



2023 Strathmore Social Needs Assessment

*Toward a community thriving
for everyone*

March 1, 2023

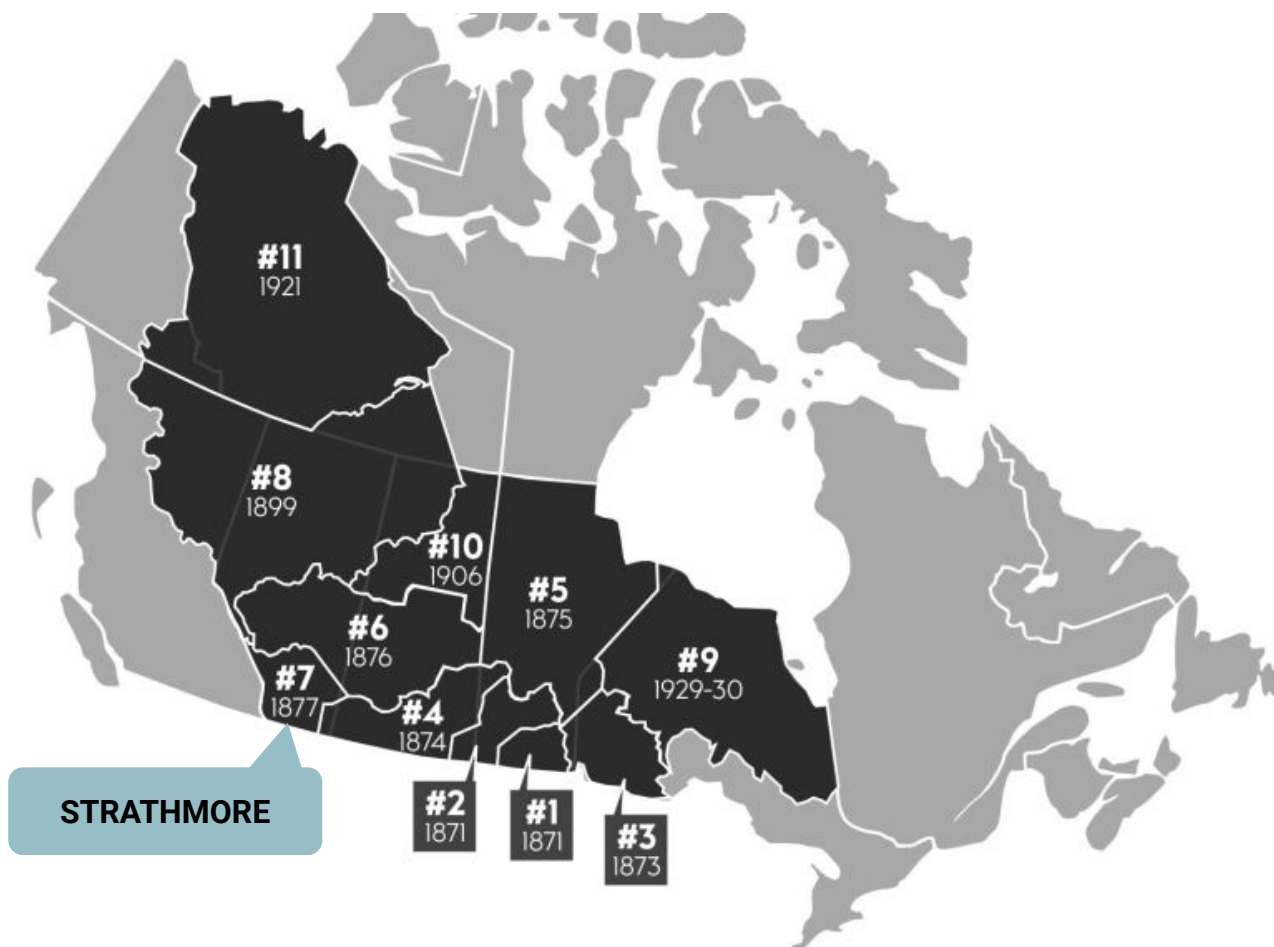
Community Report

Draft Prepared by Community & Social Development for
Review of Executive Leadership in Preparation for
City Council Presentation April 14, 2023

