Round-up and the Great Exchange in 2005, collecting 10 tonnes of electronics.
- The successful introduction of the Toilet Replacement Rebate Program provided over 250 rebates to residents who are now conserving more water using low-flush models.
- The Central Trunk wastewater upgrade was completed to increase capacity. Phase 1 of the multi-phase 34th Street sanitary trunk upgrade has begun.
- The new Centennial Wetlands stormwater management facility was completed and the Stormwater Master Plan was reviewed.

## Living life to its fullest

- Residents can now register for recreation programs online. The *Click-it* launch was a huge success with 63 per cent of registrants signing up online on the first day of registration.



- Online community hall information is now at your fingertips. Find contact names, floor plans, road maps and much more at: [www.strathcona.ab.ca](http://www.strathcona.ab.ca).
- The County has acquired **Bremner House** and is developing a business plan to preserve and create public opportunities to enjoy this piece of our heritage. Built in 1903, this 5,400-square-foot, three-storey brick farmhouse is located just northeast of Sherwood Park on 80 acres.



- Renovations to the **Strathcona County Heritage Foundation Museum** were completed. Drop in and tour excellent natural and human history exhibits of this area.
- Strathcona County was one of the region's **host municipalities to 2005 World Masters Games** with weightlifting at Millennium Place, softball slo-pitch at the Centennial Ball Diamonds and golf at the Northern Bear Golf Course.
- The County's **Home Support Services** received a **95-per-cent satisfaction rating** from those using its services.

## To serve and protect

- In response to growth, **three new full-time RCMP officers and a Special Constable** have been hired. With the added members, specialized programs such as bike, ATV and snowmobiles patrols can be mobilized.
- Special Constable and Bylaw Services will provide more support to community mediation as a proactive approach to dealing with community conflict and disputes among neighbours.
- The Drug Abuse Resistance Education program, **DARE**, was **expanded** to junior high schools. Drug related offences were down by 25 per cent in 2005 from 2004.
- To respond to increasing property crime, a team of four RCMP members has been dedicated to the targeting and prosecution of property and drug offenders. Property crime statistics showed a **27-per-cent drop in property crime in 2005**.
- **Emergency Services** responded to over **4,050** emergency medical services, fire, and rescue and dangerous goods incidents in 2005.
- 2005 saw an additional **12 full-time Fire Fighters/EMT-AP** and **13 part-time Firefighters** hired.



## Perspective 4 Communications

To facilitate effective and appropriate two-way communication among the County, its residents and other community stakeholders.



### Informing and engaging residents

Through various vehicles like open houses, the website, newsletters, brochures and advertisements, we seek to inform you about the many issues, services and events. In March 2006, there were 97,581 visits to the County's website, averaging over 3,100 visits a day.



### Capturing community history

2005 marked the 50th Anniversary of Sherwood Park, the half-century milestone for the Elk Island Art Club, and 70 proud years for the Partridge Hill Community League. Strathcona County's history is rich. In 2006, the County will spearhead an archival project to compile and present the community's history so residents can access, understand and appreciate what Strathcona is today and what it has been through history.

# Perspective 5

## Resource management

To manage the corporation's human, financial and physical resources in an effective and efficient manner, based on community needs and priorities.

### 2005 financial highlights

The average household paid approximately \$110 per month to support municipal services in Strathcona County.

#### Did you know?

Of the property tax paid in Strathcona County in 2005

- 58 per cent funded municipal services
- 40 per cent went to the province to fund education
- The remainder paid for library services and low- and modest-income seniors' housing

- The County is piloting new air lines running from a central compressor that keep buses pressurized while parked. The system eliminates the need to idle buses to increase pressure to release air brakes. Diesel fuel costs are reduced and air quality improved.
- New solar panels are being piloted on some County trucks, providing power for two-way radios, warning lights or laptops. This reduces the need to idle vehicles while stopped.
- New hybrid trucks automatically shut off when stopped. Each one saves about 1.8 tonnes of greenhouse gases every year.

### Approved 2006 Budget

- \$133.9 million to fund municipal services.
- \$56.9 million to fund capital projects, including \$35.8 million for roadway projects and \$8.3 million to maintain and enhance some facilities.
- Reflects a 3.6 per cent municipal tax increase for programs and services; less than the cost of inflation for goods and services. Another 1.5 per cent will be added to pay for recycling services, which were previously funded through utility user fees.
- The average single family residential household will see about a \$65 increase to their 2006 property tax bill.
- Utilities (water, wastewater, storm sewer and solid waste collection) continue to be funded by user fees. Residential customers in Sherwood Park will pay an additional \$11 per year in utilities.

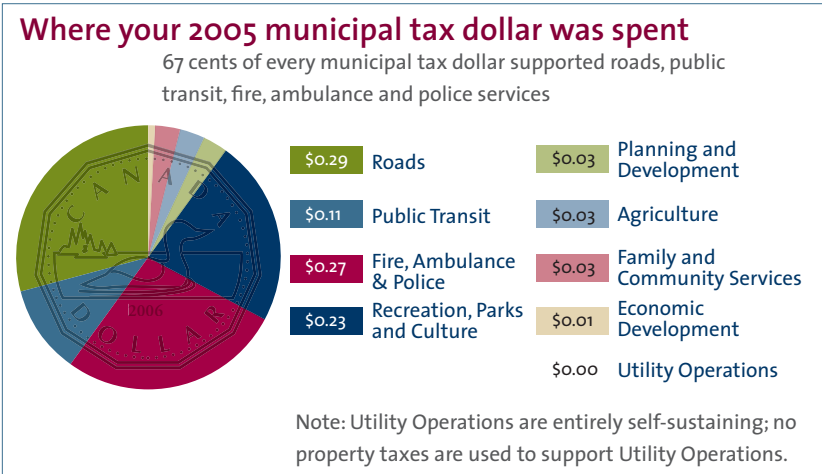
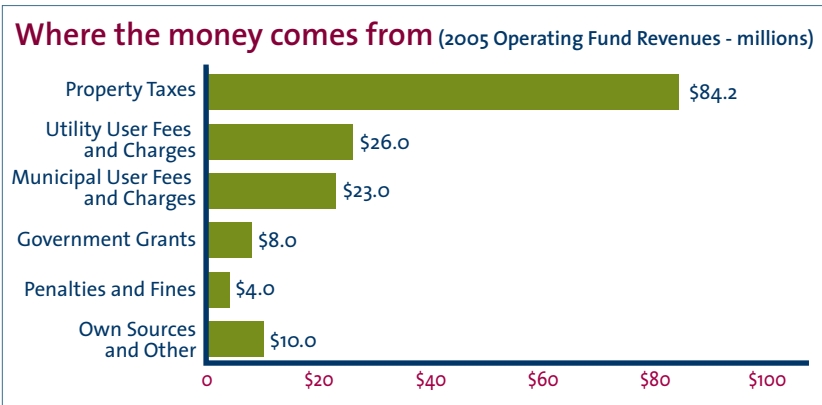
*Keeping in touch*

Visit our website often for news and information about the County.

[www.strathcona.ab.ca](http://www.strathcona.ab.ca)

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### 2005 innovation and efficiencies highlights

- Industrial air curtains installed in the bus storage building allows for faster refueling. Bay doors can remain open and buses don't need to wait to drive in. The curtain's constant stream of air provides comfortable temperatures in which to work.