CHESTERMERE

Town of Chestermere
Social Plan

2012-2014

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

While buildings, roads and parks define where a community is on a map, it's the people that live and interact in that community that make it a home. This *Social Plan* provides a path for Council to follow to ensure that Chestermere remains the home we all want it to be.

Why is the Social Plan important? It's a plan to ensure our quality of life is honoured as we grow and develop over the next few years. It's a plan that creates a social vision for the future of Chestermere's residents: our future, together. Without this strategic document providing guidance to both Council and staff on the social expectations of our residents, we risk moving forward blindly.

Hours and hours and hours of work have gone into creating this document, interviewing residents, blending existing plans and identifying priorities. This is truly a document our entire community should be proud because it was born of our thoughts, hopes and dreams for Chestermere. It reflects what we value in our society and who we are as Chestermerians.

Thank you for taking the time to read it and please feel free to provide Council or myself with feedback at any time.

Sincerely,
Patricia

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INTRODUCTION

Chestermere is at a pivotal point in its development. Never in its history have so many residents been engaged in planning the future of the community, working side by side with Town Council and Administration to achieve the visions that residents have for the community's future – for the place we call home. In the spring of 2008, Town Council called upon residents to make a decision upon which all future planning decisions would be based. The question posed in the Town survey was whether residents wanted the town to be developed as: 1) a bedroom community of Calgary, or 2) as a community with its own identity and autonomy. The answer was resounding support for the second option, with 82% of survey respondents indicating that they wanted the Town to "…build facilities, promote industry and commerce, and establish the social services needed to encourage people to meet their needs in town".

Having received this mandate from residents, The *Town of Chestermere Municipal Development Plan* (MDP) was created, based on the visions that residents have for the community. Although the MDP is primarily a plan for developing the "built community", many of the vision statements found in the document also relate to the quality of life experienced by residents, and residents' desire to maintain and grow this quality of life. Recognizing the inter-relatedness of the "built community" and the "feeling of community" desired by residents, the MDP states:

> *"The Town shall undertake a Social Plan to develop long-term strategies that will maintain and build upon the current quality of life enjoyed by Chestermere residents. This will include the planned expansion of community resources and services available to residents. The Social Plan will connect to the values and direction established in the MDP for future community development, with particular focus on the quality of life aspects that relate to maintaining a small town character".* (p. 24)

In the same way that the MDP guides the development of the "built community", the Social Plan will guide the development of "sense of community" and quality of community life. The Municipal Development Plan and Social Plan are to be used as companion documents in achieving the community's visions. However, whereas the MDP has a future timeframe of 30 years, the timeframe for many of the strategies in the Social Plan is the tenure of the current Town Council. A shorter time frame was needed in order to be responsive to current and evolving social conditions in the community, while continuing to build the social infrastructure that will be needed as the community continues to grow.

The Social Plan should be viewed as a working document. It establishes the social priorities of Town Council and Administration and is intended to be a framework from which decisions will be made regarding activities, funding, and resource allocation. The Social Plan also addresses the Town's role and responsibilities under the provincial *Family and Community Support Services Act* (Appendix One).

The primary intended audience for the Social Plan is Chestermere community residents. This is in recognition that:

- The Social Plan builds on what has been achieved to-date by the many residents who, from the earliest days of this community, have given their time to create the quality of community life that residents currently enjoy.

- There is a responsibility to report back to residents on what is being planned as a result of their making time to participate in surveys, personal interviews and focus groups, or in other ways providing input to the Town.
- The Social Plan pulls together the work of many organizations, groups, and committees, showing how their activities contribute toward achievement of the community visions and incorporating their strategies into an overarching plan to move these visions ahead.
- The continuing support and active involvement of all residents Is necessary to achieve the visions that residents have for the community.

The MDP creates the desired setting for community to take place; the Social Plan brings 'heart' to the built community.

This document has been structured into sections, each based on a vision found in the MDP, so that residents can read the document in its entirety or skip to the sections that are of most interest, whether that be:

- Chestermere's sense of small town community
- Chestermere as an inclusive community
- Community safety
- Social infrastructure and community amenities
- Chestermere: a community for all the seasons of our lives

An effort has been made to eliminate professional jargon. Where this could not be avoided, definitions have been provided.

To ease navigation through the document, each of the sections has a similar structure, addressing the following topics:

- Introduction to the Vision
- Why Should We Care?
- What You Told Us
- How We Are Doing Currently
- Strategies to Move the Vision Forward

The Plan wraps up with a chart summarizing the strategies, and a discussion on Community Indicators, i.e. what 'signs' we are going to use to gauge our progress toward achieving these visions.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SOCIAL PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The Social Plan is required to reflect the following:

- the priorities of Chestermere residents;
- the Town's commitment to involve residents in community planning, when appropriate;
- the Town's Triple Bottom Line commitment to considering the financial, environmental and social implications when making decisions;
- a prevention and future-directed focus that utilizes community assets and builds community capacity;
- alignment of resources to where they will have the biggest impact and/or where they will meet the most serious needs;
- development of cross-organizational partnerships to address identified community quality of life issues;
- building capacity at a resident and neighbourhood level by not assuming responsibility for residents in ways that diminish neighbours/friends/community members caring for each other, and through fostering opportunities for natural support networks to be developed;
- building capacity at a community level by not assuming responsibility for the community in ways that diminish residents organizing collectively for the well-being of themselves and the larger community. The Town recognizes that its leadership role in some circumstances is, appropriately, to "lead by stepping back" (John Walker).
- sustainable strategies and solutions;
- research-based best practices from other municipalities;
- shared responsibility for implementation that includes Town Council, Town Administration, and Residents.

SOCIAL PLANNING CONTEXT

THE TOWN'S ORIGINS[1i]

Understanding Chestermere as it today, is enhanced by looking at the town's unique historical roots. The origins of the community date back to the mid 1940s, when the Western Irrigation District (WID) started leasing lots on their reservoir for summer use. The residents of this temporary community had an active community life, socializing at the lake during the summer and in Calgary during the winter. They came together in 1959 to establish the Chestermere Cabin Owners Association (CCOA). As the population of the unofficial summer community grew during the mid 1960s and tenants started investing in their properties, they began advocating for longer leases, and later, for ownership of the lots. This advocacy increased when pollution control regulations for the lake were enacted, requiring significant financial outlay from the tenants.

By 1975, the issue of what to do about this temporary' summer community had become a problem for the WID, the Municipal District of Rocky View (the MD) and the Calgary Regional Planning Commission (CRPC), the latter two being opposed to the establishment of a permanent community. Some tenants had already gone so far as to build expensive houses on the lake, that they were living in illegally, year-round. During one contentious meeting with the WID, the CCOA proposed that the association buy the lakefront property from the WID for $1.5 million. Having decided to divest themselves of their increasingly problematic role as property managers, the WID agreed to sell the land.

The founders of the community were determined people of action. Within three months of acceptance of the offer to purchase, the CCOA had incorporated as a Co-operative Association, rallied the cabin owners, and obtained a loan from the Toronto Dominion Bank for $1.5 million, securing it through personal guarantees from 10 association members. The Co-Op was incorporated just 4 weeks before the final purchase date, and cabin owners who wanted to purchase their lots were invited to bring their cheque books to a meeting three days before Christmas. The turnout was so overwhelming, according to a written history of the community, that nearly all the purchase price of the land was pulled together that night, and a police escort was required to accompany the money to the night deposit at the bank in Calgary! The community's founders were not only people of action, but people with an acute financial sense, as the appraised value of the land, at that time, was $5.2 million.

Owning their lots still left major issues unresolved, i.e. the restriction against living at the lake year-round was still in place and, with 70% of the owners indicating they would like to have permanent homes in Chestermere, the Co-Op had no money to meet the infrastructure needs. Summer Village status was obtained in 1977. Although the community had sufficient population for regular village status, owners had made a decision to apply instead for summer village status so that non-permanent residents could continue to vote on community issues. In 1993, Chestermere became the first Summer Village in Alberta to go directly to Town status.

Many of the original founders of the community, or their children, still live in Chestermere, with their summer cottages having given way to impressive permanent residences around the lake.

[1]Our thanks to the authors of *Chestermere: A Home for all Seasons* for the preceding historical information.

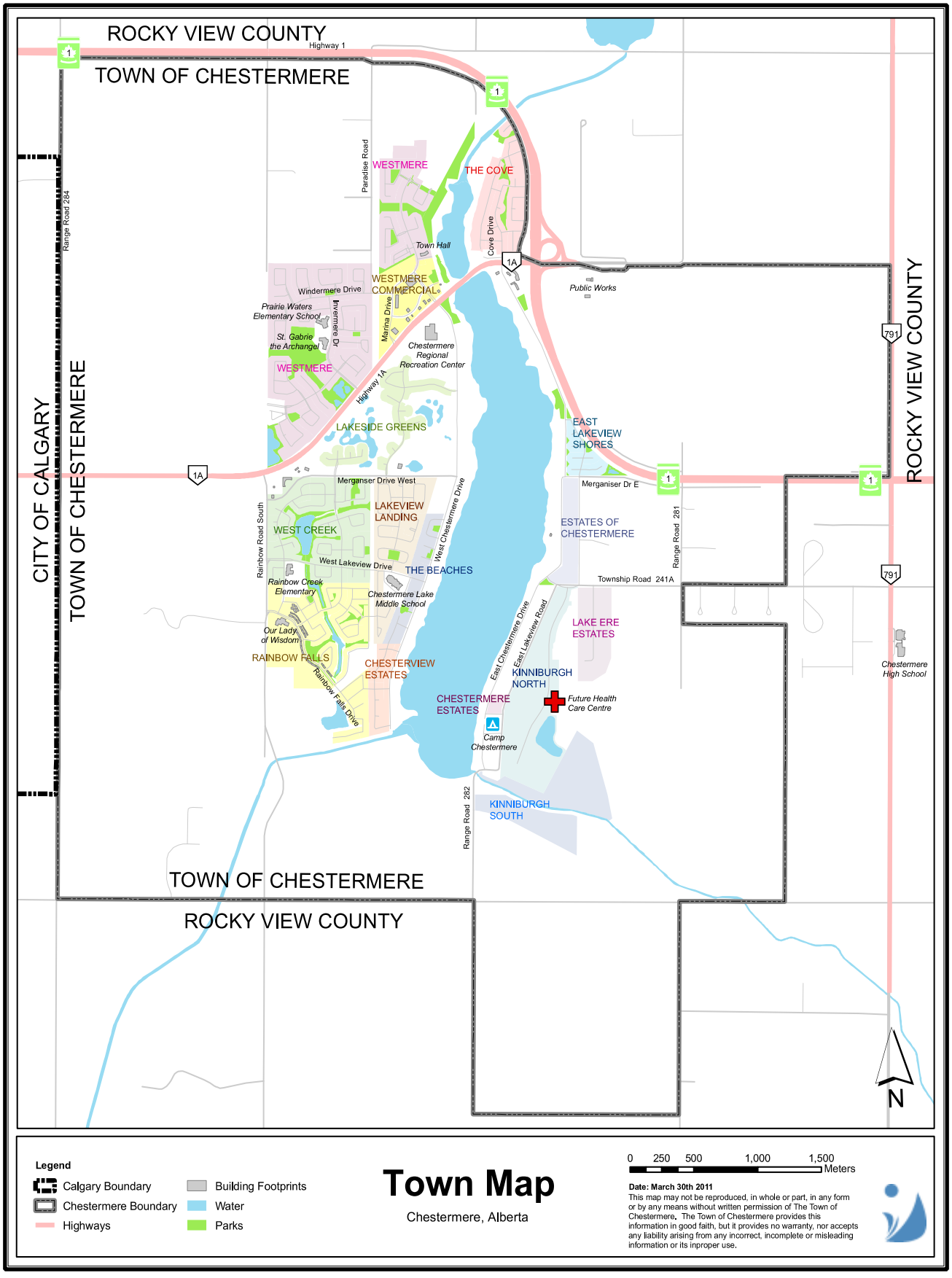
GEOGRAPHY[2]

The Town of Chestermere shares borders with two very different municipalities. Rocky View County (formerly the M.D. of Rocky View), a rural municipality of over 36,000 residents, borders Chestermere on three sides; and with the annexation of 2009, Chestermere became the first urban municipality to share a border with the City of Calgary, population of over one million people. Chestermere's current development is only 1.6 kilometres away from the Chestermere/Calgary municipal boundary. With current growth rates, this buffer is quickly diminishing.

As the largest community immediately to the east of Calgary, Chestermere serves as a regional hub for people living in the SE portion of Rocky View County. The population of this area includes residents of the communities of Conrich, Dalemead, Dalroy, Delacour, Indus, Langdon, and Prince of Peace, as well as those living rurally and on acreages.

Aerial Photograph 2008: Town of Chestermere

[2] Please refer to the map that follows


ROCKY VIEW COUNTY
Highway 1
TOWN OF CHESTERMERE
CITY OF CALGARY
TOWN OF CHESTERMERE
ROCKY VIEW COUNTY
Range Road 284
Paradise Road
WESTMERE
THE COVE
Cove Drive
Town Hall
Public Works
WESTMERE COMMERCIAL
Windermere Drive
Prairie Waters Elementary School
Invermere Dr
St. Gabriel the Archangel
Marina Drive
Chestermere Regional Recreation Center
WESTMERE
Highway 1A
LAKESIDE GREENS
EAST LAKEVIEW SHORES
Merganser Drive West
Merganser Dr E
LAKEVIEW LANDING
WEST CREEK
Rainbow Road South
West Chestermere Drive
ESTATES OF CHESTERMERE
Range Road 281
West Lakeview Drive
THE BEACHES
Township Road 241A
Rainbow Creek Elementary
Chestermere Lake Middle School
Our Lady of Wisdom
LAKE ERE ESTATES
RAINBOW FALLS
CHESTERVIEW ESTATES
Rainbow Falls Drive
East Chestermere Drive
East Lakeview Road
KINNIBURGH NORTH
Chestermere High School
CHESTERMERE ESTATES
Future Health Care Centre
Camp Chestermere
Range Road 282
KINNIBURGH SOUTH
TOWN OF CHESTERMERE
ROCKY VIEW COUNTY
N
Legend
Calgary Boundary
Chestermere Boundary
Highways
Building Footprints
Water
Parks
Town Map
Chestermere, Alberta
0 250 500 1,000 1,500
Meters
Date: March 30th 2011
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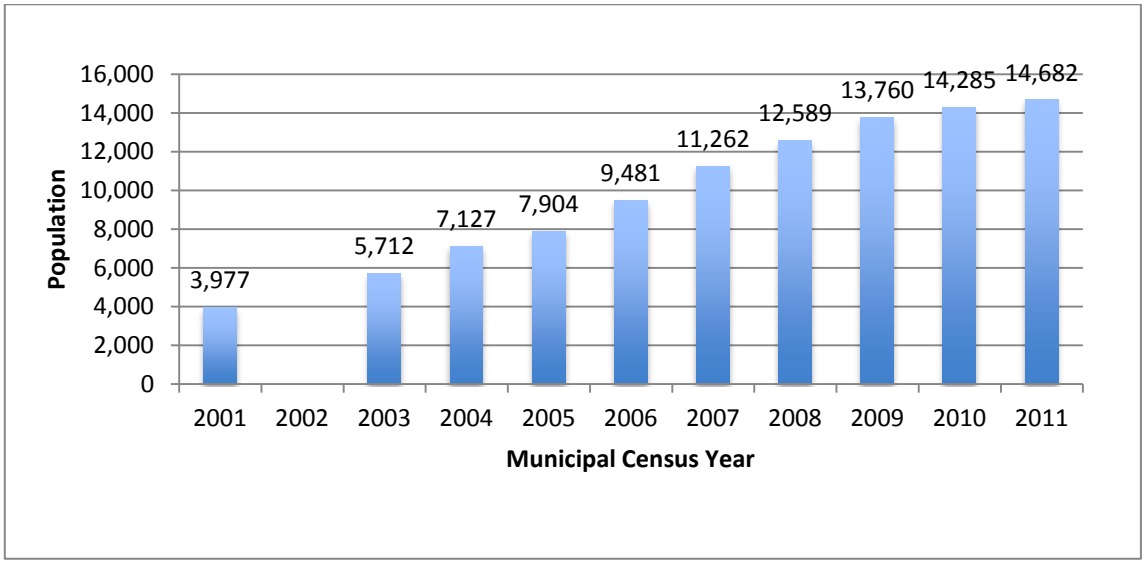
COMMUNITY PROFILE

Note: A broad overview of the community follows. More detailed information is provided in relevant sections of the document.

We have dramatically grown in numbers

Chestermere has had dramatic, community-altering growth in the last ten years, having grown from only 3,977 residents in the federal census of 2001, to 14,824 in the 2011 federal census – a growth of 273%. The 2011 federal census shows Chestermere as the fifth fastest-growing municipal centre in Canada, and the fastest growing in Alberta, with a 49.4% increase in population between 2006 and 2011.

Chart 1: Chestermere's Population Growth 2001 - 2011



Source: Town of Chestermere Municipal censuses

Our population is more heavily weighted toward children and youth

The municipal census of 2011 shows 33% of the population being 20 years of age and under, with a large concentration, 12% (1,691 individuals), being in the ages 0 – 6 category. Another population bulge is ages 36 – 50, which constitutes 27% of the population (3,972 individuals). Seniors (ages 66+) currently constitute less than 5% of the population, but the number of seniors will be growing substantially in the near future, with 16% of the current population (2,367 individuals) being between 51 and 65 years of age.

For the most part, we are a relatively affluent community

The most recent information available on household income (the 2006 federal census) indicated that the median household incomes for all types of households in Chestermere were markedly higher than those for Calgary overall and for the rest of Alberta, with the exception of female-headed lone-parent families. However, it must be noted that the median income, i.e. the income at the midpoint of the range of household incomes in the community, does not give a picture of the household incomes at the high end of the range, nor at the extremely low end. It only gives a general picture of household income (a more detailed discussion of household income can be found on p. 50).

We're a working community

The following table represents the various sources of income as a percentage of the total income for all individuals in the Town of Chestermere. "Government Transfers" refer to any money coming from government. This includes child benefits, Old Age Security, Canada Pension Plan, Employment Insurance, etc.

Table 1: Sources of Income for Chestermere Residents

Earnings	Government Transfers*	Other money (ex. investments, company pension plans, etc.)
90%	3%	6%

Source: Statistics Canada, federal census, 2006
Does not add to 100% due to rounding of numbers

We are becoming more culturally diverse

At the time of the 2006 federal census, Chestermere's cultural diversity was more reflective of the diversity of Alberta overall, rather than that of its closest neighbour, Calgary, with 17% of Chestermere's population being composed of immigrants (16% for Alberta; 25% for Calgary). The most common countries of origin for immigrants in Chestermere at that time were South Asia (predominantly from India), the Philippines, and SE Asia (predominantly from Vietnam).

There are indications that the federal census of 2011 will show a changed picture of Chestermere's cultural diversity, with the proportion of Chestermere's population comprised of immigrants being more reflective of Calgary than that of the rest of the province. The 2011 Municipal Census indicated that 35% of Chestermere's population speaks a language other than one of our official languages in their homes. This is congruent with the 2009 Annual Report of one of our schools, Prairie Waters Elementary, where it was reported that the schoolhad the largest population of English as a Second Language learners in the Rocky View School Division, with these students comprising almost 35% of the school population. In addition to the growing number of residents from culturally diverse backgrounds, the diversity itself is changing. In 2007, 58 languages besides English or French were being spoken in Chestermere homes. This increased to 60 languages in 2009, and 61 in 2011. However, these numbers do not reflect a straight forward gain in the number of languages, as some languages have been lost, and new ones added, between census periods.

We are a community of commuters

87% of working residents, work outside of Chestermere (Statistics Canada, 2006 census).

We are happy calling Chestermere home

In the Town survey of 2008, 84% of the adult respondents rated the quality of life as good or very good in Chestermere. In the YELL Survey of youth in grades 6 to 12 in 2008, 75% indicated they liked living in the community (with 45% of youth respondents saying "I really like it here", 14% saying "I love it here", and 16% saying "It's okay").

CHESTERMERE'S SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Residents have a proud history of organizing around common interests and to address an identified need. Some examples of resident-developed services and programs have included: the Chestermere Playschool, Chestermere Food Bank Society, the Rocky View South East Family-School Liaison Society program, the Whitecappers Association, the Calgary Yacht Club, the Chestermere Library, and SE Rocky View Family and Community Support Services (FCSS – now the Community Services Department of the Town). There are also two service groups: the Lions and the Knights of Columbus, with a Rotary Club currently under development.

Anomalies

With the Town of Chestermere being of relatively recent origin, there are two anomalies in the social infrastructure of the community:

- Chestermere High School was built in 1961 on Municipal District of Rocky View land (now Rocky View County), and will be celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. It is on the east side of Secondary Highway 791, immediately to the east of Chestermere.
- The Chestermere Regional Recreation Centre, which began operations in 1984 under the management of the Chestermere Regional Community Association (established in 1939), was also built on Municipal District of Rocky View land. Since then, the Town has grown around the complex, leaving the Recreation Centre an island of Rocky View County land in the heart of Chestermere.

These two anomalies have created some complexity regarding working relationships, service provision, and resourcing, etc. For example, the issue of who is responsible for recreation in the town continues to be a topic of discussion and debate, and is likely to increase in prominence during the timeframe of this plan, related to the Town's new vision, *"Alberta's Oasis: the recreation and relaxation capital".*

Origins of the Town's Social Infrastructure

In 1995, the SE Rocky View Working Group was established in order to provide input into the provincial planning process for redesigning Children's Services in Calgary and Area. This group was asked to identify needs for this area, inventory the services available to children and families, and recommend changes. The Working Group went on to form the first advisory board of the SE Rocky View Family and Community Services (FCSS), which was established as a regional service, serving residents of Chestermere and the surrounding communities of the M.D. of Rocky View.

Service provision in 1997 began simply- just a phone and answering machine located at the Recreation Centre, with Board members taking turns returning calls to offer resource information. Later that year, the facility's board decided to create space for a small Community Resource Centre, and in 1998, the Town and Child and Family Services pooled money to fund a part-time Community Resource Centre Coordinator/FCSS Director. The Community Resource Centre was a partnership between the Town and the Recreation Centre, with the Recreation Centre providing the space and the Town administering the FCSS program.

In response to the community's growth and changing community needs, an incremental growth has occurred in the services and programs offered over time, with dramatic expansion occurring in the last four years. FCSS (now the Community Services Department) has grown to be the second largest department of the Town.

The Town, through its Community Services Department, is currently in the business of providing early childhood development services; a Parent Link Centre; youth leadership development and an array of youth programs; volunteer coordination; basic needs support and referrals to services and programs. Community development is also a major function of the Department, with staff members initiating and supporting the work of community committees like the Health Services Committee; the Emergency Management Agency; the Healthy Community Initiative; and ACE (Active, Creative, and Engaged) Chestermere; as well as liaising with the School Parent Councils. In 2008, in recognition of the expanded scope of services and programs being offered and the diversity of funding sources, the name was changed to the Community Services Department.

