

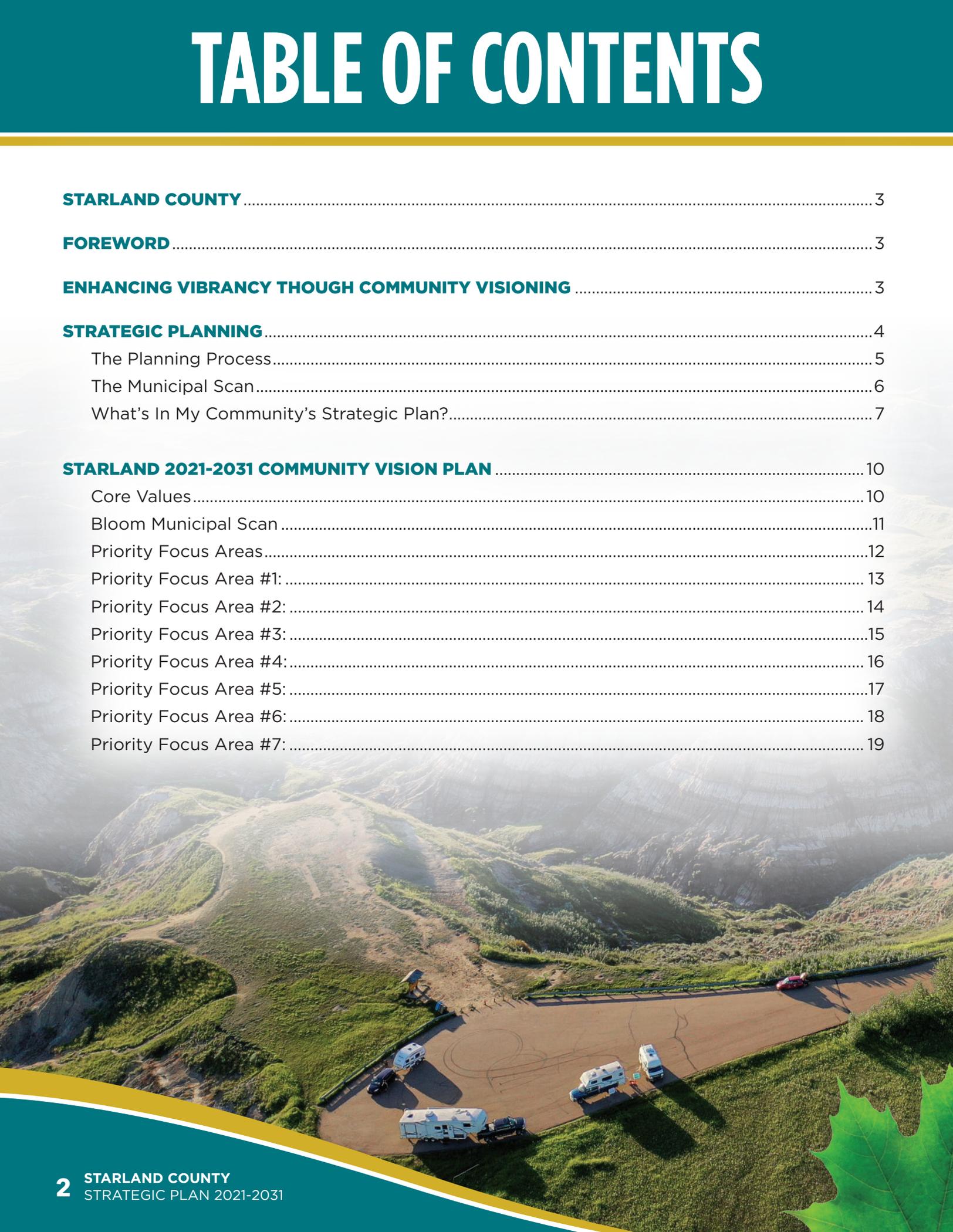


# Strategic Plan 2021-2031



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# STARLAND COUNTY

**STARLAND COUNTY IS LOCATED IN SOUTHERN ALBERTA, APPROXIMATELY 2 HOURS NORTHEAST OF CALGARY.**

Rich in agricultural and oil and gas economic history, Starland County is made up of five divisions which include several villages and hamlets. Surrounded by natural beauty in the scenic Red Deer River Valley, Starland County's community offers incredible terrain, archaeological history, and ample opportunity for outdoor recreation.

