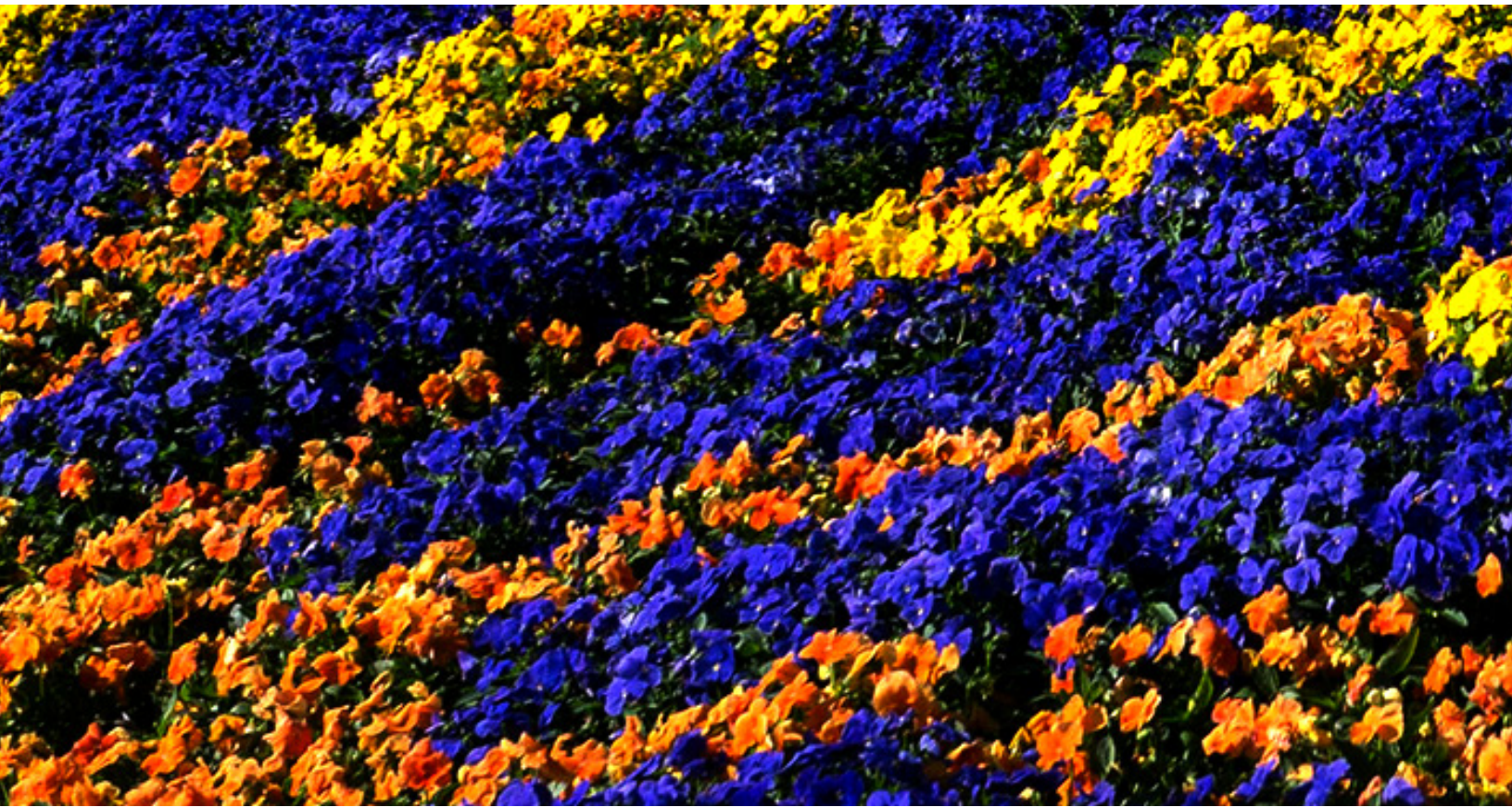




2020

Blackfalds Municipal Sustainability Plan

Fall 2020



BLACKFALDS
ALBERTA

2020 Blackfalds Municipal Sustainability Plan

Fall 2020

Prepared by Intelligent Futures, 2019 - 2020.

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Town of Blackfalds

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Disclaimer:

The Town of Blackfalds' Municipal Sustainability Plan (MSP) process, including the Council/Administration Workshop and the development of the initial draft of the MSP, took place prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The COVID-19 Pandemic and other factors created substantial delay in the final adoption of the Municipal Sustainability Plan and has had impacts in some of the measures identified in the document. Discussion points within this document, identified with an asterisk (*), are areas that have been updated or achieved during the time period from October 2019 until the adoption of the MSP.



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Contents

The 2020 Blackfalds Municipal Sustainability Plan is the latest in a line of comprehensive sustainability planning documents that guide decision-making by the Town of Blackfalds.

The document is organized into four chapters that feature four main sustainability planning components: vision sustainability pillars, critical steps and indicators.

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01



Sustainability in Blackfalds

The 2020 update of the Blackfalds Municipal Sustainability Plan (MSP) continues a shift in thinking with respect to sustainability to include the concept of resilience. According to the Stockholm Resilience Centre: “A resilience approach to sustainability focuses on how to build capacity to deal with unexpected change.”

To build capacity, it is important to keep a continual eye on the horizon for potential changes and external impacts, while simultaneously taking action in the present to strengthen the resiliency of Blackfalds with time.

This perspective is combined with an approach to action, monitoring and adaptation, which is identified in **Section 02: Sustainability Framework**. By taking an approach on short-term action with an eye to Blackfalds’ long-term vision, the Town is best positioned to generate results and improve our capacity as a community to adapt to change over time.

Sustainability Planning Process

Using the 2016 MSP as a starting point, this plan was refined and created through a workshop with Town Council, community input, and best practice research.

Phase 1: Review

To start the process, the project team reviewed and assessed the existing 2016 Municipal Sustainability Plan. The 2016 MSP organized and condensed the prior MSP into a more compact document focused on a Vision, Pillars, and Actions. The review of existing documents and recent data for Blackfalds was used in Phase 2: Council and Staff Workshop.

Phase 2: Council and Staff Workshop

The project team met with Town Council and Administration to provide the key context and content edits to the plan. This working meeting focused on exploring data reflecting major trends to create a shared understanding of the current and historical context of the community. Outcomes of the workshop included the identification of modifications to existing vision and pillars, as well as forces for and against sustainability in Blackfalds. An intensive session of action-crafting was also undertaken within the workshop, comprised of action brainstorming, prioritizing, and voting on critical steps to be included in the MSP. Council feedback can be found in **Appendix Section 4.2: Workshop Results**.

Phase 3: Community Engagement Survey

The set of new actions developed in the Town workshop were then sent out to the community for further prioritization and opportunities for comment. A series of 71 responses were collected and used to form the Pillars and Actions within the MSP. Responses can be found in **Appendix Section 4.3: Public Feedback**.

Phase 4: Vision, Pillar, Critical Step, and Indicator Refinement

The Vision, Pillars, and Actions were modified based off of Council's direction and community feedback. The draft MSP document was submitted in January 2020 for Council comment and revision. To help guide the completion of the critical steps and development of future MSP revisions, Town Staff also developed a series of indicators to be built upon.

Phase 5: Final Plan

The finalized MSP incorporated feedback from Town Council revisions and was completed in summer 2020.

1 Numbered circles are forces for sustainability in Blackfalds

A Lettered circles are forces against sustainability in Blackfalds

3 Centralized location

Forces For and Against Sustainability in Blackfalds

C Lack of attainable housing

5 New and/or planned educational facilities

1 Sports hub reputation

D High growth pressures

2 Motivated labour force

4 Strong partnerships and relationships

B Economic pressures

A Lack of provincial services

E Competition for investment with neighbour municipalities

Forces for sustainability

1 Sports hub reputation

- 18 parks/playgrounds¹
- Over 50 recreation and tourism facilities

2 Motivated labour force

- 80 percent employment rate, 2018²
- 5,022 in labour force, 2018
- 10 years of above provincial average population growth
- 35 percent residents aged 21-40, 2018
- 30 percent residents aged 0-20, 2018

3 Centralized location

- Access to three million people within a two-hour drive³
- Traffic volumes: 40,250 per day on Highway 2 (2015)

4 Strong partnerships and relationships

Strong relationships with:

- Other levels of government
- School boards
- Developers
- Victim Services
- Central Alberta organizations
- Economic Development
- Member of the Legislative Assembly, Lacombe-Ponoka
- Alberta Urban Municipalities Association

5 New and/or planned educational facilities

- High school schematic design completed, project to tender in fall 2020
- New Catholic Elementary School identified by the Red Deer Regional Catholic School Board

Forces against sustainability

A Provincial services

- Four schools
- One high school (construction scheduled)
- One doctor's office
- No Alberta Registries Outlet

B Economic pressures

- Alberta's real GDP is not expected to return to pre-recession levels until 2020^{**}
- Unemployment rate will not reach its 20-year average of about five percent until 2023
- Prolonged economic pressures from COVID-19 response and recovery

C Lack of attainable housing

- 18 percent of population spending 30 percent or more of household income on shelter
- Average monthly shelter cost for rented dwellings nine percent higher than Alberta average⁵

D High growth pressures^{**}

- 43 percent population growth rate from 2011-2016 vs 12 percent for Alberta
- On average population growth of 21 percent every four years vs 11.45 percent every four years for Alberta
- Estimated population 11,000 in 2019

E Competition for investment with neighbour municipalities

- Developers and trade are often drawn to surrounding municipalities of Red Deer, Sylvan Lake, & Lacombe. Blackfalds needs to create a unique identity to draw investment.

