

2016 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



BLACKFALDS
ALBERTA

Message from the CAO

Our community, the Town of Blackfalds, is quickly reaching a milestone population of 10,000 people, double that of the community's population just 10 short years ago.

Blackfalds' consistent growth rate over the past 5 years, coupled with investment in critical infrastructure such as the regional waste water line and two new schools is attracting new retail and commercial interest to better meet the service expectations of our residents.

Council and Administration have worked hard to meet the challenges of a community like ours, which has a sustained high growth rate, and understand the resulting resident expectations. The Municipal Sustainability Planning (MSP) process that was undertaken in 2016 was an entirely new process, that differed significantly from what was done previously. The MSP has laid out a process where approaches are identified on short-term actions with an identification and focus on long-term vision.

The MSP process included significant public engagement, which is a key focus in other areas of our operations. Several of the critical steps and actions identified in the MSP have been included in the 2017 Municipal Budget and Administration's work plans. The Blackfalds Municipal Sustainability Plan is available for viewing on the Town's website at blackfalds.com.

As we approach another municipal election this coming fall, I reflect on the challenges and the many successes achieved over the past number of years. There is an ongoing sense of pride and optimism in being part of a community that continues to be progressive and meets the needs of its residents.

I know that Town Council will continue to provide the necessary leadership and that the pride and work ethic of Town employees will ensure that Blackfalds remains the "Community of Choice" in the future.



Myron Thompson
Chief Administrative Officer



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The image shows the exterior of the Blackfalds Civic Cultural Centre. The building features a prominent sign above the entrance that reads "BLACKFALDS CIVIC CULTURAL CENTRE". The entrance consists of large glass doors and windows. To the left of the entrance, the address "5018" is visible. To the right, there is a stone pillar with a "Municipal Office Drop Box" sign and a mailbox. The building has a modern design with stone accents and large glass panels.

BLACKFALDS CIVIC CULTURAL CENTRE

5018

Municipal
Office
Drop Box
CIVIC CULTURAL

Community Services Recreation, Parks and Leisure



If there's any department that's been busy in 2016, it's Community Services! Blackfalds is a young, vibrant and active community, and Community Services has stepped up to the plate to provide residents with the recreational opportunities and options they want.

Recreational highlights for the department include completion of the off-leash dog park (Bark Park) east of the Protective Services building on South Street, Cottonwood Ball Diamond on the east side of Town, and the skateboard park on Womacks Road (in partnership with the Optimist Club of Blackfalds) slated to open in spring 2017.

Along with these new developments, improvements have been made to All-Star Park including the installation of shelters/benches to provide weather

and vandalism protection, and the expansion of the Community Hall with construction through winter, providing much needed program and event space for residents, to be completed June 2017.

New wayfinding signage for our trail systems has been installed throughout the Town to better inform visitors and residents alike of what amenities are available and how to get around our community's trail systems, including the Trans Canada Trail, which connects through Blackfalds to both Lacombe and Red Deer.

Ice facilities such as the outdoor rink remain very popular in the community throughout the winter season, while the baseball/slo-pitch diamonds attract large crowds through the spring/summer, with over 20 tournaments held per year.

The Abbey Centre has seen continued growth in 2016, seeing annual visitorship up by nearly 8,000 visits along with an increase of 750

memberships compared to 2015. The Centre continues to be the location of choice for birthday parties, seeing 231 parties hosted through 2016. The Abbey Centre provided free usage of facilities for evacuees from the Fort McMurray fires in May - seeing a total of 52 visits from evacuees.

Child minding services at the Abbey Centre saw increased usage in 2016, in part by having an expanded age-range including 8-10 year olds. Child programming including Camp Curious and C'Amped saw continued growth through the year and plans for continued growth in 2017 are in place as well.

Amphitheatre construction outside of the Abbey Centre has been completed (sponsored by the Blackfalds & District Agricultural Society) including wiring for outdoor shows - with plans to have children's festivals and more events in 2017 on location as part of the increased focus on arts and culture programming in the community.

Community Services

Strong Families and Communities

2016 saw the development of a **Social Needs Assessment Master Plan** providing a continuation from the 2012 Social Needs Assessment upon which decisions and priorities on preventative social services can be made over the next five years. Based on the research and analysis presented in the plan, FCSS will be utilizing the recommendations presented to build a strategic action plan to help guide the future delivery of preventative social services in Blackfalds.

