

From Strength to Strength

Red Deer City Council Strategic Direction 2011

"According to Aristotle a city exists for the sake of a good life and not for the sake of life only. Liveability means joy, leisure, health, communication and interaction and not just fulfilling basic needs."

-- Meri Louekari, architect and urban planner in Monocle Magazine

Vision

**Innovative Thinking
Inspired Results
Vibrant Community**

Mission

The City of Red Deer works together to provide leadership and sustainable municipal services for our community.

Our Strategic Direction

The purpose of the strategic direction is to guide administration in creating organizational change, operational strategy, and work plans to enable the community's vision to unfold.

This document is to express clearly Council's understanding of the community's vision. This series of compelling goals aims to:

**unleash innovation,
foster creativity,
and invite participation.**

Healthy Community

A healthy and happy community is sustainable when people have opportunities for meaningful work and volunteerism, have great relationships, and take pride in the place they call home. Well-used and popular amenities exist for active living and for formal and informal interaction. People regularly participate in physical activity and intellectual experiences.

Red Deer's community wellness is fundamentally founded on a balanced, proactive, and responsive approach to environmental health, cultural health, economic health, and social well-being -- our pillars of sustainability.

Great governance provides the foundation for these pillars and is realized through ongoing dialogue with the community, and staff involvement in the creation of service plans, policies, and budgets. It is characterized by the informed and effective leadership of City Council and enables transparent, collaborative and inclusive involvement of administration and the community generally.

Healthy and happy community is enabled through strong governance which supports the areas of sustainability.

Environmental

Red Deer actively enhances its rich natural environment and minimizes its ecological footprint through City leadership, community collaboration and active stewardship. We are a leading example of a resilient community in which urban and natural systems are effectively integrated to the benefit of both.

Cultural

Red Deer is a vibrant city with an authentic identity where history is honoured, spaces and places help people connect. Diversity is valued and respected, creative expression and innovation are encouraged, and citizens have a sense of pride and belonging.