Sources

1. Town of Blackfalds. 2019. "Parks & Sports Fields." blackfalds.com/tourism-recreation/parks-sports-fields.
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3. Town of Blackfalds Economic Development. 2019 December. Available Land and Property Inventory.
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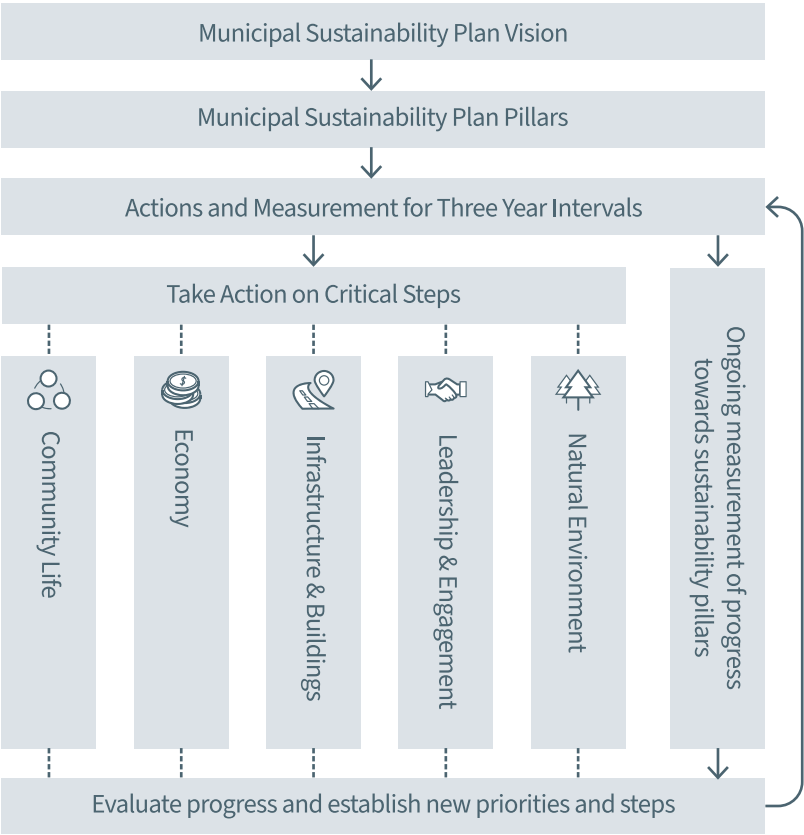
* This information had been assembled for the Government of Alberta 2019 Economic Outlook. The COVID Pandemic and other factors have made this timeline unrealistic.

** Post initial workshop to the formal adoption of the MSP document, growth within the Community slowed dramatically, as it has across the region and Province. The drop in growth has, in turn, reduced the pressures that had been previously identified.

Elements of the Plan

The 2020 Blackfalds MSP comprises four main components: the Vision, Sustainability Pillars, Critical Steps, and Indicators.

The Municipal Sustainability Plan Framework:
The Vision and Sustainability Pillars work in tandem to prompt action and measurement of municipal sustainability initiatives in Blackfalds.



Vision

How we developed the Vision:
The existing vision from the 2016 MSP was reviewed and modified from Council workshop suggestions.

The vision for the future of Blackfalds was created to provide a “north star” for the community—a direction that can be used to guide decisions and actions across all departments. The vision reflects the current goals of the Town, while identifying what Blackfalds aspires to be in the future. The five sustainability pillars are focused on specific aspects of the community, and together form the basis to support the vision.

“Blackfalds is a progressive and growing family community, situated in an economically sustainable, collaborative, healthy, safe, and beautiful living environment, where opportunities are abundant and realized through partnerships and innovation.”

Sustainability Pillars

There are five pillars of sustainability in Blackfalds: Community Life, Economy, Infrastructure & Buildings, Leadership & Engagement, and Natural Environment. All pillars are essential in supporting and realizing the vision for sustainability in Blackfalds. If one pillar is weak, it can make it more difficult for the other pillars to be successful. Rather than creating unnecessary silos in our thinking, these pillars are intended to organize our approach to the community, so we understand Blackfalds in a holistic way. As we look at actions that work towards the vision of sustainability, we are looking for the solutions that have a positive impact on a number of pillars simultaneously.

How we developed the Sustainability Pillars:
Based on feedback from Council and the public, the pillars from the 2016 MSP were revised. These were then reviewed by Council and Administration, resulting in the revised pillars.



Community Life

The everyday life of a resident in Blackfalds is characterized by the community. This includes both social and cultural elements such as a sense of belonging, mental and physical health, education, safety, and inclusivity, among others.

Goals:

- Create an ever-growing sense of community safety and pride is felt by all residents
- Maintain a community of friendly neighbours that share a sense of belonging
- Recognize the heritage of Blackfalds while encouraging heritage succession planning
- Host vibrant and unique community festivals, programs and events
- Launch opportunities for lifelong learning reflected through facilities that respond to Blackfalds' changing student demographics
- Facilitate abundant recreational and leisure opportunities that are both active and passive
- Create spaces and services that meet the needs of diversified groups
- Support and celebrate volunteerism and the community members that contribute to the enhancement of community life
- Actively support initiatives through various means to improve and expand health services to the community which will promote physical and mental health among all ages



Economy

A sustainable economy in Blackfalds includes a good ratio of residential to non-residential and a diversity of businesses and industries that include both local and national companies. There is a healthy balance of tax revenue between residential, commercial, and industrial businesses.

Goals:

- Attract and retain unique local businesses
- Promote a sustainable economy with a diversity of businesses and industries that include both local and national-scale companies
- Improve affordability for places to live, with a range of housing options for singles, seniors, and families
- Attract global opportunities for promotion and growth
- Strike a healthy balance of tax revenue between residential and non-residential
- Promote Blackfalds, its residents and businesses to a large geographic and demographic audience
- Attract businesses that reflect the existing family-oriented demographics of Blackfalds
- Ensure residents, young and old, can live and work in Blackfalds



Infrastructure & Buildings

Infrastructure & Buildings encompasses all of the built environments in Blackfalds. This includes buildings that service a diverse population and are able to adapt as the community changes and grows. Residents are able to choose from a variety of housing types and travel by bike, walking, ride-share service, or car. All of this is built and maintained in a proactive manner.

Goals:

- Ensure Blackfalds is a livable community that people seek out for its high quality of life
- Maintain a range of facilities to service diverse interests and needs
- Take a proactive approach to growth and new infrastructure and repair
- Invest in infrastructure across the entire municipality
- Create a range of mobility choices within Blackfalds and across the region
- Amend the Land Use Bylaw to include land use planning to build a variety of housing choices to accommodate all stages of life
- Buildings are of high-quality design and environmental performance
- Neighbourhoods in Blackfalds are designed to encourage walkability
- Infrastructure projects are considered and negotiated among multiple levels of government



Leadership & Engagement

Leadership & Engagement are crucial to keep Blackfalds moving towards our goals. This can be supported through an ongoing dialogue with the community, local organizations, neighbouring municipalities, and other levels of government. This ensures that residents and community leaders are informed, connected and able to provide feedback. This will result in the best possible decisions for everyone.

Goals:

- The Town of Blackfalds provides leadership and collaboration with citizens to enable community sustainability
- The community builds future leaders, while pursuing strategies for the enhancement of Blackfalds in the future
- Community involvement is built into Council decision-making
- The Town will be fiscally responsible while meeting the needs of citizens
- Town communication will use widely-distributed means of engagement such as social media, in addition to existing dialogue streams
- The Town pursues provincial, county, and regional funding opportunities, relationships and partnerships
- The Town advocates for community champions from a variety of demographics and interest groups



Natural Environment

The natural environment contributes to a high quality of life in Blackfalds. We will continuously seek opportunities to preserve and reclaim more natural space and build a culture to help promote community action to improve our environmental performance collaboratively.

Goals:

- The community reflects a culture of conservation
- We continually reduce our residential, commercial, and industrial waste while innovatively dealing with existing waste
- Alternative energy sources are encouraged and facilitated by the Town
- Development guidelines preserve and respect natural areas
- The natural environment is improved through reclamation initiatives
- The Town adopts an *Environmental Strategy* to guide meaningful environmental action
- Partnerships with surrounding municipalities are pursued for large-scale environmental initiatives
- The Town's municipal documents support environmental policy
- Short and long-term improvements to Blackfalds' parks and greenspaces are a priority

Critical Steps

Fourteen critical steps have been identified for Blackfalds to pursue over the next three years. These actions were selected through an evaluation process focused on moving the community towards the vision for the future.

How we developed the Critical Steps:

Council and Administration developed and voted on the most impactful critical steps. The project team then took these ideas and identified where there was crossover between sustainability pillars.