POWERED BY



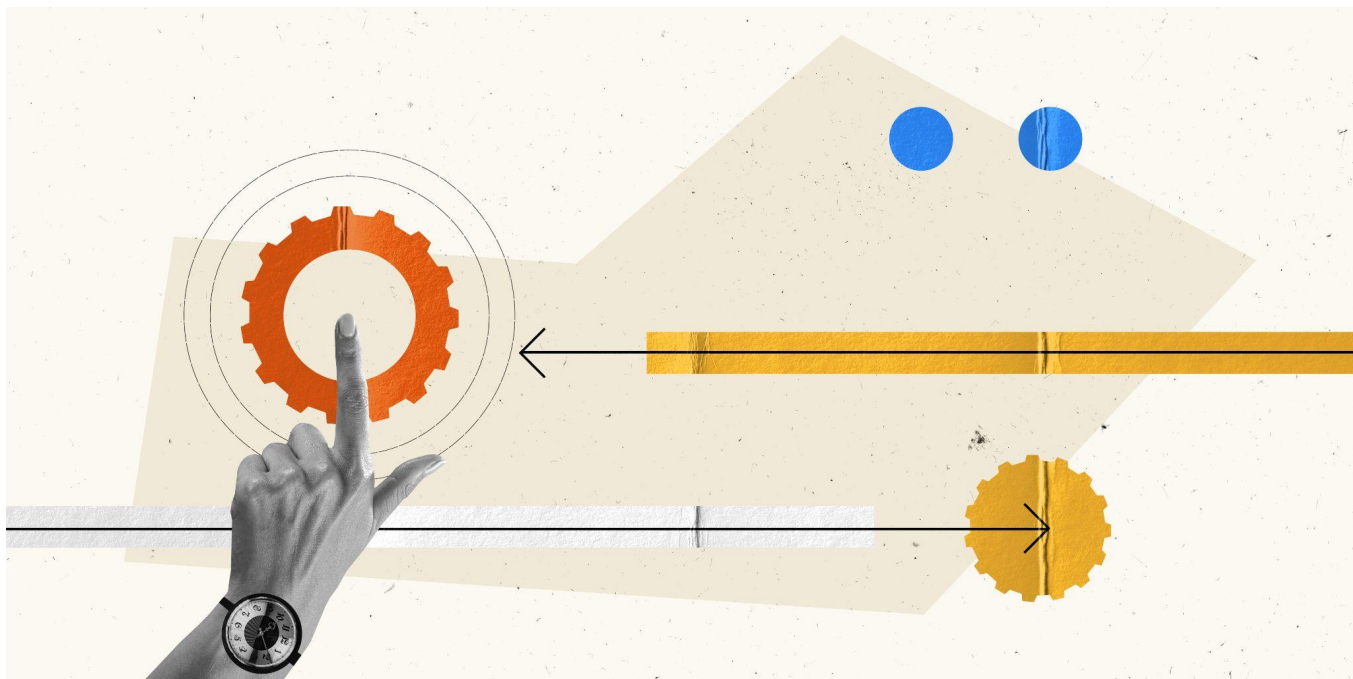
HELPSEEKER
TECHNOLOGIES



Land Acknowledgement

As we live, work, and play on this land, we wish to pay our respects to the traditional lands of Treaty 7. We extend our gratitude to our neighbours and friends of the traditional Blackfoot Territory and the **Blackfoot Confederacy**, which includes **Siksika Nation, North & South Piikani Nations**, and the **Kainai Nation**. In addition, we acknowledge the other members of **Treaty 7** First Nations, including the **Tsuut'ina Nation** and the **ȩyǎhé Nakoda** (Stoney Nakoda) comprising the **Chiniki, Bearspaw**, and **Wesley** First Nations. Our acknowledgement also extends to the home of the Métis peoples of **Region 3 of the Métis Nation of Alberta**.

For generations, these lands have been cared for and inhabited by the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. We are grateful for the traditional **Knowledge Keepers** and **Elders** who have guided us and those who have passed on. Our acknowledgement is an expression of **reconciliation** and appreciation to those who call this territory home, or to those who are visiting.



