Medicine Hat

CITY OF MEDICINE HAT

Strategic Plan

2027-2030

MESSAGE | **CITY COUNCIL**

Over the past several months, Council has undertaken an extensive process to develop this Strategic Plan and establish a clear direction for Medicine Hat's future. What began as a series of conversations among elected officials evolved into a collaborative effort informed by a comprehensive review of the City's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges, discussions with Administration, and engagement with community partners. Throughout the process, Council members also drew upon the experiences, concerns, and ideas shared by residents during the election campaign and since taking office.

As a new Council, this work has provided a deeper appreciation for the complexity of municipal government and the wide range of services, responsibilities, and opportunities that shape our community every day. We have gained a greater understanding of the difficult decisions required to balance affordability, service expectations, infrastructure needs, economic development, and long-term sustainability. This perspective has helped inform a practical and focused approach to setting priorities.

This Strategic Plan represents Council's collective commitment to take prudent, deliberate steps that move the needle in areas we believe matter most to residents. While meaningful change takes time, we are confident that by focusing our efforts, aligning resources, and measuring progress, we can create lasting value for our community. The plan is intended to guide decisions, investments, and accountability over the coming years while remaining responsive to changing circumstances and emerging opportunities.

We are grateful to Administration, community partners, and residents who contributed their perspectives throughout this process. Together, we are building on Medicine Hat's strengths and positioning our city for a strong, sustainable, and prosperous future.

Medicine Hat City Council
Linnsie Clark (Mayor), Ted Clugston, Bill Cocks, Chris Hellman, Yusuf Mohammed, Cheryl Phaff, Dan Reynish, Brian Varga, Stuart Young (Councillors)

MESSAGE

CITY MANAGER

On behalf of Administration, I am pleased to present this Strategic Plan and to acknowledge the leadership demonstrated by City Council throughout its development. Over the past several months, Council has invested significant time and effort to better understand the opportunities, challenges, and complexities facing our organization and community. Their willingness to engage in thoughtful discussion, consider diverse perspectives, and focus on long-term outcomes has resulted in a clear and practical direction for the City.

Administration is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this process, providing information, insights, and professional expertise to support Council in developing this plan. The Executive Leadership Team also sought feedback broadly from staff across the organization and made meaningful efforts to reflect staff perspectives within the strategic goals recommended to Council. This collaborative approach has strengthened understanding, built alignment, and reinforced our shared commitment to serving residents and advancing the community's interests.

This Strategic Plan will serve as the foundation for Administration's work over the next four years. Council's priorities and goals will be translated into departmental business plans, annual work programs, and organizational performance measures. Each department will identify the initiatives, actions, and resources required to support implementation and achieve measurable outcomes.

To ensure accountability and openness, Administration will also establish organizational key performance indicators and continue enhancing enterprise reporting. A strategic reporting dashboard will provide Council, Administration, and the public with clear visibility into progress, performance, and results. This approach will help strengthen evidence-based decision-making, improve organizational alignment, and ensure efforts remain focused on delivering meaningful value to the community.

We appreciate Council's leadership and the trust placed in Administration to help bring this vision to life. Together, we will continue working to deliver excellent service, manage resources responsibly, and support the long-term success of Medicine Hat.

City Manager (Interim)
Joseph Hutter

Rooted in its entrepreneurial spirit and rich natural heritage, Medicine Hat is a thriving city that creates opportunity, prosperity, and quality of life for generations to come. We aim to deliver measurable and high impact progress through accountable leadership, sound financial stewardship, and strategic investment in economic growth and resilient infrastructure.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Accountability
We honour our commitments and take responsibility for the results.

Communication
We maintain open channels with the public to share information and progress.

Stewardship
We manage public resources with fiscal discipline and long-term thinking.

Service Excellence
We lead with care and professionalism in all interactions and decisions.

DECISION CRITERIA

Council will evaluate all decisions against:

Strategic Alignment	*Does it advance our plan?*
Affordability & Fiscal Health	*Can we sustain it without significant tax and rate pressure?*
Community Benefit	*Does it serve our residents' needs?*
Safety & Legal Compliance	*Does it protect residents and infrastructure, and meet our obligations?*

STRENGTHS

Strong public confidence and consistent satisfaction with core municipal services, supported by an experienced Council and administration.

Knowledgeable, professional staff and leadership with expertise in municipal mandates, regulatory compliance, and complex service delivery.

Reliable, low-cost energy and utility systems, with sufficient water, sewer, and waste infrastructure to support growth.

Available land, and a growing advantage in energy, aerospace, defence, and innovation sectors.

OPPORTUNITIES

Energy systems, utilities, land, and infrastructure can be leveraged to drive economic growth in renewables, aerospace and defence, and emerging industries.

Digital transformation, including AI, cloud, and automation, can be advanced to improve service delivery, efficiency, and decision-making.

Public trust can be strengthened by improving performance reporting, open and proactive communication, and community engagement.

Strategic investments in services and amenities can be aligned to support population growth, workforce attraction, and long-term economic sustainability.

WEAKNESSES

Competing priorities lead to stretched capacity, attention to noncritical initiatives, and reduced organizational impact.

Financial pressures, including reliance on reserves, limited tolerance for tax increases, declining revenues in some areas, and rising costs – all affect long-term sustainability.

Organizational complexity, fragmented data, and inconsistent performance reporting can restrict coordination and evidence-based decision-making across the organization.