One of the most exciting developments in the last year for FCSS is that Blackfalds will be getting Parent Link, operating under the Central Parkland Parent Link Network, at the newly expanded Community Hall in 2017 - providing Blackfalds parents with free parenting and play programs to meet the unique needs of local families.

Many engaging community events took place through the year with great participation and attendance - including the intergenerational Black & Orange Party (80+ attendees) and Mittens & More Social (75+ attendees) thanks, in part, to the Vibrant Living Grant from the Government of Canada. Beyond events, FCSS ran the Winter Wear Program (providing 85 children with winter clothing), and the Christmas Bureau (supporting over 90 households and raising over \$23,000).

Similar to 2015, FCSS has seen a continued increase in demand for subsidized programming resulting from economic challenges in the region, and has worked through the year to develop collaborations with schools, coalitions and many agencies to ensure residents are supported in the areas that are needed.



Infrastructure and Property Services

Managing Growth

Infrastructure and Property Services saw another busy year in 2016, including large projects such as the **Blackfalds Regional Sewer Lift Station** - part of the **North Red Deer Regional Wastewater Services Commission sewer line project**.

This regional project will transfer wastewater from Lacombe and Blackfalds to Red Deer for treatment and discharge. Six large construction contracts making up this entire regional project will provide economic benefits in terms of employment during construction and long-term sustainability in addressing critical wastewater needs.

The department has worked hard through the year to improve roads in Blackfalds, including the purchase and introduction of a new loader, two trucks and a Toolcat to the Town fleet for operational programs including snow removal and summer roadwork. Updates in 2016 include improvements to the Highway 2A roundabout and completion of an asphalt overlay on Broadway Avenue as part of Downtown Revitalization, improving pedestrian access near Iron Ridge Elementary School.

A new Development Officer II position was created and filled to meet the growing development needs of the Town - including work with Elkay Developments to approve the Blackfalds Crossing Area Structure Plan and updating the Land Use Bylaw with focused enforcement on community standards and parking.

BOLT transit saw improved ridership through 2016 - with more passengers than ever using the bus to commute between Lacombe, Blackfalds and Red Deer. Since the initial introduction of the service in 2014, many residents and visitors of the Town have utilized this alternative means of transportation between communities.

Other projects during the year included the installation of a new water meter tower, providing the Town with day to day data on water use and leakage detection, and the construction of the Riser Pond Storm Lift Station, eliminating seasonal pumping onto nearby roadways.



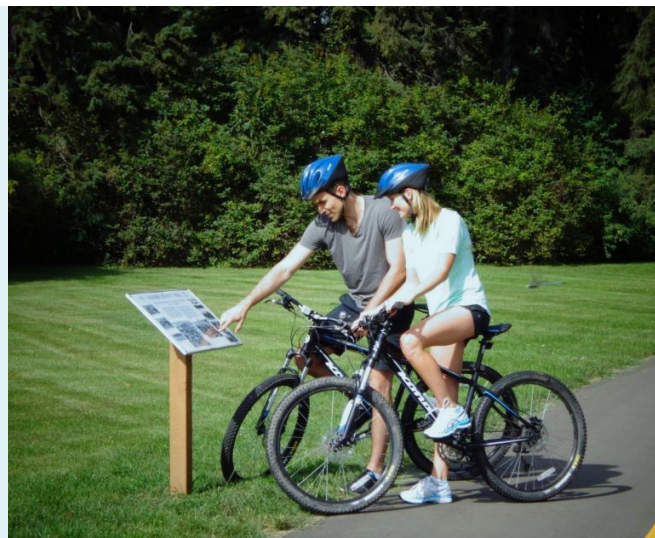
Economic Development Resilient and Sustainable Business

A number of important community economic development and tourism initiatives were undertaken in 2016 to help make Blackfalds a great destination for new business and a supportive community for existing business.

In May, 53 businesses from 10 industry sectors participated in a “business walk” and provided valuable input on what is working well for business in the community and what may be done to help business thrive even more. Based on this feedback, the Town has increased its collaborative marketing efforts with the Chamber of Commerce and local media, partnered with business service providers to offer desired training in the community and set up a business resource section at the public library.