Project Team

The Town of Strathmore engaged HelpSeeker Technologies to support data generation, data processing, and insight development from diverse data sources, with a priority on community engagement.

Together with the FCSS team, HelpSeeker worked with community partners to collect, analyze, and interpret the data contained in this summary report, as well as the larger technical report and data compendium.



HELPSEEKER
TECHNOLOGIES

**Strategy, Data & Software
for Breakthrough Solutions
To Complex Social Problems**

**We build solutions that empower leaders on the
frontlines of solving the world's most complex
social challenges.**

helpseeker.org

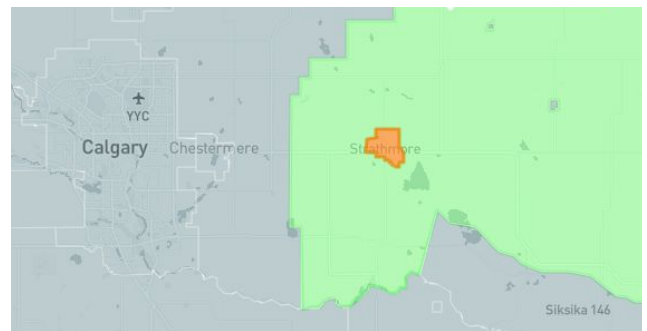
A tremendous thank you to our partners at the Town of Strathmore FCSS team and the hundreds of Strathmore community members who provided their time and critical insights into this project, from the Strathmore HelpSeeker team!

Impetus for Social Needs Assessment

Community Context

Long before the town of Strathmore was established in 1883 as a hub for prairie settlers travelling along the Canadian Pacific Railway, it was home to the Blackfoot and Cree Indigenous Peoples, who inhabited the region and followed bison herds. Treaty 7 was signed in the area, with Chief Crowfoot and Chief Old Sun present. Today, the Siksika First Nation has a reserve located southeast of Strathmore, with a population of 6,869, of which half reside on the reserve.

Originally an agricultural community known for its rich soil, Strathmore has grown and attracted families seeking affordable housing, a high quality of life, and access to urban amenities. Its proximity to Calgary has also contributed to its growth, and it now has a diverse mix of ethnicities and cultures among its residents. The town's population has steadily increased, resulting in new social dynamics and needs.



COVID Social Impacts

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on society, including mental health, the economy, and social concerns like poverty and housing insecurity. Job loss, financial insecurity, and an increase in poverty and housing insecurity have been widespread.

Preparing for these shifts will be essential for the social infrastructure planning of the Town to stay ahead of the dynamic needs, especially post pandemic. This is why the Town initiated a comprehensive, community, and data-driven social needs assessment.

Value of Social Needs Assessments

The 2022 Social Needs Assessment in Strathmore highlights the need for collaboration among stakeholders to address ongoing and emerging social issues. As the population grows, it is essential to understand the diverse backgrounds and needs of the citizens.

Municipalities play a critical role in the development and implementation of effective social support systems, as convenors and systems planning organizations. The assessment identified emerging priorities that support the Town of Strathmore's Strategic Priorities, and highlighted the need to consider strategic opportunities to work with provincial and federal partners to address community needs through a data-driven, holistic, and systems-based approach to well-being.

The FCSS program in Alberta provides flexible funding and resources to tailor programs and services to specific needs and priorities, and the Social Needs Assessment provides an evidence-based approach to develop an integrated action plan to address emerging and existing social issues in collaboration with community stakeholders.

Methodology

HelpSeeker provided data and analysis to support Strathmore in taking evidence-based, informed action on social issues through activities that generated data and insights.

Social Data Trends

Analyzing social data trends can reveal patterns and signals that indicate potential crises in a community. Such data can include factors like inflation, median income levels, and unemployment, which can contribute to issues like poverty and housing loss. Key data sources included a number of publicly available sources, including the new 2021 Census released fully in December 2022. The analysis is included in the Compendium Data Report of the full Social Needs Assessment.

