

**STRATHCONA COUNTY  
RECREATION AND CULTURE STRATEGY**

# **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW**

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# DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY - AN OVERVIEW

Strathcona County is in the process of developing a new Recreation and Culture Strategy. This twelve year strategy will replace the existing Open Space and Recreation Facility Strategy (OSRFS), which has guided the County's provision of facilities and open spaces over the past 10 to 15 years.

This new Strategy will extend its attention beyond facility development and enhancement and will provide a more holistic view of recreation, parks and cultural priorities in the community by considering all aspects of service delivery including partnerships and community development.

A variety of inputs will inform the strategy's development including:

- public engagement;
- community profile including benchmarking comparisons with other communities;
- trends in the provision of recreation and culture services; and
- current and future context in Strathcona County within which services are delivered as identified through other related County plans and policies.

Public and stakeholder engagement is vitally important to Strathcona County and extremely relevant to future planning for recreation and culture services and the development of this new strategy.

## INPUTS TO THE STRATEGY



Since June 2018, Strathcona County has received nearly 5,000 responses about the direction of the Recreation and Culture Strategy; representing over 34,000 voices collected through resident, youth, community group and stakeholder surveys.

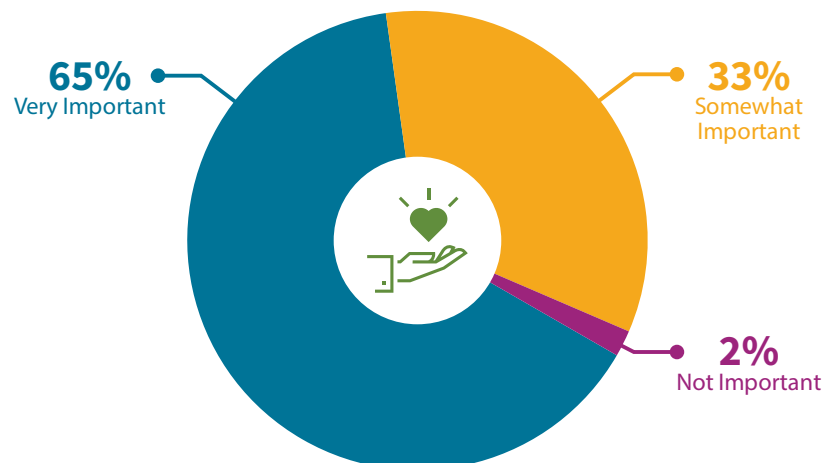
The preliminary findings from the public engagement to date are presented in this summary.

## 2018-2019 MASTER TIMELINE



Spray Park at Broadmoor Lake Park

## Importance of Recreation and Culture to quality of life



Approximately 2/3 (65%) of households consider recreation and culture opportunities very important to their quality of life. Another third (33%) said these opportunities are somewhat important.

- Household Resident Survey, 2018



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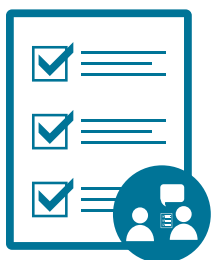


Youth Leaders in Training

# 1 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

## ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

A diverse program of engagement was implemented to gather input. The specific tactics are identified below.



### INTERCEPT SURVEY

Intercept surveys were fielded at various locations to learn people's early thoughts about recreation and culture in Strathcona County. Survey locations included the Ardrossan Picnic and Parade on June 16, PlayDay on June 18, the Canada Day Festival, as well as at:

- Millennium Place - Seniors' Fitness Days
- Community Centre Agora - Blood Donor Clinic
- Festival Place - Patio Series
- Gallery @ 501
- Glen Allan Recreation Complex
- Ardrossan Recreation Complex
- Sherwood Park Library Bookmobile - Ministik
- Millennium Place
- Strathcona Wilderness Centre - Fall Open House
- and other community locations and events

In total 535 responses were gathered during the summer months of 2018.