Indicators

Indicators are a way to monitor progress towards the vision and goals of the MSP. By measuring these indicators over time, Town Council and Administration can evaluate what efforts are working and what needs to change. The indicators also provide a unifying factor for the Town—allowing the various municipal departments to have a clear direction that they are working towards collectively. The indicators were developed using the three criteria for successful tracking: meaningful, measurable, and understandable.

How we developed the Indicators:

The 2020 MSP indicators were identified by Town Administration, building upon indicators developed for the 2016 MSP.

02



Sustainability Framework

As the Town works towards building a more sustainable community, it is important to keep an eye on the vision, while focusing on immediate actions that set the stage for future success. The framework for action features two parallel streams of activity: **Critical Steps and Indicators**.

By identifying the critical steps, initial progress is made towards the vision in ways that address current gaps and lay the foundation for other activities in the future. It is also important to keep measuring progress towards the overall direction set out in the vision and sustainability pillars. This way, the Town can measure the impact and progress of all activities towards the long-term aspirations of the community.

The two streams of activity are reviewed every three years as an opportunity to learn and re-assess the next round of priority actions. This process creates a predictable cycle of action, learning, reflection and adjustment, ensuring that Blackfalds is continually responding to current circumstances while keeping an eye on the long-term vision for the community. In this way, resilience is built over time.

Taking Action

Critical Steps help ensure that this plan is easy to understand and implement. The following list outlines key criteria used in creating and refining critical steps.

- The actions are within the Municipality's control and do not rely entirely on other governmental or community bodies
- The actions are achievable within the three year period between MSP reviews
- The actions establish a foundation for future actions
- The actions contribute to the future resilience of the community
- The actions address current gaps in the community
- The actions have clearly defined measures of success—both in terms of actions and results
- The actions contribute to multiple sustainability pillars
- The actions are opportunities which are not already in process

Each critical step is categorized within a single primary pillar, but isn't exclusive to one pillar in what it impacts. For example, an action can be within the Economy sustainability pillar, but may also influence Natural Environment goals. The secondary pillars that each critical step supports are highlighted alongside its description.





Community Life

The quality of community life is reliant on essential community services that support resident health and well being, in addition to arts and cultural programming. Though Blackfalds has multiple sports and recreation facilities and programs, there is an opportunity to grow the arts and cultural programming in the community. In addition, attracting health services and professionals to Blackfalds was identified as one of the most important steps for creating necessary community services in Blackfalds.

How this improves our resilience: By providing a diversity of arts and cultural programming, new community connections are made, new residents and visitors are attracted and a stronger, more diverse community is created. By attracting and retaining more health services and professionals, Blackfalds supports the health and well being of their growing resident population.





Critical Step 1: Develop a plan to bring health services and health professionals to Blackfalds



This action was ranked as one of the most important actions to Blackfalds residents in 2019. Attracting new health care services and professionals would aid in improving coverage for Blackfalds' growing resident population, through healthcare outside of hospitals which are regulated at the provincial level. Key areas of investigation should include:

- Identify which healthcare programs are missing in Blackfalds (e.g. general practitioners, mental health centres, addiction centres, birth centres, health clinics, geriatric care, specialist care centres, etc.)
- Create marketing strategies to attract general practitioners, and other health care specialists of interest, by promoting community life, publicizing business opportunities, and creating Town branding messages
- Lobby provincial healthcare service providers, for the resources needed to support needed expanded services and local existing healthcare facilities
- Encourage appropriate housing and community amenities available to attract and retain professionals
- Establish initiatives and/or processes to assist in the provision of appropriate healthcare facility potential in economic development recruitment efforts



Critical Step 2: Develop an Arts & Cultural Strategic Assessment



Two key aspects of the *Arts and Cultural Strategic Assessment* process and deliverables include:

1. Engage the arts and cultural community in Blackfalds and surrounding area to identify gaps and potential strategies. This step would help the municipality understand the needs and hopes of the arts and culture community and help identify where the “hot spots” of interest lie. This will help guide ideas for programming that meet the needs of the community today. Key areas of investigation should include:
 - What are the best arts and culture assets that we have in Blackfalds today?
 - What are the biggest gaps we have in arts and culture programming and facilities today?
 - What are your top ideas for new arts and culture programming and facilities in Blackfalds?
2. Identify a prioritized list of arts and cultural programming options. With an understanding of the needs of the arts and cultural community through the above engagement, recommendations can be made with the objective to “take a long term and dedicated approach to the development and delivery of this programming area” as identified in the *Recreation, Culture, and Parks Needs Assessment and Master Plan*.



Critical Step 3: Develop an Affordable Housing Plan

An *Affordable Housing Plan* would help ensure that those who wish to live in Blackfalds are not hindered by housing affordability. This is particularly important for the attraction of new residents, whether commercial store owners, new medical staff, or members of the arts and culture community. Some key steps for this process include:

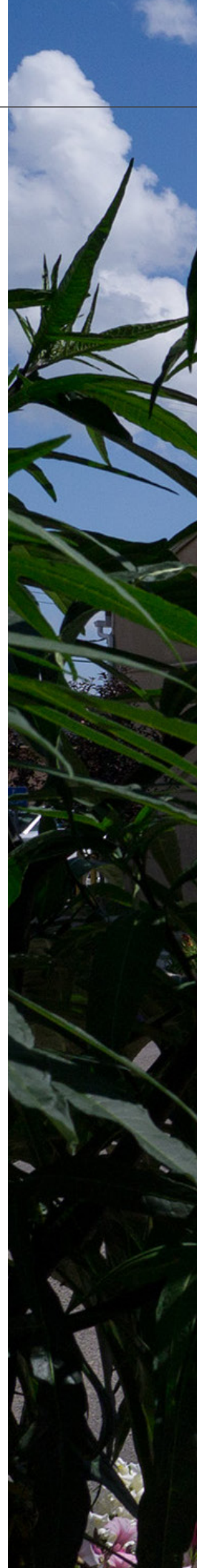
- Compare statistical data on income demographics of Blackfalds residents as well as potential new resident demographics, with the available housing stock in Blackfalds
- Identify the vacancy rate in both existing affordable units, and across Blackfalds in general
- Target vacant lots in approved developments, and identify opportunities for housing options in existing serviced areas
- Identify potential sites for development and redevelopment and work collaboratively with developers
- Test financial feasibility, and investigate grant opportunities
- Create a business plan for affordability and recruit developers



Critical Step 4: Pursue strategies to increase seniors housing

With those over the age of 55 being the fastest growing demographic in Blackfalds, there is a need to ensure there are enough housing options available for both aging residents looking to downsize, and for those moving to Blackfalds to retire. To ensure there is enough housing for the senior population, the Town will develop a *Housing Strategy* for an age-friendly community, which corresponds to the ongoing Blackfalds 55+ Housing Project in partnership with the Lacombe Foundation and the Bethany Group. The *Housing Strategy* for an age-friendly community should include:

- A list of identified stakeholders, including developers and local resources to support the aging community
- A review of missing services and supports required to house an increased seniors population
- A shared vision for housing the 55+ community
- An analysis of the housing needs for seniors' housing, and available lands that would facilitate these needs
- An investigation into the policies required to develop new housing, and the barriers that currently exist in their development
- An action plan for implementation by 2022
- A review of the Town's progress to date, and the lessons learned from neighbouring municipalities in the region
- Continued publicization, support, community outreach, applications and expressions of interest retrieval for Phases 1 and 2 of the Blackfalds 55+ Housing Project





Economy

Building a strong economy in Blackfalds helps create a more complete community. By attracting and retaining business investment, we can improve local employment opportunities and expand the tax base. A critical step is to both expand and become more targeted in the marketing of the economic opportunities in Blackfalds.

How this improves our resilience: A more diverse tax base helps create a more resilient revenue stream for the municipality. Increased local economic development makes Blackfalds less reliant on other markets in the region. By taking a thoughtful approach to identify the best approach to non-residential land development, these benefits can be best realized.





Critical Step 5: Engage developers to invest in Blackfalds



Attracting and engaging with developers is an ongoing action that is necessary for growth and retention in Blackfalds. Developing ongoing relationships with developers would increase the appeal for building in Blackfalds, as Council would seem more approachable and open to new building designs and functions. Potential exploratory avenues to attract and retain more developers include:

- Make a unique case and engage in effective communications as to why developers should operate in Blackfalds
- Hold events which bring attention to the unique community in Blackfalds, while hosting developers to introduce them to the local culture of Blackfalds
- Create communications strategies for developer outreach
- Maintain positive relationships with current and past developers to encourage more development



Critical Step 6: Target commercial businesses through marketing efforts



Targeting commercial marketing for Blackfalds will help in bringing businesses that the community currently needs, and will need in the future. Key moves include:

- Target businesses that reflect the needs of existing and forecasted demographics (e.g. family-oriented opportunities, or youth services)
- Create a unique and marketable narrative for Blackfalds to attract businesses and residents
- Explore ways to make commercial leases more affordable or accessible in new commercial developments
- Build relationships with the existing business community to grow existing brick and mortar, and home businesses
- Market to unique businesses to encourage local small-business growth



Critical Step 7: Actively explore ways to reduce tax increases through increased development



This action was ranked as one of the most important to Blackfalds residents in 2019. With new infrastructure and maintenance costs, it is important to investigate ways to generate municipal income for these projects and their maintenance costs, beyond tax increases. Some key ways to diversify municipal income include:

- Increase efforts to attract development, particularly a wide range of built forms and uses
- Investigate alternative funding structures, particularly for projects similar to the transfer of Highway 2A
- Research tax rates, funding mechanisms, and partnerships that were conducted in other municipalities
- Network with private investors for the potential of public/private partnerships



Infrastructure & Buildings

Infrastructure and building investments for the Town of Blackfalds should focus on improving the safety, and quality of life for the community members. Thoughtful acquisitions and maintenance of assets will improve service levels for both residents and non-residents. In addition, by developing an *Affordable Housing Plan*, Blackfalds ensures that it is allowing essential built form to improve a spectrum of residents' quality of life.