Design Labs

Design labs are inclusive and supportive roundtable discussions that aim to identify potential solutions to community problems. These labs, along with other forms of community consultation such as the youth survey, are important in understanding not just what people need, but what types of services and supports they want in response to those needs.

In April and May 2022, the Town of Strathmore held several Service Design Labs, with a total of 22 representatives participating. Additionally, a separate design lab was held on May 5 with a small group of four Indigenous community members. These consultations allowed for a diverse range of voices and perspectives to be heard, helping to ensure that the identified solutions are inclusive and meet the needs of the entire community.

Youth Survey

On May 5, 2022, the youth survey was conducted during the lunch break at Holy Cross Collegiate and Strathmore High School, with 122 responses received from students. The aim of the survey was to gather insights from the youth perspective on community priorities, service needs, and opportunities in Strathmore.

Citizen Satisfaction Survey

The citizen satisfaction survey was conducted by the Town of Strathmore in 2022, with a total of 781 responses analyzed. This report includes the key findings of the survey as they relate to social issues and needs.

Social Infrastructure Supply Mapping

The analysis identified emerging priorities and needs in the community. Social infrastructure supply mapping identified over 290 organizations and services, highlighting potential gaps in the social support system. Validating this map will ensure it is a living systems map that supports coordinated access to services. As a future step, an agile supply-demand calibration approach could balance resources and services with demand in the community, maximizing benefit and prioritizing limited resources.

Indigenous Voices

Indigenous Design Lab Themes

Racism & Discrimination:

- **Palpable discrimination** toward Indigenous people in the local community, highlighting the urgent need for culturally responsive services, including addictions services.
- **Appearance-based racism** is a significant problem in Strathmore. Addressing anti-Indigenous racism is essential for creating a more equitable and inclusive community.
- **Inequitable treatment** of care, with long wait times at the Emergency Department in Strathmore and poor outcomes and treatment experienced by Indigenous people.
- Closure of the Siksika First Nations Youth Treatment Centre and Food Bank has resulted in a lack of access to crucial supportive programming for **Indigenous youth** and lower-income individuals.
- Lack of **addictions services** in the community. Addressing this issue requires a collaborative effort from community stakeholders.

Solutions:

- Valuing **Indigenous perspectives** and voices in the school board and community planning processes.
- Creating a **safe and accessible space** for Indigenous voices to be heard, ensuring that all community members have a voice in shaping the future of Strathmore.
- **Addressing discrimination** in local stores and promoting a safe and welcoming environment for Indigenous Peoples and all racialized groups.
- **Bringing people together** and promoting interaction to combat racism and promote a more inclusive community.
- Expanding **Indigenous liaisons** for the RCMP and at the hospital, enhanced communication between Strathmore Indigenous communities, the Town Council, and the RCMP.
- Establishing **culturally appropriate services** such as meet and greets, bannock and tea, and opportunities for community members to speak with Elders and ask questions.
- **Innovative Friendship Centre** model, holding cultural activities and events at a rotating space that invites all community members to participate.

"We want things happening in Strathmore."

"Direct communication and engagement with the Indigenous community could provide us with the strength needed to overcome these challenges."

Community Voice

Service Provider Design Lab Themes

Complex Needs Caused By:

- Visible drug use
- Rising visible and chronic homelessness
- Increase in opioid overdoses
- Growing intimate partner violence



Systems Under Strain:

- Public Health struggling to meet local needs
- COVID strain taking its toll
- Crisis service overreliance
- High acuity needs must be addressed by emergency response



Optimizing Local Responses:

- Calls for service coordination
- Understanding and navigating the system of support available
- Addressing transportation access barriers
- Service access challenges & regionalization



Affordable Housing Supply Concerns:

- Need for long-term supportive housing
- Rising cost of living and need for affordable housing
- “Renovictions” on the rise
- Lack of low-income housing
- Rent supports to address affordability of available stock
- Seniors increasingly vulnerable to housing instability.