Although the Department has done admirable work to-date, it has been over-taxed to meet the growing demands in recent years. The community's existing social infrastructure is insufficient to meet the needs of a growing population. This issue will be discussed in detail in the section titled *Daily Needs can be Met in Chestermere.* (p. 71)

SOCIAL PLANNING

What is Social Planning?

Social Planning is not a stand-alone process, separate from the Town's operations or community life. Rather, it is a process of:

- recognizing, valuing and pulling together the many ways in which individuals, groups, and organizations are contributing to the quality of community life that we currently enjoy;
- structuring this information in such a way that we can recognize our strengths, as well as gain a clearer understanding of what more needs to be done to achieve the visions that residents have for the community;
- developing strategies that will move us as a community toward achievement of these visions in an organized and planned way;
- developing the means to measure our community's progress toward achieving these visions.

This Social Plan is the culmination of a community development process that dates back approximately four years to when planning for a Community Assessment began. The Community Assessment was seen as both i) a written product, and ii) a community development process that would provide opportunities to engage residents in what was happening in the community.The YELL (Youth Encouraging Lasting Leadership) Youth Council was created at that time to provide a youth voice in community planning, with the HCI (Healthy Community Initiative) providing input and feedback, and the Seniors Services' Providers developing the *Chestermere Seniors' Survey* and providing input regarding the needs of our aging population.

The development of the YELL Youth Council has been a particularly successful community development strategy, with YELL having become a well-known and respected entity in the town in the four years since its inception. Through YELL, youth have become actively engaged in community life and have had many achievements, starting with the development of the YELL Youth Survey. This survey was administered to grade 6 – 12 students in both school systems in 2008, and became an important source of information for planning purposes. YELL youth were involved in making sense of the data, determining priorities, and have taken a leadership role in planning and implementation of strategies to address issues identified by their peers. Some of the activities they have been involved in are:

- developing recreational programming for children and youth
- hiring youth leaders
- volunteering at programs and community events
- mentoring children and peers
- leadership development
- fund-raising
- planning and building the YELL Mountain Bike Skills Park
- organizing anti-bullying activities
- promoting inclusion and respect for diversity
- providing an opportunity for youth of the community to discuss proposed by-laws with Town and policing representatives
- organizing the Candidates' Forums for the last municipal election and the 2012 provincial election

Social planning and community development are inter-twined, ongoing, ever-evolving processes. Subsequent to the completion of the community assessment, other community capacity-building[3] groups were established that have enhanced/are enhancing the quality of life in Chestermere:

- ***The Health Services Committee*** is a community committee initiated by and supported by the Town, consisting of a broad cross-section of interested parties. Its purpose is to address insufficient healthcare services in the town.

- ***The Chestermere ACE Committee*** was a community partnership between the Town and the Recreation Centre promoting Chestermere being a more active, creative and engaged community through the means of recreation, parks, arts, culture, and heritage.

- ***The Create a Wave of Change Anti-Bullying Committee***(Heroes in the Hood) was a group of youth willing to take a stand against bullying, who spread a message of acceptance and friendship throughout the community.

- ***The Seniors Sub-Committee of the Community Services Advisory Board*** is an ad hoc committee involved in exploring opportunities for seniors housing as well as other services for seniors. It is currently on hiatus, with members having decided to focus on housing through establishing the Chestermere Regional Seniors Housing Initiative.

- ***The Spray Park Committee (an ad hoc sub-committee of the Visioning Committee)*** is working on increasing community amenities, starting with development of a Water Spray Park.

- ***The Faith Community Group*** is composed of representatives of many of the faith groups in the Chestermere area. The group's purpose is to explore how the different faith groups can work together to help the community or fill gaps that exist for vulnerable residents.

- ***The United Way/Chestermere Partnership*** is the most recent of the United Way's Area Partnerships. Through this partnership, community members are focused on campaigning and spreading awareness within the community about the United Way and its funding, investment in local programming, and overall community engagement.

Strategies in the vision sections of the Social Plan incorporate the work of Town Committees, YELL, and the more recently developed community capacity-building committees noted above.

[3] *Community capacity* refers to the commitment and motivation a community has; the leadership and ability to create shared visions of the community's future; the ability to understand and analyze problems; the knowledge, skills, and resources to solve problems together; and the ability to access, organize and utilize the resources needed to effectively address challenges and achieve desired community visions.

Adapted from: i) Mattessich and Roy in Tamarack, *Our Growing Understanding of Community Engagement*, and ii) the Aspen Institute, *Measuring Community Capacity Building: A Workbook-in-Progress for Rural Communities*

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Municipal Development Plan (2009) is the foundation on which the Social Plan was built. Other sources of information were used to enhance our understanding of the community, the visions, and what is needed to move the visions along:

- Demographic information: federal and municipal census data and projections based on this data
- Resident surveys: the *Town Survey* (2008), *YELL Youth Survey* (2008), *Chestermere Seniors' Survey* (2008), *SE Rocky View Anti-Bullying Survey* (2008), *Water Park Survey* (2010), and the *Policing Committee Survey* (2010)
- Studies: the *Chestermere Community Assessment* (2009), *the Assessment of Child Care Needs in Chestermere, Strathmore & Surrounding Area*(2007); *Chestermere RCMP: Five Year Resource Strategy, 2009-2014*
- Individual interviews: interviews were conducted with community leaders and a mix of long-term and newer residents (Appendix One)
- Consultations: Community Assessment Priority Setting Workshop; ACE Community Screening Tool Workshop and planning meetings; focus groups with municipalities/services funded by Rocky View County FCSS; meetings with YELL leadership and Policing Committee representatives
- Questionnaires: Responses were received from school principals, HCI members, Community Services Board members, and youth from immigrant families.
- Documents from neighbouring municipalities: Rocky View County and the City of Calgary
- Literature reviewed during the first phase of Rocky View County's Intramunicipal Project, which explored challenges caused by the urbanization of what were previously small town communities
- Infrastructure and mill rate information from Alberta communities of comparable size and proximity to a major urban centre.

As noted earlier, when the question was posed to residents in 2008, 87% indicated that they wanted Chestermere's future planning and development to be as an autonomous community, rather than as a bedroom community of Calgary. To fully understand the importance of this question, and the values and quality of life issues related to it, one must look back in time to the town's origins as well as consider the current community. Residents who lived in Chestermere during its early days as a summer village describe Chestermere as a place where everyone recognized each other and where there was a sense of general friendliness, with everyone waving as their cars passed on the unpaved roads. Residents had a shared lifestyle, centred mostly around the lake, with physical amenities like a dancehall, sailing club, and small grocery store adding to the sense of small town community. There was a feeling of being separate from Calgary. But with the rapid growth of Calgary's population and eastward expansion of the city, Chestermere became an attractive community to live in for people who work in Calgary. With the population boom and the town's increasing proximity to NE and SE Calgary, also came significant changes in the community's cultural makeup. Chestermere, once a culturally homogenous community, has become a community of choice for economically successful immigrant families. The dramatic population growth and increased diversity of cultural backgrounds have created challenges to maintaining the small town sense of community.

Why should we care about sense of community?

Some would argue that, in today's world, the concept of geographical community is no longer relevant, with the majority of people working, socializing, and shopping outside of the community where they reside. They would argue that communities brought together by common interests like sports associations, communities of shared beliefs like faith communities, workplace communities fostered by employers, cultural communities, and social networking sites with their convenience of use, have replaced 'communities of place' - that people no longer have the time, energy, nor desire to invest in the communities where they reside. The counterargument is that, from a quality of life perspective, we cannot afford to ignore the importance of "community of place".

Research shows that the Quality of Life experienced by individuals is higher in communities where residents recognize and know each other, where there is a sense of community and of belonging to a community, where residents are actively engaged in the community and with each other. The Canadian Index of Wellbeing measures the wellbeing of Canadians across 11 quality of life domains. Of the 11 domains identified, three relate directly to the concept of engaged residents: 1) high levels of civic participation, 2) vital communities, and 3) access to and participation in dynamic arts, culture & recreation.[ii] This is also reflected in the work of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, where civic engagement and personal safety are two of their Quality of Life measures[iii]. Resident engagement is also critical for community sustainability.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Many aspects of Quality of Life – safety, health, family finances, an environment that supports the healthy development of children and youth, and the ability to stay in one's home as one ages, are positively impacted where there is a sense of community:

A. SAFETY

Perceptions of safety

Knowing others, and others knowing you and your family, is a major factor in individual perceptions of safety, according to Chestermere residents that were interviewed.

Crime prevention

- Where residents recognize their neighbours, they also recognize people who do not belong in their neighbourhood, so there is more awareness of individuals who may pose a risk to individuals and property.
- Where there is a strong sense of community, there is also a sense of shared responsibility, with residents organizing to increase community safety. Chestermere Block Watch, the Create a Wave of Change program (an anti-bullying, youth-led initiative), and Citizens On Patrol are local examples.
- Respect for property: There is more respect for property and lower levels of vandalism and mischief in communities with a strong sense of community and community ownership.
- Public spaces are safer.

Safety of children

- Parents have a greater sense of their children's whereabouts and activities when they know other parents in the community. The sharing of information that comes from being connected to other parents, also increases parental awareness of potential risks to their children.
- When residents feel part of a community, they feel more responsibility to intervene when they see something happening that could endanger other people's children. The importance of this is recognized by the City of Winnipeg, where "adults in neighbourhood to watch out for children's safety" is one of their Quality of Life Indicators.

B. HEALTH

According to the Vancouver Health Authority, "…research has identified social inclusion—the extent to which people have social supports available to them and feel part of their community—as a critical determinant of health. These protective factors act as powerful buffers against the effects of stress on health."[iv] This is also supported by both the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition and BC Healthy Communities (partners in Canada's *Healthy Communities, Healthy Nation* chronic disease prevention initiative) which include social supports as one of their measures of healthy communities. [v]

The topic of stress and its connection to health, both physical and mental, is the subject of much discussion these days. The connection can be direct in regard to the impairment

or damage that it causes to healthy functioning, as it is believed to place individuals at greater risk of contracting diseases and developing chronic health conditions, or indirect, i.e. it puts some individuals at further risk through the destructive behaviours they engage in to try and decrease their stress, such as substance abuse. It has been found that lack of supportive relationships, social isolation, and mistrust of others further increases stress.[vi]

Sense of geographical community has a positive connection to health outcomes, in that communities with a strong sense of community:

- are more socially inclusive, with less residents feeling socially isolated.
- are characterized by social networks of support. These relationships act preventatively in reducing stress and providing support to be able to cope more effectively with temporary life circumstances. They also provide support to help people get through times of crisis and to deal with chronic health issues.
- are more likely to be engaged in health promotion. This can include everything from groups promoting healthy eating and active living for children; anti-drug coalitions; school parent councils advocating for healthier food in the schools; and groups that come together to ensure the community has amenities like bike paths, parks, and recreation facilities in order to be able pursue an active lifestyle.

C. ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Being connected to other residents can be financially advantageous to individuals and families, whether it be new home owners sharing the cost of equipment rental, neighbours joining together to negotiate a cheaper price for sod, babysitting each other's children, or sharing information about where to get the best value for one's money.

D. CHILD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The children and youth of Chestermere have a different experience of the community than do most of the adults. Their lives, for the most part, take place within town.This is where they attend school, where many of their recreational and leisure activities take place, and where their friends live. If one cares about the quality of their lives and their development as individuals, one has to care about the context within which their lives take place. Research has shown the importance of community in positive child and youth outcomes. To explore this concept further, we will refer to two bodies of research: protective and risk factors for youth development, and "critical hours" research.

The children and youth of Chestermere have a different experience of the community than do most of the adults. Their lives, for the most part, take place within town.

The Impact of Community on Healthy Child and Youth Development

Researchers with the Search Institute[vii]have determined that 40 "protective factors" are associated with positive child and youth outcomes. The general concept is that the more of these protective factors that a child or youth has in his/her life, the greater is the likelihood

that the young person will develop into a healthy, caring adult despite negative influences and "risk factors" in their lives. Protective factors are of two kinds: i) factors related to the individual such as positive values, social skills, and self-esteem, and ii) those external to the individual, which includes factors related to the community. According to the research, community can play a significant role in helping to positively develop children and to protect them against negative influences:

i) Community can provide an environment of support for children and youth, where they can grow and flourish. This is achieved through:
   - positive, responsible role models: The City of Winnipeg considers this to be of such importance that it uses "adults in neighbourhood for children to look up to" as one of their Quality of Life Indicators.
   - caring neighbours and relationships with other supportive adults in the community.
   - neighbours monitoring young people's behavior.
   - adults in the community valuing youth and giving them useful roles in the community.
   - children and youth having a feeling of safety at home, school, the neighborhood, and the larger community.

ii) Community provides opportunities for the kinds of engagement, participation, and constructive use of time that are associated with positive child and youth outcomes. Some of these protective factors are the young person being engaged in service to others, creative activities, youth programs, and participation in a religious community. In communities where youth are actively engaged in positive activities during the *"critical hours"* (i.e. the hours between whenschool ends and their parents get home from work), there is lesser incidence of teen pregnancy, crime, substance use, and other undesired behaviours[viii](Calgary Children's Initiative, 2006).

iii) Being engaged in the community also provides opportunities for developing values, beliefs and social competencies which have been identified as protective factors[4]:
   - a sense of caring and valuing helping others
   - integrity: learning to act on one's convictions and stand up for what one values

Hands Across the Community youth delivering donated goods

Community is…
valuing youth and their contributions to the community.

[4]adapted from the Search Institute and Resiliency Initiatives

- planning and decision-making skills
- interpersonal competence: empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills
- cultural competence: knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ ethnic backgrounds
- resistance skills: being able to resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations
- conflict resolution skills
- the beliefs that one has control over "things that happen to me" and that one's life has purpose

E. ABILITY TO "AGE IN PLACE"

As one ages, the ability to remain in one's home and "age in place" can be dependent on having supportive neighbours and friends who are willing to help with yard care, home maintenance, transportation and other supports required by seniors.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

Quality of Life is enhanced by the number and quality of activities, community events, organizations, service groups, sports teams, and shared interest groups in a community, and these are heavily reliant on volunteers' efforts and leadership. When residents have a sense of community, they are more highly motivated to volunteer and contribute to the community.

Small town atmosphere and sense of community are powerful marketing tools from two perspectives. Many individuals as well as parents looking for a good place to raise their children are attracted to small town living. Also, small towns with an enticing quality of life, can be appealing to businesses looking to locate in a community, in that this makes it easier for them to recruit qualified employees.

What you told us about "small town community"

In exploring sense of community and its importance, an extensive literature review was conducted to try and achieve greater clarification on what "community" and especially "small town community" means. However, during the review, it was realized that the most valuable definition of "small town community" was not going to be found in the literature – that it needed to be created by the residents of our community. So, we turned to community residents to create a definition of "small town community" that would be unique to the Town of Chestermere. Fifty-three individuals contributed to this through participating in individual interviews (Appendix One). Participants in these interviews included community founders, long-time residents, and newer residents. In these interviews, residents were asked to discuss:

Small Town Community is:

- **a feeling,**
- **a place, and**
- **a value.**

~Chestermere residents

- what the term "small town community" means to them and to give examples of what it 'looks like';
- how the town has changed since the population explosion;
- what parts of the small town feeling still exist and what has been lost;
- what organizations and groups contribute to a sense of community;
- the places that they felt act as community hubs – providing opportunities for residents to gather and socialize;
- ideas they had on how to maintain or enhance the sense of small town community, and
- ways to involve newcomers in the community.

Common themes emerged: We were told that small town community is a feeling, a place, and a value.

Construction of the YELL Mountain Bike Skills Park

Community is…
pitching in to make a dream a reality.

A FEELING

Residents told us that "small town community" is:

- **a feeling of friendliness**: saying hello and waving to others, introducing yourself to new neighbours, knowing who lives in almost all the houses on your street.
- **a feeling of familiarity - knowing your neighbours**: As one newer resident expressed it, "*A small town feeling is one where you tend to know your neighbours better. A trip to the grocery store becomes a social event*".
- **a feeling of safety**: having a sense of security and safety for ourselves and our families -*"You're not too worried about letting the kids run and play because you know that there is a "village" watching over them*."
- **a feeling of belonging**: As one resident expressed this, "*I think it all amounts to feeling at ease, as you know and are known in the community*".
- **a feeling of caring**: Residents are not alone when things happen to us or our families – we have neighbours, friends, and others in the community who care about our wellbeing.
- **a feeling of community support**: Residents know that as we age, the community cares about us: as a child, youth, young parent, parent of teenagers, a person supporting aging parents, and as a senior; and that there are supports/programs/services to help us master the challenges that come with the different stages of the life cycle;
- **a feeling of pride**: Small town feeling means being proud to be a Chestermere resident and proud to tell others where we live.
- **a feeling of responsibility**: Small town feeling means demonstrating caring about the community through volunteering locally, helping out neighbours, and donating to local initiatives (recreational facility development, local charities, etc.) when able.
- **a feeling of confidence:** Small town feeling is believing that the quality of life that is currently experienced in the community will continue into the future - knowing that steps will be taken to address community issues that may occur that could affect the quality of life in the community, and that we can impact what is happening in the community.

> **"Size (of the population) doesn't matter, it's the feeling. We can grow even larger and still have that feeling with the right planning and development."**
>
> **~Candace, Long-Time Resident**

Block Party

Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast

Community is…
feeling proud to be Chestermerians.

COMMUNITY IS A PLACE

Residents told us that "small town community" is:

- **a place where people can easily get to where they need to go within the community;**
- **a place where first impressions of the community tell visitors that the people who live there care about where they live**. This is evidenced by how people care for their yards, road and parks maintenance, an abundance of pathways connecting neighbourhoods, town flags, the Urban Beautification Committee's work, signage at the entrances to the community, and art in public gathering places.
- **a place where there are physical sites to get together with other residents**. These visually communicate that the community is not just a bedroom community – that people are involved in the life of the community and that the community itself has a life. Places residents identified that serve the role of being hubs of the community included: the Recreation Centre, Tim Hortons, the Library, the Landing Bar, Westcreek Pub, the Parent Link Centre, Lakeside Greens Golf Club, Camp Chestermere, the Sailing Club, Safeway, community parks and the boat launch.
- **a place where activities for children provide opportunities for busy parents to get to know each other**. Some residents told us that they do not have the time to get involved in the community or even to get know their neighbours, but they have a sense of community coming from getting to know other parents because their children are involved in the same activities. This is especially true for activities like hockey and soccer where the children progress together through the years.
- **a place where residents are able to stay in Town for what they need** (community amenities, jobs, shopping, recreation, and housing options suitable to one's stage of life).

Pitch-in Lake Clean Up

Community is…
taking care of the place we call home.

COMMUNITY IS A VALUE AND A RESPONSIBILITY

Residents told us that small town community is a value and that it has associated behaviours. It is evidenced by the following:

- **Celebrating as a community**: One long-time resident described how in the early days of the community, residents of all ages attended social functions together. Weddings, baby showers, and holiday dances, were community-wide celebrations. Over the years, this has given way to larger community events and festivals that have become annual traditions that are uniquely Chestermerian. The community's dual historical roots, as a lake community surrounded by a large rural area, are evident in these celebrations and the Chestermere of today is enriched by its dual historical roots:

  The community's agricultural roots are celebrated annually by Country Connections in the spring and the Country Fair in the fall. Both are hosted by the Agricultural Society with support from the Chestermere Regional Community Association. The 2012 fall fair will be the 23rd annual event. It has a history of success, with events like the following attracting increasingly large turnouts, year after year: the parade; pancake breakfast; a tradeshow showcasing home-based businesses; the judging of Red Ribbon entries by certified agricultural judges; Battle of the Bands; artistic and crafting worshops; gymkhana (residents with horses having friendly competitions in barrel racing; pole bending, stake races, etc.); trick riding shows; baseball tournament; beer garden; rabbit hopper competition; and a community dance.

  The Town hosts three lake-based annual events, Waterfest, Winter Festival and Canada Day:
  - At Waterfest, Chestermere's recreational lake village spirit comes alive as residents festoon their boats and water crafts, pick their music, and get decked out in costume for the parade of boats and boat judging. The fishing derby, wakeboard competition, lake tours, Lions' beer garden, YELL's rubber duck race, local entertainment, and people coming out in their boats to watch the fireworks over the lake, have become community traditions.
  - Winterfest's sleigh rides, ice fishing derby, polar bear dip, motorcycle racing and skating on the lake, and indoor activities like Wii Winter Sports, family gingerbread displays, Kids Playzone, and local entertainment, provide an opportunity for the community to gather in the middle of winter, promoting the lake as a year-round amenity for residents.

Community is…
enjoying the lake with family and friends.

- The Canada Day celebration on the waterfront is a more recent addition to the growing number of annual events that contribute to a sense of small town community and attracts a very multi-cultural crowd.

The Olympic Torch event of 2010 was a notable event in Chestermere's history, with thousands of residents turning out to celebrate the Olympics and being Canadian.

- **Residents taking the initiative to organize themselves and utilize their talents and skills for the good of the community**: There are countless ways in which this has occurred in the community, for example: the development of the Chestermere Library; the Whitecappers Association; the Lions, Knights of Columbus, and Rotary service groups; sports associations and clubs; and worship groups. It is important to recognize that it is not just the adults of the community who have organized for the benefit of the larger community. Chestermere has benefitted from strong youth leadership through YELL, the Anti-Bullying initiative, leadership activities through the schools and Camp Chestermere, and through youth organizations like Cadets, and the Girl Guide and Scout movements.
- **Informal leadership emerging at a neighbourhood level**: The importance of residents who take the initiative to organize neighbourhood get-togethers was cited as being important to a sense of community. These activities range from spontaneous gatherings, like a neighbour opening his garage door on a hot summer day and inviting others to join him for an impromptu neighbourhood barbecue, to annual/seasonally recurring neighbourhood events.
- **Knowing who to go to in the community and feeling that it is okay to approach them**: Residents referred to a wide variety of purposes, such as asking for information or advice or borrowing a tool. It also meant knowing the Mayor and Town Council members "at least by sight", feeling comfortable phoning them, and feeling one is able to have input on decisions being made in the community.
- **Being inclusive and respecting others**
- **Getting involved:** We were told that participating on sports teams, and belonging to some of the many organizations, clubs, and associations in the town (p. 37) is important to a sense of small town community.
- **The community rallying around and supporting other community members that are in need**: Chestermere's small town community spirit shines when residents come together to help ensure that our most vulnerable residents receive the community's support.

Community is…
joining in celebration.

2010 Olympic Torch Relay

This is shown in many ways: regularly recurring events in support of a cause; residents organizing to support families who have experienced a death, house fire, illness, or other tragedies; and individuals and groups who come up with creative ways to raise funds for a cause dear to their heart. Notable examples of regularly recurring events that are well-supported in the community include the Christmas with Dignity Campaign and the Relay for Life:

> "Every time there's a tragedy, it reinforces that we're a community. It doesn't matter where they live or what their cultural background is – it's compassion that brings us together."
>
> ~ Steve, resident

- In 2009, a recession year, residents reached deep into their pockets and donated 150% more to the Christmas with Dignity campaign than they had in the previous year to support other residents facing financial challenges.
- The first Relay for Life event in the summer of 2010, saw Chestermere residents rallying around people they care about: family, friends, neighbours and co-workers whose lives have been affected by cancer. Chestermere, with a population of just over 14,000 people at the time, organized 22 teams, and raised over $113,000 for the Cancer Society!