A Visitor Friendly Assessment was conducted from May to September (including the Town of Blackfalds, City of Lacombe and Lacombe County) and the Central Alberta Destination Management Plan was adopted. Recommended strategies from these plans will encourage hospitality and tourism development, and assist with attracting and retaining visitors to the community.

Economic Development worked through the year to facilitate new development from local and Canadian investors and welcomed new storefront businesses including 7-11, Blackfalds Eye Care, offices for Blackfalds LIFE and MP Calkins, and numerous home-based businesses. Additionally, economic development worked to support community events and initiatives including the new Community Market and business networking events.



Protective Services RCMP



Blackfalds RCMP had a busy and productive year in 2016, having seen an uptick in reported incidents within the detachment area compared with earlier years.

The detachment has a fully staffed front office - assisting eight municipal RCMP members, as well as rural and Provincial enforcement, all working out of the local detachment building. The complement of eight municipal members includes the introduction of a new School Resource Officer - an RCMP officer who works in the community with students, administrators, and teachers to provide safe and respectful school environments. This position has been well received with school principals reporting favorably on the work being done.

In November, Blackfalds RCMP moved to a 24-hour shift schedule, which has helped decrease response times, free up police

vehicles during evening hours, and increase the morale of officers. The extra presence of marked RCMP vehicles in early morning hours is expected to dissuade crime in the area through 2017 along with the addition of another RCMP officer.

Working alongside the Priority Crimes Task Force earlier in the year, Blackfalds RCMP apprehended groups responsible for a large part of the increase in property crime. The takedown of these high priority groups is expected to reduce crime levels to be more comparable with previous years.

Throughout the year, RCMP participated in numerous community functions throughout the area including the Blackfalds Crime Prevention Fair, training sessions with the Blackfalds Chamber of Commerce, and partnering with Big Brothers Big Sisters, Lacombe PD, Lacombe County and Blackfalds CPO in Kids and Kops.

The detachment continues to focus on community engagement, increasing awareness and working together to ensure residential safety through partnerships with groups in Town.



Community Peace Officers

In 2016, Community Peace Officers (CPO) continued work to improve safety in Blackfalds including working with surrounding schools, adding speed signs to gather traffic data and improve enforcement, and introducing new software to enhance reporting and follow-up. With a team now consisting of two full time and one part time officers, Blackfalds CPO have seen success in promoting safety in the community.

CPOs continue to focus on following the Alberta Traffic Safety Plan 2017 as directed by the Province and Law Enforcement Agencies and working with the community stakeholders to provide a safe and healthy community. With powers and authority under the *Peace Officer Act*, CPOs are committed to serving and protecting citizens and their property.

The division received and managed over 1200 bylaw complaints/ concerns and incidents within the community - with the majority being split across the Community Standards Bylaw (255 files), Animal Control Bylaw (337) and Traffic Bylaw (146).

The CPOs participated in many community events through the year, including the Crime Prevention Fair, Youth Bike Rodeo, Joint Forces Operations (Commercial Vehicle Inspections), Kids & Cops, Crown Prosecutor/RCMP Mock Trial, Wadey House move, and the Alberta Association of Community Peace Officers Conference. CPO strive to be leaders in supporting the Town of Blackfalds through serving those who live, work and visit the Town.



Fire | Rescue

The Blackfalds Fire Department currently has a full roster of 30 fire service members ready to serve our community. The department is looking at increasing membership and is always eager to accept applications from interested residents.

The fire department trains every Wednesday evening. Currently 94% of our members are trained to NFPA Level 1001 Level 1 and 2 Standards as well as Hazmat Awareness and Operations NFPA 472 level.

In 2016, the fire department responded to 151 calls, which is a 26% increase in call volume from 2015. The majority of these calls originated from alarms (31%), motor vehicle incidents (20%), medical (13%) and fire structure (8%).

During the year, the Town of Blackfalds amended a Fire Service Agreement with Lacombe County to expand the land area around the Town's boundaries to be included in fire service protection by the Blackfalds Fire Department. This is one area of collaboration with our municipal partners to expand the level of service for not only the Town, but for our neighbors as well. Through these collaborations we have also formalized a cost sharing arrangement for a new fire pumper truck that is expected to be delivered around June.

Members continue to take part in various events throughout the year from Winterfest, the Fun Run, Blackfalds Days, Fire Prevention Tours, and the extremely popular Santa Runs.