How this improves our resilience: By ensuring Blackfalds supports infrastructure and buildings required for a safe and equitable high quality of life for its residents, our changing community will build resilience over time.





Critical Step 8: Highway 2A Plan from the Province, including accommodations for pedestrian crossing/safety

The *Highway 2A Plan* is meant to improve pedestrian conditions, highway access, intersections, and maintenance along Highway 2A in Blackfalds. The transition should include the following key considerations:

- Continue discussions with the Province on possible takeover of Highway 2A with a focus on advantages and disadvantages of Town takeover
- Create a transportation strategy for municipal responsibility transfer of Highway 2A that considers: potential access points, intersections, maintenance improvements, and pedestrian safety
- Include pedestrian safety and networks in future iterations of *Transportation Master Plan* for Blackfalds
- Consider and evaluate the safety of all existing future pedestrian crossings including consideration of a pedestrian bridge. This may include provincial or federal grants, transition funding from the provincial takeover or inter-municipal funding and partnerships



Critical Step 9: Maintain an effective and efficient on-demand transit service for Blackfalds



Sustainable transportation is necessary to ensure Blackfalds remains an open and accessible hub, particularly for those who are unable to commute using car or active transportation modes. On-demand passenger transit providing local service and express service south to Red Deer is necessary to replace the phased-out BOLT transit service in Lacombe County. As such, in maintaining with the newly passed plan to onboard such a service, the Town of Blackfalds should consider the following provision of transit service for the community in their execution of transit service onboarding:

- Use persuasive and unique messaging in communicating transportation benefits to the community, particularly to high-interest groups including seniors, youth, and low income populations.
- Ensure transit stops and vehicles that are accessible to varying ability levels
- Continuously adapt stop density, coverage and timing to reflect Town access needs
- Consider special transit service opportunities for community and regional events
- Track the success of on-demand routes, with the objective of expanding ridership and effective use of resources
- Create educational materials on the advantages of on-demand transit, and the implications associated with the change in service, including increased cell phone dependency, and ride cancellation repercussions
- Continually look at effective marketing and promotion initiatives to improve program



Leadership & Engagement

In order to build a sustainable and resilient community, it is essential that there is an ever-improving dialogue between the Town of Blackfalds and the residents that it serves. In order to most effectively engage residents, it is essential that a consistent framework is first established, capacity is built and resources are allocated. The critical steps identified on the following page will establish this foundation.

How this improves our resilience: By improving the dialogue between the municipality and the community, more ideas are brought into the process, resulting in better solutions and increased learning for everyone over time.





Critical Step 10: Provide training for Town staff on how to deliver effective engagement



With a clear direction in place through an approved engagement policy, staff training would build the necessary skills and capacity to deliver quality engagement and build a culture of engagement over time between the Town and residents. Key elements should include:



- Understanding the theory of community engagement



- Identification and tailoring of best practice for community engagement in Blackfalds
- Understanding the Town's engagement policy
- Development of specific skills and techniques to effectively engage the community



Critical Step 11: Develop a Community Engagement Action Strategy



With a policy in place and initial training delivered, an action strategy can help to ensure that the necessary resources and staff capacities are integrated into the Town on an ongoing basis. Key elements should include:



- Identify funding and staffing requirements for community engagement strategy



- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of specific community engagement strategies
- Investigate the potential development of a Community Action Committee comprised of a series of community champions to gather additional feedback on decisions for housing, transportation and development, and other municipal areas of investigation



Critical Step 12: Develop a resident feedback survey



An annual survey designed to gather community feedback, determine resident attitudes and opinions towards the Town of Blackfalds, and understand the day-to-day experiences of residents. The survey will provide feedback on programs, services, and facilities offered by the Town, improving opportunities for the Town to respond to the needs of the community. Key elements for developing this survey should include:



- Ranking prioritization of Town projects, programs, services, etc.
- Identification of areas for future redevelopment or public improvement processes
- General ideas of interest or opportunities for innovation in Blackfalds
- Measure of public attitudes and opinions towards recently initiated or proposed projects
- Consistent structure and questions, enabling comparison of results over time

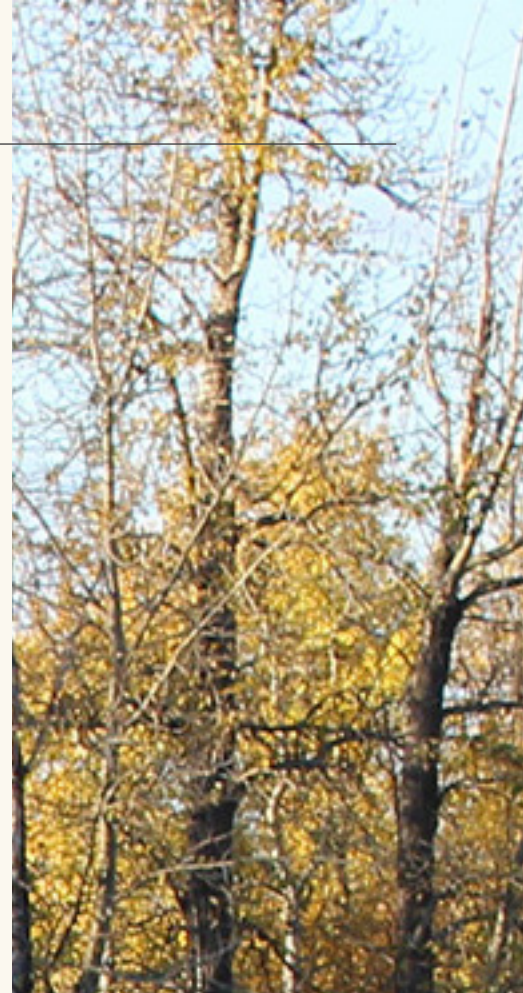




Natural Environment

There is room to improve both the environmental performance of the Town as well as the environmental awareness of our community. By making a concentrated effort to inform the community and take positive action, we can reduce our environmental impact, while also having a positive influence on our economy.

How this improves our resilience: If we are more informed as a community, then we are more likely to take positive action to reduce our environmental impact.





Critical Step 13: Develop and approve an Environmental Stewardship Strategy



An *Environmental Stewardship Strategy* will provide a comprehensive approach to how the Town manages the full extent of its environmental impacts. The *Strategy* would highlight policy direction, standards improvement, community programs and resourcing needs. This will allow the Town as an organization to identify the most important actions to reduce environmental impact and initiate community programs to support a healthy environment. Key focus areas would be:

- Potable Water: How the Town manages water resources to reduce use
- Stormwater: How the Town handles and treats stormwater
- Land: How the Town manages growth, natural spaces and the landscape
- Energy: How the Town manages energy use and increased use of renewable energy
- Buildings and infrastructure: How the Town builds and maintains assets to reduce environmental impact
- Waste: How the Town manages waste to increase waste diversion
- Air: How the Town manages emissions and improves air quality

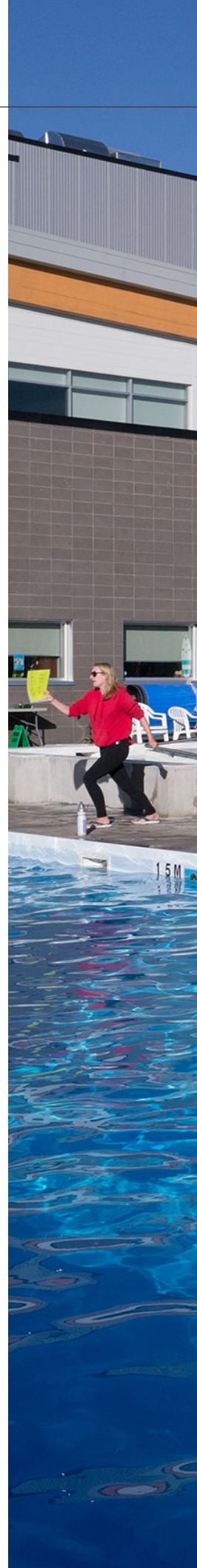


Critical Step 14: Develop an environmental awareness program



An environmental awareness program would complement the *Environmental Stewardship Strategy* in building community knowledge of the issues and impacts that can be addressed at the individual level. Key elements of the program would include:

- Regular environmental awareness communications. A regular program of environmental awareness can provide ongoing information and resources to reduce individual environmental impacts. A combination of information (facts, statistics, etc.) combined with clear direction for action (how to get involved with municipal services and programs) can lead to improved results over time and will be measured through the indicator program.
- Design environmental awareness signage for Town infrastructure. By including environmental awareness signage throughout the community, citizens are better informed and the message of environmental stewardship is reinforced. Examples in other communities have shown that making items such as energy use visible can prompt changes in individual behaviour.