Community is…
supporting other residents through hard times.

CHALLENGES IN ACHIEVING THE VISION

Chestermere has a number of challenges to achieving and maintaining the small town community vision, some unique to Chestermere, but most of which are shared by other communities situated in close proximity to a major population hub:

1. **Creating a shared vision**

   Residents' observations about sense of community[5ix] in Chestermere were very diverse, not just in terms of what exists currently, but what existed historically.

   What long-time residents told us

   Three very different perspectives were expressed by long-time residents:

   i) There are long-time residents who had a strong sense of community, who are saddened by its loss, who believe it was inevitable and that there is nothing that can be done to get it back.

   ii) Other long-time residents did not experience a sense of small town community when Chestermere was smaller. Their experience was that, *"Social life was pretty minimal because everyone here was pretty spread out, so (we)still travelled into the city for social activities and shopping…"* As one of these residents expressed it: "*I don't think we were a small town. We were a bedroom community. We're only now just turning into a small town. We need to maintain what we have now as we grow larger*".

   iii) Then there were long-time residents who had a sense of small town community, whose sense of community has changed, but who are hopeful for the future. One of these residents expressed it this way, *"I think it is probably impossible to keep the small town feeling just as it was years ago. But, there are some things that can be done to knit us all closer together, to help us feel that we, as individuals, all belong to the one whole"*.

   Newer residents: As with the long-time residents, newer residents' sense of community was highly diverse. Some newer residents have become very engaged in community life, have a strong sense of community, and are committed to the small town vision. At the other end of the continuum are those who do not know their neighbours, do not participate in community life, who have no sense of community and have not invested their time in the community.

2. **Rapid population growth**

   Dramatic population growth and the sheer number of new residents did not allow for gradual transition or adjustment to changes in the community.

3. **The amount of time that adults spend outside the community**

   A major challenge to creating a sense of community is that 87% of Chestermere residents in the workforce, are not in the community during a major part of their day. Add to this the fact that 39% of Chestermere households have no children at home to draw them back to the

[5] *Sense of Community:* "Villages, towns, and cities with a sense of community include those where all members: contribute to and hold a common vision for the future; respect and celebrate their heritage, diversity, and resources; share information; and develop and sustain an abundance of social networks and relationships. As a community, they have a strong, positive identity, uphold a shared set of values, rights and responsibilities, foster an atmosphere of civility, trust, and respect, and sustain norms of networking, shared information and active participation." ("Fraser Basin Council", 2003, in Tamarack; Malheur Commission on Children and Families, 2002 as Found in Tamarack p. 2; Charter of Community Engagement.)

community after work (Stats Canada 2006),and the challenge of engaging residents becomes even greater. One resident suggested that there are two parts to addressing this challenge:

i) that we need to look at what activities and amenities are keeping these residents in Calgary and provide more of these in the community in order to entice them and their friends to spend more time in Chestermere; and

ii) that residents who work outside the community often do not know what is available in the community.

- 87% of working residents work outside the community.
- 39% of households have no children at home to draw them back to the community after work.

4. **Diminished sense of commonality that draws people together**

The Lake: The overarching vision expressed in the MDP is that Chestermere is "a distinctive recreational lake community promoting a safe, family-oriented, sustainable environment". There are indications, however, that as housing has expanded out from the lake shores, the importance of the lake as the commonality shared by all residents has diminished. One resident expressed the view that: "People come from Calgary and move into a house away from the lake. The perception is they are just another suburban Calgary neighbourhood. Their friends, work and social network are still in Calgary. This is just where they sleep. A sense of community can be encouraged and maintained with a segment of the population that resides around the lake and the golf course. The rest of the population consider themselves Calgarian". It is apparent that the lake is no longer sufficient by itself as a commonality that creates a sense of community, but there was some sense from residents that more could be done to enhance the lake as a shared community resource. As one resident expressed it,"We have an amazing resource (the lake) but it's not being taken advantage of. We need to make use of it for ALL residents, not just those who live on the lake or have a boat…"

Shared interests: A number of individuals talked about increasing the opportunities for people to come together over a common interest, whatever that may be. As one woman expressed it, "Where there is a connection ….relationship develops".

Community traditions: Others expressed the importance of community traditions, with community events that residents look forward to, held during the same week every year so that residents plan their schedules around attending.

5. **Less sense of personal responsibility**

Increased population often results in people feeling less personal responsibility for what happens, whether it be with regard to the community generally or other residents in the community. One resident expressed the phenomenon this way: "You can call a work party if the population is under 1,000 and everyone will come. At 1,500, it's kind of iffy, and if the population is over 2,500, you call the Town to do it".

6. **Busy Lives**

One of the biggest impediments to developing a sense of community is residents being so busy in their own lives that they feel they do not have the time or energy to get involved, whether that be getting to know their neighbours, helping when others need support, or volunteering. It is the uncommon individual that is looking for an opportunity to further commit their time, no matter how worthwhile the endeavour. According to Volunteer Calgary, 78% of Calgarians who don't volunteer, cited lack of time as the reason for this (Statistics Canada, *Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating* 2007).

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Although there are many ways of describing and talking about community engagement, for the purposes of achieving the small town vision, we have chosen to look at community engagement as being made up of three components: i) civic engagement, ii) volunteer contributions, and iii) resident engagement with each other. Together, they create a vibrant community life.

Civic Engagement

Civic engagement[x], in a broad sense, can be defined as members of a community participating in the decisions and actions that affect themselves and other residents, and that help to shape their community. For the purpose of the Social Plan, civic engagement will refer specifically to resident participation in Town-related/Town-sponsored activities such as participating in municipal elections, attending Town open houses, participating in community consultation processes, and volunteering on Town Committees.

A Resident's Vision for Chestermere:

"The Town of Chestermere is a community where people know and care about their neighbours, partake in a variety of recreational, educational, artistic, sports and social groups and activities, volunteer their time and skills when able, shop locally and support local business initiatives, are passionate about their community and what is happening in and around the community, and strive to make a stronger community for themselves, their children, and other residents".

~Maureen

Volunteerism

This refers to resident participation in a voluntary capacity, in advisory, planning and leadership roles, within all organizations and institutions that contribute to the quality of life experienced in Chestermere. This includes, but is not limited to the following: the Chestermere Regional Community Association, the Agricultural Society, school parent councils, the Lions, Knights of Columbus, Rotary, the Town's Community Services Department, the Foodbank Society, sports associations, arts groups, the Whitecappers and youth groups.

Resident Engagement with Each Other

This term is used to describe the number, strength, quality and inclusiveness of relationships between residents as well as resident involvement and support for community life: attending and supporting community events and activities, participating in community groups, supporting local charitable causes, parents supporting their children's schools, being involved in faith-based communities, supporting local businesses and services, active use of the Town's parks and trail system, etc. In a dynamic community, there is a sense of community resident ownership and shared responsibility for the quality of life in the community. This concept has been discussed fairly extensively earlier in this section.

All three types of engagement are important in increasing community capacity. The next section will look at what the Town's role is in regard to community engagement and what is known about current levels of civic engagement and community capacity in Chestermere.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE TOWN

Achieving the small town community vision as well as the other community visions articulated in both the MDP and the Social Plan, will require the participation of all stakeholders, most of all, the residents of Chestermere themselves. Town Council and Town Administration's responsibility is to provide civic leadership in promoting community engagement (where appropriate, given the executive role of Council for community decision-making); building community capacity; and reporting back to the community on progress made. In *Civic Engagement and the Restoration of Community*[xi], the authors beautifully state this civic leadership responsibility as: "Leaders create the conditions for civic engagement. They do this through thepower they have to convene, focus attention and define the conversations for people when they gather."

Chestermere's existing community capacity has been built by many groups, organizations, Town Council and administration. What social planning brings to the community is the ability to purposefully and strategically plan how to further build on and grow this capacity. The purpose of community capacity building is: *"…to enable people in a community to work together, make well-considered and collaborative decisions, develop a vision and strategy for the future, and act over time to make these real – all while tapping and building the individual skills and abilities of an ever-increasing quantity and diversity of participants and organizations within the community".* Capacity building is a shared responsibility, encompassing *"… a wide range of activities, from formal leadership development efforts to community–wide strategic planning to a wide variety of less formal activities that build trust and camaraderie among citizens*"[xii].

Engaging the community and community capacity building should be, and should be seen to be, core activities of the Town. This should be reflected in:

- Town policies and practices
- Town visioning
- Town operations, service and program provision
- the Town's relationship with community groups and organizations, school divisions, and services provided to Town residents by other levels of government
- the Town's promotion of volunteerism as a community norm
- how the Town hosts events and festivals (involving resident in meaningful ways, and providing opportunities for resident interaction)

PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN CIVIC ACTIVITIES OR SERVICE PLANNING[xiii]

The Town is committed to the following:

- involving residents in tackling issues of real concern that have been identified by the community, where appropriate
- Inviting stakeholders to an issue to provide input into addressing the issue
- being clear about the role of community in the community engagement activity, i.e. whether they will be acting in an advisory or implementation capacity
- setting clear objectives for the engagement activities
- establishing clear mandates and being clear about limitations and constraints in order to avoid raising unrealistic expectations, i.e. being clear at the outset re any courses of action that will not be feasible, and why, and that some actions may be long-term
- determining at the outset, how the contribution of individuals and committees will be used, and involving those individuals who will make use of the community engagement activity from the beginning so that recommendations can be reviewed and implemented speedily
- being open, accessible and approachable so that community members and groups feel able to have contact with the process
- maximizing opportunities for participation by the community by: i) considering providing supports that may be required for particular individuals to participate, such as childcare or transportation, ii) ensuring venues are physically accessible; iii) holding meetings/activities at times that work for residents
- developing the skills and capacity of the community and providing training opportunities, as appropriate, to fulfilling the tasks of the civic activity
- allowing adequate time for planning
- helping the committee chairs with how to address conflicting views
- communicating with the community regarding decisions made, and if recommendations have not been adopted, providing the reasons why not
- determining the most appropriate way(s) to communicate with residents
- recognizing and celebrating successful efforts and recognizing individual contributions
- reviewing and evaluating engagement strategies and approaches used
- conforming with FOIPP requirements and other Council standards for communication and information sharing
- providing training for Committee Chairs

How We are Doing Currently

I. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN CHESTERMERE

According to Smart Growth BC, "Citizens are not just periodic voters, they are stewards of their community and a political force for change"[xiv]. Civic engagement is a continuum, ranging from relatively passive activities like keeping informed about what's happening in the community and voting, to providing input on a municipal planning process, completing Town surveys, and participating on a Town committee. Civic engagement isn't an activity that takes place only in the Town Hall, although it is in use by community groups most evenings of the week. Rather it is an activity that takes place at a number of sites throughout the community –residents' homes, schools, the Recreation Centre, and community parks or in a vacant lot building a bike park. The following examines how residents are currently civically engaged in Chestermere:

1. Keeping Informed: The Town uses a number of means to communicate with residents: *the Mayor's Messages*, the Town website, a weekly page in *The Anchor*, public notices, a Facebook site, and Community Services' *Community Currents* on-line publication.

2. Voting: Voter participation in municipal elections has ranged from a low of 14% in 2004, to a high of 31% in 2007. The dramatic increase in 2007 mirrored the voter participation rates in Calgary, with Calgary ranking 3rd in Alberta for voter turn-out and Chestermere ranking 4th.

Table 2: Voter Turnout in Municipal Elections, Alberta Cities

City	2001	2004	2007	2010
Airdrie	22%	31%	12%	32%
Brooks	32%	n/a	34%	27%
Calgary	32%	20%	33%	53%
Camrose	41%	27%	21%	44%
Cold Lake	36%	42%	27%	28%
Edmonton	35%	42%	27%	33%
Fort Saskatchewan	44%	47%	27%	36%
Grande Prairie	30%	18%	29%	25%
Lethbridge	45%	40%	23%	35%
Medicine Hat	44%	42%	48%	38%
St. Albert	36%	46%	37%	22%
Spruce Grove	41%	24%	30%	34%
Wetaskiwin	25%	17%	25%	35%
Town of Chestermere	23%	14%	31%	23%

Source: 2001 – 07: *Calgary Herald*, April 6, 2010

3. Consulting and providing input: Since 2008, numerous opportunities have been provided for residents to express their views and engage in discussion with their elected representatives. These include recurring Mocha Mondays with the Mayor, *the Chestermere Town Survey*, *the YELL Youth Survey*, *the Chestermere Seniors' Survey*, *the Chestermere Policing Committee Survey*, *the Water Park survey, the Survey of Residents of Existing Acreage Areas*, numerous planning open houses, and *the Lake Dredging Survey*.

4. Community Development: With the restructuring of Town Committees in 2010, there are now four ways in which residents are engaged on committees with the Town:

   i) **Legislated committees** that exist due to a Federal or Provincial law or Municipal Bylaw;

   ii) **Advisory committees** provide general advice or suggestions about a specific topic to Council;

   iii) **Project-Based Committees** exist only for the duration of a project;

   iv) **Partnerships/Community Committees** are committees whose activities are not directed by the Town, but where the Town provides support to their activities. Town representatives on these committees (staff or Council members) act as conduits for information from and to Town Council.

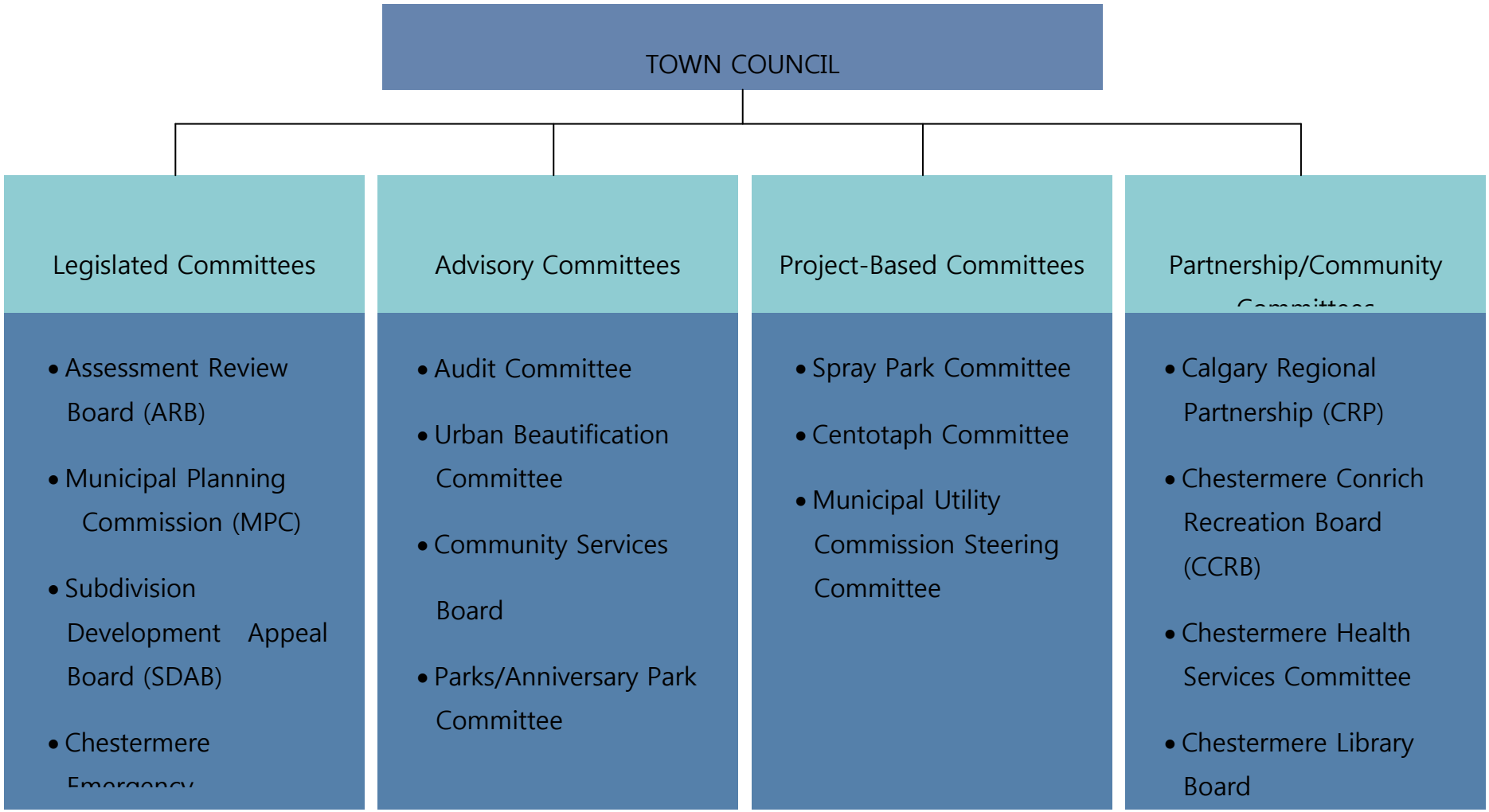
   These committees are reflected in *Chart 3: Town of Chestermere Committee Structure* and *Chart 4: Community Services Department's Committee Involvement*.

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT'S COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENT-as of July 2011

Department Committees	Community Partnerships	Department–Supported Community Committees

Community Services Board
• Seniors Advisory Committee (on hiatus)
• Youth Advisory Committee
  • YELL Chestermere
  • YELL Langdon
• Early Childhood Development Advisory Committee (under
	ACE
	HCI-Healthy Communities Initiative
	Health Services Committee
	United Way Partnership Committee
	• United Way Investment Committee
	• United Way Campaign Committee
	Chestermere Crime Reduction Partnership
		Parent Councils at:
		• Chestermere Lake Middle School
		• Our Lady of Wisdom
		• Prairie Waters Elementary
		• Rainbow Creek Elementary
		• St. Gabriel the Archangel

TOWN OF CHESTERMERE COMMITTEE STRUCTURE –as of July 2011



II. RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH EACH OTHER

Through the years, residents in the community have come together to form associations, clubs, organizations and faith groups that provide a wealth of opportunities for getting to know other residents in the community. These opportunities have been expanded by businesses and organizations that offer programs and services that bring people together as groups on a recurring basis.

Chart 3: Chestermere Associations, Clubs, Organizations, and Faith Groups

Artisans of Chestermere
Block Watch
Calgary Yacht Club
Camp Chestermere
Centre Street Church (Chestermere satellite)
Chestermere Adult Slow Pitch League
Chestermere Agricultural Society
Chestermere Army Cadet Corps #3125
Chestermere Arts Guild
Chestermere Beavers and Scouts
Chestermere/Calgary Guides
Chestermere Castaways Hockey Club
Chestermere Christian Fellowship Church
Chestermere Community Basketball
Chestermere Community Football Association
Chestermere Community Playschool
Chestermere Community Soccer Club
Chestermere Coyotes Hockey Club
Chestermere Curling Association
Chestermere Country Fair Committee
Chestermere Ducks Unlimited
Chestermere Fine Art Guild
Chestermere High School Parent Council
Chestermere High School Band Parents Assoc.
Chestermere High School Parents of Athletes
Chestermere Historical Society
Chestermere Karate Club
Chestermere Knights of Columbus Council
Chestermere Ladies Club
Chestermere Ladies Ringette
Chestermere Lake Middle School Parent Council
Chestermere Lakefront Owners Association
Chestermere Lakers Hockey Club
Chestermere Lions Club
Chestermere Minor Hockey Association
Chestermere Multi Club (Boot, Scoot'n Riders Light Horse Club)
Chestermere Regional Food Bank
Chestermere Regional Community Association Board
Chestermere Skunks Hockey Club
Chestermere Skating Club
Chestermere Soccer club
Chestermere Whitecappers Association
Ducks Unlimited, Chestermere Chapter
Chestermere Lakeside Quilters Guild
Chestermere Lions Club
Chestermere Minor Hockey Association
Chestermere Moms and Tots
Chestermere Oldtimers Hockey Club
Chestermere Pioneer Club
Chestermere Rotary Club
Chestermere Whitecappers Association
En Compass Evangelical Free Church
Lakeside Community Church
La Leche Breastfeeding Support League of Canada
Lakeside Quilters Guild
New Apostolic Church
Our Lady of Wisdom Parent Council
Prairie Waters Elementary School Parent Council
Rainbow Creek Elementary School Parent Council
Rockyview Water-ski Club
Saint Gabriel the Archangel Parent Council
Saint Gabriel the Archangel Parish
Town of Chestermere Public Library Board
Watershed Committee
YELL Youth Council

III. VOLUNTEERISM

Residents play a major role in community quality of life, through volunteering for Town Committees and Town-sponsored activities, and in the larger community. At the time this Plan was developed, data was not being collected on volunteerism at a community-wide level, and the Town does not consistently track data on its volunteers (this will be addressed later in the Plan). However, 2010 information from the Town's three largest users of volunteers – the Community Services and Development Services Departments and the Town's Events Planner, would indicate that residents have been making a significant volunteer contribution to the community:

- *The Community Services Department*: 254 volunteers (both Chestermere and Rocky View County residents) donated 3,081 hours to Chestermere and Area through this department. Volunteers contributed to the community by serving on the Community Services Advisory Board, becoming Everyday Angels, facilitating programs, volunteering at events, visiting isolated residents, providing administrative support, getting involved with ACE, and acting as advisors to the YELL Youth Council. YELL youth continued to be a major source of community volunteers.
- *Development Services*: 17 volunteers contributed approximately 1,110 hours through three committees: the Chestermere Planning Commission (CPC), the Subdivision Development Appeal Board (SDAB) and the Spray Park Committee. Both SDAB and CPC allow for a transparent, public dialogue around future development within the town. The CPC facilitates and encourages public engagement into the development process, ensuring the high quality future development which is articulated in the MDP. The SDAB provides an opportunity for residents to appeal decisions that have been made.
- *Events Planning*: The Town's Events Planner reported 210 volunteers providing 1,542 hours of support for Town events. Predominant was community support for Chestermere being a community celebration site for the 2010 Olympic Torch Relay, with 120 volunteers contributing a total of 840 hours to this historical event. Volunteers also contributed throughout the year to Town events like Winterfest, Canada Day, and the Water Festival.

> **"When you have a passion for being in a community, everything else comes naturally. I want people to want to know their neighbours and work together to build the relationships that make communities stronger. I want individuals to work together and help each other in order to achieve a closeness that larger communities don't have. When you have those qualities amongst a group of people, the desire to volunteer and give back to your community comes easily"**
>
> **~Corie, Town staff**

Strategies to Build Sense of Community and Increase Resident Involvement

A beginning point in the journey toward achieving the small town vision articulated in the MDP was being able to define what residents want "small town community" to look like in Chestermere. As discussed earlier, we have been able to not just define it, but also have been able to: identify the feelings associated with it; describe its physical indicators; articulate its associated values and identify behavioural indicators of those values. This will provide a sound foundation for promoting a new vision of Chestermere as a small town community, one that honours the Town's history, while engaging more residents in creating a new, shared vision of the community. During the next few years, we will be actively working on increasing our community's vitality by increasing civic engagement, volunteerism, and residents' involvement with each other and participation in community life.