Starland County Council is made up of five councilors, one representing each division of the County. Council is led by a Reeve and Deputy Reeve who are elected by Council each fall. The Reeve and Deputy Reeve are essentially the elected chief and vice-chief executives of the County. Council is also supported by a number of Council Committee Members who hold annual appointments for specific projects and interests of the County. With more than 2,000 residents, Starland County is a small but tight-knit community of passionate and hard-working people.

## STARLAND COUNTY DEPARTMENTS

- Council
- Agricultural Services
- Administration & Finance
- Municipal Services
- Protective Services
- Public Works
- Cemeteries
- Family and Community Support Services
- Recreation



# FOREWORD



## Council's Message

As County Council, we work individually and collectively to represent the citizens of Starland County. We do this with one goal in mind: support the quality of life of citizens. Reflecting on our current strengths and challenges, we embarked on a strategic planning process. The resulting strategic plan and community vision identify values and priorities in support of our County's future success and long-term sustainability.

This strategic plan is not a beginning or an end but a bridge to our long-term vision and the tangible actions required to reach that vision.

As we work towards a better tomorrow for our community, we as Council will use this strategic plan to lead, direct, and make decisions. Our next step is to consider action plans developed by administration in the pursuit of our seven priority focus areas: economic growth, leadership, communication, community pride, service excellence, financial sustainability, and sustained infrastructure.

We are immensely proud as your Council to be delivering this *Starland Strategic Plan 2021 -2031* to you, the citizens of Starland County.



# ENHANCING VIBRANCY THROUGH COMMUNITY VISIONING

## THE VIBRANCY, VITALITY, AND QUALITY OF LIFE AVAILABLE IN STARLAND COUNTY IS OUR UTMOST PRIORITY.

As representatives of the residents and business owners in our municipality, it is our job to listen to the wants and needs of our people and translate those into effective and achievable policies, projects, services, and future goals.

Council is here to serve the community and is responsible for leading the charge on any changes and fiscal decisions that are required to allow the County to prosper and move forward to a better tomorrow for all of us. We are in the business of providing quality of life through service provision in our community.

By appropriately planning for the maintenance and provision of existing or novel services, the Strategic Plan can directly impact quality of life in a community. Dedicated municipal staff deliver value-add and essential services such as road maintenance, water utility, fire protection, parks and camping, agricultural services, cemeteries and more via adequate and strategic management of all of the assets within a community.

**Our strategic plan provides a long-range view of our vision of Starland County over the many years to come. The plan outlines how we will foster quality of life and wellness amongst our residents, neighbours, families, and businesses.**

## THE MUNICIPAL EQUATION



# STRATEGIC PLANNING

**A STRATEGIC PLAN IS A MAP THAT SHOWS HOW THE COMMUNITY CAN ACHIEVE ITS GOALS, FOSTER VIBRANCY, AND SUPPORT COMMUNITY HEALTH AND CULTURE.**

## **A STRATEGIC PLAN (SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS A “COMMUNITY VISION PLAN”) PRESENTS KEY PRIORITY FOCUS AREAS**

that are determined by Council to be most critical to sustaining and enhancing quality of life of the residents within the community. These focus areas and the general vision for the community is established through a series of planning exercises.

The Strategic Plan uses short- and long-term planning approaches to provide a realistic and task- based foundation towards the higher vision. This ensures that Council balances and mitigates any risks, and considers existing commitments, contracts, needs from residents and commercial businesses within the community.

Administration is then tasked with developing specific implementation plans that will further enable Council’s strategic vision for the community and reach the specific objectives. Finally, a financial plan allocates funding to each of the prioritized projects and services which will serve to support the action plans and put into motion the realization of the goals outlined in the vision for the community as a whole.