03



Measuring Progress

Indicators are a way to monitor progress towards the vision and goals of the MSP. By measuring these indicators over time, Town Council and Administration can evaluate what efforts are working and what needs to change. The indicators also provide a unifying factor for the Town—allowing the various municipal departments to have a clear direction that they are working towards collectively.

The following are measurements for tracking the MSP over time. As these indicators are used, the Town will be able to consider adding or removing indicators, depending on the usefulness they provide in telling the story of progress towards our vision.

Indicators

Detailed descriptions on who is responsible for keeping track of specific indicators can be found in **Appendix Section 4.4**.

Community Life

- Attendance at Abbey Centre (and other recreation facilities)
- Crime rates
- Enrollment in public programs
- Attendance at community events and festivals
- Ratio of health service professionals to resident population

Economy

- Number of (new) jobs
- Number of local businesses
- Commercial realtors in region
- Number of people commuting to Blackfalds for work
- Investment dollars into development (private)

Infrastructure & Buildings

- 10-year capital plan (Are these plans being met? Why or why not?)
- Reserve plans tangible capital assets
- Facility development and replacement master plan
- Transit ridership

Leadership & Engagement

- Public engagement participation
- Comparative tax rates (to other municipalities)

Natural Environment

- Weight/tonnage of waste and recycling per capita
- Water usage per capita
- Energy usage per capita

A vibrant field of blue, yellow, and orange flowers, likely pansies, filling the background of the page. The flowers are densely packed and create a colorful, textured pattern.

04

Plan

Appendices

- 4.1. Review Process
- 4.2. Workshop Results
- 4.3. Public Feedback
- 4.4. Indicator Tracking

4.1

Review Process

>> Year 1: Fall 2020 - Fall 2021

- Administration builds the critical steps into the resourcing plans and budget and reports back to Council for approval.
- Establish baseline numbers for all indicators.
- Where available, previous years' data should be included. This will provide a trend over time, which is ultimately what makes indicators valuable.

>> Year 2: Fall 2021 - Fall 2022

- Prior to the Sustainability Retreat in winter 2022, update indicator numbers.
- Hold a two-day sustainability retreat with Council and senior Administration. Key elements of the agenda include:
 - » Update on action and progress on the critical steps
 - » Review of the indicators
- What do the indicators tell us about progress towards our vision?
- What course adjustments are needed to ensure we stay on the path towards our vision?
- Spring: Publish an indicators report for the community.

>> Year 3: Fall 2022 - Fall 2023

- Prior to the Sustainability Retreat in the winter of 2023, update indicator numbers.
- Hold a two-day sustainability retreat with Council and senior Administration.
 - » Key elements of the agenda include: update on action/ progress on the critical steps, review of the indicators.
- What do the indicators tell us about progress towards our vision?
- What course adjustments are needed to ensure we stay on the path towards our vision?
- Spring: Publish an indicators report for the community.

>> Fall 2023 Update

- Report on the critical steps, focusing on key results.
- Conduct a refresh of the critical steps process, starting with engagement in the community and using a one-day working session with Council to determine the next three-year cycle of critical steps.
- Repeat the three-year cycle as shown above.

4.2

Workshop Results

In October 2019, Blackfalds Town Council and select Administration took part in a workshop to help inform the 2020 update of the MSP. As a part of this workshop, councilors were asked to list potential actions that could be implemented in Blackfalds.

In order to prioritize these actions, participants were asked to map each action as it corresponds with effort (how hard an action would be to implement) and impact (how much influence an action would have). Participants were then able to prioritize three actions in total, across all five pillars.

Impact-Effort Matrix – Actions by Pillar

Original Vision & Pillar Comments


Forces For & Against Sustainability


Data Walk Responses

Informal Workshop Feedback

Impact - Effort Matrix Actions by Pillar

Note: All underlined actions were those which were prioritized by Town Council and Administration in the 2019 Council workshop.

<div> <div>SUSTAINABILITY PILLAR</div> <div>Community Life</div> <div></div> </div>		
Effort / Impact	Low Effort	High Effort
Low Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist groups and organizations to take their own initiative on programming • Develop more adult education programming • How can we grow historic society and define resident demand; succession planning; historic society • Encourage block-parents, COPS, Neighbourhood Watch • Reach out to regional culture societies to include cultural programming here 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small hall for service groups; easily affordable
High Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct fcss dollars into more mental health programs • Develop/encourage development of golf course, 10 years • Define and encourage more ways to recognize volunteers • <u>Work with local pharmacies to bring in practitioners by 2021; develop a plan to bring additional health services to community</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define what increases are needed to Peace officer positions to meet community demand • Use current fcss building for mental health/ vaccinations clinic similar to Johnstone in Red Deer • Attract mental health professionals to community • Catholic K-5 School by 2022 • Public School rebuild • <u>Composite high school by 2022–priority one for school board–ground ready for new build already</u>

<div> <div>SUSTAINABILITY PILLAR</div> <div>Economy</div> <div></div> </div>		
Effort / Impact	Low Effort	High Effort
Low Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Year-round shop local campaign</u> 	
High Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage home-based businesses to expand storefronts • <u>Organize functions that involve developers to encourage loyalty over next two years</u> • Focus major community events; functions in new plaza 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage developers to build smaller commercial units, thereby lowering rental rates for small businesses • Utilize/leverage Junior A team to draw and incentivize key stakeholders over two to three years • Entice manufacturing and warehouses to Blackfalds with our strong local workforce and central location • <u>Develop a marketing video to target commercial business</u> • Develop sponsorship programs for Town facilities

Infrastructure & Buildings



Effort / Impact	Low Effort	High Effort
Low Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase use of meeting spaces (arena/library) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase regional and provincial participation through campaigns by Alberta Tourism Improve camping and rv opportunities
High Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage developers to consider long term implications and include [...] more affordable units for both residential and commercial builds Centralize as many services in less facilities for economic benefit one year Work with Habitat for Humanity to provide housing in Blackfalds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify land for fire services building by 2021 on east. Include plans in this to also build a small community centre on same property Attain senior housing funding Develop affordable housing plan for community <u>Pedestrian crossing for Highway 2A</u> Improve access to northwest Blackfalds to incentivize growth for commercial, five years

Leadership & Engagement



Effort / Impact	Low Effort	High Effort
Low Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage Stantec on grant funding for infrastructure funding Be on the executive of every organization that Council and Administration participate in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss Youth in Town committees Update transportation master plan based on growth projections
High Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create more external engagement opportunities over the next year Actively encourage participation in municipal 2021 election 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete branding within next two to three years, requires Council decision prior Foster defined ongoing partnerships with Lacombe City and County <u>Actively look at ways to reduce tax increases year to year to offset and changes to MSI funding to prevent downloading on residents</u>

Natural Environment



Effort / Impact	Low Effort	High Effort
Low Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create tourism draw in our nature areas, five years Address this during ICF discussions. Watipi and Burbank as possible solutions--annex? Collaborate with Lacombe County and Province for campground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Finalize location for rv dump***</u>
High Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market our "natural" and open stormwater ponds as a unique feature one year Include source water protection in all planning documents Work with Watershed Alliances on involving community in watershed restorations in Town Complete learning environment within East Avenue storm Turf maintenance priorities defined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Environmental Strategy

*** New RV Dump developed in 2020

Vision and Pillar Comments

Participants were asked to look at the vision identified in 2016, and identify any changes or missing elements that they would like to see included.

2016 Vision Missing and Change Comments

- Wants three lines [presented as six lines]
- Remove “self-sufficient” – change to: “collaborative”
- “Self-sufficient” – leave it in

2016 Community Life Missing and Change Comments

- More focus on inclusivity in planning (culture, LGBTQ+, etc.)
- Heritage succession planning

2016 Economy Missing and Change Comments

- Unique businesses
- Attraction of global opportunities
- Regional co-dependence
- Larger employers
- Community promotion to a larger audience
- Not an affordable place to live for many
- Capitalize on family demographic

2016 Infrastructure & Buildings Missing and Change Comments

- Walking connectivity of paths between districts
- Developing Youth facility
- Healthcare facility
- Low income housing
- Senior housing

2016 Leadership & Engagement Missing and Change Comments

- Positive engagement through social media
- Printed news outside of town
- Capitalize on forward thinking strategies
- Regional relationships slipping

2016 Natural Environment Missing and Change Comments

- Environmental strategy
- Work on collaborative regional approach to environmental initiative
- Idling bylaw
- More of a natural environment
- Include a goal to work with neighbours outside of Blackfalds

Forces For and Against Sustainability

Workshop participants were asked to look at the forces for and against sustainability in Blackfalds. This included both internal and external factors. This feedback helped establish what is within the Town's control and get a picture of where the Town is currently.