Strategy One:
Build Chestermere's small town sense of community through the means of recreation, parks, arts and culture as an opportunity to engage residents

In 2009, the Town of Chestermere and the CRCA partnered in an application to become an ACE community. ACE is a rural community development initiative of the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association(ARPA), through which communities are encouraged to use recreation, parks, leisure, arts, culture and heritage as a means to build *active*, *creative*, and *engaged* communities. The decision to apply came out of a desire by the two organizations to partner on a project, and because the ACE initiative seemed well-suited as a means to advance two of the visions that had come out of the MDP planning process: the small town and inclusive community visions. Community leaders were brought together in February, 2010 to establish community priorities and ACE members continued refining the ideas that were brought forward at this meeting.

One of the major themes that emerged was using the arts to engage the community. According to the Creative City Network of Canada, arts and culture contribute to the wellbeing of communities by: building community identity and pride; fostering the personal and social development of youth; and engaging and bringing together stakeholders

Brian Wood and Councillor Chris Steeves at an ACE meeting the night of the Olympic hockey play-offs

Community is…
sometimes making sacrifices.

of diverse cultures, ages, socio-economic backgrounds and values. When the ACE Committee became aware of the gazebo/pavilion being planned for John Peake Park, they consulted performers in Chestermere, Calgary, and Langdon to solicit their input regarding what changes would need to be made to enhance the gazebo as an outdoor public performance space. The Parks Committee and ACE members then worked together to incorporate these changes into the drawings. The gazebo/pavilion has generated a lot of excitement among residents involved in music, theatre, and even boot camp. The ACE Committee envisions a schedule of activities and performances that would help build a dynamic arts and cultural aspect to community life in Chestermere, where the gazebo would serve as a venue for local performers of all ages to share their talents with the community and where other cultural events would be hosted, increasing opportunities for residents to gather to enjoy the benefits of life in Chestermere.

ACE also became the first sponsors of Chestermere Arts Days. They saw supporting the 2011 Alberta Arts Days as a fun and creative opportunity to further engage residents. Hopefully this will become an annual event, adding to the array of community celebrations that make Chestermere a unique place to live.

When selected as an ACE community, ARPA held seed funds in reserve for Chestermere, for when a determination was made as to what project/projects residents wanted to focus on. In June, 2011, the people involved in the initial priority setting meeting were asked to vote on which of 4 projects was a priority for funding. The choices were:

- the gazebo project
- development of a permanent site for YELL's Mountain Bike Skills Park
- a community information portal: an internet site where residents could go to find out everything they would like to know about what is available in the community and what is happening in the community. It was thought that the information portal would be particularly advantageous to residents who are outside of the community during most of their day – that it would help them know how they can participate more in community life. The portal could also be used as a community intranet – available only to residents, and would allow residents to connect with each other around shared interests; to advertise their neighbourhood garage sales and block parties; for community groups to post announcements, etc.
- Chestermere Arts Days

The Bike Park received the most votes, followed closely by the gazebo and information portal. Subsequently, Chestermere Arts Days received money from a couple of other sources and a potential partnership with the Library is being explored to make the information portal a reality. Chestermere's formal involvement with ARPA's ACE initiative has come to an end, but the intent of ACE will continue – using parks, recreation, arts, culture and heritage to promote residents being active, creative, and engaged in the community and with each other.

<u>Strategy One Activities:</u>

a) Construction of a Mountain Bike Skills Park on a permanent site.
b) Construction of the gazebo and establishment of a schedule of activities and performances that engage residents
c) Support the library to enhance their website to function as a community information portal
d) Continue to use arts activities as a means to engage residents

Strategy Two:
Build sense of community at a neighbourhood level

During the interviews, we were told that the focus on building a sense of community needed to be smaller, i.e. at a neighbourhood level, as the Town grows larger. The role of the Town with this strategy is not to take the lead role in making this happen, but rather to stimulate this occurring naturally and to support those residents who are the informal 'sense of community builders' in their neighbourhoods or who could become those community builders. The Town's Community Services Department would be responsible for implementing this strategy, building on their current successful efforts.

Strategy Two Activities:

a) Continue the Block Party Initiative: Through this initiative, residents wanting to host a block party are able to get assistance in hosting a successful event, which includes a Block Party kit, use of a neighbourhood-sized barbecue, and sandwich boards to notify neighbours of the street closure. As well, Community Services takes care of processing the documentation for the required permit, and notifies Public Works, the RCMP, and the fire department of the event. Elected leaders and firefighters consistently use these parties as an opportunity to get out and mingle with residents.

b) Continue providing Garage Sale Kits: Any three or more neighbours wanting to hold a neighbourhood garage sale, are able to borrow Garage Sale Kits which include all the items required to organize and advertise a sale. Community Services also advertises their event on its website and advertises it in the Anchor (local newspaper) at no cost to residents.

c) Explore other ideas that have neighbourhood-building potential, for example:
   - expanding the block party and garage sale kits concept to include street hockey and/or other activities that bring residents together to have fun as neighbours.
   - hosting Welcome Events for newcomers to the community, in partnership with organizations like Welcome Wagon and Block Watch. New residents would be provided information on community organizations, sports, amenities, businesses and services; the wide array of opportunities to get involved in the community as participants and volunteers; they would have an opportunity to meet their elected leaders, and would be encouraged to become engaged in the community. It would be an opportunity to model, talk about, and promote the small town vision and its associated values and behaviours.

Block Parties

Community is...being neighbourly.

These events would be an opportunity for new residents to interact with other new residents, starting the process of making connections within the community.

- having a Good Neighbours Week, with workshops leading up to it on topics like planning a progressive dinner; planning themed parties; experiencing the foods and traditions of other cultures; as well as a workshop on 'how to deal with 'the difficult neighbour', offered by a mediation service and the RCMP, etc. Fun incentives could be offered to neighbourhoods to host events during Good Neighbours Week, with prizes for best turnout, most creative neighbourhood event, etc.
- assisting residents who have a neighbourhood-building concept they want to pursue, in preparing a proposal for grant funding, where appropriate.
- exploring the potential of existing and new residents' associations to build sense of neighbourhood.

Strategy Three:
Adopt a community development approach to planning community events and activities

This strategy is multi-faceted and includes cultivating a community development orientation to their roles with all Town staff whose responsibilities include organizing community events, festivals, activities, and programs. Providing opportunities for resident engagement and community capacity building needs to be seen to be a vital role that these staff fill in moving the small town community vision toward being a reality. A commitment to this role would be seen in a number of ways:

- the importance given to resident involvement in planning and evaluation of community events and activities;
- consideration being given with every activity that is planned regarding how to use it as an opportunity for residents to interact with each other, creating a balance between activities where residents are passive consumers of entertainment, for example, and activities where they go away having met people they did not know before the event/activity.
- the numbers of volunteers they have engaged to support the event/activity and the meaningful ways in which these volunteers are contributing.
- acting on the opportunity at events and activities to meet residents and recruit participants as future volunteers.

<u>Strategy Three Activities:</u>

a) Continue to build Chestermere's identity and community pride by offering festivals and events that are unique to Chestermere and that residents will look forward to with anticipation every year.

b) Continue to be guided by capacity building principles which include:
   - first looking to local talent, services, businesses and vendors and only going outside the community when the needed resources cannot be found in the community, and
   - purposefully searching out the skills, expertise, and resources that exist in the community and engaging residents to use these for the betterment of the community.

Strategy Four:
Continue to develop youth in leadership roles, supporting them in addressing issues that affect them and mentoring them as they work toward achieving their goals.

In 2007, the Community Services Department adopted an approach to working with youth in the community that had youth assuming a lead role in identifying the issues of importance to them, determining priorities for action, and where they were actively involved in planning and implementation of strategies to address the priorities identified. The YELL Youth Council was developed as the group to be providing this youth leadership role. Adult advisors with differing areas of expertise were recruited, whose roles were to mentor the youth and to use their expertise to support these youth in achieving their goals. Through YELL activities, community capacity has been increased through the experiences youth have had in planning, interviewing and selecting Youth Leaders, program implementation, volunteer recruitment, mentoring children and other youth, and fundraising. YELL received a Choosewell Award in 2009 for the leadership they took in promoting active living in the community through the development of the Bike Park.

This approach to working with youth was also very successful in combating bullying and promoting inclusion. In the fifth year of the Community Services' anti-bullying program, the Program Coordinator worked with nine youth, developing them as leaders and developing their capacity to address issues related to bullying, at a personal, school, and community level. She also worked with the schools, supporting the development of school-based leadership teams.

<u>Strategy Four Activity:</u>

a) Continue the current direction with YELL and other youth programming.

   At the Community Assessment Priority Setting Meeting in 2009, youth were identified to be a continuing priority for the community, with support being expressed for the approach that was being taken with community youth leadership development. The direction given at that time, was to continue with this approach. The major issue facing youth leadership development activities is not having sustainable funding. This has led to a yearly 'rejigging' of positions and responsibilities, dependent on the funds available. This has created some challenges with continuity from year to year and with the discontinuation of the Community Incentive Funding Stream through the province in 2010, the Town no longer has funding for its successful anti-bullying program. This issue will be addressed in the discussion on sustainable social infrastructure development.

Community is…
youth leadership.

Municipal Candidates Forum 2010, sponsored by YELL

Strategy Five:

Promote volunteerism as a community value and norm

Our community organizations are highly reliant on volunteers in order to offer the programs, services, and activities that add so much to the quality of life in Chestermere. They are challenged by a number of the factors cited earlier in this document: the number of residents working outside the community, the 'busyness' of people's lives, as well as changes in people's motivations for volunteering and the way they choose to volunteer. Promotion of volunteerism needs to be looked at in new and creative ways that fit with the changing world of volunteerism and don't require long-term commitments. What we learned from the development of the Bike Park is that although many people are leery about making commitments to long-term projects, they are still willing to give their time to support a project that has a fixed end date and where they can immediately see the results of their involvement. There need to be more opportunities to volunteer on one time or short-term projects. As one resident stated in the interviews, "We need to focus on smaller projects that can get us engaged and out in the community". There need to be more opportunities for residents to volunteer as a family, as a group, and through their workplaces, so that volunteering enhances time with family and friends, rather than taking time away from them. "Virtual volunteering" – where tasks are undertaken at least partly online, is also an unexplored opportunity that allows people to contribute their time more flexibly.

<u>Strategy Five Activity:</u>

a) Through project and events-focused activities, continue to develop relationships with community organizations that utilize volunteers, in preparation for coming together at a later date as a more formal association of organizations promoting volunteer engagement and development.

Gardening together through the Meet Me at the Park program

Community is…

teaching children, from a young age, to care about the community.

Communities struggle with how to welcome new residents and embrace diversity, while maintaining a sense of community identity. This is particularly challenging in Chestermere, where dramatic population growth has created a situation where the number of newcomers is higher than the number of people with established roots in the community. This is compounded by the increasing diversity of residents, as will be discussed further in this section.

The original vision found in the MDP is that "Chestermere is a socially and culturally cohesive community" (p. 6). For social planning purposes, the wording has been changed from "cohesive" to "inclusive", as it was felt that this more accurately portrays the vision that Chestermere is a welcoming community. The phrases "sense of belonging" and "sense of community" are used in the Social Plan to express the idea that residents feel joined together in some way. In this section we define what inclusion means in Chestermere, look at why inclusion is important, examine what residents had to say about the topic, review successes and challenges to-date, and discuss strategies to further our progress toward realizing this vision.

Definition of inclusion in Chestermere

In the literature review, the topic of inclusion was often found to refer to challenges associated with cultural diversity, with much of the interest in this topic originating from the United Kingdom where there have been serious inter-racial problems in communities. The view taken of inclusion in Chestermere is much broader in scope. While recognizing the importance of including people from different cultural backgrounds in community life, the Chestermere vision is to be inclusive of ALL residents: whether it be someone who has just moved to the community, a single mother, a child with special needs, New Canadians, those living in town and those living on acreages within town boundaries, people living on the lake and those living elsewhere in the community, those with tremendous financial resources and those struggling to pay their mortgages, youth and seniors. Inherent in this vision is the belief that all individuals, groups and segments of the community have a place in community life. Inclusion is a valuing of what every individual or group brings to the larger community.

Why should we care about inclusion?

The small town vision and the inclusive community vision are inter-twined. A goal of both is that residents experience a sense of belonging within the community. This goal is important in that, "People who feel that they belong…. will help their neighbours, will challenge inappropriate behaviour, will welcome newcomers and help them settle. They will pull together in a crisis and join together in celebration. All this helps to build empowered and active communities….."[xv] One of the people interviewed for the Social Plan made an important point when he observed that a small town sense of community does not mean having a feeling of belonging because everyone is from the same background or has the same economic standard of living. He observed that, "The more cultural diversity and more economic backgrounds we have in our community, the richer we are….. We have such an opportunity to learn and teach one another based on our backgrounds and the family histories that we bring to the table."

Benefits to the Community

"Every resident has something to offer the community" is a theme that recurs throughout the Social Plan. Inclusion builds community capacity and the community is stronger for being able to access what residents have to offer - the knowledge, skills, experience, time, and other resources that residents possess. Everyone has "…gifts of the head (knowledge), heart (passion), and hands (skills). Identifying ways in which people can contribute those gifts to the community is a wonderful way to get them engaged."[xvi]

Ways in which increased and more diverse resident participation would benefit Chestermere include the following:

- Enhanced community vitality: Organizations and committees would be revitalized through the new ideas, perspectives, experiences, skills, and knowledge that these participants bring. As we have seen in our work with the YELL Youth Council, for example, youth bring energy, an optimistic belief in their ability to change the world, creative and innovative ideas, and knowledge of technology and social media as a means of communication. Another example is New Canadians who, in many cases, bring an appreciation for the safety, freedoms and opportunities that come with being Canadian, that many Canadian-born individuals take for granted. When engaged in the civic life of a community, they often bring a passion to their participation that comes from knowing what it is like to live under different circumstances.
- Increased community sustainability: With more residents involved in the community, there would be a larger base of support for Town committees, community organizations, projects, and initiatives. There would be more opportunities for mentorship and succession planning. As long-time volunteers scale back, or shift their commitments, there would be other residents willing to take on their responsibilities, providing continuity and building on previous achievements.
- More effective and creative planning: Planning to address issues affecting diverse populations within the community would be more effective and creative when the experiences, knowledge, and thinking of these populations is valued and sought out. Parents of young children, seniors, youth, and people of different cultural backgrounds, for example, may experience the community in ways that are unique to their segment of the population. They are a rich source of ideas on what would enhance their quality of life.

Youth and Town Council Dodgeball at Winterfest.

Community is…
cross-generational.

- More effective service provision: As has been found in our work with the town's youth population, when different sectors of the community are invited to work with us to improve their quality of life, we gain in our understanding of what they need – as individuals, members of families, program participants, clients, and community members.
- Breaking down stereotypes – Stereotypes of youth, seniors, and people from different cultural backgrounds, etc. are broken down by opportunities for interaction between residents.
- Integration of immigrants: Volunteerism is a means to help immigrants become more integrated into the community, through providing work experience/skills development, an opportunity to practice English and to expand social contacts. It is an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the community while contributing to the community they have chosen as their home.
- Increased sense of community and quality of life: Inclusive communities have stronger networks of friendship, support, and acquaintance.
- Increased 'word of mouth' communication: As members of diverse populations become more involved in the community, 'word of mouth' communication of their experiences is expected to encourage others to become involved, increasing awareness and utilization of community services, programs and community amenities, and increasing attendance and participation at community events.
- Increased understanding of civic processes: Increased participation will result in increased access to decision-makers, more ability to provide input into issues of importance to residents, and increased knowledge of how to 'get things done' in the community.

Impacts of Not Being Inclusive

The impacts of a community failing to be inclusive range from minimal to severe. At the more minimal impact end of the spectrum is the community that does not fully build its capacity and therefore does not maximize the quality of life that could have been achieved if the knowledge, passion, skills and abilities of residents had been more fully realized. More moderate level impact is seen in communities where there is little sense of inclusivity and commonality, where groups within the community look at each other with distrust and suspicion. At the more extreme end in terms of negative impacts are communities that experience high levels of inter-group tension, negative stereotyping of youth, lack of tolerance generally for diversity, where the community experiences high levels of social problems such as gang activity, and where there is heavy reliance on formal programs and services to address community issues and to provide support to individuals.

Chestermere's Diversity

Community composition has many faces. The community's diversity can be looked at in terms of its neighbourhoods, the proportion of new residents to more established residents, the different kinds of family compositions, the economic status of households, age groupings, cultural backgrounds, and differing abilities, to name just some of the more common ways of looking at a community's composition. Some readers may feel that this is an overly complex way of looking at our community, but it is important to understand the community's diversity, as:

- being aware of the community's diverse composition and interests, allows decision-makers to make more informed decisions in relation to the third aspect of the Triple Bottom Line, i.e. the social consequences of decisions for different sectors of the community. For example, residents with children and those without children often have different views on what the priorities should be for spending residents' tax dollars. Similarly, residents with household incomes of +$400,000 may have differing views of community service priorities than residents who are parenting on their own and trying to survive as a family on $40,000 per year.
- recognizing, understanding, and valuing the ways in which we are different and respecting different perspectives and opinions are important features of an inclusive community. A true sense of community happens when community members seek to see things beyond the perspective of our own self-interest – when we care about the well-being of other residents of the community and the community at large.

What inclusive communities typically discover in getting to know people 'different' from ourselves is that what we have in common, greatly outweighs what makes us different from each other.

The following describes what is currently known about Chestermere's composition:

Neighbourhoods

According to the 2011 Chestermere Municipal Census, Chestermere's total population of 14,682 consists of the 14,265 residents who live within the Chestermere townsite and a further 417 residents who live on acreages within the Town's boundaries. The residents of Chestermere currently reside in one of thirteen official residential developments: the Beaches, Chesterview Estates, the Cove, East Lakeview Shores, Estates of Chestermere, Kinniburgh North, Kinniburgh South, Lake Ere Estates,Lakeside Greens, Lakeview Landing, Rainbow Falls, West Creek, and Westmere; or on acreages or properties within the town's boundaries. In terms of neighbourhood identification, it is not uncommon for residents to refer to themselves as residing in unofficial neighbourhoods such as East Chestermere, and the Westmere neighbourhoods of Oakmere, Springmere, and Hawkmere, for example.

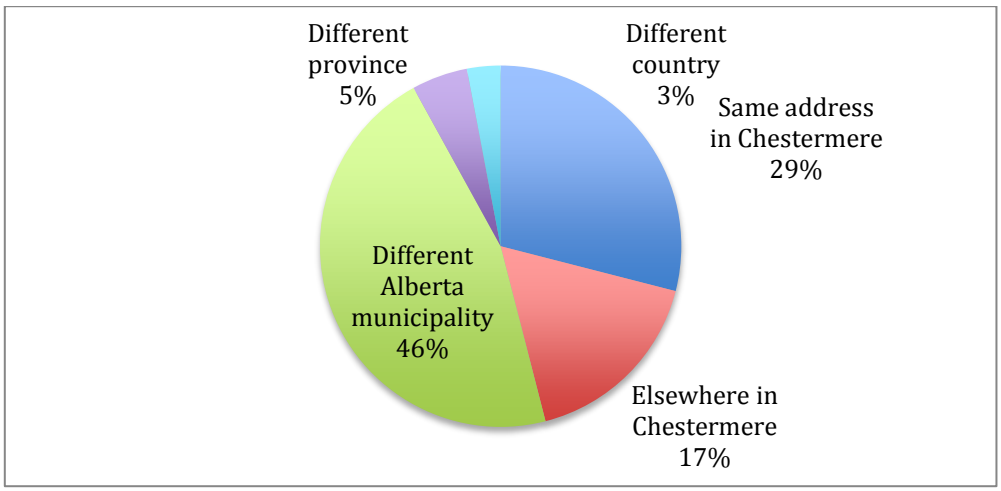
New Residents

There are a couple of ways to get a sense of the numbers of new residents in the community, both of which have drawbacks. It was decided to use community mobility as a descriptor, rather than population growth, as mobility data excludes population increases due to births and decreases due to deaths, and provides information on where people were living prior to moving to Chestermere. The major drawback of using this data is that it is not current, coming from the

2006 federal census. Unfortunately this was the best information available as information from the 2011 federal census, broken down by community, is not likely to be available until 2013.

At the time of the 2006 federal census, there were 8,810 individuals 5 years of age and over living in Chestermere. Of these individuals, 29% had been living at the same address in Chestermere and 17% had been living elsewhere in the community five years earlier, during the previous census. With only 46% of the population, therefore, living in Chestermere at the time of the previous census, newcomers to the community formed the majority of the population in 2006. Of the rest of the population, 46% had been living in a different Alberta municipality, 5% were living in a different province, and 3% had been living in a different country at the time of the previous census. This puts the inclusion challenge into perspective – that the number of newcomers moving to the community during this census period exceeded the previous population of the community.

Chart 3: Place of Residence During Previous Census Period



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 federal census

Household composition

The household composition of Chestermere varies from that of the province overall, most notably in terms of the percentage of households consisting of a couple with children (49% of households in Chestermere compared to 30% for the province), and the percentage of single person households (8% for Chestermere compared to 25% for the province). In terms of households consisting of a couple with no children, Chestermere looks similar to the rest of the province.

Table 3: Household Composition

HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS	# OF HOUSEHOLDS	% OF CHESTERMERE HOUSEHOLDS
Total private households	3,065	100%
Households containing a couple with children	1495	49%
Households containing a couple without children	945	31%
One person households	260	8%
Other Household Types	365	12%

Source: Statistics Canada. 2006 Community Profiles.
Note: Included within the 365 "other" household types are 210 female-headed lone parent families, 30 male-headed lone parent families, and households with multiple families.

Economic Diversity

Chestermere is a relatively affluent community, with median household incomes for all types of households being markedly higher than those for Calgary overall and for the rest of Alberta, with one exception. This exception is lone parent families headed by a female. The median income for this family type is comparable to that of lone parent female-headed families in Calgary. There is a major difference between the household incomes of male-headed and female- headed families in Chestermere, with female-headed lone parent households living on incomes just over half that of male-headed lone parent families and less than that of one person households. There is little difference in the median income of couple households with children and those without children, with households without children having only slightly higher household incomes than those with children.

Table 4: Median Household Income by Household Type for Chestermere, Calgary, and Alberta

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION/ MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	CHESTERMERE	CALGARY	ALBERTA
Couple households with children	$105,477	$96,711	$92,155
Couple households without children	$108,921	$80,395	$72,774
One person households	$52,146	$36,499	$32,179
Lone parent families headed by a male	$81,997	$55,666	$55,205
Lone parent families headed by a female	$41,614	$41,291	$37,469

Source: Statistics Canada. 2006 Community Profiles

Although median household incomes are useful in giving a sense of the overall economic picture in the community, it must be kept in mind when looking at these numbers, that the *median income* is the income at the midpoint of the range of household incomes in the community. Therefore it does not give a picture of the household incomes at the high end of the continuum, nor at the extremely low end. It should not be concluded therefore, based on these numbers, that all households in Chestermere are financially secure. To get a better understanding of economically challenged families we turn to other measures: data on families living below the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) in Chestermere, usage of the Food Bank, and usage of the Christmas with Dignity program through Community Services.