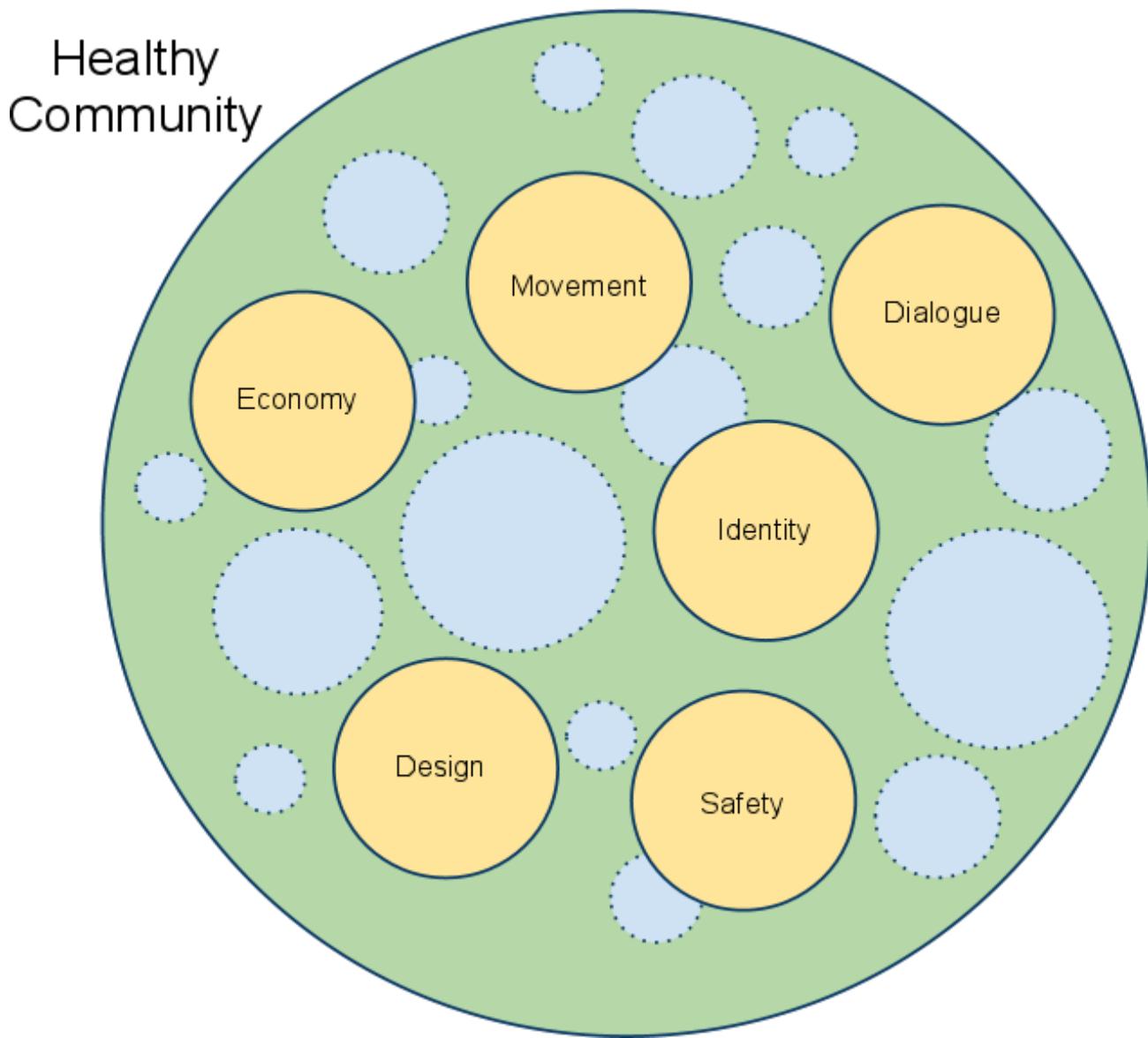
Economic

Strategic analysis promotes economic vitality and a strong, resilient environment for business health. To meet the current and future financial needs of Red Deer, resources are managed through decision-making processes which consider and regularly assess both long and short term financial effect on the organization and the community.

Social

Authentic engagement, social cohesion and broad participation among its citizens characterize Red Deer. Through leadership, support and partnerships, quality of life is improved and opportunities are available for people's basic needs to be met. Equality, social well-being, a sense of belonging and the appreciation of diverse groups are supported and decisions are equitable and just.

The six themes of the strategic direction support a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable community.



This diagram illustrates the themes of our strategic direction (yellow), current initiatives and projects of various sizes (blue), and all of our ongoing activities (green). Many activities and projects will continue and others may need to be adapted as our strategic direction is implemented.

Six Themes of Our Strategic Direction

Economy

- **Shift our primary economic development focus and activity to within Red Deer.**

Our economic development activity within Red Deer diversifies and stabilizes our economy, increases local business and job opportunities, utilizes properties to their potential, and has resulted in appropriate use of land that reflects our identity and community values for the benefit of our taxpayers, community groups, and business owners.

When we have successfully shifted our economic development activity to within Red Deer. What will we see? What will have changed?

- Our assessment base has increased due to more appropriate use of land, which has also improved community health, prosperity, quality of life and economic activity. Underutilized properties or boarded up buildings such as; the Arlington lot, the neglected lot beside Gaetz United Church, 40th and Ross SE Corner are finding new life.
- We've increased our assessment base which has allowed us to build community amenity projects in our capital plan sooner.
- By focusing on economic development our city has become more walkable, safer, there are fewer vacancies, downtown activity and development is thriving.
- Our economy is based on a wider number of sectors. Businesses are locating in Red Deer or being started here; there are great opportunities for small businesses to thrive, and for new investment, and the economy is less subject to fluctuations.
- Properties within Red Deer are being utilized to their full potential; brownfields sites are being remediated, vacant land and/or buildings are being redeveloped or adapted especially as it relates to the GDAP and our investment in the downtown.
- A policy exists that regulates brownfield site remediation within a certain timeframe and invites development.
- Our economic development activity has gained recognition for our creative and sustainable approaches to land use.
- Expansion and retention of current local businesses has stabilized and

strengthened our assessment base.

- We have concentrated our downtown development in very specific areas, rather than trying to do too much all over; we have reviewed and redefined our commercial zoning in the downtown.
- New jobs and business opportunities have encouraged people to stay and have attracted the brightest talent.
- There are more festivals, conferences and events and we have been successful in attracting major events, such as the 2019 Canada Winter Games.
- Development of Riverlands is underway. Vacant and underutilized lands are changing in keeping with our community vision and ARP.
- The Riverlands Market is flourishing and attracting tourists. It has become a hub of activity.
- As recommended in the retail recruitment strategy, new retail and restaurants businesses have been attracted to the downtown
- More mixed use buildings have been built in the downtown which have shops and residences in the same building. A great sense of community is growing.
- We are promoting and planning for high-speed rail and light rail transit in all of our community planning.