Forces for sustainability

- Residents
- Relationship with victim service
- Respected partner in central Alberta organizations
- Relationship with MLA
- Known for being a sports hub
- Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
- Our staff's reputation
- Relationship with RCMP
- Economic development collaboration
- Relationship with MP
- Relationship with school boards, wcsb
- Highway 2 proximity
- Economic development collaboration
- Employee base to draw from
- Relationships with developers
- Well known in the DB Recreation Community
- Location within region and along corridor
- Community buy in and support
- Efforts and success to building relationship
- Excellent infrastructure
- Developers and builder investment
- Vicinity to large industry
- MP has constituency office in Blackfalds
- Excellent Council leadership
- Pride; high energy
- A developable land inventory
- Media and pressure residents (good relationship)
- Location
- Young, motivated work force moving here
- Positive staff
- New facilities in the community– feels brand new
- Strategic thinking
- Forward thinking budgeting
- Reputation

Forces against sustainability

- Lack of firm identity
- Lack of recognition by orders of government
- Government red tape
- Competition for investment with Lacombe, Red Deer, Sylvan Lake
- Not being recognized by provincial government
- High growth creates pressures
- Pre-conceived impressions of Blackfalds. Small, expensive
- Competing priorities compared to neighbours
- World politics/economy
- Government not supporting Town (no funding)
- Pay for / download responsibilities
- Historic growth and positional advantages for counties/towns
- Location
- Changes to communication trends
- Social media; lack of truth
- Change of government; lack of continuity
- Current government
- Federal funding
- Misinformation–stigma
- Provincial funding
- Residents
- Lack of important services: health care, schools
- Down turn in economy
- Regional relationships
- Lack of low income housing
- Rental costs for families/singles
- Lack of highway access to North Blackfalds
- Lack of mental health services
- Rental costs for businesses

Data Walk Responses

Data walks were introduced at the beginning of the Council and Town Administration workshop as a way to understand the context behind Blackfalds' changing demographics, businesses, environmental affects, housing supply and other statistical trends.

Statistics of changes in and surrounding Blackfalds were put up for participant review, followed by a series of questions that would help to answer the reason behind these changes.

What recreational and arts and culture needs are going unmet in Blackfalds?

- More arts program
- Costs of facility rentals
- LGBTQ+ programming
- Actual culture in culture programs
- More arena programs
- Horseshoes
- Frisbee golf, bowling
- Music opportunities
- Cultural venue
- Culture organizations (more)
- Studio space
- Performing arts opportunities

What are the key factors influencing this trend over time?

- Recession
- Outlook optimistic or pessimistic
- Government support from federal and provincial levels
- Use up existing new housing supply
- Poor housing market due to recession
- Cheaper housing
- Downtown in oil sector major influence
- More townhomes due to lifestyle/cost
- Land available
- Less people driving/getting licenses
- Sustained population increase
- Need for commercial/industrial businesses

What are the implications of assessment trends for how the Town delivers service to the community?

- More pressure for commercial/industrial development
- Population growth
- Density of development
- Utilities—shorter runs
- Growth and capacity has put us in more sustainable environment
- Population threshold warrants commercial
- What future housing needs of the community do we need to start thinking about?
- Habitat for Humanity
- Apartments/rentals
- Seniors and affordable housing
- Mixed residential/commercial
- All levels of rental (e.g. basement apartment)
- Strong mix of housing
- Infill in older districts
- Encouraging developers of the Rolling Hills development

How is Blackfalds supporting our children today?

- Parks, schools, library programs, sports, community programs
- SRO, FCSS grants to kids programs, BYC
- Parent link
- Non-profit youth organizations
- Innovative + inclusive playgrounds
- New school advocacy
- FCSS programming–Kids ‘n’ Cops
- Big Brothers and Sisters
- Facilities, amenities and programming
- Providing a safe environment (policing, etc.)

How can we improve supporting our children in the future?

- More schools!
- Health care
- Better policing
- Traffic controls
- Our new arena! And library
- Creating employment opportunities
- Safer crossing at railway
- Increase mental health
- Increase childcare opportunities
- Encourage parent council support them
- Ensuring relevancy in changing world
- Continued working with our schools

What are the biggest opportunities for economic development in Blackfalds?

- Blackfalds crossing
- Economic development matrix and web page
- Strip mall on east side
- Increase in home-based business
- “Big flea” market area for home-base business
- Understated in commercial so opportunities exist
- Big manufacturing + warehousing plants (e.g. home hardware)
- Location along the Highway 2 and Highway 2A corridor and 597

What housing needs are going unmet in Blackfalds currently?

- Seniors
- Apartments not enough
- Affordable housing!!!
- Short term accommodations
- Smaller rentals for single people
- Affordable housing
- Low income housing
- Tiny houses

What is driving population growth in Blackfalds?

- Youth
- Amenities
- Amenities, e.g. recreation
- Service levels
- Larger families
- Vicinity of large centers
- Reputation
- Physical size of town

What are the key pressures this growth creates?

- Service levels
- Staffing
- Appropriate facilities
- Managing costs
- Maintaining service levels
- Education and health care needs
- Schools
- Healthcare
- Roads and transportation
- Reaching all demographics

How does the age profile of Blackfalds affect the culture of the community?

- Kids programming
- Times of programming
- Parks and rec spaces
- How we advertise
- Family events
- Youth programming
- Puts focus on family and high level of service expectations
- Progressive culture and willingness to change

How should the age profile of Blackfalds influence how we think about our service delivery in the Town?

- How we advertise
- Times of events
- Collaboration with community groups
- Library
- Focus on needs of younger demographic
- Middle age couples with no kids
- Looking for services that are not available
- Fees

Informal Workshop Responses

Throughout the workshop held with Town Council and Administration, recurring themes were noted.

What is one thing to convince someone to move to Blackfalds

- Family friendly community
- Young and progressive
- Many years of growth, transition from residential to commercial, changing quickly
- 30 percent young population, family oriented
- Everything you need in Blackfalds
- Quality of life
- Beautiful town

Review of vision and pillars

- Sustainability means that Blackfalds has the needed stores in the community to be self sufficient with a full range of services.
- Vision and pillars used when: Hiring people, environmental stewardship, developing programs

Positives and challenges of MSP

- Positive: Other groups can look at and understand upper levels. Hope is that other organizations will look at and use
- Challenge: Creating buy in from other levels of government (e.g. schools)
- Challenge: financial and people resources to create innovation and buy in

Thoughts end of day one of workshop

- Things may have been taken for granted so far
- Work required to get housing back
- Much more competition than previously, as developers in other surrounding communities
- Social planning might be more achievable than other things
- Blackfalds overlooked by organizations, developers, other levels of government
- Partnering with surrounding area could open up possibilities
- Municipalities need to be able to attract talent

Required Actions

- Additional health services
- Safe crossing across Highway 2A
- Community champions

Last thoughts

- Lobbying and negotiating for different grant funds
- Create materials for marketing
- Review transportation master plan
- Keeping track of long term goals, while working on short term goals and what can be done in next three years

4.3

Public Feedback

A survey was created to gather public feedback on the newly proposed actions and general overview of plan vision and pillars. The following are responses recording feedback for action prioritization of the seven new actions released for public feedback.

Ranking #1-7	Target Commercial Business Through Marketing	Engage Developers to Invest in Blackfalds	Plan to Bring Additional Health Services	Affordable Housing Plan	Highway 2A Transportation Plan: Pedestrian Crossing	Reduce Taxes Through Increased Development	Complete Environmental Strategy
#1	13%	7%	34%	4%	11%	27%	4%
#2	13%	10%	29%	4%	21%	19%	4%
#3	17%	13%	17%	14%	13%	14%	10%
#4	20%	17%	9%	14%	11%	18%	11%
#5	14%	20%	5%	20%	11%	12%	18%
#6	9%	17%	5%	26%	17%	8%	18%
#7	14%	14%	0%	18%	18%	3%	32%
Priority Status	MODERATE	MODERATE	HIGH	LOW	MODERATE	HIGH	LOW

Public Open Comments

A survey was created to gather public feedback on the newly proposed actions and general overview of plan vision and pillars.

Community Life

- Doctors!
- Mental Health support through AHS, increased Doctor's in town, addictions support.
- More emphasis on seniors in our community and services, resources, opportunities for them.
- Healthcare is the most important thing now.
- Medical clinic!!! high school!
- Building more schools
- Schools, anything our community can do to help our teachers give the best education possible with the reduction of the provinces budget plan.
- I think we should be working towards an elementary Catholic School, the Pre-K to grade 5 is full.
- Community cultural spaces.
- Property crime is rampant and increasing. Citizens need to feel secure in their homes and with their property. Property crime reduction is important.

Economy

- Focus on residential tax reduction
- No increase in taxes or debt. We are at our limit between federal and provincial taxation
- Keep Blackfalds affordable to everyone
- Explore ways to keep town bill from increasing yearly.
- Focus on diversifying the businesses
- Off-site levies
- Every current program and service should be reviewed looking at its return on investment to the community. Ineffective or programs whose subsidy is higher than 50 percent need to be eliminated. Only after current programs are thinned out should new ones be introduced
- Need decent paying jobs, help move away from oil and gas sector.
- Encouraging small business development rather than large corporate entities (e.g. A diner vs Wendy's). Keep our small town a cozy small town rather than a corporate monstrosity.