### RESIDENT HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

The resident household survey was fielded using two different methodologies. A **coded survey** was used in which a unique access code was provided to individual households. This

code allowed each household to participate in an online survey. The access codes were mailed out to a random sample of 10,000 households in Strathcona County replicating the urban (Sherwood Park) and rural distribution (74:26). The survey ran from September 4 to October 15, 2018. These survey findings are considered statistically representative of County residents because a random sample of households was invited to participate. In total 388, responses were collected.

An **open version** of the household survey was also available for completion. This version of the questionnaire was very similar<sup>1</sup> to one used in the coded survey – however no code was needed to access it. In total 2,727 responses were collected. This total includes 293 responses from participants of SCOOP (Strathcona County Online Opinion Panel).<sup>2</sup> The open survey was available for responses from October 1 to November 9, 2018.

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- 1 Revisions were made to the open questionnaire in an effort to encourage a higher completion rate.
  - 2 SCOOP is an opt-in online survey community where members are regularly invited to provide feedback on County initiatives and issues. This type of community is also known as an Online Research Panel (ORP). ORP's are interactive tools that have been used successfully in industry, business, and municipal government. [www.strathcona.ca/scoop](http://www.strathcona.ca/scoop)

In addition to social media, TV's in facilities and other assorted media, staff provided opportunities to complete the survey by iPad or paper copies at the following locations over the Fall 2018 season:

- Strathcona Olympiette Centre
- Millennium Place
- Strathcona County Hospital
- Community Centre - Blood Donor Clinic
- Glen Allan Recreation Complex
- Strathcona County Health Centre - Flu Clinics
- Strathcona Community Hospital
- Sherwood Park Log Cabin - Seniors Dance
- Strathcona County Library - Community Centre
- Moyer Recreation Centre
- Sherwood Park Farmer's Market
- Ardrossan Recreation Complex - Halloween Skate



## COMMUNITY GROUP AND STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

Community groups and stakeholders were invited to participate in a survey, with a focus on their organization and their thoughts about the delivery of recreation and cultural services in Strathcona County. The survey ran from October 17 through to December 10, 2018. In total 87 organizations provided a response; and over 400 organizations were invited to participate.

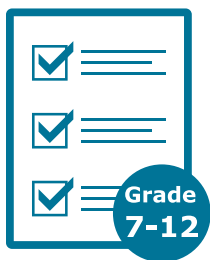


## COMMUNITY GROUP MEETINGS

Community organizations were invited to discussion sessions to gather additional insight into the provision of services from a range of perspectives. The feedback gathered through this means provides a greater understanding of the circumstances of organizations than can be learned through the findings from the group survey. Groups were invited to sessions in which attendees would have some commonality; often these groupings were based on types of facilities used, but could be based on type of participant served. In total, 14 meetings and conversations took place representing 30 different organizations throughout November 2018.



Snowshoe Path at Strathcona Wilderness Centre



## YOUTH SURVEY

A youth questionnaire was developed to capture the perspectives of the community's youth (ages 11-19 years). While the household survey does capture the needs of everyone in the household including the youth, this survey was a direct means of learning the youth perspective. There was a variety of tactics used to encourage participation from the community's youth, including connecting with the Elk Island Catholic and Public School Divisions. In addition, contact was made directly with youth and youth organizations to encourage participation in the survey outside of the school setting. The survey was open from November 1 through to December 10. In total 957 responses were gathered.

Survey	Number of Responses	Perspectives Represented
Intercept	535	535
Household - Coded Access	388	991
Household - Open Access*	2,727	7,663
Community Group and Stakeholder	87	24,678
Youth	957	957