Design

- **Design and plan our community to reflect our character and values**

Our City's planning and urban design has resulted in a welcoming, more walkable and environmentally sustainable community which accurately reflects our character and values. It provides housing options, pedestrian routes, and allows for alternate forms of transportation and deliberate connections to our parks, trails, and well designed public spaces where people can meet and interact and feel a sense of belonging.

When we have successfully designed and planned our community to reflect our character and values. What will we see? What will have changed?

- Our community is friendly to pedestrians.
- Throughout the city exists a network of sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, transit service, and roads.
- We've adopted new ways of thinking and planning that integrate movement within the city and focuses on the benefits and choice to live near where you work and play.
- Our city is making better use of its land resources; there is less urban sprawl and more liveable high-density.
- We have created a good example of a new high density community with great public spaces and good connections to amenities and transportation networks.
- Our communities are designed to provide liveable and appropriate housing choices and also demonstrate environmental and financial development practices which are sustainable.
- We have new neighbourhood design guidelines and standards that are flexible and allow for creativity and innovation. They call for a higher standard of architecture and design. The guidelines reflect our values and character and the environmental and financial realities.
- Our developers have worked with us to discover new options and build uniquely designed neighbourhoods and commercial developments which reflect our identity and character.
- We have developed our unique aesthetic to the point that when we design and build it is recognized by Red Deerians and visitors.
- Our way of building our communities encourage people of all ages to form connections, to be outside, to be active, and to get to know each other.

- Because we have hired a highly skilled urban designer and work closely with them, we are able to design and build all aspects of our community in a way that consistently reflects our character and stays true to our vision and values.
- By consistently applying the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design we have increased safety.
- We understand the natural and built environments are inseparably linked and designed in a way which respects and honours nature and wildlife.
- Through our flexible design guidelines and zoning we invite our business community, including developers, builders, architects, engineers, to be innovative and we provide incentives when they help us achieve our vision for both environmental and financial sustainability.
- We've been able to increase density in the community while improving quality of life.

Movement

- **Design for and facilitate integrated movement.**

Our deliberate decision to create viable alternatives to single occupant vehicle travel in our transportation network encourages healthy active lifestyles, environmental stewardship, supports safety for people of all ages, increases use of our public and green spaces, and integrates our sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, transit service, rail, and roads with our built environment.

When we have successfully designed for and facilitated integrated movement within Red Deer. What will we see? What will have changed?

- Through innovation, forward-thinking, and careful consideration of the design, size and scale of our pedestrian and transportation infrastructure we have created a financially and environmentally sustainable future for our taxpayers.
- Council and administration have a clear understanding of the relationship between the size and design of pedestrian and transportation infrastructure and ongoing operating and replacement costs on which to base decision making.
- We have alternatives to personal vehicle use which are equally efficient, easy to use, affordable, and convenient as a result there are fewer cars on roads.
- We have a bike lane network that is safe for all people including children and seniors.
- Demand for greater road capacity has decreased.
- Transit ridership has increased.
- New development standards and design guidelines demonstrate sustainable priorities, integrate all forms of transportation, and reduce our environmental footprint.
- Shift in allocation of funds away from a focus on infrastructure for single occupant vehicle traffic towards infrastructure for bikes, transit, and pedestrians.
- We have our own model of “complete streets” that reflects the character and values of Red Deer.
- Our network of sidewalks and trails make our community walkable and interconnected, and encourages healthier community and active people.
- There is increased satisfaction and safety for all transportation users.
- We use roundabouts to smooth traffic flow, reduce travel time, reduce

construction and maintenance costs, and reduce environmental impact.

- We have new knowledge of the human, environmental, and financial cost of various movement options.
- We have begun to build our communities in ways that give people opportunities to live near their workplaces.
- People want to live near where they work.
- We create residential living that has employment opportunities and community amenities nearby to improve quality of life and reduce traffic congestion, environmental degradation, and the need for expanded public infrastructure.
- We have created desirable new neighbourhoods with alternative forms of transportation integrated in the community design.
- Attractive and green routes compel people to consider active transportation.
- The potential of rapid transit and high speed rail is reflected in our planning documents.
- Community design and integrated transportation focus has resulted in nodes of business development and residential density along transit and rail corridors.