Economy, continued

- There are vacant/for sale lots in many of the subdivisions. This means a lot of money has been laid out for infrastructure yet has not been optimized because these developments have not been fully populated. Further to that, new subdivisions have been developed. Should we consider a strategy to bring the current subdivisions to full capacity or at least increase the percentage of completed building permits prior to breaking ground in another new development?
- With the economic mess Alberta is in, it is time we all tighten our spending. No more salary increases for Town employees, only essential spending by our Town politicians, find ways to lower our property taxes, enough with recreational development. Find ways to reduce spending. When Alberta's economy recovers, whenever that will be, then the Town can initiate increased spending plans. The days of greed in this province and spending like there is "no tomorrow" has to stop.

Infrastructure & Buildings

- Focus on pedestrian crossing for Highway 2A
- Stay on top of the roads. Make and keep them world class. Less pretty more functional. Be wise with the funds.
- Railway crossing on Broadway / Greg Street. Changing, removing, over/under pass. Safety and travel concerns
- Paving the gravel road off of Broadway Ave (Range Road 272) to allow for easier commutes and less damage to vehicles and better access to new commercial and residential development

Leadership & Engagement

- Making sure Lacombe County recognizes Blackfalds as an important community in their region

Natural Environment

- Short and long term plans for a Blackfalds Park in addition to the many green spaces.
- Should Blackfalds consider encouraging environmental/ climate change initiatives as a community? For example, residential solar collection, composting program, community gardens, commercial building energy conservation programs, etc.

Other

- No rebranding. Spend that money on more important things.
- Rebranding is important!
- I have been seeing a lot of chatter about rebranding. A quick Google search shows many municipalities have done this. Almost all of whom did so because of their problems attracting people and businesses. Blackfalds has not had this problem for at least a decade, if ever. Stop wasting our money on projects that do little more than bolster someone's resume.
- Not wasting money on a new logo.

4.4

Indicator Tracking

SUSTAINABILITY PILLAR

Community Life



Indicator	Data Source	Period	Owner	Location
1.1 Attendance at Abbey Centre (and other recreational facilities)	MaxGalaxy (web-based program)	April 2018	Abbey Centre General Manager and Guest Services Officer	MaxGalaxy
1.2 Crime rates	RCMP statistics—organized by category	From 2014	RCMP K Division, Blackfalds Protective Services Manager	RCMP database
1.3 Enrollment in public programs	FCSS programming data	From 2013	FCSS program registration is maintained by FCSS programmers and through program registration software	FCSS Office, Program Registration Software
1.4 Number of community events and festivals	Community event and festival advertising	From 2013	Community Services Department—different programming staff lead initiatives and events	FCSS Office, Town of Blackfalds Civic Centre & Abbey Centre

SUSTAINABILITY PILLAR

Economy



Indicator	Data Source	Period	Owner	Location
2.1 Number of local businesses	Economic Development Officer (EDO), Town of Blackfalds	From 2016	EDO	Paper and electronic records maintained by Economic Development Officer
2.2 Commercial realtors in the region	EDO, Town of Blackfalds. EDO creates monthly available land and property inventory.	From 2017	EDO	Monthly Land & Property Inventory

SUSTAINABILITY PILLAR

Infrastructure & Buildings



Indicator	Data Source	Period	Owner	Location
3.1 10-year Capital Plan (are these plans being met? Why or why not?)	Town of Blackfalds–updated spreadsheet, reviewed during preparation of annual budget	Several years	Corporate Services Director, Infrastructure Services Director, Town of Blackfalds	Town of Blackfalds Civic Centre
3.2 Reserve plans– tangible capital assets	Town of Blackfalds–reviewed during preparation of annual budgets	Several years	Corporate Services Director	Town of Blackfalds Civic Centre
3.3 Facility development and replacement master plan	Town of Blackfalds–offsite levies bylaw (for underground, IPSD), Facilities Master Plan	---	Community Services Director	---
3.4 Transit ridership	Town of Blackfalds–data collected monthly, quarterly reports provided to Council	3 years	Infrastructure & Property Services Director	Town of Blackfalds Civic Centre

SUSTAINABILITY PILLAR

Leadership & Engagement



Indicator	Data Source	Period	Owner	Location
4.1 Public engagement participation	Town of Blackfalds–citizen engagement for budget feedback and other initiatives is conducted throughout the year	4 years	Corporate Services, Marketing & Communications	Town of Blackfalds Civic Centre
4.2 Comparative tax rates (to other municipalities)	Tax Bylaw RFPs have comparisons to other municipalities. Comparative information drawn from Government of Alberta Municipal Affairs	Several years	Corporate Services	Town of Blackfalds Civic Centre

SUSTAINABILITY PILLAR

Natural Environment



Indicator	Data Source	Period	Owner	Location
5.1 Weight / tonnage of waste and recycling per capita	Town of Blackfalds–monthly data collection	5 years	Infrastructure & Property Services Director	Town of Blackfalds Civic Centre



BLACKFALDS
ALBERTA

CRITICAL STEP #1 (COMMUNITY LIFE)

Develop a plan to bring health services and health professionals to Blackfalds

DESCRIPTION

- This action was ranked as one of the most important actions to Blackfalds residents in 2019. Attracting new health care services and professionals would aid in improving coverage for Blackfalds’ growing resident population, through healthcare outside of hospitals which are regulated at the provincial level. Key areas of investigation should include:
- Identify which healthcare programs are missing in Blackfalds (e.g. general practitioners, mental health centres, addiction centres, birth centres, health clinics, geriatric care, specialist care centres, etc.)
- Create marketing strategies to attract general practitioners, and other health care specialists of interest, by promoting community life, publicizing business opportunities, and creating Town branding messages
- Lobby provincial healthcare service providers, for the resources needed to support needed expanded services and local existing healthcare facilities
- Encourage appropriate housing and community amenities available to attract and retain professionals
- Establish initiatives and/or processes to assist in the provision of appropriate healthcare facility potential in economic development recruitment efforts

ACTIVITY

FUTURE WORK

SUSTAINABILITY PILLAR ALIGNMENT



STATUS

Responsible: Those who do some, part, or all of the work for the action.
Accountable: The one person who signs off or ensures an action is completed.
Consult: Those who are sought out for feedback to support action delivery.
Inform: Those who are kept up-to-date on progress towards an action.

Responsible

Accountable

Consult

Inform

STATUS

Initiated In Progress Complete

CRITICAL STEP #2 (COMMUNITY LIFE)

Develop an Arts & Culture
Strategic Assessment

DESCRIPTION

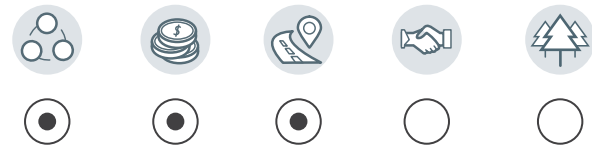
Two key aspects of the Arts and Cultural Strategic Assessment process and deliverables include:

1. Engage the arts and cultural community in Blackfalds and surrounding area to identify gaps and potential strategies. This step would help the municipality understand the needs and hopes of the arts and culture community and help identify where the “hot spots” of interest lie. This will help guide ideas for programming that meet the needs of the community today. Key areas of investigation should include:
 - What are the best arts and culture assets that we have in Blackfalds today?
 - What are the biggest gaps we have in arts and culture programming and facilities today?
 - What are your top ideas for new arts and culture programming and facilities in Blackfalds?
2. Identify a prioritized list of arts and cultural programming options. With an understanding of the needs of the arts and cultural community through the above engagement, recommendations can be made with the objective to “take a long term and dedicated approach to the development and delivery of this programming area” as identified in the Recreation, Culture, and Parks Needs Assessment and Master Plan.

ACTIVITY

FUTURE WORK

SUSTAINABILITY PILLAR ALIGNMENT



STATUS

- Responsible:** Those who do some, part, or all of the work for the action.
- Accountable:** The one person who signs off or ensures an action is completed.
- Consult:** Those who are sought out for feedback to support action delivery.
- Inform:** Those who are kept up-to-date on progress towards an action.

Responsible

Accountable

Consult

Inform

STATUS

Initiated In Progress Complete

CRITICAL STEP #3 (COMMUNITY LIFE)

Develop an Affordable
Housing Plan

DESCRIPTION

An Affordable Housing Plan would help ensure that those who wish to live in Blackfalds are not hindered by housing affordability. This is particularly important for the attraction of new residents, whether commercial store owners, new medical staff, or members of the arts and culture community. Some key steps for this process include:

- Compare statistical data on income demographics of Blackfalds residents as well as potential new resident demographics, with the available housing stock in Blackfalds
- Identify the vacancy rate in both existing affordable units, and across Blackfalds in general
- Target vacant lots in approved developments, and identify opportunities for housing options in existing serviced areas
- Identify potential sites for development and redevelopment and work collaboratively with developers
- Test financial feasibility, and investigate grant opportunities
- Create a business plan for affordability and recruit developers

ACTIVITY

FUTURE WORK

SUSTAINABILITY PILLAR ALIGNMENT



STATUS

Responsible: Those who do some, part, or all of the work for the action.
Accountable: The one person who signs off or ensures an action is completed.
Consult: Those who are sought out for feedback to support action delivery.
Inform: Those who are kept up-to-date on progress towards an action.