Major Service Gaps:

- Absence of detox and treatment options
- Lack of off-reserve addictions and mental health supports for Indigenous people
- Lack of primary health care
- Unmet needs for older populations
- Lack of settlement support for newcomers

Community Data Highlights

Citizen Survey (781 reponses)

- **Health, safety, mental health, and addiction** were the top concerns for Strathmore residents.
- **Childcare, poverty, violence, housing, and homelessness** were cited by over half the respondents, though **education, basic needs, recreation, and technology** access were also noted.
- Economic factors connected to **cost of living** are having a significant impact on the wellbeing of Strathmore residents.
- **Friends and family** were the primary source of support for individuals in times of need, highlighting the importance of strong social connections and community-based support systems.
- Community outreach efforts and **accessible sources of information**, such as social media, could help connect individuals with the resources they need.



Youth Survey (122 responses)

- **Youth mental health** is an emerging priority concern in Strathmore, and prevention and intervention efforts are needed.
- A **family-focused approach** is important to address youth mental health, as it is often interconnected with caregiver well-being.
- **Discrimination, bullying, and food insecurity** are significant challenges and concerns facing youth in Strathmore.
- Greater efforts to promote **inclusivity and tolerance** in the community are needed, as well as improved support and resources for those who have experienced discrimination and bullying.
- **Personal relationships** are important sources of support in the community, and traditional forms of professional support may not be as utilized or as effective.
- Access to activities and **recreational opportunities** for youth in Strathmore is generally good, but there may be barriers to participation.
- There is a strong interest and **engagement** in extracurricular activities among youth in Strathmore.



of respondents reported **Discrimination** as the most important issue they faced



of student respondents reported having been **bullied in the past 12 months**

Interestingly, in contrast to the findings about overall happiness, regular & occasional feelings of

 **86%**

sadness

 **77%**

depression

 **86%**

anxiety

 **90%**

stress

were frequently reported by respondents



reported food insecurity is an issue having not enough food to eat at home

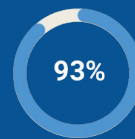


reported not having a place to sleep as part of current concerns

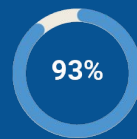
Most youth see it as very important or somewhat important to:



participate in local activities



understand what issues affect their community



feel connected to the community

additional options / increased recreational activities within walking distance is a main consideration for youth surveyed as **27%** reported **transportation to be a concern**



Asked what is missing in Strathmore, youth, in their own words through the Youth Survey, encouraged decision-makers to consider:

"Safe alternatives to drug use"

"Help with school anxiety"

"Help with focusing more on our mental health"

"Being able to speak and have [one]'s own opinion without being bullied."

Important Issues

Most important issue(s) in youth's life:

60%

Stuff to do

39%

Friends

20%

A Safe
Community

14%

Transportation that
is easy to access

13%

Discrimination

Social Data Trend Highlights

Unless otherwise stated, these data were derived from the 2021 Census at the CSD level for Strathmore.

Population Growth

- From 2016-2021, Strathmore's population grew by **1.9%**, according to the 2021 Census.
- Strathmore's **population density** and overall population is increasing steadily, indicating a need for social infrastructure planning to meet the needs of an urbanizing population.
- As the town is projected to have a population of 30,000 by 2040, and potentially **100,000** in the next 30 years, planning for future needs should begin now to ensure the social infrastructure can meet the demands of a larger and more diverse population.

Demographics

- Strathmore's **dependency ratio** shows a higher proportion of non-working individuals (seniors and children) compared to the Alberta and Canadian averages, which can impact the economy and social services.
- As the **population ages**, the gender difference in life expectancy means there will be a larger proportion of women than men, which has implications for social services and resources.
- The increase in two-person families in Strathmore may suggest a need for **smaller housing units**, while the slight increase in 5+ person families may suggest a need for larger housing units or more support for **families with several children**.
- Women head the majority of **lone-parent families** in Strathmore, but the town has a higher percentage of lone-parent families headed by fathers compared to Alberta and Canada.
- The number of **people living alone** in Strathmore increased by 15% from 2016; living alone can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness, as well as increased burden of household responsibilities and potential financial insecurity.