LICO is sometimes referred to loosely as the 'poverty line". It is calculated based on the size of a community's population and the number of family members. At the time of the last census, the Before Tax LICO for Chestermere was calculated as:

- $16,605 for one person households,
- $20,671 for a family of two,
- $25,412 for a family of three,
- $30,855 for a family of four, and
- $34,995 for a family of five

This is the income below which it is estimated that a family is spending 70% or more of its income on basic necessities, i.e. food, shelter, and clothing. According to Statistics Canada, 3.3% of all Chestermere residents (315 individuals) were living in households that fell below the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) for before tax incomes.

Other indicators of economic disparity are the numbers of families/individuals receiving food hampers and those receiving basic needs assistance for items like rental assistance, gas, utility payments, school fees, dental work, and medicine through the Town's Christmas with Dignity

program (which operates throughout the year). In the fiscal year 2010 - 11, the Town's Community Resource Worker received 284 referrals for basic needs assistance, an increase of 60% over 2009-10.

Age

With the exception of seniors +80 years of age in 2008, the percentage of the population formed by the various age categories has remained very consistent, varying only 0 – 3% in each two year period in the last eight years. The percentage of the population represented by children and youth (ages 0 – 20) continues to remain high: 35% in 2004, 33% in 2006, 30% in 2008, and 33% in 2010.

Table 5: Population by Age

AGE CATEGORIES	2004	% OF POPN.	2006	% OF POPN.	2008	% OF POPN.	2010	% OF POPN.
0 - 5	891	13%	885	10%	1,094	9%	1,711	12%
6 - 10	577	8%	809	9%	829	7%	942	8%
11-15	585	8%	754	8%	1,006	8%	1,088	8%
16-20	456	6%	618	7%	811	7%	989	7%
21-35	1,413	20%	1,898	20%	2,592	21%	2,855	20%
36-50	2,111	30%	2,759	30%	3,489	28%	3,965	28%
51-65	881	12%	1,286	14%	1,746	14%	2,155	15%
66 – 80	178	2%	264	3%	374	3%	502	4%
+80	31	<1%	39	<1%	72	6%	78	1%
unknown	24	N/A*	147	N/A*	174	N/A*	0	N/A
TOTAL population	7,147	**	9,481	**	12,589	**	14,285	**

Note: percentages were controlled for missing data
** does not add to 100% due to rounding of numbers

Cultural Backgrounds

I. Immigrants

Generation of immigration

During the time of the last federal census (2006), 23% of Chestermere residents 15 years of age and older had been born outside of Canada, 17% were 2nd generation Canadians (born in Canada with at least one parent born in Canada), and 60% were 3rd Generation Canadians (or more, having been born in Canada to both parents who were born in Canada). This was very comparable to the rest of Alberta at that time, where 20% of the population was first generation, 20% were second generation, and 60% were third generation Canadians.

Recency of immigration

Demographics from the 2006 federal census supported an observation made during the community assessment process – that Chestermere is a destination of choice for immigrant families who have achieved some measure of financial success in Canada. Although immigrants constituted 17% of Chestermere's overall population, only 2% of residents had immigrated within 5 years of the previous census.

Mother tongue

At the time of the 2006 federal census, 19% of the community reported having a mother tongue other than English or French. The language spoken most often in the home was reported to be English for 90% of Chestermerians (89% for Alberta). That picture appears to have changed quite dramatically in the past five years. The Municipal census of 2011 shows 35% of residents (25% of the households), speaking a language other than English or French at home. Because the question asked in the municipal census is worded differently from that asked in the federal census, it does not allow for direct comparability. However, it does give a sense of the increasing diversity of cultural backgrounds in the community.

When the languages were categorized according to the area of the world where they are most commonly spoken, the cultural origins of households speaking a language other than English or French were found to be as follows:

Table 6: Cultural Origins of Languages Spoken in Chestermere Homes (based on Chestermere Municipal Censuses)

GEOPOLITICAL REGION	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS		
	2007	2009	2011
1. SE Asia (with the highest numbers being from Vietnam and the Philippines)	291	380	375
2. South Asia (with the highest numbers being from India, mostly the Punjab region)	177	282	318
3. European/European Union (with the highest numbers being from Germany, Italy, and Poland)	199	264	243
4. East Asia (with the highest numbers being from China)	113	145	117
5. Middle East	51	93	98
6. Africa (with the highest numbers being from South Africa)	16	18	23
7. Native Canadian (Blackfoot and Cree)	3	5	2
8. SW Pacific	1	6	2
9. Caribbean	1	2	0

Note: The above should only be taken as a rough indication of the community's cultural diversity. As country of origin was not asked on the municipal census, a number of relatively sizable language groups could not be categorized, specifically households speaking French, Spanish, and Portuguese.

II. Aboriginals: Low numbers of Chestermere residents, i.e. 3% of the population, identified as Aboriginal (compared to 6% of the province's population).

Table 7: Languages besides English or French spoken in Chestermere homes

Languages	No. of households		
	2007	2009	2011
AFRICAN LANGUAGES TOTAL	**16**	**18**	**23**
Acholi	1	1	0
Afrikaans	12	14	13
Akan	1	0	0
Igbo	0	0	2
Nigerian	0	0	1
Swahili	1	0	3
Twi	1	2	1
Yoruba	0	0	2
Zulu	0	1	1
CARIBBEAN LANGUAGES	**1**	**2**	0
Jamaican	1	2	0
EAST ASIAN LANGUAGES	**113**	**145**	**117**
Chinese Languages:			
Cantonese	18	30	23
Chinese	67	80	57
Mandarin	8	8	6
Japanese	5	7	9
Korean	8	9	8
Russian	7	11	14
EUROPEAN/ EU LANGUAGES	**199**	**264**	**243**
Albanian	0	2	0
Bosnian	0	0	3
Bulgarian	1	1	1
Croatian	19	32	23
Czech	4	1	3
Danish	3	5	0
Dutch	24	12	19
Finnish	0	0	1
Gaelic	0	0	1
Galician (Spain)	1	0	0
German	54	85	81
Greek	2	1	1
Hungarian	13	20	9
Irish	1	1	0
Italian	31	35	42
Macedonian	0	1	1
Norwegian	1	0	0
Polish	16	24	25
Romanian	8	13	12
Serbian	2	2	3
Slovak	1	10	4
Swedish	1	2	0
Swiss-German (Switzerland)	2	2	2
Ukrainian	16	15	11
Welsh	0	0	1

Languages	No. of households		
	2007	2009	2011
MIDDLE EAST LANG. TOTAL	**51**	**93**	**98**
Arabic	42	61	49
Kurdish	1	2	1
Lebanese	3	7	0
Pashto	0	2	1
Persian (Farsi)	5	8	12
Turkish	0	13	9
NATIVE CANADIAN LANG.	**3**	**5**	**2**
Blackfoot	3	2	1
Cree	0	3	1
SOUTH ASIAN LANGUAGES	**177**	**282**	**318**
Indian Languages:			
Gujarti	16	12	13
Hindi	29	59	45
Kacchi (Kutchi)	5	3	4
Kannada	0	1	0
Punjabi*	107	205	214
Tamil	1	2	1
Pakistani Languages:Urdu	18	40	41
Sri Lankan Language: Sinhalese	1	0	0
Bengali	**0**	**0**	**2**
SE ASIAN LANGUAGES	**291**	**380**	**375**
Burmese (Myanmar)	1	2	1
Indonesian	1	1	0
Javanese	1	0	0
Khmer (Cambodian)*	7	10	8
Lao	10	13	11
Malay	0	2	1
Thai	2	7	3
TokPisin (Papua New Guinea)	0	1	0
Vietnamese	174	216	231
Philippine Languages:			
Cebuano	0	1	0
Tagalog	32	79	53
Filipino	63	48	66
Ilocano	0	0	1
SW PACIFIC LANGUAGES	**1**	**6**	**2**
Fijian	1	6	2
UNCATEGORIZABLE*	**86**	**141**	**124**
Hebrew	1	0	0
Latin	0	1	0
Sign (American Sign Language)	1	2	0
Spanish	54	102	87
Portuguese	30	36	37

Notes:

- The number of households speaking languages other than English/French was 934 in 2007;1,336 in 2009; and 1,467 in 2011.
- The number of languages spoken by residents was 58 in 2007; 60 in 2009; and 61 in 2011, with losses and gains of particular languages.
- Uncategorizable languages are those that are spoken in more than one geopolitical area. The origins of the French speakers are unknown, as is also the case with the Portuguese and Spanish speakers.

What you told us about inclusion in Chestermere

Due to the survey for the MDP process going out at the same time that the Community Assessment was being conducted, the community consultation for the Social Plan was not as extensive as it would have been ideally. Being unable to access all residents through a community-wide survey, there are gaps in our knowledge as to the community's diversity and how we are doing with regard to achievement of the inclusive community vision. The following represents what we know in terms of the diverse groups/sectors in the community, and preliminary observations about inclusion. The next Town Survey will create a baseline for future Quality of Life measurements, and will more fully explore the topic of inclusion.

Inclusion of Youth

Youth were asked two questions in the YELL survey of 2008 that relate to inclusion: how much of a say they feel they have in how things are run in the area, and their experiences with being bullied. The following are their responses:

i) Say in how things are run in the community: Three years ago when this survey was conducted, it became evident that increasing youth's sense of inclusion in community life needed to be a priority area, with only 34% indicating they felt they had some say in what happens in the community. Since that time, many efforts have been made to engage youth in the community, primarily through YELL and the Anti-Bullying Program. Through these programs, youth involvement in the community has increased greatly, as has previously been noted.

ii) Bullying is a counter-indicator to inclusion, as it is based on the exclusion of individuals. In the Anti-Bullying Survey of 2008, youth were asked how many times they had been bullied in the community and at their schools during the month preceding the survey. The results were concerning, with 20% of the youth reporting having been harassed or bullied in the community on at least one occasion in the month prior, and 33% reporting that they had been harassed or bullied at their schools during the same period. Community Services' anti-bullying program, Create a Wave of Change, was subsequently created to develop youth leadership to address bullying concerns and was very successful in engaging youth and the larger community in regard to addressing this issue.

Heroes in the Hood's Seventh Rain concert: a message of inclusion

Community is…
being the change you want to see.

Groups Self-Isolating

Concern was expressed by some of the residents interviewed, in regard to what it could mean for the community if individuals rarely or never venture outside the group where they feel most comfortable. It should be noted that this concern is not just applicable to cultural groups. It is as true of any group of residents, where people don't interact with others outside of their 'circle'. It was noted that a potentially negative effect of no/limited cross-group interaction is that when groups are self-isolating, suspicion, distrust, and fear of each other can arise, and misperceptions can easily occur. One long-time resident expressed the concern that if Chestermere is not an inclusive community, "it will feel less friendly and may not feel like a community at all". One of our challenges as we move forward with the two visions (i.e. the small town and inclusive community visions) will be to find ways to connect the various groups within the community, and to connect these groups and their members to the life of the larger community.

The Pull of Two Cultures

In order to improve our understanding of what it is like to grow up in Chestermere as a child of an immigrant family, we turned to young adults who have successfully managed the challenges of 'having one foot in two cultures'. Integration can be a confusing process according to one of these young adults, where:

> *…your parents are almost as confused as you are, so tell you to remember where you came from and never forget all the values that made you who you are today. I never understood how much I should let go and how much I should hold on to, its hard to find mid grounds where your parents are not on your case and not being the one sticking out at school for the wrong reasons.*

These young adults shared their learnings as to why they were able to maintain their connection to and involvement in their family's cultures, while also developing friendships outside their culture and taking on leadership roles in the larger community. According to these youth, the attitudes of their parents were important in their successful integration. As one young person stated it: *"My dad grew up here and did not want us to face the same challenges as he did. He encouraged us to embrace the Canadian culture as much as possible without losing our roots".* Having interests that cut across cultural groups, like sports and other community and school activities, was also a common factor in making cross-cultural friendships and developing a sense of belonging to the larger community. They felt that overall they'd had a positive experience growing up in Chestermere. As one young man commented:

> *As a first generation Canadian, I think it is important to respect your family's cultural roots, but it is also important to understand that my cultural roots now lay in this country. 'Back home' for me does not mean going to India. It means my home in Chestermere."*

Inclusion of Residents with Diverse Cultural Backgrounds

In the interviews for the Community Assessment, residents were asked what their thoughts were regarding whether New Canadians should be encouraged and supported to become part of the larger community. A wide range of opinions were expressed. Due to the relatively small number of interviews, it is unknown how reflective these views might be of the town's population, but they were valuable in terms of providing new perspectives for consideration.

When asked what the consequences would be if residents of diverse cultural backgrounds were not encouraged and supported to become part of the community, one resident said "…it is not good to have a bunch of different groups of people not interacting with one another. Breeds feelings of fear, uncertainty of other group where there is a lack of knowledge and understanding about other cultures". Councilor Patrick Bergen represented the views of many residents when he said "…I believe a diverse community where everyone participates and thrives doing so, is healthier and happier than a community where everyone keeps to their own kind. I think we gain a lot when we learn from each other, whatever background we come from".

Young adults from immigrant families provided valuable insights. One young woman observed that efforts to include diverse groups can sometimes be interpreted in ways that were totally unintended – that "encouragement" to become involved could be interpreted as non-acceptance of who one is, and as pressure to conform. This highlights the importance of consulting with and involving the population under consideration, whatever it may be, when doing any kind of planning. It is also important to recognize that this learning applies to working with all diverse populations, not just culturally diverse groups.

An example of what happens when this doesn't occur, is a time when adult ESL (English as a Second Language) classes were offered in the community. Many non-immigrant residents had identified this as a community need, as lack of English fluency is commonly considered to be one of the biggest barriers to community participation by immigrants, whether it be getting to know neighbours or being able to speak to a child's teacher. However when the course was offered, it was canceled due to insufficient registration. This example illustrates that involving members of diverse groups in planning programs and services could help identify:

- if a perceived need of the larger community is considered to be a need by that population,
- if there is a need, what the barriers may be to participation, and
- strategies to overcome these barriers.

A resident from an immigrant family pointed out that often family members who are seniors come to Canada after their adult children do, don't speak English well, and that many of these seniors will only socialize with others of the same background. He felt the best approach with immigrant seniors is to just let them know what is available for them and that they are welcome should they want to become involved.

Generally, the feedback given by residents was that encouragement and support to become involved in the larger community should consist of being welcoming, having an inclusive attitude, extending the invitation to participate and respecting people's choices to participate as much as they feel comfortable to participate – that they should not feel pressured. This is an appropriate philosophy as we move forward promoting community inclusion in terms of all forms of diversity in the community: that our responsibility is to promote the conditions that would make all residents feel welcome and able to participate fully in community life, to provide supports to enable their participation where this would be of benefit (such as on-site childcare for programs for single parents, transportation for youth activities, mentoring support where desired, etc.), while respecting residents' decisions regarding the degree to which they would like to be included.

The Role of Town Council and Administration

According to the AUMA[xvii], municipal governments have an important role to play in creating welcoming and inclusive communities, "…. as they function at the most practical level, and are the most closely involved in the lives of their citizens" (p. 4). Reasons they give for why municipal governments should get involved in promoting inclusivity are that:

- they are the major political force within the community
- they govern the delivery of essential services
- they have the capacity to influence public opinion and bring diverse interests together for the common good
- they have the moral authority to sway other organizations (voluntary and private sector) and government to address issues that have an impact on the local community.

adapted from AUMA

An additional reason is that "Community leaders that bring new people into decision-making are building (community) capacity"[xviii].

What Civic Leadership Looks Like in Terms of Promoting Inclusion

The Town is providing leadership in creating a more inclusive community by:

- **championing the vision of a socially and culturally inclusive community**: This vision was first articulated in the Municipal Development Plan and has been further developed in the Community Assessment and in the Social Plan.
- **communicating and promoting the vision to residents**: During the consultation and approval process for the MDP, residents first became aware of this vision for Chestermere's future. Work will continue on expanding leadership for making this vision a reality.
- **modeling inclusion**: The Town's commitment to hiring well-qualified staff has resulted in a multicultural workforce that spans a wide array of ages. As residents come into contact with Town staff, a strong message is being given to the community that diversity is valued.
- **requiring its departments to support and promote the vision and model inclusivity in how staff work with each other and with community residents**
- **providing diversity training for staff**
- **supporting individuals and other organizations who are promoting the vision**: This is evidenced through involving diverse groups (such as youth and seniors) in planning; support of Rockyview Adult Education Literacy programs; the Parent Link Centre working with CIWA (the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association) to bring a cross-cultural parenting course to the community; and past support of Rocky View Schools' Stepping Stones to Mental Health pilot at Chestermere High School.
- **evaluating progress toward achieving the vision**.

How we are Doing Currently

Things Bringing Residents Together Across Our Differences

- **Being parents**: A great 'leveler' or unifier is being a parent, with parents connecting to each other through their children knowing each other, through their children's activities, commonly shared experiences, or shared concerns.
- **Sports**: Sports were frequently mentioned by residents as creating a bridge across cultures in Chestermere. Soccer especially, as a sport that has a strong international following, attracts participants across diverse cultures in the community. Hockey was also cited as a sport that crosses cultural lines in Chestermere, with a long-time resident commenting that it is "Good to see kids of other cultural groups playing hockey – this isn't something you see in every small community". Residents' ideas for enhancing sports as a means to bring people together included hosting an event to introduce residents from diverse cultural backgrounds to curling and other 'Canadian sports', and offering more sports that would appeal to residents from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- **The Create a Wave of Change Anti-Bullying Program**: A participant described the program as:

  > *A group of youth in Chestermere that are willing to stand up against bullying and spread a message of acceptance and friendship. (We worked) together to develop a community action plan and individual school action plans for the project year, as it relates to creating awareness and reduction of tolerance of bullying. (Participants) come from different schools, different grades, and are diverse ethnically and socially, but are united in their desire to create a community free from discrimination and hate.* Krista

- **Multicultural celebrations**: Various schools in the community host events celebrating cultural diversity, and our Canada Day celebration is a microcosm of the community's diversity.

Canada Day celebrations at John Peake Park

Community is…
celebrating being Canadians.

Challenges to Achieving the Vision

Developing a Shared Vision

The same challenges referred to in achieving the small town vision are also relevant here, regarding creating a shared vision and shared commitment to the vision; the number of individuals whose lives take place, for the most part, outside of the community; and the 'busyness' of people's lives in general.

Lack of Knowledge about Residents with Special Needs

Very little is known about individuals and families with special needs in the community. Schools, one of the most reliable sources of information regarding this form of diversity, did not provide the information requested regarding the numbers of children and youth with special needs, citing FOIPP restrictions. The next Town Survey will help fill some of these knowledge gaps. The only feedback received to date from residents was with regard to the planning of outdoor spaces, i.e. that we need:

> *Bigger outdoor spaces (picnic areas, water park, football/Frisbee fields, etc.) that are handicap accessible to both parents and children, and inclusive of all handicaps, not just physical, i.e. sight, hearing, autism spectrum. Playground structures to stimulate any type of child, not just the able bodied. We have to consider that when building new structures, so why is it not being considered for parks, playgrounds and green spaces?*

Difficulty Reaching Residents from Diverse Cultural Backgrounds

It is not easy to connect to culturally diverse adults in Chestermere. There are no immigrant-serving organizations, no cultural organizations, and no places of worship associated with particular cultural groups, located in the community.

'Cultural Clustering' of Youth

As mentioned previously, the generation of Chestermere youth from families of diverse cultural backgrounds who are now young adults seems to have integrated well into the community, without losing their cultural heritages. However, there is a perception in the community that this is changing with the generation of youth who are currently in middle school and high school - that the community's youth are starting to associate more along cultural lines, rather than across cultures.

Although remaining within one's cultural group socially is a phenomenon often associated with older immigrants, this 'cultural clustering' had not been observed previously to a significant degree with the youth of the community. When we turned to the same young adults again to ask why they thought this is occurring, when it hadn't with their generation, the response was generally that they thought it was due to the large number of people from diverse cultures in the community now. Their observations were that when they were growing up, there were smaller numbers of people from diverse cultures in the community, so the social circles they developed included youth from many different cultural backgrounds, including Canadian-born youth. They speculated that because there has been such an increase in people from diverse backgrounds living in the community, it is easier for youth to connect with people from the same cultural background who have had similar experiences, who understand the challenges that their families have faced, and who have similar rules and expectations at home. One youth who moved to Chestermere from Calgary, speculated that the phenomenon being observed

could also be related to youth who have moved to Chestermere from Calgary –that youth are recreating what they experienced living in Calgary.

'Cultural clustering' appears to be a natural phenomenon that occurs as populations of the same cultural groups increase in a community, with people gravitating to others most like themselves, who have similar life experiences. However, concern was expressed that if youth only associate with other youth from their own cultural background, this does not prepare them well for 'the real world', where they will be in jobs or situations with people from different cultures, as they are not learning about other cultures and the people around them.

Strategies to Promote Social and Cultural Inclusion

Rather than being prescriptive, the following strategies are intended to create the conditions under which all residents are welcomed and able to participate fully in the life of the community, to whatever degree they want to be included. There will be a focus on promoting the benefits of inclusion and its importance in achieving the small town community vision that is so valued by residents. Strategies will promote inclusion generally as well as be directed to particular groups or sectors of the community. They will include increasing 'natural' opportunities to promote the vision, where 'the stage' is created for residents to interact with each other as individuals and across groups or sectors, as well as more structured programs designed to promote inclusion.

Strategy Six:

Continue to involve diverse populations in planning regarding issues that affect them

The Town believes in the strength of the community, and that community capacity is further increased when residents are involved in identifying and addressing the issues that affect them and in building the quality of life of the community. This is evidenced by the number of Town Committees and sub-committees as has been discussed in the previous section. Rather than thinking of expertise as being solely vested in the hands of staff, with professionals planning on behalf of the community (with varying degrees of community input), residents on Town Committees are considered to bring a wide array of skills, talents, and creativity to the table. The Town supports the work of these committees of residents through the Town Departments assigned to the various committees.

Community is…
valuing our diversity.

With a capacity building approach, it is not automatically assumed when a community issue is identified or when an amenity is desired by residents, that 'the answer' will be new services or that 'the Town will provide'. In some cases, building the capacity of the population affected by an issue to deal with the issue, is a more effective and sustainable response than creating a new program or service. The concept referred to earlier in this document as "leading by stepping back", i.e. knowing when the Town's role more effectively should be a supportive and facilitative role, rather than a lead role, is not an easy concept to implement. It requires:

- a foundation of well-articulated values and beliefs that comes from residents and is supported by residents, as is the case with the vision statements in the MDP and the 'fleshing out' of these visions through the Social Plan;
- developing relationships with residents, where residents see the Town working alongside them in achieving the desired objectives;
- remaining true to the reasons for valuing resident engagement;
- recognizing circumstances when it is unreasonable and inappropriate to expect community to take the lead role.