## **MUNICIPAL PROCESS**

*“Achieving Community Vision”*



# THE PLANNING PROCESS

## THE STRATEGIC PLAN SETS THE STAGE FOR REAL ACTION AND REAL FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS.

While the vision is largely based on needs, wants, and hopes for the community, it will ultimately be assessed against the capacity and capabilities of the municipality from both an operational and a financial perspective. The Strategic Plan must be grounded in reality and tied to realistic, feasible, and measurable goals and objectives

Creation of a Strategic Plan must focus on a few specific thought exercises:

1. **A landscape assessment (or “Municipal Scan”) to understand what the baseline is and what current operational values are;**
2. **A visioning exercise to determine what the ultimate vision or end goal for the community in the future (5-10 years) is;**
3. **An objective-setting exercise to fill in the gaps between the current status of the community and the future vision, deciding on realistic projects and tasks that get the municipality from A to B;**
4. **Deciding on key performance indicators or measures of success to determine how the plan can be kept on track as it moves ahead.**

## IMPACTS OF THIS PLANNING PROCESS

- **Identify challenges and opportunities that are facing the community;**
- **Engagement in energized and focused strategic discussions based around a realistic view of the municipality’s current state;**
- **Practical and pragmatic steps link strategic goals and vision to reality through the municipal service planning and budgeting processes; and**
- **A vision for the community driven by Council that speaks to Administration and to the public in a way that is transparent and easy to understand, providing clear direction.**

# THE MUNICIPAL SCAN

## **While undertaking this Strategic Plan process, your Municipal Council had to conduct a realistic assessment of Starland County as it stands today.**

We considered the current state of the community, both positive and negative, the needs of the residents that we represent, and discussed the historical and current challenges our municipality faces. At the same time, we considered the importance of long-term sustainability, operational capacity, and unique financial constraints and opportunities.

We also took care to specifically consider the divisional structure of our County, which in and of itself presents a mix of unique and differing needs of each of the divisions that make up our beautiful municipality.

### **MUNICIPAL COUNCIL:**

- **Reviewed the current and past budgets and operational plans to detect patterns and challenges facing our County.**
- **Considered the importance of sustaining our agricultural economic sector, local businesses, and what a thriving Starland County would look like.**
- **Explored opportunities and challenges that may be confronted during the implementation of actions.**
- **Envisioned attainable, measurable, and realistic objectives that would mark our success in how well we achieve our vision in the future.**

As a result of this process, we have proudly developed our 2021-2031 Strategic Plan for Starland County. This is our roadmap to prosperity and vibrancy in the community, with specific focus on our community culture, sustainability in fiscal responsibility and infrastructure projects, and leading the County to economic resiliency through strategic decision making and achievable actions.

# WHAT'S IN MY COMMUNITY'S STRATEGIC PLAN?

## A STRATEGIC PLAN OUTLINES THE HIGH-LEVEL VISION OF THE FUTURE OF A MUNICIPALITY AND DESCRIBES SPECIFIC MUNICIPAL PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED BY COUNCIL.

Often, the plan will include priority focus areas which showcase the overall vision in different categories or themes.

Within each priority focus area is an overall goal statement, describing the vision for that specific focus area in the future. Affiliated with this goal statement is a list of more granular objectives or projects, which can be used to create specific action plans in order for them to be fulfilled. These plans are often described in the subsequent action and financial plans, which really bring the goal statements and focus areas to life.

The Strategic Plan provides priority-based direction for more detailed planning and budgeting of capital assets, municipal services, and overall management of the municipality. A forward-thinking, realistic, and well-rounded vision provides the foundation for the effective long-term planning and provision of services that support the wellness and vitality of a community.

**PRIORITY FOCUS AREAS**  
Each one represents an area of importance to the future of the County.

**GOAL STATEMENTS**  
A number of goals may support the achievement of one of the priority focus areas. These are the high-level aims that will help in achieving the overall vision.

**OBJECTIVES**  
Specific desired successes or outcomes that drive the action plans and financial commitments required to achieve the vision. These objectives are highlighted annually in the budget decision-making process.

# STARLAND COUNTY 2021-2031 COMMUNITY VISION PLAN CORE VALUES



## INTEGRITY

Starland County approaches governance with transparency, honesty, and consideration of residents' values.



## RESPONSIBILITY

Starland County provides high-quality, efficient, and effective services using best practices and a commitment to constant improvement.



## COOPERATION

Starland County works well with regional neighbours, community groups, and other levels of government.



## COMMUNITY

Starland County strives to be a safe, beautiful, and sustainable home that fosters a sense of community.



## RESPECT

Starland County exemplifies respect within the workplace and the community.