Identity

- **Identify and promote our Red Deer identity.**

Our work to describe our identity has given the community a clear sense of civic pride and ownership, an understanding of who lives here, and how we are connected to this place and to one another. This aesthetic is evident in the way we design and build everything, the way we talk about ourselves and work together... it's in our nature.

When success has been reached, what will we see? What will have changed?

- Civic pride continues to increase in us, we are more aware of our place and identify with the characteristics that make us unique and authentic and that make us distinct in the region; embracing this adds to our quality of life.
- When people are asked about Red Deer an answer comes naturally.
- We identify and market ourselves as people connected to our place in the parkland, the amenities that we have to offer such as our great sports facilities, cultural opportunities, parks and trails.
- We have developed a brand that is becoming recognizable.
- Red Deer is welcoming and inviting, tourists and visitors want to stay and explore.
- Red Deer offer a great quality of life that attracts people to stay.
- Our contributions to Alberta's economy and culture are recognized provincially and help us with our advocacy efforts.
- Our cultural and sporting opportunities attract tourists to Red Deer.
- The marketing of our identity has supported our economic development activity and strengthened our economy.
- The City of Red Deer is known to be innovative and creative when working with individual citizens, business, and community groups.

Safety

- **Enable and promote a safer community.**

Promoting a safe community through active citizen participation in crime prevention has changed the perception of crime and the downtown, decreased drug trafficking, drug use and related criminal activity, reduced violence, and strengthened relationships and belonging resulting from the elevation of preventative activities.

When success has been reached, what will we see? What will have changed?

- There is a decrease in serious crime, theft, community vandalism, bullying, family violence, drug trafficking, drug use and related criminal activity, and panhandling.
- Downtown business and residential living have increased to the point where they contribute to downtown safety.
- Budget has been reallocated within the continuum of crime prevention and policing with a primary focus on crime prevention.
- Red Deer is known as a healthy community where people feel a sense of personal safety.
- People feel safe going out after dark, including in the downtown.
- Residents participate actively in crime prevention.
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- We understand the role of relationships in addictions, homelessness and crime.
- There is a clear understanding of the importance of literacy and the role of education in crime prevention.
- The community has a clearer picture of reality and perception as it relates to criminal activity, safety, mental illness, homelessness, and addictions.
- There is less need for law enforcement due to intervention and prevention.
- In interactions with our police force our community finds them to be friendly, responsive, and approachable.
- People report crime when they see or experience it. There are simple ways to make reports.
- A successful treatment centre is under development.
- Our economic development efforts have resulted in gains in our crime prevention strategy.
- Our people have strong and healthy relationships with family, friends,

colleagues, social networks, medical services, and if needed social agencies have the capacity to respond.

Dialogue

- **Engage our community and enhance our relationships.**

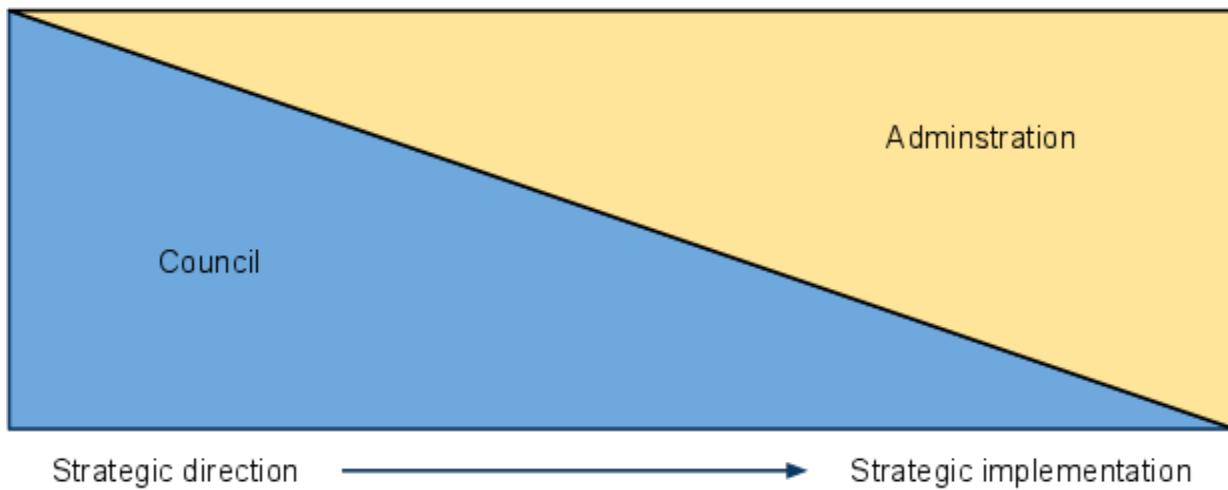
The City and Council's willingness to listen and have ongoing community dialogue has given us a clear understanding of our community diversity, priorities and values, has created collaborative relationships, has enabled advocacy success with other orders of government, other municipalities, and educational and health organizations, and has allowed us to understand the expectations of the community and work toward its vision.