The strategies below include a mix of continuing existing strategies, modifying existing strategies and developing new strategies to promote social and cultural inclusion:

Strategy Six Activities

a) **Town Committees**:
Town Committees will continue to maximize opportunities for resident involvement, with the Town ensuring: i) that all Committees are working toward achieving the community visions, ii) that each committee strive for inclusiveness by considering: how well its membership reflects the composition of the community, whether all the interests that should be represented on their committee are represented, what barriers there might be to more diverse participation, and that diverse constituents within the community have been consulted, where appropriate.

b) **Youth**:
The Town will continue to involve youth in addressing issues that affect them and continue to support youth programming that promotes inclusion through YELL and anti-bullying programming:

YELL: Since its inception, YELL's membership was intended to reflect diversity within the community's youth population. Efforts to increase diverse representation are paying off, with more representation by age group, school, interests, and social groups. As mentioned previously, YELL has been engaged for the last three years in identifying issues affecting the community's population, taking on some of these issues, and increasing the quality of life experienced by youth of the community. Their work is helping to create a new stereotype of youth in Chestermere: one where youth are seen as leaders and active contributors to community life.

The YELL Council was asked to develop a plan as to how they would contribute to the achievement of the inclusive community vision, and they decided to focus on the following:

- **creating intergenerational opportunities**: YELL plans on 1) meeting with the Whitecappers' President to discuss a Youth and Seniors Dessert Gala and other events and programs that would involve youth and seniors; 2) continuing to mentor younger girls at events like the annual Go Girl, and mentoring children and other youth in volunteer roles such as their mentorship of the Girl Guide volunteers at the 2011 Winter Festival;

3) meeting with the library to explore collaborating on different initiatives such as providing help with reading to younger children and homework/study skills.

- **increasing cultural inclusiveness**: 1) continuing to recruit students representing all schools, genders, cultures and social groups; 2) participating in the Chestermere High School Multicultural Event; 3) offering Diversity Week activities 4) continuing the annual traditions of Pink Shirt Day: Take a Stand Against Bullying, Bullying Awareness Week activities, and the Peace Walk.

Anti-Bullying: Community Services offered a highly successful anti-bullying program in the SE RockyView area from 2004– 2010. Its activities were guided and supported by the Anti-Bullying Committee, representing all the schools in the area, the RCMP, and others concerned about issues of bullying and violence prevention. As mentioned previously, in 2009-10 the program took a new direction, with youth being developed as leaders to assume the lead role in planning and implementing anti-bullying strategies. This was particularly effective. Unfortunately, the province discontinued this funding stream and the Town lost the program coordinator position. The Community Service Department is seeking a relationship with another organization to fill this gap.

c) **Seniors:**
The Town will continue to support seniors' involvement in issues that affect them, through the Chestermere Regional Seniors Housing Committee, the Health Services Committee, and through supporting the Seniors' Advisory Committee (which will continue to meet on an ad hoc basis as needs or opportunities arise, when it comes off its current hiatus).

d) **Parents of Preschool-Aged Children:**
Ten percent of Chestermere's population is under the age of 6, i.e. 1,441 children (Municipal Census, 2011). Currently there isn't a stakeholder group representing the interests of this age group. Establishment of an Early Childhood Advisory group is a priority.

Strategy Seven:

Increase opportunities for residents to interact in fun ways

In order to grow the inclusiveness of the community that is required to achieve the small town vision, we need to increase natural opportunities for residents to interact with others beyond their customary circles, both individually and as groups. There needs to be increased

Community is…
sharing skills and remembering our history.

Grannie Jen Peddlesden's pie workshops bring together residents from ages 9-90.
Photos courtesy of *the Anchor Weekly*

recognition that the strength of the community and the quality of community life is enhanced by inclusion. As one writer expressed it:

> *"A community is made up of different people with different interests, experiences and backgrounds. These characteristics may divide a community into natural groups but there must be cooperation among them if the community is to work well as a unit. A strong community values the uniqueness of these groups and their traditions, but also recognizes their interdependency*."[xix]

Strategy Seven Activities:

a) **Sports** will be used as a means to engage more residents with each other, across ages and cultures.

Nelson Mandela is quoted as having said, "Sports have the power to unite people in a way little else can."[xx] This is evident throughout Europe, where there have been extensive efforts to use soccer (football) as a means to combat racism. Closer to home, the Youth Diversity Cup is a two day soccer tournament held in Calgary, sponsored by the Calgary Learning Village Collaborative, Calgary Police Services, Middle East Police Advisory Committee, the Community Life Improvement Council, City of Calgary and KidSport. Calgary's Globalfest also sponsors the Global Cup. An intent of these local events is to use soccer as a means for people to have fun and to interact across cultures.

Other ideas that could be explored are:

- a Dads 'n Lads Soccer Challenge with father and son teams competing against each other
- an International Sports Day where Canadian-born residents with a passion for sports could be introduced to sports popular in other countries by residents from those countries.
- a family curling bonspiel

…The possibilities are endless.

Chestermere Soccer Team at Youth Diversity Cup

Community is…
playing team sports.

b) **Arts and culture**: Chestermere Arts Days will be another opportunity added to the community's schedule of annual events that will provide an opportunity for residents to connect through shared interests.

Strategy Eight:

Develop a sustainable plan for community inclusion of those from diverse cultural backgrounds

With none of the formal means available to us for connecting with immigrant residents in a community, such as cultural associations, immigrant-serving organizations, and places of worship of various cultures, engaging culturally diverse residents is much more of a challenge in Chestermere. Informal leaders exist within cultural grouping in the community, but are difficult to identify. We have seen the value of this informal leadership in programs offered by the Parent Link Centre, with mothers who are more confident and comfortable, bringing other mothers from their cultural group with them to a program. These individuals who help others 'bridge' between cultures are invaluable to increasing the participation of newcomers and we need a means to locate and work with these individuals.

Strategy Eight Activities

a) **The Chestermere Inclusion Project:** The Community Services Department has contracted Calgary Catholic immigration Society (CCIS) to engage residents of the diverse cultures in our community, as well as other community stakeholders, in creating a sustainable plan for community inclusion. At the time the Social Plan was finalized, the recommendations were being reviewed, and decisions will be made regarding implementation.

b) **The Chestermere Local Immigration Partnership:** CCIS has applied to Citizenship and Immigration on behalf of the community for funding for Chestermere to form a Local Immigration Partnerships. The Town will participate on and support the work of this partnership.

YELL Summer Programming

Community is…
good times with friends.

Sense of safety is one of the most critical factors in perceived quality of life in a community. It could be argued that it is a pre-requisite to a good quality of life. Without feeling safe, it doesn't much matter how much green space there is or the number of recreational facilities and programs a resident has access to. This vision is strongly connected to the small town community vision (p. 14), as residents identified a feeling of safety as being important to having a sense of small town community in Chestermere.

What you told us about Community Safety

- **Interviews with residents**: In the interviews with residents, an increase in crime was commonly cited as the predominant challenge resulting from the community's population growth. A couple of factors seemed to be associated with this:
  - population growth has led to individuals not knowing one's neighbours anymore. Long-time residents stated that back when they knew their neighbours and recognized other community residents, it gave them a sense of security and safety – that they could recognize a car or individuals that didn't belong in their neighbourhood.
  - the "Calgary penetration" as one individual described it. With the townsite's expansion westward and the city of Calgary's continued expansion eastward, we are now in such close proximity that it has brought many of the issues affecting Calgary into the community.

- **Seniors and youth**: In the 2008 surveys of seniors and youth, differences were noted in the sense of safety of these two age groupings. Seniors over 65 years of age reported feeling very safe in the community, with 97% saying they felt safe in Chestermere and 79% saying that they felt safer than they would in a large community. Seniors' interests were in having more educational seminars on protecting one's home and protecting one's self from fraud. Youth, on the other hand, were more concerned about their personal safety, with 53% saying that they don't always feel safe in the community, and 49% identifying bullying/harassment as the third issue of most concern to them. This issue was of most concern to middle school-aged youth.

- **Chestermere Policing Committee Survey**: In March 2010, the Town of Chestermere's Policing Committee conducted an online survey for the purpose of helping to determine policing priorities for the next year. The two charts that follow, indicate 1) the top ten policing issues identified by residents and 2) the community policing activities or programs that residents would like the RCMP tobe involved in /more involved in.

Chart 4: The Top 10 Policing Issues in Chestermere Identified by Residents

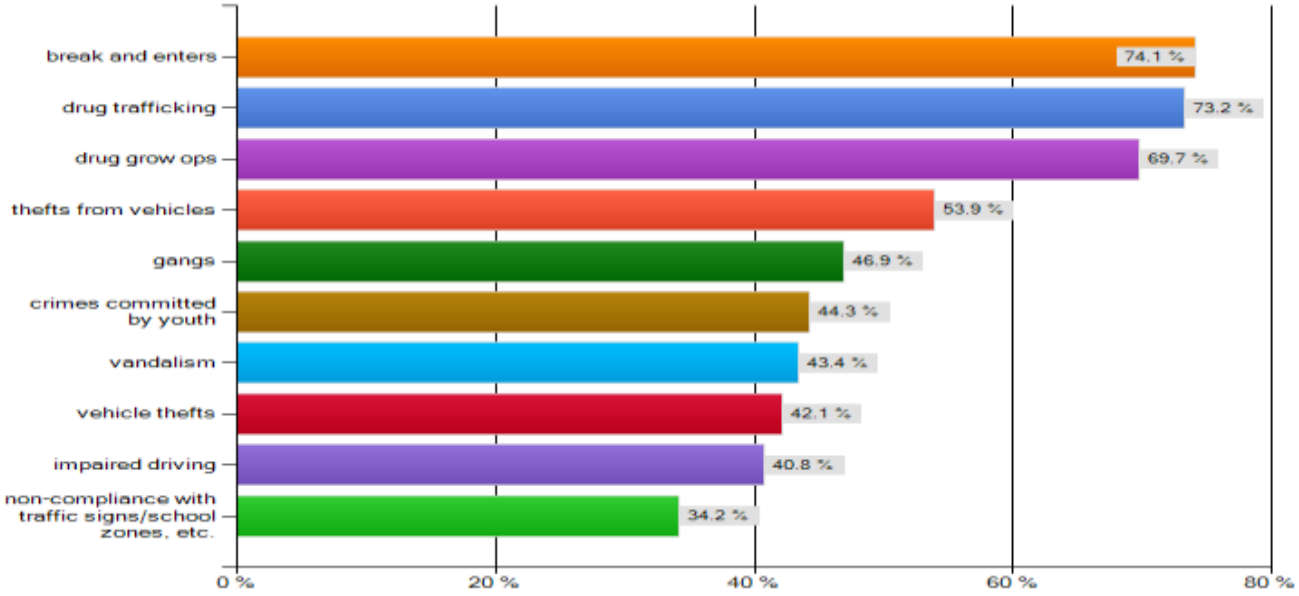
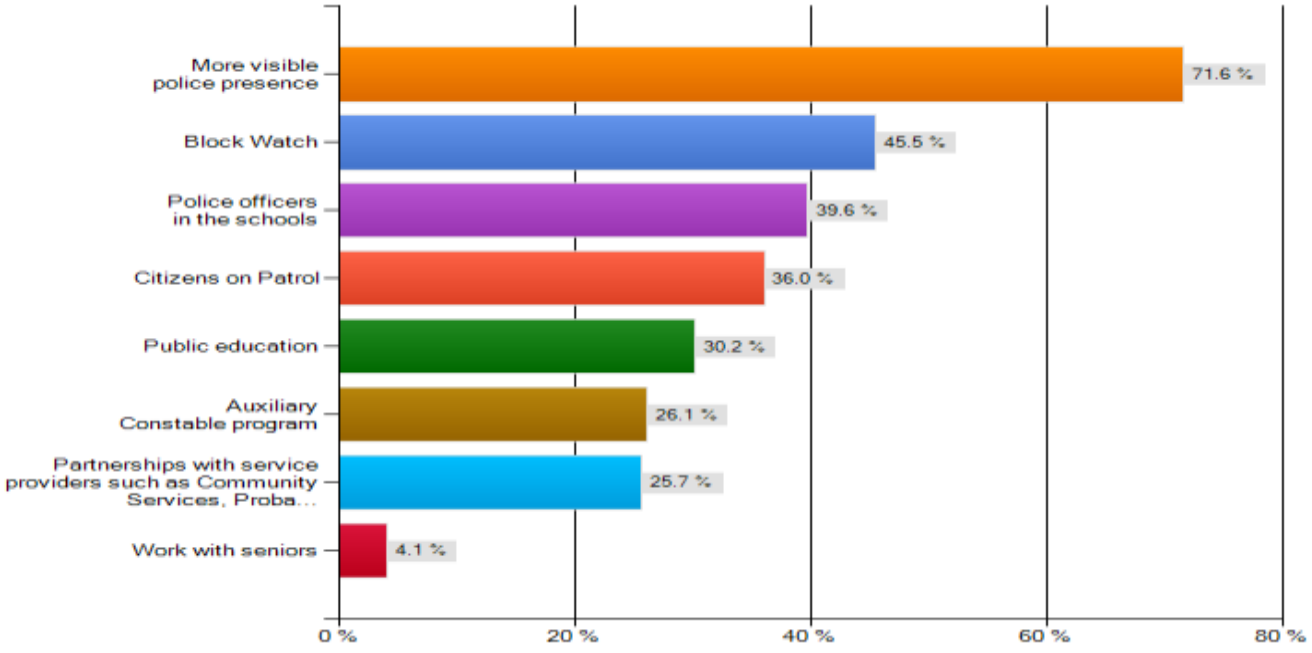


Chart 5: Community Policing Activities or Programs Residents Would Like the Chestermere RCMP Involved In/More Involved In



How we are doing currently

Community safety in Chestermere has been enhanced by three factors in recent years: enactment of by-laws that increase the RCMP's enforcement abilities, an increase in policing resources, and an increase in community resources. These are summarized below:

- **By-law changes:**
  - The Open Spaces Bylaw restricts the use of town parks and open areas between the hours of midnight and 5 a.m. This is a tool the police use when they have difficulty identifying, charging and/or moving along unwanted persons from outside the community and to constrain undesirable behaviour.
  - The Community Standards Bylaw restricts such activities as panhandling, causing a disturbance, littering and loitering. This bylaw has not been used often but will allow the police to effectively intervene when needed.
- **Police Resources**: The staffing of the Chestermere detachment has grown considerably in the past three years, and the compliment of officers in 2011 is considered to be appropriate for the population size.
- **Community Resources**:
  - Through a partnership with the Community Services Department, a social worker is now located with the detachment, providing prevention and intervention servicesto youth through the Turnaround Program
  - Block Watch has a membership of approximately 300 and is a valuable community resource.
  - Citizens on Patrol is an organization of volunteers working in partnership with the Chestermere RCMP detachment. They do night patrols, reporting anything of concern that they see to the detachment.
  - Chestermere does not have a Youth Justice Committee. Young Offenders are dealt with through the Strathmore Youth Justice Committee.
  - The Probation Officer serving Chestermere now works out of the Community Services Department on a part-time basis.

Strategy Nine:

The Policing Committee will continue to consult with the public about policing priorities for Chestermere.

Strategy Nine Activities:

Community Consultation: A policing priority question and questions regarding residents' perception of community safety will be added to the next Town Survey and will be used as information in determining policing priorities.

Strategy Ten:

The Community Services Department and the RCMP will continue to support YELL's Anti-Bullying efforts

Strategy Eleven:

The Community Services Department and the RCMP will continue to partner through the Turn Around Program.

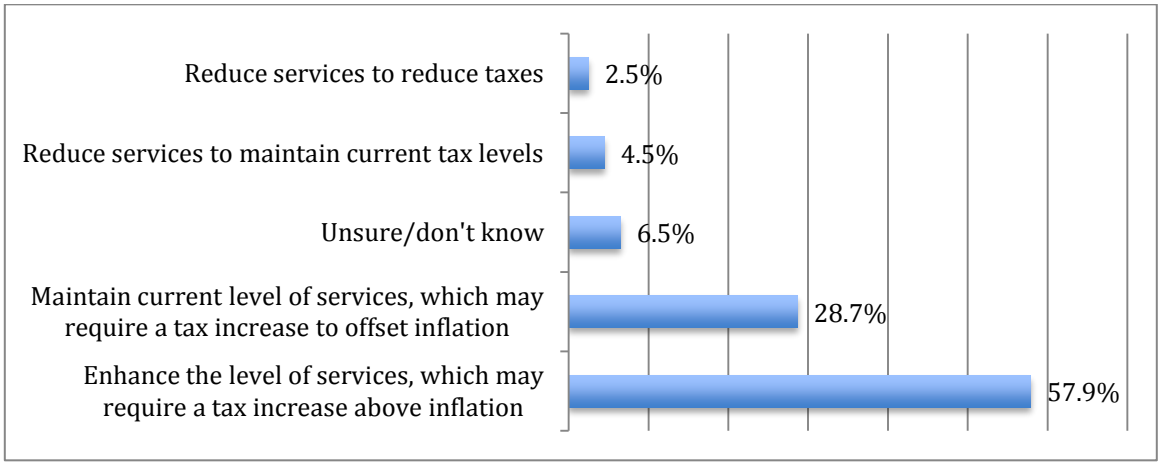
Chestermere currently lacks many of the community amenities, services, retail outlets, recreational and leisure venues, and places of worship found in communities with comparable populations throughout Alberta, although they are increasing. Three factors influence their development: 1) proximity of the town to a large urban centre where these amenities and services are available, 2) the Town's limited non-residential tax base, and 3) the cost/square foot for commercial/retail space in Chestermere. When compared to other urban municipalities with similar populations (ex. Okotoks, Fort Saskatchewan, Camrose, Cochrane, Brooks, Canmore, Strathmore, High River, etc.), Chestermere has the lowest percentage of its tax base coming from commercial/industrial of all these communities. In fact, all of Chestermere's non-residential taxes come from commercial, as the town does not have any industry. In 2010, only 3% of Chestermere's taxes came from commercial/industrial, compared to a median* of 16% in our comparison communities (with the range being from 3% to 47% across these communities). The lack of a commercial/industrial taxbase is a major limitation in the development of public facilities and amenities .

*median = the mid-point of the range

A complaint commonly heard from residents who use Calgary as their point of comparison, is that property taxes are too high in Chestermere. Looking at historical comparisons of Chestermere's tax rate with those of communities of a similar size throughout the province, it is seen that Chestermere consistently has one of the lowest/the lowest tax rates of all the communities. This is because, in an effort to keep taxes fairly consistent from year to year, the Town annually adjusts the tax rate in relationship to the real estate market, as property taxes are also a product of the value of one's property.

Residents were asked in the Town Survey of 2008, which tax strategy they would support over the next five years, given that there will be pressure to increase municipal service levels as the town continues to grow. The responses were as follows:

Chart 6: Survey results regarding taxation options



Why should we care about having more amenities and services in the community?

- Lack of amenities impedes development of a sense of community. From what we were told, being able to get most of what you need in the community helps build a sense of community, as you're spending more time in the community, and running into other residents as you go about your day builds a sense of connectedness and belonging.
- Accessing services and shopping outside of the community affects quality of life, as time spent on the road decreases time that could be spent with family, being involved in the community, being physically active, pursuing leisure activities, or just relaxing.
- Having more amenities makes a community a more desirable place to live.
- Lack of services, particularly health services, is an important determinant of whether it is feasible to remain in the community as residents age.
- An increase in businesses helps build the non-residential portion of the tax base, which can result in more community amenities and services.
- Convenience
- They create opportunities for residents to both live and work in the community.
- They create the need for related services and supports, which further builds the tax base.

What you told us

In the Town Survey of 2008:

- 67% of respondents supported having "Health infrastructure (ex. medical offices, health centre facilities, public health unit)" located in the town.
- 54% said they would like more shopping and restaurants.
- 51% said the town would be a better place to live if it had more recreation facilities. A swimming pool was identified as a priority for adults of the community, with 76% supporting this. The youth of the community also saw this as a priority, according to the YELL survey.
- 50% said they wanted Seniors Support, i.e. transportation, recreation.
- 42% supported Chestermere developing "social infrastructure (ex. churches, cemeteries, childcare)".
- Adults differed from youth in their perspectives regarding the need for recreational activities for youth – 23% of adult respondents indicated that more activities for youth were needed, whereas 60% of youth in the YELL Survey said there wasn't enough for them to do.

In The Municipal Development Plan:

The following statements from the MDP, indicate the direction the town is taking in moving the community towards achieving this vision:

1. The Town will support initiatives to provide improved health care services and facilities locally within Chestermere. (p. 25)
2. Community Services will continue to pursue community partnerships with other organizations and agencies that can provide funding and support to the community(p. 25)
3. Public consultation should be undertaken to assess community needs and the allocation of land and resources for community services in partnership with community stakeholders and service providers. (p. 25)

4. Recreational open spaces and public amenities abound (p. 5)
5. The Town will support initiatives to improve local access to post-secondary educational opportunities (p. 25)

The Water Park Survey:

94.6% of survey respondents supported the development of a Water Park.

Priorities and Strategies

Outline of This Section of the Social Plan

Community priorities addressed in this section of the Social Plan include:

A. Healthcare
B. Recreation
C. Support for Vulnerable Residents
D. Family and Community Services
E. Community Facilities and Amenities: churches, childcare, restaurants and businesses
F. Transportation

Each of the above priorities will be addressed separately, looking at the demographics and trends associated with the priority area, and outlining strategies to address these priorities. It is apparent that many of these strategies will require new collaborations across organizations and new ways of thinking in regard to partnering.

Tubing on Chestermere Lake

Rock Climbing with YELL

Rafting through Extreme Sports Week

Community is...active living.

A. HEALTHCARE

Currently, the town is greatly under-serviced relative to communities of comparable populations in Alberta. Chestermere's existing health infrastructure consists of one family practice, two walk-in clinics and a mental health office. Residents often go to Strathmore and Calgary to meet their medical needs. The closest hospitals are located in NE Calgary (Peter Lougheed) and Strathmore.

Four trends need to be taken into consideration when planning health infrastructure in Chestermere: anticipated population growth, provincial health trends, the aging of the 'Boomer' generation, and the population growth of young families.

Population Trends

According to the consultant contracted to do the business plan for a new health centre, "Even based on the low to medium (population) growth scenarios, there is a capacity for at least 10 family physicians, if not more, over the next 5 year horizon. With the current demographic mix and projected population increase, demands for obstetrical care as well as health services for women, children and youth will be increasing."[xxi]

Alberta Health Trends

The following are key trends for Alberta based on data from 2003 – 2009[xxii]:

Albertans are Living Longer: In 2007, the average life expectancy of an Albertan at birth was 81 years (83 for women, 78 for men). At age 65, the further life expectancy was an average of 20 years (22 for women, 18 for men).

But We're not Feeling Healthier: Although we're living longer, we're apparently not feeling healthier, with the percentage of people age 12 and over feeling that their health is very good or excellent declining to 62% in 2009. This may be attributed to a corresponding increase in individuals considered to be overweight or obese (up nearly 4% from 2003) and an increase in individuals having diabetes, high blood pressure, mood disorder, and pain or discomfort that limits participation in normal activities. In 2009, 54% of Albertans were overweight or obese, using BMI (Body Mass Index) calculations (36% were overweight; 19% obese). 5% were diabetic, 14% had high blood pressure, 7% had mood disorders, and 12% had debilitating pain.

Access: In 2009, 80% of Albertans age 12 and over had a regular doctor, down almost 4% from 2003.

The Good News: The good news is that the incidence of cancers (colon, lung, breast and prostate) have all decreased since 2003. Also the rate of deaths due to cancer, diseases of the heart and cerebrovascular diseases, in particular, have steadily decreased since 2003.