# BLOOM MUNICIPAL SCAN

## EXTERNAL CHALLENGES

- Economic downturn
- Pipeline cancellation
- Provincial downloading
- Grant reductions and uncertainty

## POPULATION

- Population growth is stagnant
- Starland County has excellent community pride
- Positively engaged community groups

## CAPITAL GROWTH AND MAINTENANCE

- Infrastructure is in relatively good shape
- Road maintenance is a priority

## SOCIAL NEEDS AND ISSUES

- Economic downturn has resulted in increased crime
- Positive FCSS partnerships with other municipalities
- There is community pride and very active community groups
- Community events are positively attended

## SERVICE EXPECTATIONS

- Cemetery, weed control, road grading, campsites, recreation areas – all are subject to high expectations
- Fire support is a priority
- Rural internet is a priority
- Good tax elasticity to meet service demands

## RESOURCE AVAILABILITY

- Economic challenge has created numerous financial difficulties
- Loss of industrial assessment – loss of linear assessment (significant increase in bad debts)
- Provincial grants have been reduced (MSI)
- There are some possible upswings on the horizon (seed cleaning plant, wind farm, solar farm, oil rebound)
- No current municipal debt

## TECHNOLOGY

- The need for automation creates pressure
- Lack of time and proper plans to implement automations
- Strong IT personnel is supporting the organization
- Require modernization of systems and software

# Priority Focus Areas

## COUNCIL IDENTIFIED SEVEN PRIORITY FOCUS AREAS FOR STARLAND COUNTY.

Council and Administration will work together to support projects and specific funding allocations that align with Starland County's desire to focus on bolstering economic growth, promoting leadership, enhancing communication, enhancing our culture of community pride, providing service delivery excellence, showcasing fiscal sustainability, and ensuring the sustainability of our infrastructure.



### ECONOMIC GROWTH



### LEADERSHIP



### COMMUNICATION



### COMMUNITY PRIDE



### SERVICE EXCELLENCE



### FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY



### SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE



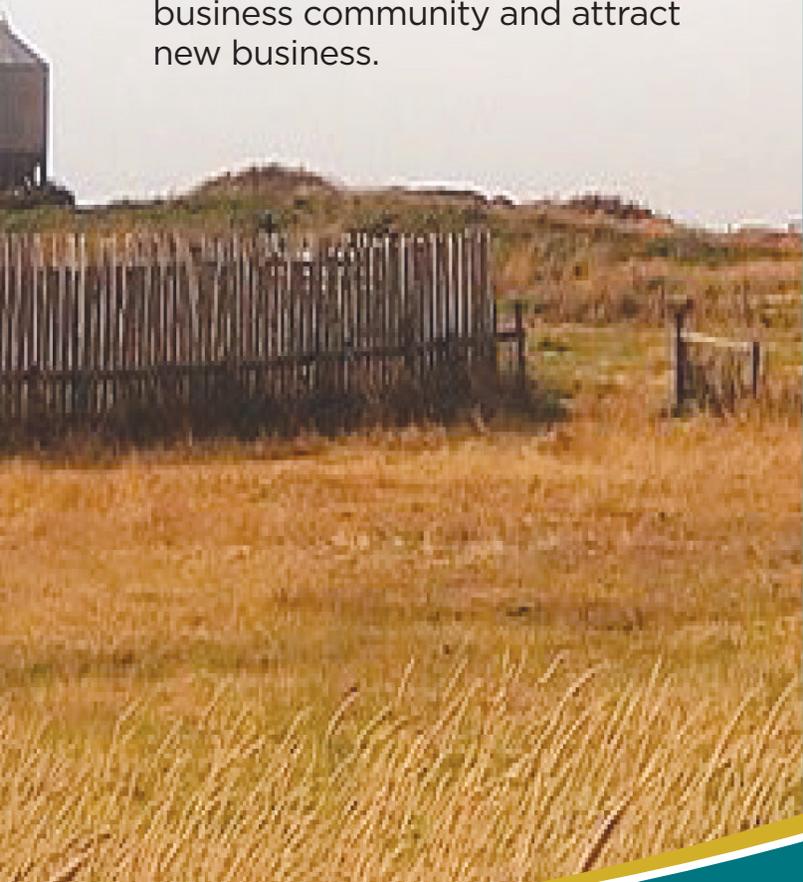
## Priority Focus Area #1



# ECONOMIC GROWTH

## Goal Statement

We support economic growth through a welcoming attitude towards business and proactive actions that support our current business community and attract new business.