Responsible

Accountable

Consult

Inform

STATUS

Initiated In Progress Complete

CRITICAL STEP #4 (COMMUNITY LIFE)

Pursue strategies to increase seniors housing

DESCRIPTION

With those over 55 being the fastest growing demographic in Blackfalds, there is a need to ensure there are enough housing options available for both aging residents looking to downsize, and for those moving to Blackfalds to retire. To ensure there is enough housing for the senior population, the Town will develop a Housing Strategy for an age-friendly community, which corresponds to the ongoing Blackfalds 55+ Housing Project in partnership with the Lacombe Foundation and the Bethany Group. The Housing Strategy for an age-friendly community should include:

- A list of identified stakeholders, including developers and local resources to support the aging community
- A review of missing services and supports required to house an increased seniors population
- A shared vision for housing the 55+ community
- An analysis of the housing needs for seniors’ housing, and available lands that would facilitate these needs
- An investigation into the policies required to develop new housing, and the barriers that currently exist in their development
- An action plan for implementation by 2022
- A review of the Town’s progress to date, and the lessons learned from neighbouring municipalities
- Continued publicization, support, community outreach, applications and expressions of interest retrieval for Phases 1 and 2 of the Blackfalds 55+ Housing Project

ACTIVITY

FUTURE WORK

SUSTAINABILITY PILLAR ALIGNMENT



STATUS

- Responsible:** Those who do some, part, or all of the work for the action.
- Accountable:** The one person who signs off or ensures an action is completed.
- Consult:** Those who are sought out for feedback to support action delivery.
- Inform:** Those who are kept up-to-date on progress towards an action.

Responsible

Accountable

Consult

Inform

STATUS

Initiated In Progress Complete

CRITICAL STEP #5 (ECONOMY)

Engage developers to invest in Blackfalds

DESCRIPTION

Attracting and engaging with developers is an ongoing action that is necessary for growth and retention in Blackfalds. Developing ongoing relationships with developers would increase the appeal for building in Blackfalds, as Council would seem more approachable and open to new building designs and functions. Potential exploratory avenues to attract and retain more developers include:

- Make a unique case and engage in effective communications as to why developers should operate in Blackfalds
- Hold events which bring attention to the unique community in Blackfalds, while hosting developers to introduce them to the local culture of Blackfalds
- Create communications strategies for developer outreach
- Maintain positive relationships with current and past developers to encourage more development

ACTIVITY

FUTURE WORK

SUSTAINABILITY PILLAR ALIGNMENT



STATUS

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Inform: Those who are kept up-to-date on progress towards an action.

Responsible

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Initiated In Progress Complete

CRITICAL STEP #6 (ECONOMY)

Target commercial businesses
through marketing efforts

DESCRIPTION

Targeting commercial marketing for Blackfalds will help in bringing businesses that the community currently needs, and will need in the future. Key moves include:

- Target businesses that reflect the needs of existing and forecasted demographics (e.g. family-oriented opportunities, or youth services)
- Create a unique and marketable narrative for Blackfalds to attract businesses and residents
- Explore ways to make commercial leases more affordable or accessible in new commercial developments
- Build relationships with the existing business community to grow existing brick and mortar, and home businesses
- Market to unique businesses to encourage local small-business growth

ACTIVITY

FUTURE WORK

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CRITICAL STEP #7 (ECONOMY)

Actively explore ways to reduce tax increases through increased development

DESCRIPTION

This action was ranked as one of the most important to Blackfalds’ residents in 2019. With new infrastructure and maintenance costs, it is important to investigate ways to generate municipal income for these projects and their maintenance costs, beyond tax increases. Some key ways to diversify municipal income include:

- Increase efforts to attract development, particularly a wide range of built forms and uses.
- Investigate alternative funding structures, particularly for projects similar to the transfer of Highway 2A.
- Research tax rates, funding mechanisms, and partnerships that were conducted in other municipalities.
- Network with private investors for the potential of public/private partnerships.

ACTIVITY

FUTURE WORK

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CRITICAL STEP #8 (INFRASTRUCTURE & BUILDINGS)

Highway 2A Transition
Plan from the Province

DESCRIPTION


The Highway 2A Plan is meant to improve pedestrian conditions, highway access, intersections, and maintenance along Highway 2A in Blackfalds. The transition should include the following key considerations:



- Continue discussions with the Province on possible takeover of Highway 2A with a focus on advantages and disadvantages of Town takeover
- Create a transportation strategy for municipal responsibility transfer of Highway 2A that considers: potential access points, intersections, maintenance improvements, and pedestrian safety
- Include pedestrian safety and networks in future iterations of Transportation Master Plan for Blackfalds
- Consider and evaluate the safety of all existing future pedestrian crossings including consideration of a pedestrian bridge. This may include provincial or federal grants, transition funding from the provincial takeover or inter-municipal funding and partnerships

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CRITICAL STEP #9 (INFRASTRUCTURE & BUILDINGS)

Maintain an effective and efficient on-demand transit service for Blackfalds

DESCRIPTION

Sustainable transportation is necessary to ensure Blackfalds remains an open and accessible hub, particularly for those who are unable to commute using car or active transportation modes. On-demand passenger transit providing local service and express service south to Red Deer is necessary to replace the phased-out bolt transit service in Lacombe County. As such, in maintaining with the newly passed plan to onboard such a service, the Town of Blackfalds should consider the following provision of transit service for the community in their execution of transit service onboarding:

- Use persuasive and unique messaging in communicating transportation benefits to the community, particularly to high-interest groups including seniors, youth, and low income populations.
- Ensure transit stops and vehicles that are accessible to varying ability levels
- Continuously adapt stop density, coverage and timing to reflect Town access needs
- Consider special transit service opportunities for community and regional events
- Track the success of on-demand routes, with the objective of expanding ridership and effective use of resources
- Create educational materials on the advantages of on-demand transit, and the implications associated with the change in service, including increased cell phone dependency, and ride cancellation repercussions
- Continually look at effective marketing and promotion initiatives to improve program

ACTIVITY

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CRITICAL STEP #10 (LEADERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT)

Provide training for Town staff on how to deliver effective engagement

DESCRIPTION

With a clear direction in place through an approved engagement policy, staff training would build the necessary skills and capacity to deliver quality engagement and build a culture of engagement over time between the Town and residents. Key elements should include:

- Understanding the theory of community engagement
- Identification and tailoring of best practice for community engagement in Blackfalds
- Understanding the Town’s engagement policy
- Development of specific skills and techniques to effectively engage the community

ACTIVITY

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CRITICAL STEP #11 (LEADERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT)

Develop a Community
Engagement Action Strategy

DESCRIPTION

With a policy in place and initial training delivered, an action strategy can help to ensure that the necessary resources and staff capacities are integrated into the Town on an ongoing basis. Key elements should include:

- Identify funding and staffing requirements for community engagement strategy
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of specific community engagement strategies
- Investigate the potential development of a Community Action Committee comprised of a series of community champions to gather additional feedback on decisions for housing, transportation and development, and other municipal areas of investigation

ACTIVITY

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CRITICAL STEP #12 (LEADERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT)

Develop a resident
feedback survey

DESCRIPTION

An annual survey designed to gather community feedback, determine resident attitudes and opinions towards the Town of Blackfalds, and understand the day to day experiences of residents. The survey will provide feedback on programs, services, and facilities offered by the Town, improving opportunities for the Town to respond to the needs of the community. Key elements for developing this survey should include:

- Ranking prioritization of Town projects, programs, services, etc.
- Identification of areas for future redevelopment or public improvement processes
- General ideas of interest or opportunities for innovation in Blackfalds
- Measure of public attitudes and opinions towards recently initiated or proposed projects
- Consistent structure and questions, enabling comparison of results over time

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CRITICAL STEP #13 (NATURAL ENVIRONMENT)

Develop and approve an
Environmental Stewardship Strategy

DESCRIPTION

An Environmental Stewardship Strategy will provide a comprehensive approach to how the Town manages the full extent of its environmental impacts. The Strategy would highlight policy direction, standards improvement, community programs and resourcing needs. This will allow the Town as an organization to identify the most important actions to reduce environmental impact and initiate community programs to support a healthy environment. Key focus areas would be:

- Potable Water: How the Town manages water resources to reduce use
- Stormwater: How the Town handles and treats stormwater
- Land: How the Town manages growth, natural spaces and the landscape
- Energy: How the Town manages energy use and increased use of renewable energy
- Buildings and infrastructure: How the Town builds and maintains assets to reduce environmental impact
- Waste: How the Town manages waste to increase waste diversion
- Air: How the Town manages emissions and improves air quality

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CRITICAL STEP #14 (NATURAL ENVIRONMENT)

Develop an environmental awareness program

DESCRIPTION


An environmental awareness program would complement the Environmental Stewardship Strategy in building community knowledge of the issues and impacts that can be addressed at the individual level. Key elements of the program would include:


- Regular environmental awareness communications. A regular program of environmental awareness can provide ongoing information and resources to reduce individual environmental impacts. A combination of information (facts, statistics, etc.) combined with clear direction for action (how to get involved with municipal services and programs) can lead to improved results over time and will be measured through the indicator program
- Design environmental awareness signage for Town infrastructure. By including environmental awareness signage throughout the community, citizens are better informed and the message of environmental stewardship is reinforced. Examples in other communities have shown that making items such as energy use visible can prompt changes in individual behaviour

ACTIVITY

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