Note: Numbers were rounded off for use in the Social Plan

Aging Trend

Seniors (age 66 and older) constitute a small portion of the Chestermere population, currently accounting for only 5% of the overall population, i.e. 661 residents (2011 Municipal Census). However there is a bulge in the age category below this – what is commonly referred to as 'the Boomer/ Zoomer generation'. As one respondent to the Seniors Survey expressed it, "We are coming and we are many". Those age 51 – 65 currently constitute 16% of the population, i.e. 2,367 people. Health services planning will need to: 1) address the needs of the relatively small number of seniors currently living in the community, and 2) start preparing for the increased numbers of seniors we are anticipating in the near future. 2011 is the year when the front end of the Baby Boom generation hit age 65.

Note: The "Boomers" segment of the population is defined as anyone born between 1946 and 1964, people who are roughly between the ages of 48 and 66 at this time.

Concerns have been expressed at a provincial level regarding a shortage of health care workers; increased user costs and health system organization; and rural seniors not having access within their communities to basic health services. Respondents to *the Chestermere Seniors' Survey* in 2008 indicated the need for: more doctors, a medical lab/mobile lab, home nursing care, foot clinic, and support group for caregivers, and more physiotherapists. Home care needs were identified as: light housekeeping, monitoring of chronic illness, help with medication, rehabilitation services, personal care, wound care, and intravenous therapy.

Strategy Twelve:

Continue to support the work of the Health Services Committee in increasing the health services in Chestermere

Currently, the Committee is working on development of a Primary Care Network Clinic in the Kinniburgh neighbourhood, scheduled to open in 2012. Primary Health Care is defined as: "…the first level of contact with the health system to promote health, prevent illness, care for common illnesses, and manage ongoing health problems".[xxiii] According to the Business Plan for the clinic:

> *The vision for the Chestermere Community Healthcare Centre (CCHC) is a medical home that includes primary care in which many family practitioners will be working in a community of practice alongside teams from across the professions including nurses, pharmacists, dietitians, therapists and social workers. The facility would also be a hub for local lab, public health and home care services.*

The following services are anticipated to be offered at the Chestermere Community Health Centre:

Table 8: Proposed services at the Community Health Centre

SERVICE/PROGRAM	FUNCTIONAL DESCRIPTION
PHYSICIAN SERVICES	Family practice physicians (5 - 10). Recruitment efforts are also being directed toward bringing pediatricians to town.
PRIMARY CARE NETWORK SERVICES	
Nursing	Assist people living with one or more chronic diseases including diabetes, COPD, asthma, cardiovascular disease, cancer, obesity, etc.
Nutrition	Counsel and product education on diet management to address diabetes, heart disease, underweight, obesity, crones, high blood pressure, digestive problems, osteoporosis, etc. Group teaching will be key to design as care will be moving increasingly towards groups visits, self-directed care etc.
Pharmacist	Review and advise physicians on drug interactions.
ALBERTA HEALTH CARE SERVICES (AHS): will be leasing 10,000 sq ft in the Health Centre	
Homecare	Offer a range of services such as acute/chronic illness monitoring, HTPT and IV (intravenous) therapy, wound & skin care, lower leg/other assessments, personal care, palliative care, etc.
Mental Health	Major services that fall under this include mental health screening, assessments, crisis support, consultation & treatment services for child, adolescent, adult, geriatric, etc, education & mental health promotion/prevention, supportive psycho-education/therapeutic groups, IS, outreach services etc.
Public Health	Encompasses promoting health, preventing disease, prolonging life and improving quality of life (e.g. vaccinations, school health, best beginnings and post partum home visiting.
Lab Services	Have been confirmed
TOWN SERVICES	
Resource Centre	Provide resource information from basic needs such as food hampers, shelters etc. to locating social support and referrals for services ranging from counseling to job training programs both as a direct client service and as information source for related professions.

*chart adapted from the Business Case

B. RECREATION

The Town and its residents are committed to active living and to maximizing the use of the lake. As mentioned previously, the Town successfully hosts three lake-centred annual festivals – Waterfest, the Winter festival, and Canada Day. The community has an extensive system of walking/bike paths, connected to the Calgary path system, and continues to build the number and diversity of parks and public gathering places. In 2009 Chestermere was chosen as an ACE (Active, Creative, Engaged) Community by the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association, in recognition of what has been achieved to date and the community's potential.

This recreational potential has been captured in the newly created Town Vision for 2016: *Chestermere, Alberta's Oasis: The Recreation and Relaxation Capital*. The following excerpts from the MDP nest nicely within this larger vision for the community and provide direction for future planning toward achieving this vision:

- In addition to the Lake, there are now many local and regional recreational amenities to maintain and expand upon the lakeside park and golf course recreational lifestyle that Chestermere residents value so highly. (p. 5)
- Comprehensive plans will emphasize larger regional parks including sportsfield parks and passive natural areas. (p. 17)
- Major recreational parks (20+ acres) will be created at central locations within residential areas. (p. 17)
- A continuous trail system connects focal points and social gathering places throughout the community. (p. 5)
- Neighbourhoods incorporate large parks providing passive and active activities (p. 5)
- The Town shall undertake a Recreation Master Plan or Facilities Master Plan to identify a strategic long-term plan for municipal recreation and social facilities. (p. 24)
- The Town will incorporate recreational services into the administrative structure to ensure a coordinated approach to parks operations and services that meets the needs of a growing population (p. 18)
- A new recreational multiplex facility, library, and world-class urban plaza are located within a new Town Centre (p. 5)

Town Council would also like to see a privately operated, world class recreation facility located in the community, one that would link Chestermere's name with a particular sport, akin to how when one thinks of cross-country skiing, one thinks of Canmore because of the Nordic Centre located there.

Two regional recreation planning processes are currently under way. The CRCA's *Chestermere Regional Community Recreation Needs Assessment and Facility Development Strategy* document is currently under review by their board and going through an approval process, before being released publicly. Also, the Country of Rocky View has started the process of doing a regional recreation master plan for the area served by the Chestermere Conrich Regional Recreation Board.

How we are doing currently

Recreational Facilities

The Town does not own or operate recreational facilities currently. The Chestermere Regional Recreation Centre is the largest recreational facility in the community. It is operated by a non-profit board, the Chestermere Regional Community Association (the CRCA). The facility houses a 4 sheet curling rink, 2 arenas, 2 large halls, a lounge, a seniors centre and meeting rooms, and is surrounded by 25 acres of land on which there are soccer pitches, baseball diamonds and an agricultural corral. Residents have identified the Recreation Centre as a "community hub" – i.e. a place where residents gather and get a sense of community. On a typical day 1,500 people use the facility. The CRCA and the affiliated Agricultural Society play an important role in ongoing traditions that provide a sense of continuity and connection to the surrounding community's rural roots as has been mentioned previously.

Because it was built by a non-profit association, there is no tax base supporting the ongoing operational needs of the facility. Operating costs are mostly covered through rental revenues and membership fees (to a limited degree), and participants' fees need to totally offset the costs of all programs offered. When capital cost improvements/refurbishments are necessary, the CRCA makes application for funds to the County and the Town, but there isn't a sustainability plan in place for this valued resource, and there is no reserve fund.

Other recreational facilities located in Chestermere include the Calgary Yacht Club, Camp Chestermere, and the Lakeside Greens Golf Course.

As mentioned previously, an indoor pool is the recreational facility most desired by residents. Two studies have addressed the feasibility of this: 1) the Chestermere Regional Recreation Centre's Business Plan of 2006, and 2) a study commissioned through the Aquatics Centre Committee of the Town in 2009. In both cases, the conclusion of independent consultants was that Chestermere was not yet at a point where it was feasible to build and sustain the operations of an indoor pool.

Recreational and Leisure Programming

A number of parties are involved in offering recreational and sports programming in the community. The bulk of the programming is organized through the CRCA, which also does the community bookings for Rocky View Schools, but the community also has a wide array of arts and sports-related clubs, associations and businesses (refer to p. 34).

Although recreation is not currently a mandate of the Town, the Community Services Department has become involved in supporting/hosting a number of recreational programs, activities, and events in recent years as a means to engage youth of the community, as an opportunity for youth leadership development and community building, and to enhance the range of activities available for youth. In 2010, after years of offering summer recreational programming for children and youth, the department decided to reduce offering this programming, retaining only the programs with the highest attendance, and to reallocate its staffing resources more fully to its primary role, that of youth leadership development. The department will continue to support youth activities, where recreation is a means to achieve purposes that fit with the department's mandate.

The Town-operated Parent Link Centre also offers a range of recreational and leisure programs for children throughout the summer, to promote awareness of the Centre, develop skills, strengthen families, and provide opportunities for families to connect with each other.

Strategy Thirteen:

The Town will explore opportunities for increasing recreational amenities in the community.

Strategy Thirteen Activities

a) **World class recreation facility**:
The Town will explore major recreation facility gaps in the Calgary area and opportunities to attract a major sport to Chestermere.

b) **Regional Recreation Planning**:
The Town will table conducting the Regional Master Recreation Plan called for in the MDP, pending the findings of the CRCA and the County of Rocky View's recreation planning studies.

Strategy Fourteen:

Continue to promote an active, outdoor lifestyle through development of public outdoor spaces and parks, and increasing the usability of existing spaces.

The Town's Visioning Committee (now a project-based committee) developed an extensive list of desired community amenities, many of which relate to residents wanting more places to gather. These include everything from an off-leash dog park to a large public plaza. Work on developing the desired amenities will continue on a project-by-project basis.

Strategy Fourteen Activities:

a) **Park Development/Redevelopment**: A number of park additions and redevelopments are being planned or are already in process. These include:
- a pirate-themed water spray park
- an off-leash dog park
- redevelopment of Anniversary Park
- the gazebo project at John Peake Park
- a linear park along Merganser Drive
- a permanent site for the YELL Mountain Bike Skills Park

Community is…
quality programming for all ages.

C. SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE RESIDENTS

The table below illustrates the organizations currently providing support to vulnerable residents in Chestermere and area.

Table 9: Current Supports for the Community's Most Vulnerable Residents

ORGANIZATION	VULNERABLE RESIDENTS THEY SERVE	SERVICES /PROGRAMS TARGETED TO THIS POPULATION
Food Bank	Economically challenged	Provision of food and food gift cards
Child and Family Services	Children in need of protection	Child protective services out of the Strathmore office
Alberta Health Services: Addiction Services	Residents of all ages at risk of/abusing substances	Counselor based in Strathmore
	Students at Chestermere High School at risk of/abusing substances	Counselor for the Stepping Stones to Mental Health Initiative
Alberta Health Services: Chestermere Health Centre	Mental health	Assessment and treatment Mental health services
Community Services Department, Town of Chestermere	Youth at risk of/involved in crime and wanting to make changes in their lives	Turnaround program
	At-risk youth	Success Coach for the Stepping Stones to Mental Health Initiative
	Economically challenged	Community Resource Worker
		Christmas with Dignity program
	Individuals and families trying to cope with various life challenges	Community Resource Worker: information and referrals
	Children and youth being bullied	YELL's anti-bullying initiatives
	Vulnerable families with pre-school aged children	The Parent Link Centre is uniquely situated to connect parents to other community services and programs, through the Department's Resource Worker.
Schools	Children coming to school hungry	Breakfast programs

United Way Volunteers

Community is…
supporting the United Way.

Identified Gaps in the Service Infrastructure Supporting Vulnerable Residents

Notably absent, given the number of New Canadians in the community, is that there are no immigrant-serving agencies providing service in the community. Also, we are lacking a broad-based child, youth and family-serving non-profit agency.

Faith Organizations

Faith organizations and their faith communities are also important sources of support to vulnerable residents. Recognizing this, the Community Services Department has brought together a Faith Community Group, consisting of representatives of the different faiths in Chestermere and area, to discuss shared issues. Current membership of this committee and the location of their places of worship are found in the table below.

Table 10: Faith organization representation on the Faith Community Group

FAITH ORGANIZATION	LOCATION OF PLACE OF WORSHIP
Chestermere Christian Fellowship	Conrich Road
Camp Chestermere	Chestermere
Christian Reform Church	Rocky View County
En Compass Evangelical Free Church	Chestermere
Lake Ridge Community Church	Chestermere
Langdon Community Church (also referred to as the Langdon Baptist Church)	Langdon
Lantern Community Church	Calgary
New Apostolic Church	Chestermere (under construction)
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church	Rocky View County
The Rock Church	Chestermere (home-based)
Rocky View Community Ministries	Langdon (IOOF Hall)
St. Gabriel Parish	Chestermere (St. Gabriel the Archangel School)
Seven Day Adventist Church	Rocky View County

Communities of worship are important to a sense of belonging for many residents. Working with faith group representatives can be of great benefit to communities:

- The values of compassion, caring, responsibility to help others, peace, integrity, and justice – values associated with sense of community, are rooted in the beliefs and teachings of most religions.
- They have regular connection to and relationships with community residents. Their members may be willing to volunteer as a group, individually, or as a family for community projects. They may also be willing to take on, by themselves, or with others, responsibility for addressing an identified community need.

- They are a valuable means to gain a better understanding of the people in the community, especially those serving culturally diverse residents, where it has been difficult for service providers to connect to this population. By having a better understanding of what people of different faith groups have in common, geographical communities are more able to promote inclusion and build a sense of a larger community built on those commonalities.
- They may have physical resources like buildings, meeting spaces, and equipment that the community may be able to access.
- Many faith groups have experience dealing with the issues that the community is trying to address: many provide social services to members of their faith, whether it be helping seniors who need assistance to stay in their homes, assisting families that are experiencing economic hardship, or providing family counseling. Some religions are very experienced in providing a range of services to their members and we could learn from their experiences.

adapted from *Engaging Faith Communities*[xxiv]

Strategy Fifteen:

Continue to build the community's capacity to support vulnerable residents through:

a) continuing to strengthen relationships with faith group leaders and their congregations through the Faith Community Group and increasing diverse religious representation on the committee

b) continuing to build the capacity of the Chestermere/United Way Partnership

c) continuing to build the financial resources of Christmas with Dignity

D. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

The Community Services Department of the Town is the only local body with a broad mandate regarding the social well-being of children, youth and families in Chestermere and area. It is also the only body with broad responsibility for community development activities that have as their intent an increase in the quality of life experienced by residents.

The Community Services Department plays a vital role in the quality of life experienced in Chestermere:

- **FCSS Responsibilities**: A core business of the Department is fulfilling the Town's responsibilities under the Family and Community Support Services Act, i.e. working preventatively to help residents develop independence, strengthen coping skills and become more resistant to crisis; increasing awareness of social needs; helping individuals and the community to assume responsibility for decisions and actions which affect them; promoting volunteerism, and supporting people as active participants in the community.
- **Identification of Community Concerns and Trends**: The Department has the responsibility of identifying emerging concerns and trends that could threaten the quality of life of residents and the community overall, and often takes the lead in bringing together others to develop collaborative strategies to preserve and enhancethe quality of life that is so valued by residents.
- **Brokerage**: The Department serves an important brokerage role with organizations that provide necessary community services that fall outside of the Town's mandate, brokering the provision of services in the community and negotiating relationships with funders.
- **Support of Healthy Family Functioning**: The Department attempts to ensure that as residents move through the life cycle, from child to senior, that support is available to help individuals master the challenges that come with the different stages of one's life, whether that be ideas for parents on how to deal with a 'spirited' toddler, developmental screenings of preschoolers, guidance on how to support a child who is getting bullied, food to help families through a difficult time, or assistance to find out what benefits are available to seniors in this province, to cite just a handful of the supports available.
- **Support of Community's Most Vulnerable**: The Department attempts to ensure that our most vulnerable residents have the supports that they need when family and community are not able to support them to the degree needed, as discussed in the previous section**.** As one resident stated, "…Community Services is a good instrument for ensuring our broader social responsibility is not neglected".
- **Consultation and Support**: The department's staff support a number of Town Committees and provide consultation and support to community organizations, such as the Food Bank and the parent councils of both school divisions.

Demands on the Department

Since its origins as a one room Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) office at the Recreation Centre, the services and programs offered have grown in number and in complexity, in response to the community's evolving needs. This has resulted in the Community Services Department becoming the second largest department of the Town. However, it has been

recognized that continued growth is not sustainable. Nor is it desirable, from a community capacity building perspective, as will be discussed further in this section. At the time the development of the Town's Social Plan began, discussions were ensuing in regard to the structure of the department, the FCSS model of funding and service provision being used, funding opportunities that the department had not been able to access, etc., with a view to the community's future social infrastructure needs. Development of the Social Plan had become a necessity in order to guide the Town's future decision-making in the face of increased demands on the Department.

There are three primary sources of demand:

1) Population growth has increased both the needs of the community and the numbers of people to be served. The Department is actively involved in meeting the needs of families with young children through the Parent Link Centre and Early Childhood Services Team; and the needs of families, youth, seniors, and immigrants through the Community Development Team's programs and services.
2) Currently the Community Services Department is 'the only game in town' for organizations that desire community partners, or where organizations are required by a funder to have community partners in order to receive funding for projects.
3) The Community Services Department currently is responsible for regional service provision to the SE portion of Rockyview County and receives funding from the County's FCSS to provide a range of services to their residents. These services and programs are available to county residents, both in Chestermere, as well as at various sites in the county. Serving these residents, particularly Langdon and Conrich, is anticipated to continue to stress existing resources.

Sustainability

- **Capacity to meet the demand**: The Community Services Department is quickly exceeding its capacity to meet the demand, in terms of the current workloads of staff and management. This would appear to be an optimal time to pause, to reflect on what is being done currently, and plan where the department should be heading. As a service provider whose services continue to expand in response to a growing population and an increasing need for services, the department continues to grow in terms of the number of personnel needed to meet these needs. Increased staffing is accompanied by increased need for administrative, technical and Human Resources support, and the need for increased office space. Given the tax base limitations of the Town and the increasing budgets of other Town departments, at some point (which we may be rapidly approaching), the financial requirements of providing the necessary social infrastructure may outgrow the Town's ability to financially support. If the community were able to access the funding available to non-profit organizations, this would reduce the need for the Community Services Department to act as a direct services provider.
- **Functional reorganization**: Without other family and community service organizations in the community, the Community Services Department is locked into its current structure as a service provider. As the community continues to grow, the Department may want to have the flexibility to consider other structural models. For example, it is common in Alberta that larger municipalities function in dual capacities, as both service providers and FCSS funders. They provide core services of a broad nature to the community, such as social planning and

community development, etc., but they also function as a funder, distributing FCSS funds to non-profit and charitable organizations to provide services that fit with the social issue priorities identified by their municipal councils. It is not feasible, nor advisable, that the Community Services Department continue down the path of attempting to meet all the family and community support needs in Chestermere and area as the population increases and becomes more diverse in its needs.

- **Accessing funding**: As a department of the Town, the Community Services Department is ineligible for funding from any funder that excludes municipalities from applying. This has become increasingly limiting in terms of securing funding that the community needs. The community would be enriched through building/supporting the development of a non-profit infrastructure of community support. An important first step in making this a reality was the establishment last year of the Chestermere United Way Partnership.

Strategy Sixteen:

Continue to grow the social infrastructure of the community and residents' access to services.

Activities

a) **Development of a Chestermere-based non-profit agency with a broad family and community orientation**:
Work has commenced to develop a Chestermere-based family and community-oriented non-profit agency that will be responsive to community direction and guidance in the services offered to area residents. It is intended that this non-profit organization apply for charitable status, thereby increasing its ability to: i)secure funding, ii) engage in fundraising activities and iii) offer charitable receipts to contributors.

b) **Continue to develop relationships and new collaborations with existing non-profit agencies to expand their service provision into the Chestermere area**.

c) **Continue to advocate with Calgary agencies to allow Chestermere residents to access their services and programs.**

d) **Continue to support the effective operations of local non-profits**:
The Town, through the Community Services Department and the Community Services Advisory Board, will continue to support local non-profits and other non-profits providing services in the community, through sharing information on funding opportunities, supporting their fundraising efforts, recruiting volunteers to support their efforts when asked to do so, and connecting these organizations to individuals and other organizations.

E. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND AMENITIES: CHILDCARE, PLACES OF WORSHIP RESTAURANTS AND BUSINESSES

Childcare

Chestermere's first childcare facility, the Chestermere Learning Centre, has broken ground and will open in the spring of 2012. It will provide 247 childcare spaces and will house an 1,800 sq ft gym. Its 45 Before and After School spaces will add to the growing number of options available to Chestermere parents for the care of their school-aged children, with Before and After School Care programming now being available through the Recreation Centre, Prairie Waters and Rainbow Falls Elementary Schools.

Places of Worship

Places of worship are an important component of a community's infrastructure. In the words of one of our residents: *"I appreciate what they bring to the community, not just in a religious aspect, (but also) with social activities, daycare, seniors programming, youth drop-ins, etc."*. Due to its origins as a summer village and relatively recent origins as a town, Chestermere lacks the faith community infrastructure typically found in communities of this size, as alluded to previously. There are faith groups that meet locally, ranging from meeting in residents' homes, to the sizeable Catholic parish that meets at the St. Gabriel the Archangel school, and the Friday prayer sessions by the Muslim community that are held at the Recreation Centre. Two churches are within close proximity to Chestermere, and the first church building located within the town, just opened its doors. However, a large number of residents are connected to faith communities located outside of the community.

Businesses and Restaurants

Having an array of local businesses was frequently cited in the interviews as being important to creating a sense of community, particularly businesses like restaurants that provide a place to get together with other people in the community. This was consistent with the results of the Town Survey where 54% of respondents said they would like more shopping and restaurants in Chestermere. Strategies to increase the number of businesses and restaurants, and to encourage residents to shop locally are being addressed as community economic development issues, rather than being addressed through the Social Plan.

F. TRANSPORTATION

What Residents Said

Public transportation is a priority that has been identified by a range of ages in Chestermere:

- In the Town Survey of 2008, 78% of adults responding to the survey indicated they wanted the Town to plan/promote public transit to Calgary and the region.
- 74% of respondents to the Seniors' Survey indicated that they would support specialized transportation services with their municipal taxes.
- Youth responding to the YELL survey also indicated that transportation is an issue for them and is a factor in decisions regarding the activities they participate in.

How we are Doing Currently

Chestermere is serviced by a privately owned commuter bus service that runs into downtown Calgary, and Rocky View Regional Handi-Bus provides services to residents with special needs. For residents with other special circumstances, assistance may be available through Community Services' Everyday Angels Program. This program provides grocery delivery, picking up of prescriptions, and transportation to appointments, depending on the availability of volunteers.

In 2007-2008, the Town operated a one year pilot using the Prince of Peace bus to transport seniors age 55+ in to Calgary. This project was cancelled due to low ridership. When asked in *the Seniors' Survey* what could have been done to improve this service, the feedback was that for the most part it wasn't used because residents didn't know about it, despite extensive advertising of the service. Other feedback was that: the cost was too high; having only one pick-up spot in town was a problem; the bus needed to run more frequently; and that one of the destinations in Calgary should include a major grocery store.

Current and future transportation needs are being addressed through other town planning efforts.