Corporate Services

Improved Operations and Engagement

Financial Services undertook several initiatives in 2016 to create improved citizen engagement and customer service. This includes e-billing for utilities, permanent dog licenses, improved budget process, cost efficiencies and savings in corporate services operations, enhanced electronic file retention, and more in-depth analysis of long term capital funding requirements.

Utility e-billing is environmentally friendly, reduces materials, postage and labor, and provides quicker services to customers. In 2016, Corporate Services undertook advertising and encouraging customers to sign up for e-billing. The number of e-bill registrants increased from approximately 250 to 1,101 by the end of December. Educational campaigns will continue in 2017 with a goal of eventually becoming 100% electronic.

2016 was the first year the Town utilized Citizen Budget - an interactive software survey program that enables citizens to interact with the budget and provide feedback. During the pilot program, there were over 200 responses collected with the information included in the budget presentation. This process was completed with an Open House held before the budget was finalized in December. This survey will be done in 2017 as well in an effort to provide an avenue for citizens to provide input into the budgeting process. We look forward to expanding opportunities for citizens to become more engaged and informed about the budget process.

Permanent animal licenses were rolled out for the start of the 2017 calendar year. Every year almost 1,000 people have to come into the office during business hours to obtain new licenses - a labour intensive process for staff and customers. We also added the ability to pay for the license online through online banking payments. The goal of a permanent (5 year) license is to enable people to renew their license online and save them money and time having to come to the Town Office.

In 2016, a review of the debt servicing of the Town was undertaken, with savings of just over \$500,000 realized through changes in some of the loans to a lower interest rate. This will allow the Town to provide more services to our customers owing to the lower interest payments.

There is a project underway internally within the organization to implement an electronic file retention and work space system called SharePoint. This project will improve electronic filing and accessibility of documents. The workspace portion will create efficiencies as staff will be able to collaborate on shared documents.

A review of all corporate services processes was undertaken in 2016 which resulted in efficiencies in operations being identified - which were streamlined to improve customer service levels.

A 10 year capital funding plan was developed and included in the 2017 10 year capital plan. This is an extremely important component for the municipality. It identifies the funding requirements for the next 10 years and enables Council, staff and citizens to understand what projects are a priority and the methods of funding available. It is critical to prioritize projects and ensure there is planned funding for at least 10 years into the future.



Population
9,510



> 1,100 e-billing
registered residents

Debt
savings:
\$500k

Blackfalds & Area Historical Society

The Society had another *historical* year in 2016 - including the development of the **Blackfalds Heritage Survey**, with the intention of identifying, documenting and evaluating historic buildings of interest in Blackfalds and area. The Blackfalds & Area Historical Society has identified 37 sites that show historic and cultural value within a five mile radius of Town. This survey will create a base of knowledge for resources that may be recognized as important historical places for the municipality and Alberta - funded in part by the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation.

More visibly, the Historical Society has been working with the Town of Blackfalds on the preservation of the **Wadey House**. This 100 year old Eaton's package house was moved in early November 2016, and will be a multi-use centre sharing space as a visitor information centre, an office for the Blackfalds & District Chamber of Commerce, along with an office and display/interpretive space for the Blackfalds & Area Historical Society.

The Blackfalds Archives is happy that relatives of the Wadey family are donating many artifacts and photographs that are original to the house, such as a stained glass window from the front room and a painted portrait of George Wadey (the original Blackfalds pioneer) that used to hang in the house.

We look forward to the grand opening of the Wadey Centre slated for July 1, 2017, in conjunction with Canada's 150th birthday celebrations.



Blackfalds Public Library

Library Use

Visitors	43,702
Hours of Computer Use	23,341
# of WiFi / Internet Users	27,937
# of Exams Written	74
Questions Answered	16,350

Circulation

Adult Print	12,698
Juvenile Print	36,437
Magazines Newspapers	2,183
Electronic Items	2,345
Interlibrary Loan Items	Total Borrowed: 5,776 Total Loaned: 14,009
Total Items Circulated	65,032



Collections & Resources

Print Collection	Items Added in 2016: 2,201 Items Deleted in 2016: 2,694 Total Print Items: 23,513
Non-Print Collection	Audio Books: 536 Music: 403 DVDs: 2,814 eBooks: 3,549
Total Non-Print Items	3,816
Total Physical Collection	27,329



