

# Executive Summary



Strathcona County  
2011-2013 Strategic Business Plan & 2011 Budget  
***“Balancing Community Needs to Maintain Quality of Life”***  
**Executive Summary**

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## **Introduction**

Developing Strathcona County’s Strategic Business Plan and Budget is an inclusive and complex task that involves considerable deliberation with all stakeholders. Working together, Council and Administration determine how to best balance the needs and wants of our diverse community with the resources available to the municipality. These are important decisions as they directly affect our community’s quality of life. Both Council and Administration are committed to maintaining that quality of life for all citizens, rural and urban.

The County’s Strategic Plan is the foundation for the Strategic Business Plan and Budget. It was updated early in 2009 and sets out the municipality’s vision and long-term goals. It anticipates and accommodates change while encouraging decisions made stay focused on community priorities.

For the 2011-2013 Strategic Business Plan and 2011 Budget, emphasis has been placed on sustainable decision-making and a balance between environmental, economic and social implications. The Community Centre exemplifies this triple bottom line approach to decision making. The Community Centre Project Team used the LEED framework (environment), analyzed the lifecycle and maintenance requirements when purchasing equipment (economic), and included gathering places in the Centre’s design (social) to adhere to our sustainability framework.

Industrial stakeholders contribute significantly to the County’s tax revenue base. Timing of proposed major industrial projects in Strathcona County is still uncertain. Potential remains for billions of dollars in investment over the next several decades, but the timeline for this development continues to be extended, requiring adjustment in the County’s growth and revenue forecasts. Given this uncertainty, the County must ensure decisions made now consider future implications.

When deliberating the budget, Council must constantly balance different community needs. How much money can be invested in social programs and environmental stewardship? Citizens also expect their local government to build and maintain roads, supply safe drinking water and provide emergency services.

Finally, the County must look to the future. Council is expected to plan for a solid economic foundation for our growing community, be fiscally prudent and provide value for the tax dollar.

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## **The Budget Process**

The budget is developed based on recommendations from departments, senior administration and Council, along with public input.

### **April:**

Public input is invited through a random telephone survey of 400 residents, open houses, and an invitation for any interested resident to comment.

### **June:**

- Council receives the public input and reviews all current programs and services and reviews financial projections.
- Council provides guidance and direction for the upcoming Business Plan and Budget

## **The 2011 Budget was developed under the following guidelines:**

- ✓ Maintain municipal service levels while searching for efficiencies in operations to lessen the tax requisition to residents.
- ✓ Increasing selected user fees to keep pace with market conditions and to offset increased costs on fee based services.
- ✓ Maintain utility service levels while searching for efficiencies in operations to lessen the impact on utility bills.
- ✓ Continue to provide annual operating funds for annual capital programs.
- ✓ Utilize debt as a potential financing source for capital projects.

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## Highlights of the proposed 2011 Budget

### Municipal Operations

- Programs and program service delivery levels will be generally maintained at Council-approved 2010 levels.
- Ten new Business Plan initiatives are recommended:
  - Create a City of Edmonton/Strathcona County Trans-Boundary Watershed Management Development Plan
  - Implement Consistent Addressing for Rural Subdivisions
  - Implementation of Strathcona County Emergency Services (SCES) “Emergency Management Branch”
  - Addition of Community Risk Reduction, Fire Prevention and Fire Investigation Resources to SCES
  - Implement Elder Abuse Prevention Program
  - Implement Corporate Branding
  - Implement Webcasting of Open Council Sessions
  - Create a County Page for Advertising
  - Support Social Media Tools
  - Coordinate Implementation of Public Engagement Policy and Framework
- The proposed municipal operations operating budget for 2011 is \$225 million.
- This budget represents the resources required to implement Council’s strategic direction, maintain current programs and service levels, and provide for important new Business Plan Initiatives.
- The impact of municipal price inflation (MPI) has been incorporated into the total operating expenditure budget. MPI is estimated to be 2.7% for 2011 and is expected to amount to an estimated \$5.5 million for County municipal operations. MPI represents the estimated increase in cost of the County’s “basket of goods” (i.e., asphalt, gravel, etc.)
- The impact of a projected 2.13% population increase, continued development and the increased demand for and cost of municipal services have been addressed by the 2011 operating budget.
- The 2011 operating budget requires additional municipal property tax revenues (\$5.2 million) equivalent to approximately 3.45% tax dollar increase to support maintaining current service levels.
- Municipal tax rates for 2011 will be subject to Council’s approving the 2011 Tax Rate Bylaw in May 2011. In addition to municipal property taxes, tax rates provide for anticipated provincial education requisitions, Library and Seniors Management Services.
- Selective increases are recommended to occur in fees and charges for certain programs and services.
- The recommended 2011 Municipal Capital Budget amounts to \$37.3 million.

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**Municipal Operations**

The 2011 Capital Budget:

- Has a continued focus on the replacement of existing capital infrastructure, which is critical to maintaining programs and service levels.
- Includes an investment in new priority capital infrastructure, responding to the increased demand for services.
- No new debt for municipal operations is proposed to support priority capital infrastructure projects. Strathcona County's total debt of \$213 million projected for December 31, 2011 is well within the limit legislated by the Province of Alberta.

**Utilities Operations**

- Programs and program service delivery levels will be generally maintained at Council-approved 2010 levels.
- One new Business Plan initiative is recommended, Implementation of 4E Recommendation for Utilities.
- The proposed Utilities operating budget for 2011 amounts to \$49 million.
- The Utilities user fee for water, wastewater, storm sewer, and solid waste will see a net rate increase of \$4.71 per month for the typical Sherwood Park residential customer.
- Utilities will continue to be entirely self-sustaining in 2011 with no property tax revenues required to support utility operations (except for recycling stations and Enviroservice events). Only those customers who benefit from utility services pay for the utility services.
- The recommended 2011 Utilities Capital Budget amounts to \$14.9 million.

**Library Operations**

- The proposed Library operating budget for 2011 amounts to \$8.3 million.
- The Library is not proposing a general tax dollar increase for 2011.
- The recommended 2011 Library Capital Budget amounts to \$0.5 million.