Diverse Populations

- Strathmore saw a 15% increase in the number of people identifying as **Indigenous** in 2021 compared to 2016.
- The percentage of **immigrants** in Strathmore increased from 8% in 2016 to 9% in 2021, with about 20% of immigrants arriving in Canada between 2016 and 2021.
- Strathmore's **visible minority** status increased from 7% to 8% between 2016 and 2021,
- Strathmore's population is more **secular** compared to Alberta and Canada, with 50% of the population reporting a secular belief system and 48% reporting **Christianity**.

Income, Employment & Education

- The **median income** of recipients aged 15 years and over was unchanged between 2019 and 2020 at \$42,800, or **\$38,000** after tax. The average income in Strathmore was 13% lower than the Alberta average, but 3% higher than the Canadian average.
- Although the percentage of Strathmore's working-age population with no **post-secondary education** is slightly higher at 10.3% than the Alberta and Canadian averages (both 9.9%), that percentage is decreasing over time in Strathmore, down 2.5% in the past five years.
- The prevalence of **low income** as calculated using the LIM-AT (Low Income Measure After Tax) was 8.9% in 2021, lower than the rates for both Alberta (9.2%) and Canada (11.1%), but up 0.5% from 2016.

The highest rate of poverty was seen in children (10.9%) and seniors (10.8%); concerning, children 5 and under had the highest rate of poverty at 11.6%, consistent with the provincial and national averages.

6.6%



Indigenous

8%



Visible Minority

9%



Low Income

8.9%



Immigrants

20.2%



Core Housing Need

12%



Children in Low Income

\$38K



Average After Tax Income

40.1



Average Age

1,120



Children in Lone Parent Families

Housing

- Strathmore has a higher **home ownership** rate (77%) compared to the provincial and national averages, despite a small decrease from 2016. There was a minor increase in renter households to 23% in 2021, which reflects the trend of higher rates of renters in Alberta and Canada.
- The **core housing need** rate slightly increased from 20.2% in 2016 to 21.0% in 2021. This rate was comparable to rates in Alberta and Canada.
- The percentage of **renters** spending more than 30% of income on shelter was 38% in 2021, compared to 37% in 2016.
- According to the 2022 **Homelessness** Prevalence survey results gathered from clients who accessed supports during the survey periods, of 98 people surveyed, 49 (50%) were found to be living in situations defined as homeless or housing-insecure.

Health

- The **COVID-19 pandemic** has had a significant impact on various aspects of health, including mental health, substance use, physical health, and chronic disease. The effects of the pandemic on health are complex and far-reaching, and the long-term consequences will continue to be studied and understood in the years to come.
- While **mental health** data for Strathmore was not available for our analysis, we can infer these challenges are present. In fact, mental health was the second-most cited concern in the citizen survey, at 76% of respondents.
- In 2020, Strathmore saw a significantly higher rate of **emergency department** visits due to mental and behavioural disorders, as compared to the provincial average (1,099 per 100,000 versus 791 per 100,000 in Alberta), as well as a higher rate of visits related to substance use (2,174.3 per 100,000 versus 1,316.1 per 100,000 in Alberta).

Safety

- According to the RCMP Municipal Crime Gauge, Strathmore saw an overall 22% increase in reported **Criminal Code** offenses from 2021 to 2022.
- A 59% increase in **spousal abuse** from 2021 to 2022 was reported. This growth trend has been seen since 2019, but was exacerbated by the pandemic. This aligns with the surveys and design lab input on the need for increased supports to address interpersonal violence.
- The rate of police-reported **sexual violence** in Strathmore decreased by one-third from 2021 to 2022, returning to pre-pandemic levels. The fact that this is the reverse of the national trend merits further exploration.

Key Takeaways from Data and Community Input

The social challenges faced by Strathmore residents are interconnected, as illustrated by the citizen and youth surveys, as well as diverse data and community feedback. These indicate that certain groups of residents face more obstacles to well-being than others. Therefore, each of the following priority areas demands focused attention and deliberate action to prevent the exacerbation of social issues:



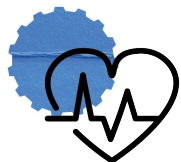
Housing

A growing number of households in Core Housing Need, specifically renters and single earner households with children, are likely to continue straining the local housing market as Strathmore continues its growth.