This vision was first expressed during administration of the *Seniors Survey*, whenit was used as a marketing slogan promoting the survey (an alteration of the Town's tagline of "*Chestermere: a community for all seasons").* With 88% of the respondents to the survey indicating that they wanted to remain in Chestermere as they age, this turned out to be an apt turn of phrase. With regard to seniors, the belief underlying the vision was that as residents age, we should be able to remain in the community where we have lived our lives, raised our children, and developed a life-time of friendships and relationships, rather than having to move to a more 'seniors friendly' community. However, since then the vision has become more inclusive, reflecting the belief that Chestermere should be a community where residents of all life stages experience a high quality of life. This section of the plan focuses on three life stages: families with preschool-aged children, seniors and the 'boomers/zoomers'.

A. FAMILIES WITH PRESCHOOL AGED CHILDREN

Three conditions have been identified as jointly leading to positive child outcomes: 1) effective parenting, 2) adequate income, and 3) supportive community environments. According to the *Policy Blueprint for Canada's Children,* "Communities can provide supportive environments for children through access to reliable education, health, social, and recreational services, by providing integrated delivery for all of these services, by creating "child friendly" spaces and systems, and by collaborating across sectors to promote better outcomes for all children".[xxv] Being good parents is considered to be easier in communities that are supportive of parents and families, where "… health and developmental resources are available for infants and toddlers, where recreation and cultural programs for young children are accessible, and where children are safe to play and participate in enriching activities."[xxvi]

How We are Doing Currently

Community Services' Kidz First Network Parent Link Centre and Early Childhood Development Services are a critical piece of the social service infrastructure for parents with preschool-aged children. A wide array of services and programs are offered, and Ages and Stages Developmental Screenings help identify potential delays as well as help parents know what they can expect next in their child's development. The Parent Link Centre is ideally positioned as a place from which to identify and work with families needing additional support as it is seen as a positive and fun place to come with one's child(ren).

A gap in stakeholder representation in community planning is that there is no Early Childhood Advisory Committee/Planning Group at present, although a number of opportunities are provided through the year for parents to provide input.

Strategy Seventeen

Develop an Early Childhood Advisory Committee

The Community Services Department has taken a lead role in the establishment of a local steering committee for the provincial ECMap project. This is an early childhood development mapping research project and community development initiative of Alberta Education. Through this project, all kindergarten students in the community will be developmentally assessed, and the results examined in relation to the availability of local services and programs supporting families with children aged 0 – 6, number of green spaces, socio-economic data on the community, and other factors believed to be associated with healthy child development. This project is an opportunity to bring together all stakeholders to work in a coordinated fashion to improve the outcomes for this age group.

It may also be an opportunity to take on an expanded community capacity-building scope, such as in Banff[xxvii], where their Early Childhood Advisory Group was involved in:

- identifying family friendly aspects of their community
- raising awareness regarding the top issues for young families in the community and how these issues affect them
- providing input on how the quality of life for young families in the community could be improved
- providing ideas on ways to connect young families, how to improve programs, and intergenerational connection opportunities.
- generating new ideas on how to support young families

B. SENIORS and BOOMERS/ZOOMERS

At the moment, Chestermere has relatively lower numbers of seniors than the other communities surrounding Calgary. Based on the 2011 municipal census, seniors (ages 66+) currently make up less than 5% of the population (661 individuals). However, the category of future seniors (those currently ages 51 – 65) is growing, having more than doubled in size between 2004 and 2011, so that they currently make up 15% of the population (2,155 individuals).

'Boomers' (Baby Boomers) are generally considered to be individuals who were born in the Post WWII baby boom (between 1946 and 1964). This generation is expected to 'forge new frontiers' regarding aging and retirement, challenging existing thinking and having different expectations for services and supports as they age. According to the *Calgary and Region Social Outlook 2010 – 2015*[xxviii]:

> The next generation of seniors (today's baby boomers) will have different characteristics than the previous generations of seniors. For example, on the whole, the baby boomers are more educated, have better health and longer lives and are more culturally diverse. Some have greater income and savings, but not all. Boomers are experienced advocators and thus generally have higher expectations for products and services.

Dr. David Demko, a gerontologist, has coined a new term to describe these up and coming seniors - "Zoomers". He describes a Zoomer as someone who: knows the difference between inevitable and reversible aging, who works on being physically and mentally fit, who watches their nutrition, has a passion for living life to its fullest, and

plans on having an adventurous retirement. According to Alberta's Demographic Planning Commission, "…future seniors will increasingly refuse to let age define them and will resist stereotypes, attitudes and services that restrict their choices"[xxix].

Because they are charting new ground, it is difficult to anticipate what the needs will be of these future seniors. Whether it be research conducted on behalf of associations of realtors or builders, or forecasts by demographers or futurists, there seems to be little agreement on what can be expected. Some would have us believe that boomers will be looking to return to smaller-sized communities, similar to the ones they came from before moving to a city to pursue their careers. Others would have us believe that downsizing means moving from the suburbs to a condo in an urban core. Yet others predict that boomers are less likely to downsize – that they will be working longer and thus stay in larger homes where they are able to host their family members as their children start having children. Then there are those that say that increased cost of living has retirees looking to other countries for their retirement homes.

The province has expressed concern that:

> "….future (Alberta) seniors may not be planning sufficiently for their senior years. They may not fully appreciate how long they will live, what services they will require and what age-related health issues they will face. Future seniors also may not have thought about how they will spend their time, where they will live and who will care for them. Policy makers need to encourage and support individuals and families in making such preparations"[xxx].

This leads to the question of WHO is responsible for planning for future and current seniors. Is it an individual or public responsibility? *The Findings Report* indicated that "Albertans believe individuals, families, communities, governments and the private sector share roles in ensuring seniors have access to the services they need."

The Challenge

The challenge of preparing for the future with regard to our community's existing seniors and the upcoming population of boomers/zoomers is captured well in *the Calgary and Region Social Outlook 2010 – 2015,* where it is stated:

> While there are many similarities in the services and facilities that older adults need and seek out, there may be just as many differences in their service requirements. Younger seniors will want to stay active for as long as they can and will be interested in the same pastimes they have enjoyed during their whole adulthood. However, for the time being, the increasing numbers of older seniors will want more traditional seniors' activities in their communities. Services for older adults across the board need to offer more variety to meet the needs of current older adults, while evolving to accommodate the changing nature of this population.[xxxi]

What Residents Said

Two processes occurred almost in parallel during the time of the Community Assessment. Both the Town and the Government of Alberta administered surveys related to seniors' issues within months of each other. Both used age 65 or older to define "senior". Responses to the

Chestermere survey were highly congruent with the Findings Report of the Demographic Planning Commission (Alberta)[xxxii]. Themes from these surveys are as follows:

1. "Aging in Place": Both surveys found that people want to live in their own homes as they age (90% of provincial respondents, 91% of Chestermere respondents) and that they will need a number of supports in order to be able to do this, specifically home and yard care and medical/personal care. Respondents to the Chestermere survey identified the following as possible barriers to their being able to remain in the community: i) lack of needed supports and services (68%); ii) insufficient medical services (63%); and iii) lack of affordable housing options (56%) for seniors. The provincial *Findings Report* indicates that "aging in place" does not necessarily mean living in the same place. It refers to being able to live independently.

   Chestermere respondents identified the following services as being necessary in order to live in their homes independently and safely: assistance with home maintenance and repairs, housecleaning and heavy housework, yard care and snow removal, friendly visitor/telephone reassurance, assistance with grocery shopping, Lifeline, Meals on Wheels/meal assistance, medication delivery, and daily check-ins. Projections are that by 2014 there will be 619 homes in Chestermere being maintained by individuals 65 years of age and older, and another 1,010 being maintained by up and coming seniors aged 55 – 64 (Environics Analytics)

2. Most Important Issues facing Seniors: According to the Findings Report, finances are an important source of concern for both current and future seniors. The following chart indicates the most important issues identified by provincial survey respondents, ordered according to issues of most concern:

   Table 11: Most important issues facing seniors

CURRENT SENIORS	FUTURE SENIORS
1. Being able to afford the cost of living	1. Being able to afford the cost of living
2. Being able to stay in the home	2. Finding a family doctor or getting access to healthcare
3. Affordability of pharmaceuticals and health care aids	3. Being able to stay in the home
4. Affording costs of home ownership	4. Affording costs of home ownership
5. Finding a family doctor or getting access to healthcare.	5. Affordability of pharmaceuticals and health care aids

3. Awareness of Resources
   The provincial report indicated that Seniors need to be made aware of the resources available to them through the government. In the *Chestermere Seniors Survey*, 59% of people responsible for the care of a senior family member said they have convenient access to information and resources for seniors, and 61% indicated they had access to assistance with issues related to providing care to a senior. Areas where better dissemination of information is required were identified as: the affordability and

availability of home support/home care, health information, information and referral to resources, respite care, and emotional support.

4. Transportation and Community Accessibility: According to the *Findings Report* "Municipal governments are responsible for a considerable amount of planning that affects seniors. Municipal planners will need to consider the accessibility, mobility and transportation needs of seniors …" (p. 43). Seniors in Chestermere indicated that the following would make the community more physically accessible: Housing that is closer to amenities, more handicap priority parking, longer walk lights at intersections, brighter street lights, more sidewalks, larger print on street signs, more sloped curbs, easier entrance to public buildings, and wider sidewalks.

5. Seniors-Appropriate Housing Options:
   56% of respondents to the Chestermere Seniors Survey identified lack of affordable housing options as a possible barrier to seniors remaining in the community. However, when asked about their own plans, 67% of respondents did not anticipate downsizing within the next 10 years or anticipated that they would not be downsizing at all.

   The provincial Demographic Planning Commission spoke to a number of stakeholders, asking the question regarding whose responsibility it is to create housing options for seniors. Many of the people they had discussion with felt that governments have a role in creating housing choices, through mechanisms they have at their disposal through zoning and planning. Developers indicated that they were open to considering more options for seniors, but that cost is a limiting factor, especially in smaller communities as it is more difficult to secure loans to build in these communities.

   The 'village' concept found in the MDP would appear promising in regard to the opportunity it could provide to have higher density, seniors-appropriate housing located close to community resources and amenities.

7. Seniors' Supportive Living Services: 95% of respondents to the *Chestermere Seniors Survey* felt it was somewhat/very important that these services be available in Chestermere. However 77% of respondents did not anticipate needing this service at all or within the next 10 years. This raises an interesting planning issue: Most people do not want to see themselves as aging or to imagine themselves as needing assistance. However, what one wants, and what one needs may be quite different as an individual ages. If planning is based on what people say they want (i.e. to remain independently in their homes), it may be that when the need becomes apparent, resources will be insufficient to meet the need.

How We are Doing Currently

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The Prince of Peace campus: This seniors-oriented community is located in close proximity to Chestermere. Approximately 90% of their residents come from Chestermere and SE Rocky View. A number of seniors' housing options exist on the 158 acre site: assisted living suites in the Manor, semi-detached bungalows in the 55 Plus Retirement Village, and a building that accommodates those with Alzheimers.

The Whitecappers: 84% of survey respondents were aware of the Whitecappers Club, and of those not currently a member, 58% indicated they would consider joining. Activities that seniors would like to see through a seniors' group included: social activities, health programs, recreation programs, information and resources.

Community Services Department: Provincial funding to communities for seniors' support currently comes through two funding streams: FCSS (Family & Community Support Services) and the MSI (Municipal Sustainability Initiative – block funding to municipalities to spend on local priorities). Although the seniors' population in Chestermere is small in numbers, the Town of Chestermere's Community Services Department has become increasingly involved in providing services and programs to seniors over the past few years and brokering the provision of Calgary-based services to Chestermere seniors. This has included: creating the Everyday Angels program; providing social activities, information and resource drop-ins, foot clinic, and lunch 'n learn seminars at the Whitecappers; and developing the Friendly Visitor program. The Community Resource Worker was in discussion with the Kerby Centre in Calgary and it was decided that Chestermere and area residents are eligible to use their services. The Resource Worker continues to explore other services and programs that may be available to Chestermere residents.

SOCIAL AND SUPPORT NETWORKS

The Chestermere Seniors Survey showed that Chestermere Seniors have strong social and support networks:

- 81% live with others (with 73% of seniors living with their spouses)
- 59% reported having 4 or more close friends or relatives that they can turn to for support, with an additional 40% reporting they have 1 – 3 people they can turn to. Only 1% of seniors had no one to turn to.
- In a typical week, 50% of our seniors see family/friends on 4 or more occasions; 49% see them 1 – 3 times per week, and 1% of seniors typically see no one.

Strategy Eighteen

Continue to support the work of the ad hoc Seniors Advisory Sub-Committee in identifying issues affecting the current and coming seniors' population of Chestermere.

The Seniors Advisory Committee was created by the Community Services Advisory Board to look at all issues related to the needs of Chestermere Seniors. The holistic scope given to the committee was a purposeful choice to try and avoid the fragmentation of planning and services that has been said to characterize planning for seniors at other government levels. It was felt that many of the issues relevant to seniors are inter-connected and that it would create artificial distinctions to separate them. Two issues have arisen as being paramount to local seniors: increasing medical resources in the community, and seniors' housing. As mentioned previously, the Town initiated, and continues to support, a community committee that is currently planning a community health clinic. The Seniors Advisory Committee and the Whitecappers have joined forces and created a community committee to address Seniors' Housing. They have recently hired a consultant to work with them to write a Business Plan to build a small, personal care home in the community. The Seniors Advisory Committee will remain on hiatus while focusing on this project. When it becomes active again, it will remain an ad hoc committee, that meets to explore issues and opportunities as they arise.

SUMMARY OF STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE VISIONS

VISION	STRATEGY (continue/redirect/new action)	LEAD ROLE(S)	PARTNERS
Small town sense of community	1. Build Chestermere's small town sense of community through the means of recreation, parks, arts and culture as opportunities to engage residents in the community and with each other. 2. Continue to build sense of community at a neighbourhood level by supporting informal neighbourhood leadership. 3. Adopt a community development approach to planning and running community events and activities 4. Continue to develop youth in leadership roles, supporting them in addressing issues that affect them and mentoring them as they work toward achieving their goals. 5. Promote volunteerism as a community value and norm.	Events Planner, Community Services Community Services Events Planner, all program staff Community Services Town Council and Departments, YELL, CS Advisory Board	CRCA, Arts Days Committee, YELL YELL Advisors
Socially and culturally inclusive community	6. Continue to involve diverse populations in planning regarding issues that affect them. 7. Increase opportunities for residents to interact in fun ways across ages, cultures, and other forms of diversity. 8. Develop a sustainable plan for community inclusion of those from diverse cultural backgrounds.	Town Committees, Community Services Event Planner, YELL, Community Services Community Services	CRCA CCIS, Chestermere Local Immigration Partnership
Safe community	9. Continue to consult with the public about policing priorities for Chestermere. 10. Continue to support YELL's Anti-Bullying efforts. 11. Continue to partner through the Turnaround Program.	Policing Committee Community Services Community Services	RCMP, RVS RCMP, Solicitor General
Daily needs can be met in the community	<u>Health</u> 12. Continue to support the work of the Health Services Committee in increasing health services available in Chestermere. <u>Recreation</u> 13 a) The Town will explore major recreation facility gaps in the Calgary area and opportunities to attract a major sport to Chestermere. b) The Town will table conducting the Regional Master Recreation Plan	Town Council, Community Services Town Council	Health Services Committee, AHS, PCN

VISION	STRATEGY (continue/redirect/new action)	LEAD ROLE(S)	PARTNERS
	called for in the MDP, pending the findings of the CRCA and the County of Rocky View's recreation planning studies.		
	14. Continue to promote an active, outdoor lifestyle through development of public outdoor spaces and parks, and increasing the usability of existing spaces	Public Works, Dev. Services, Community Services,Spray Park & Bike Park Committees	
	<u>Support to the Community's Vulnerable</u> 15. Continue to build the community's capacity to support vulnerable residents through: a) continuing to strengthen relationships with faith group leaders and their congregations through the Faith Community Group and increasing diverse religious representation on the committee. b) continuing to build the capacity of the Chestermere/United Way Partnership c) continuing to build the financial resources of Christmas with Dignity	Community Services	
	<u>Community Services Infrastructure</u> 16. Continue to grow the social infrastructure of the community and residents' access to services and programs through: a) development of a Chestermere-based non-profit agency with a broad family and community orientation b) continuing to develop relationships and new collaborations with existing non-profit agencies to expand their service provision into the Chestermere area c) continuing to advocate with Calgary agencies to allow Chestermere residents to access their services and programs. d) continuing to support the effective operations of local non-profits, when requested by these organizations. e) exploring opportunities for co-location of family and community-serving agencies and organizations	Community Services and CS Advisory Board Community Services, Development Services	
Chestermere: A community for all the seasons of our lives	17. Develop an Early Childhood Advisory Committee.	Community Services	ECMap Project
	18. Continue to support the work of the ad hoc Seniors Advisory Sub-Committee in identifying issues affecting the current and coming seniors' population of Chestermere.	Community Services	

CHARTING OUR PROGRESS

Now that we know where we want to get to as a community and have the MDP and Social Plan to guide us, we need to determine what signs along our route will let us know how well we are moving toward our destination or tell us if we've gone off course. The next Town Survey will help us more clearly define where we are right now in terms of achievement of the visions. Residents will be asked for feedback regarding: i) where we are as a community currently, with regard to achieving the visions and ii) whether the Town is still on track with what residents want. This survey will serve as a baseline against which to measure our progress through subsequent surveys.

Following the survey, a report to the community will document the efforts that have been made, what has been accomplished as a community, and where improvements are still in order, with regard to the following indicators:

- Sense of community
- Community safety
- Community and social infrastructure
- Health and Wellness
- Arts and culture
- Sustainability
- Local economy
- Recreation

1.1 FCSS ACT

Under Section 2(a) of the *Family and Community Support Services Act, R.S.A. 2000, c. F-3*, municipalities are given the power to: "provide for the establishment, administration and operation of a family and community support services program within the municipality". In the Act, "program" means "an arrangement for the delivery of family and community support services that are of a preventive nature…"

In establishing, administering and operating a program, a municipality is required by the Act to:

a) promote and facilitate the development of stronger communities;
b) promote public participation in planning, delivering and governing the program and services provided under the program;
c) promote and facilitate the involvement of volunteers;
d) promote efficient and effective use of resources;
e) promote and facilitate co-operation and co-ordination with allied service agencies operating within the municipality.

Services provided under a program must:

a) be of a **preventive** nature that enhances the social well-being of individuals and families through promotion or intervention strategies provided at the earliest opportunity, and
b) do one or more of the following:
    i) help people to develop independence, strengthen coping skills and become more resistant to crisis;
    ii) help people to develop an awareness of social needs;
    iii) help people to develop interpersonal and group skills which enhance constructive relationships among people;
    iv) help people and communities to assume responsibility for decisions and actions which affect them;
    v) provide supports that help sustain people as active participants in the community.

COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD MEMBERS

Steve Grande, Chair
Randy Thornhill, Vice-Chair
Bob Thomson (Past Chair)
Patrick Bergen (Past Vice-Chair)
Kim Mikkelsen (past member)
Rosemary Paddock
Patricia Matthews (past member)
Trish Henry (past member)
Chris Steeves
Terry Leighton

HEALTHY COMMUNITY INITIATIVE MEMBERS

- Laura Brankovich, Chair, Town of Chestermere
- Joanne Simpson, Alberta Mental Health
- Alisa Lomenda, Prairie Waters Elementary
- Amanda Kittridge, Langdon School
- Anya Trousdale, Rainbow Creek Elementary
- Bev LaPeare, RVSD Trustee
- Catherine Walsh, AADAC
- Cathy Tardif, Calgary Health Region
- Cheryl Gammel, Calgary Health Region
- Corporal Dave Friend, RCMP
- Corporal Shane Fletcher, RCMP
- JennLabrecque, Town of Chestermere
- Lisa Post, Town of Chestermere
- Lesley-Anne Guilbault, SHP, RVSD
- Marlys Glass, St. Gabriel the Archangel
- Noel McArdle, St. Gabriel the Archangel
- Robin Schmidt, Chestermere High School
- Rosemarie Goerlitz, CCSD Trustee
- Sherri Standish, Town of Chestermere
- Staff Sergeant Art Pittman, RCMP
- Staff Sergeant Glenn Henry, RCMP

SENIORS SERVICE PROVIDERS COMMITTEE

- Amy Lucas, Calgary Health Region
- Laura Brankovich, Town of Chestermere
- Maureen Fehr, Town of Chestermere
- Melanie Jovanovic, Town of Chestermere
- Penny Deeter, Town of Chestermere
- Sandra Loshnig, Calgary Seniors Resource Society
- Sherri Standish, Town of Chestermere
- Steve Grande, EnCharis/Algebraix
- Stephen McKibbon, Calgary Seniors Resource Society
- Vivian McKenzie, Chestermere resident

CONTRIBUTORS

- Abdullah Ismail, long-time resident
- Ally Uifalusi, long-time resident
- Arlene Porter, long-time resident
- Bill Porter, long-time resident, former Mayor
- Bev LaPeare, RVS Trustee
- Bob Thomson, Past Chair, Community Services Board
- Candace Loewen, long-time resident
- Catherine Walsh, AADAC
- Chestermere High School Admin/Counseling
- Chris Steeves, Town Councillor
- CorieSolvason, Volunteer Coordinator
- Corporal Dave Friend
- Don Deeter, long-time resident of SE Rocky View
- Don Roberts, Policing Committee Chair
- Donna Green, new resident
- Elaine Peake, long-time resident, former Mayor
- Grace Sylvester, long-time resident
- Hannah Cook, Create a Wave of Change
- Jamie Lall, past Cultural Support Worker
- Jay Speck, long-time resident
- Kelsey Johnson, Town Councilor
- Jennifer Peddlesden, long-time resident
- Leslie Bergen & 2 children, long-time residents
- Linda Hutchison, long-time resident
- Lisa Eastwood, Youth Coordinator
- Marjorie McKay, long-time resident
- Maureen Fehr, newer resident
- Nancy Huneault, Events Coordinator
- Nicole Johnson, long-time resident
- Pam Steeves, long-time resident
- Patricia Matthews, Mayor
- Patrick Bergen, Town Councillor
- Patty Sproule, Community Services Director
- Phyllis Howe, long-time resident
- Rosie Paddock, long-time resident
- Sandra Elliot, new resident
- Sarah Eccleston, Heroes in the Hood
- Serena Shokar, long-time resident
- Sherri Standish, long-time resident

- Jeanette Bailey, new resident
- Joanne Simpson, AB Mental Health
- Karen Jonah, new resident
- Karen Tran, YELL
- Kathy Speck, long-time resident
- Keith Hadden, Principal, Prairie Waters
- Stacey Termeer, long-time resident
- Steve Grande, newer resident
- Stu Hutchison, Town Councillor
- Tanya Galey, Parent Link Centre and Early Childhood ServicesManager
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- Tom Howe, long-time resident
- Tracy Anderson, long-time resident

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Shayelyn Peters
Shelby Morgan
Tiffany Stead
Tony Jozeljic
Ty Schulhauser
Victoria Miller
Ward Huckabay

CREATE A WAVE OF CHANGE (HEROES IN THE HOOD)

Sarah Eccleston
Nirveen Dhaliwal
Roopitha Kaval
Hannah Cook
Krista Breiteneder
Quinn Keister
Courtney Habina
Susan Trinh
Brittany Tapper
Jaskarn Jawanda

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