## BROAD OBJECTIVES

### We will:

- Explore opportunities to diversify the Starland County economy while considering the need for large-scale industry and commercial partners
- Focus on relationship development with the business community to support and retain established business
- Pursue opportunities related to the agricultural business and campgrounds
- Review the County’s current position in relation to attractiveness for business location. Develop a thorough understanding on how to incentivize to solicit business interest
- Develop a County economic and community profile highlighting the positive benefits of locating business in Starland County
- Develop our understanding of municipal business attraction competitiveness. Develop our core competencies to support business attraction success
- Review infrastructure in relation to business attraction and consider investment where a business case proves positive for the community
- Work with regional neighbours and partners to develop an integrated economic development strategy focused on shared benefits



## BROAD OBJECTIVES

### We will:

- Embrace leadership with the goal of having an ambitious, clear, and attainable community vision
- Work collaboratively as a Council, respecting democracy, and good legislative practices
- Lead in accordance with our core values displaying integrity, cooperation, and accountability
- Foster a positive environment of leadership with clear direction delivered by Council to Administration with a focus on priorities
- Develop our leadership abilities, fostering a culture of trust, accountability, and an organizational commitment to a unified vision
- Develop our leadership communication ability internally and with the public to ensure our vision is translated with clarity
- Clearly define Council and Administration's leadership responsibilities and cooperate to ensure staff fully understand the vision for the community
- We will become an employer of choice enhancing our ability to attract and retain high quality staff

## Priority Focus Area #2



## LEADERSHIP

### Goal Statement

We embrace positive leadership providing a positive work environment, strong relationships and achievement of high-quality service and long-term strategic goals.





## Priority Focus Area #3



# COMMUNICATION

## Goal Statement

We are focused on using and improving our communicative ability to support relationships, enhance our community's identity and strengthen our bond with our citizens.

## BROAD OBJECTIVES

### We will:

- Embrace communication as a critical tool that supports positive relationships and strategic goals
- Develop a comprehensive communication plan that will serve as a foundation for communication competency to strengthen our communicative abilities
- Foster a culture of positive communication as a Council, between Council and Administration, with our neighbors and other levels of government
- Embrace public engagement focusing on what matters to the citizens, educating, and sharing the value of everyday Starland County services
- Focus on the improvement of our communication platforms including our website, media releases and open houses
- Develop a municipal newsletter, providing a forum for communication with Starland citizens to communicate important municipal news, updates on services and sharing our successes
- Focus on communicating value for taxes and the importance municipal services has on the quality of life of our citizens





## BROAD OBJECTIVES

### We will:

- Foster our community identity and pride through conscious and thoughtful efforts
- Consider our identity and document the key positive aspects of our history, community profile, culture, citizens, business, and community groups
- Develop a positive presence at community events and develop positive relationships with community groups, societies, and our neighbours
- Create a culture of pride within our administration leading to positive outcomes for our citizens
- Commit to proactive and positive messaging relaying the message of the importance of our community and our commitment to serving the community

## Priority Focus Area #4



## COMMUNITY PRIDE

### Goal Statement

We cherish the community of Starland County with its rich heritage, history, and culture, with a focus on fostering community pride within our citizens today and tomorrow.





## Priority Focus Area #5



# SERVICE EXCELLENCE

## Goal Statement

We focus on delivering and improving high-value essential and value-add services every day to support the quality of life of residents.