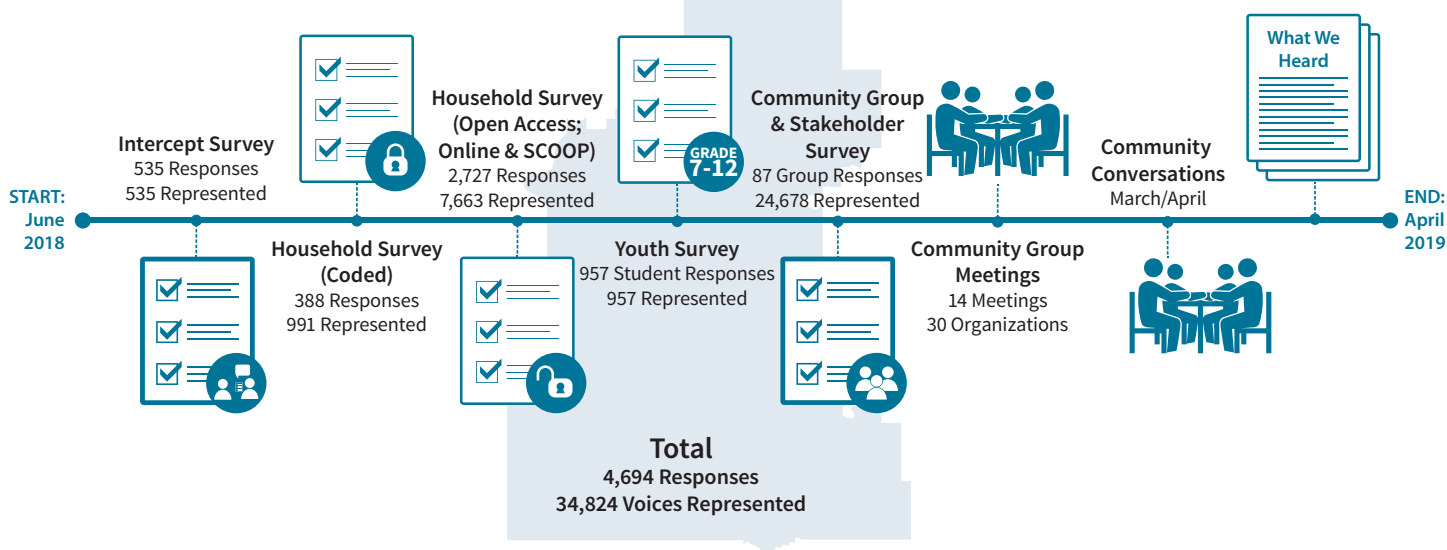
\* Includes 293 SCOOP (Strathcona County Online Opinion Panel) participants



## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Further to this, Community Conversations are scheduled to take place in March and April 2019 with a variety of recreation and culture community groups and stakeholders. The results of these discussion will be included in the final What We Heard report.

## ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE



# WHAT WE HEARD SUMMARY

## GENERAL FINDINGS



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

Benefits 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 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 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

### Outdoor



Trails (non-mechanized)



Dog Off-Leash Parks and Areas



Campgrounds



Swimming Pools



Natural Areas

### Cultural



Performing Arts Theatres



Event Grounds



Public Art

## COMMUNITY GROUP AND STAKEHOLDER CHALLENGES



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

# 2 COMMUNITY PROFILE

## COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The Community Profile is an important consideration for the development of the Recreation and Culture Strategy. 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.

## 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)
- 1 wilderness centre
- 1 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
- 4 seniors centres
- 3 curling rinks
- 1 museum and archives

### 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 of time remains available for rent.



14% of residents have a Millennium Card



3,500 annual museum visits



18,000 annual art gallery visits



85 annual performances



22,110 annual performance attendance

# 3 COUNTY PLANS AND POLICIES

County plans and policies are another consideration for the development of the Recreation and Culture Strategy.



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

Many of the County's 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.

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



Aquatic facilities



Outdoor aquatics



Off-leash dog parks



Sports fields



Cultural facilities



Heritage facilities



Parks



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



Inclusion



Affordability



Health and Wellbeing



Safety



Transparency



Fiscal Responsibility



Public Engagement



Environmental Preservation



Heritage Preservation

## 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.

# 4 TRENDS

Trends provide insight into the future needs, as well as an overall comparison of recreation and culture provisions in the region.






## BENEFITS

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

-  Essential to personal health and well-being
-  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.