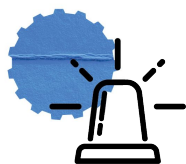
Poverty

The number of low-income families, primarily women-led, but with a growing number of lone-parent father-led families, is growing - but the affordability crisis and COVID impacts are affecting all groups.



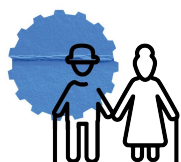
Health

These issues were amplified by COVID across populations and were connected with health risks specifically on mental health and substance misuse.



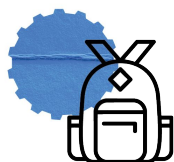
Safety

Community safety dynamics are changing, and a growing number of RCMP reports on spousal violence is notable. Mental health, bullying, violence, and discrimination are a major concern for most youth surveyed.



Seniors

An aging population, with health and social complexities, is impacting community capacity to meet new needs, especially among low-income and homeless populations.



Families, Children & Youth

The pandemic and economic pressures have increased mental health challenges, particularly in children and youth. Families under strain during the inflationary recession will need targeted interventions.

Social Policy Implications

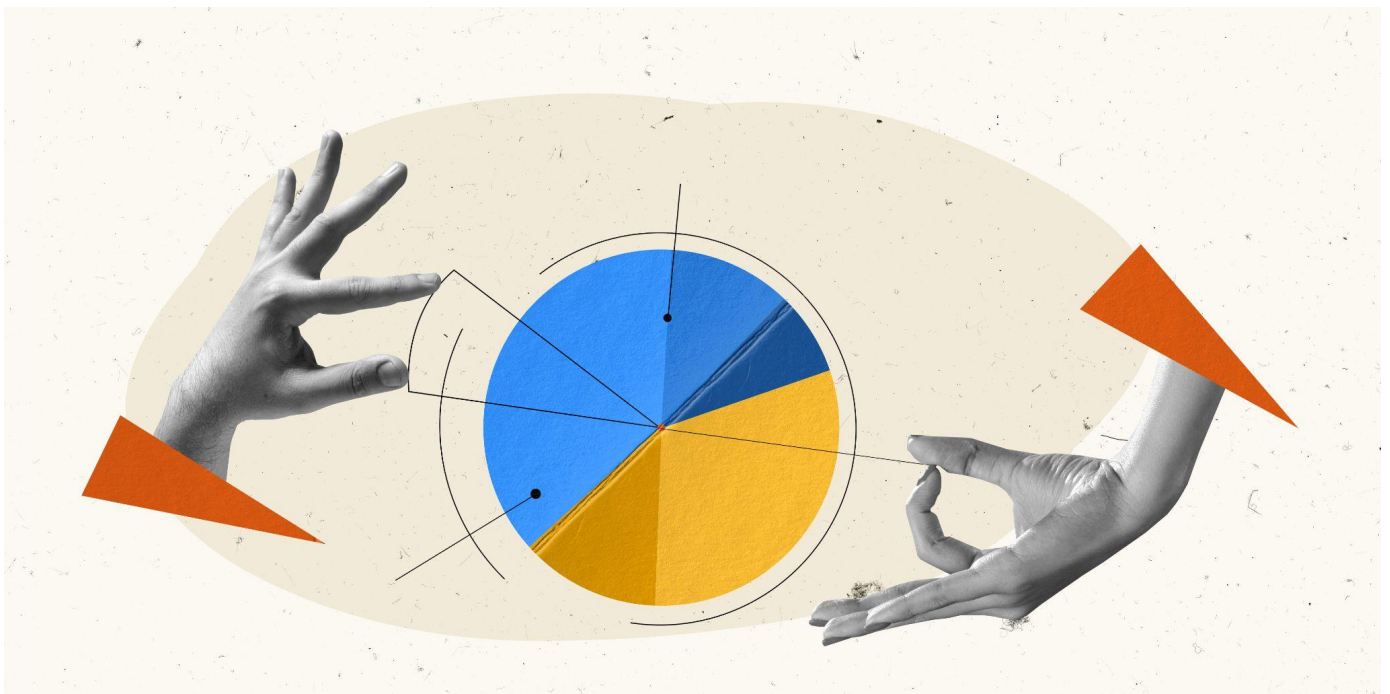
In light of these population trends, the Town of Strathmore may face key social challenges in the coming years, prompting a number of considerations from a municipal policy lens:

Social Challenges	Potential Municipal Considerations
1. People's ability to make ends meet for basic needs like transportation, housing, food, and clothing.	<p>Collaborate with community partners to develop advocacy efforts aimed at the provincial and federal governments, highlighting the inadequacy of current social safety net programs and any emerging gaps in the system, particularly as they pertain to financial vulnerabilities of groups over-represented below the poverty line (lone parents, renters, seniors, Indigenous people, visible minorities, and newcomers).</p> <p>Work with First Nations governments to advocate for equal funding and parity in social safety net spending between on-reserve and off-reserve communities.</p>
2. Strained and over-burdened systems of care, especially in specialized services like supportive housing or newcomer supports.	<p>Define the exact gaps in the system of care and develop supply calibration models to create an evidence-based business case for funding housing, health, and social care systems.</p> <p>Explore innovative collaborations among public, nonprofit, and private organizations to enhance the availability and accessibility of specialized services.</p>
3. Higher reliance on government support due to COVID-19 and economic downturns.	<p>Monitor the implications of economic pressures on key population segments closely, to identify any support gaps and inform provincial and federal response measures that cater to local needs.</p> <p>Advocate for policies that support job creation, manage the cost of living, and promote economic recovery that balances growth with social needs.</p>
4. Isolation from services, especially for those who have transportation limitations or do not live in areas with central access services.	<p>Explore novel approaches to addressing rural transportation needs, such as car-share programs and ride-hailing services by nonprofits.</p> <p>Investigate partnerships with nonprofit and private sector organizations to increase the availability of specialized services in remote or isolated areas.</p>
5. Increased demand on social infrastructure for particular populations.	<p>Develop a comprehensive social infrastructure plan to address the growing need for social infrastructure encompassing housing, settlement, Indigenous needs, mental health, childcare, and recreation.</p> <p>Expand partnerships with private organizations to increase the availability of social services for vulnerable populations within the low-income, renter, youth, Indigenous, newcomer, and lone-parent segments.</p>
6. Higher rates of poverty, homelessness, income inequality, crime, poor health outcomes, and social exclusion due to unemployment rates and other economic factors.	<p>Collaborate with other municipal partners to advance policies that promote economic growth and employment opportunities while considering social infrastructure needs.</p> <p>Advocate for and secure support for affordable housing initiatives to reduce homelessness and poverty.</p> <p>Explore innovative community safety initiatives to lower crime rates and reduce social exclusion.</p>
7. Social instability for certain groups, including low-income families, seniors, children, youth, lone-parent families, renters, and Indigenous people.	<p>Develop targeted programs and initiatives that address the specific needs of vulnerable populations, leveraging the strengths of the existing social infrastructure.</p> <p>Enhance data sharing and coordination processes and technologies to maximize the current response and improve services to underserved groups.</p>

Filling the Gaps in the Social Infrastructure Supply

Strathmore has a relatively high per capita proportion of programs and organizations compared to Barrie, ON and Nanaimo, BC, though that does not necessarily mean the right levels of the right types of supply are in place. For instance, the relatively low occurrence of services for basic needs and key demographic groups that may be underserved are noteworthy.

Leveraging the strengths of the community and building on existing social infrastructure can move Strathmore toward becoming a more inclusive, equitable, and supportive community for all residents.



Moving toward enhanced service coordination:

- There is a need for a model that **coordinates access** to services and resources for addressing complex social challenges, leveraging **technology** to connect individuals with necessary resources and track progress over time.
- The ultimate goal is to **match individuals** with the resources they need in real-time based on their unique needs and circumstances. This would require **data sharing** and individual-level service matching to optimize resource allocation and ensure timely support for those in need.
- Efforts to improve social infrastructure could involve policy changes that address systemic barriers and inequalities in areas such as housing, education, and employment.



Thank you!

Please connect with us at any time to discuss this project, further insights, and potential next steps.