## BROAD OBJECTIVES

### We will:

- Commit to positive communication that delivers clear direction to administration on Council service level expectations
- Commit to a culture of improvement and service excellence which will include investigating best practices and new delivery methods
- Continually identify which services matter the most to residents and which contribute to daily quality of life in the County
- Focus on the identification of service priorities through priority-based driven budgeting processes
- Focus on efficiency and effectiveness to deliver well-run and well-managed services
- Align staff, financial, and capital resources with identified service priorities with the understanding of the challenge of limited resources
- Regularly recognize and communicate our service accomplishments to Starland County residents
- Have a “customer first focus” with all services that we deliver



## BROAD OBJECTIVES

### We will:

- Enhance our financial processes to become more strategic and ensure our ability to meet current and future resource challenges
- Develop a long-term tax strategy aligned with the municipality's financial resource requirements
- Review and support our short-term and long-term reserve requirements
- Enhance our long-term capital planning to better understand future resource requirements
- Enhance our financial and analytical processes to support evidence-based decision-making
- Develop enhanced communication to support our resident's understanding of the value they receive for taxes, rates, and charges

## Priority Focus Area #6

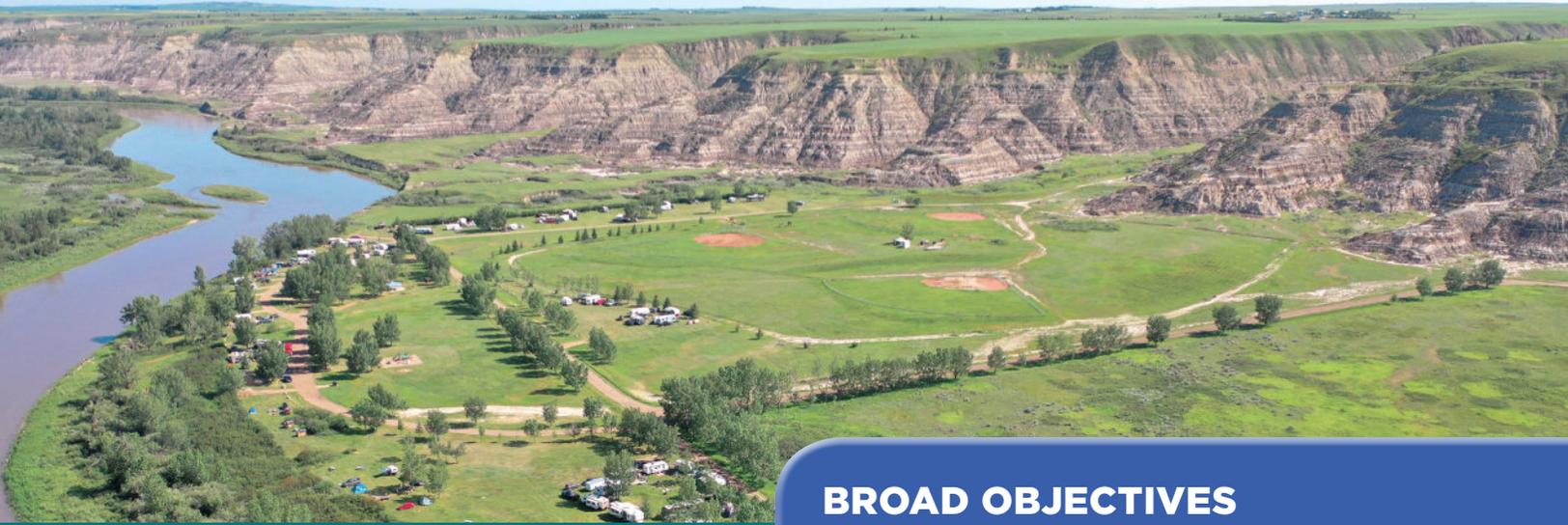


## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

### Goal Statement

We will continually develop short- and long-term financial strategies in support of the Community Vision Plan's objectives and the County's future financial sustainability.





## Priority Focus Area #7



# SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

## Goal Statement

We will use best practices to ensure existing and future infrastructure and capital assets within the County are maintained and sustained in a strategic manner to support the needs and economic vitality of the region.

## BROAD OBJECTIVES

### We will:

- Strengthen our understanding of capital priorities to influence evidence-based decision-making for capital projects
- Develop a comprehensive long-term capital plan identifying maintenance, growth, value add and strategic capital requirements
- Prioritize capital projects to allow for tangible action to be taken on short- and long- term large-scale initiatives:
  - road maintenance improvements
  - bridge improvements
  - water needs
- Consider capital plan initiatives that can foster economic growth, and attract and support industry
- Consider capital projects that support Starland County tourism/camping/fishing initiatives
- Develop sustainable financial plans that support a capital plan that meets the diverse needs of the County





Created in  
association with

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Centre for Municipal Education