When success has been reached, what will we see? What will have changed?

- There is an ongoing conversation about what's best for everyone.
- We have good communication between cultural groups and council that help us understand the cultural diversity of Red Deer.
- We have personal relationships with key people so we can advocate on issues when needed in a proactive as well as a responsive way.
- We have collaborative relationships with Red Deer County, the Alberta Government, school boards, Red Deer College and other organizations. These help us share our own perspectives and opportunities as well as understand others.
- Informal opportunities have been created to meet with council to continue and deepen community dialogue. (farmers' market, coffee night)
- Because we want to know what citizens think, we've used multiple approaches to interact with the public and in so doing we hear from a broad spectrum of public opinion giving us a real sense and gauge of people's opinions and desires.
- People are involved in opportunities to express their opinions and desires for their communities because their participation feels meaningful and is important.
- At a variety of community events we give opportunities to citizens to provide feedback on initiatives that are underway. (ie: the Environmental Master Plan at Mayor's Garden Party and the Public Market)
- We provide good opportunities for all citizens to voice their ideas, concerns, and expectations which creates a sense of ownership, a safer and healthier community, and enables people to experience civic pride.
- We foster opportunities for people to work together for the good of Red Deer and one another.

- We are attracting new and passionately talented people to our committees.

From Direction to Implementation



This diagram illustrates the roles of Council and Administration as they work together to develop the strategic direction and then collaborate to pass that direction to the organization through the development of charters, implementation strategy, programs, and action. The strategic direction is owned by Council; implementation is owned by Administration. Both Council and Administration are involved throughout the process in different roles and share the responsibility for holding true to and achieving the vision.

We recognize the shift in the community direction and as a result want to be sure that there are no assumptions about the past or the future as implementation is considered. As we embrace the principle of sustainability, change requires that old ways of doing give way to thinking that allows creativity and adaptation.

Principles

We've included the following implementation principles as a way to capture some of Council's thinking as we worked to develop the strategic direction and considered how best to pass this vision to administration.

- **When making recommendations for approval by Council on the implementation of the strategic direction, the relationship to each of the four pillars of sustainability must be clear and evident.**
- **Charters, service plans, and project terms of reference will be developed in a way that supports the thinking within the six themes understanding that other activities will take a lower priority and core service delivery may need to change. Operating and capital budgets must reflect these priorities.**
- **As work on these six themes progresses, appropriate levels of service to the community must be supported by taxes and other revenues which are acceptable to the community.**
- **High level implementation plans will be approved by Council.**

Good Implementation Questions to Consider

The various perspectives provided in these questions are for administration and staff to work with as you plan and develop specific actions and strategies. We encourage you to explore all ideas and possibilities as you think through various strategies and approaches. This list is not exhaustive, but underscores Council's desires and hope for evolutionary change.

- **In what ways does the budget need to be realigned to make these six themes of strategic direction tangible and real for the community?**
- **Do budgets for core services need to be adjusted?**
- **In what ways does the structure of the organization need to evolve to result in noticeable change focused on these six themes?**
- **In what ways does the culture of the organization need to evolve to embrace change and calculated risk, and allow for innovation?**
- **How can we attract the best people to help us accomplish this evolution?**
- **How can we develop a culture of creativity and innovation where people's strengths and interests are cultivated?**
- **How can we encourage staff skill development which supports this work?**
- **How can we recognize and strengthen the work of the community on projects and activities related to these six themes?**