Gaps in information sharing, consultation, and prioritization clarity can result in misalignment between decisions and broader community needs.

THREATS

Fiscal, macroeconomic, and resource pressures – including inflation, cost escalation, supply chain volatility, affordability limits, and regulatory uncertainty – constrain growth and service delivery.

Rising service expectations outpace population growth, organizational capacity, and available resources.

External constraints such as regulatory changes, reduced funding, and infrastructure or cybersecurity risks, limit municipal flexibility.

Challenges in attracting and retaining talent, as well as missed partnership opportunities, impact long-term competitiveness.

PRIORITY #1

Fiscal Responsibility

Manage public resources responsibly through long-term financial planning, clear performance reporting, and strategic investment in core services.

OUTCOME

Financial stability with clear value for money

1. The City targets financial sustainability with reduced reliance on reserves and better revenue-service alignment.
2. All major services have set service levels and costs for informed budgeting.
3. Council and public receive clear, outcome-based financial and performance reports.
4. Budgeting prioritizes high-impact initiatives and reduces noncritical spending.

PRIORITY #2

Economic Growth through Asset Expansion

Leverage Medicine Hat's energy business, land base, infrastructure, and economic assets to drive investment, competitiveness, and long-term community value.

OUTCOME

Increased investment and diversified local economy

1. Investment in the City increases, enabled by quicker approvals and development-ready land.
2. Key sectors such as energy, aerospace, and defence, and emerging industries show measurable growth or active project pipelines.
3. The City is recognized as a competitive business destination with strong partnerships.
4. Energy, utility and land assets generate long-term economic value and returns.

PRIORITY #3

Organizational Effectiveness and Reliable Services

Improve how the organization works by aligning people, processes, and resources to deliver responsive, efficient, and high-quality municipal services.

OUTCOME

Coordinated organization delivering consistent, reliable services

1. The organization sets clear priorities and areas of focus with reduced duplication across departments.
2. Departments collaborate better by pursuing shared outcomes.
3. Residents receive reliable, accessible services that meet defined standards.
4. The City modernizes systems for improved efficiency, data use, and service.
5. Council decisions are consistently implemented and communicated for accountability.

PRIORITY #4

Strong Community Connections

Strengthen community connections through meaningful engagement, open communication, accountability, and a commitment to creating a vibrant community where residents feel heard, valued, connected, and proud to call Medicine Hat home.

OUTCOME

Increased community connectivity and positive civic pride

1. Residents' confidence in City leadership grows with open reporting and communication.
2. City decisions are fair, balanced, and reflect community needs.
3. Resident engagement is more consistent, and feedback better informs decisions.
4. Public spaces are safe and accessible, enhancing quality of life.
5. Government and community partnerships yield coordinated social and safety responses.

GOVERNANCE

Council has identified three goals related to governance oversight.

GOALS	STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA	DIVISIONAL COORDINATION
1. Implement Government Relations Strategy and investor concierge for strategic projects.	• Economic Growth through Asset Expansion • Strong Community Connections	City Manager's Office
2. Harnessing digital modernization efforts, explore implementation of comprehensive service request/inquiry system.	• Organizational Effectiveness and Reliable Services • Strong Community Connections	Corporate Services
3. Develop an AI and technology governance framework.	• Organizational Effectiveness and Reliable Services • Strong Community Connections	Corporate Services

CORPORATE SERVICES

MANDATE

Ensure financial sustainability, organizational readiness, and implementation of modern systems.

CONTEXT

- 77% of residents perceive good value for tax dollars, but affordability and cost pressures remain key concerns for residents.
- Budget pressures and reliance on reserves create risks to long-term financial sustainability.
- Residents expect efficient use of resources and clear financial reporting.
- Demand for digital access and modern service delivery systems is increasing.
- Legacy systems and fragmented data limit performance tracking and enterprise decision-making.

GOALS	STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA	DIVISIONAL COORDINATION
1. Ensure low property tax increases and service-level affordability.	• Fiscal Responsibility	City Manager Development & Infrastructure Energy, Land & Environment Public Services
2. Empower front-line staff by garnering input and engaging in decision making.	• Organizational Effectiveness and Reliable Services	City Manager Development & Infrastructure Energy, Land & Environment Public Services
3. Mature existing capital asset management plan to improve capital budget planning.	• Fiscal Responsibility	City Manager Development & Infrastructure Energy, Land & Environment Public Services
4. Refine and streamline procurement processes.	• Fiscal Responsibility • Organizational Effectiveness and Reliable Services	City Manager Development & Infrastructure Energy, Land & Environment Public Services
5. Develop and publish performance dashboards and improve enterprise reporting.	• Fiscal Responsibility	City Manager Development & Infrastructure Energy, Land & Environment Public Services
6. Explore priority-based budgeting to ensure budget aligns with highest priorities.	• Fiscal Responsibility	City Manager Development & Infrastructure Energy, Land & Environment Public Services

PUBLIC SERVICES

MANDATE

Enrich quality of life, safety, well-being and vibrancy in Medicine Hat.

CONTEXT

- Social issues (poverty, homelessness, housing, mental health and addiction) are increasing and affecting service demand.
- 94% of residents are satisfied with parks and green space.
- Residents place high value on safety, quality, affordability and accessibility.
- Fire and Emergency Services' response time performance exceeds both established national standards and national averages.
- Fair Entry participants account for 40% of public transit ridership, underscoring the system's key role in providing equitable access.
- Expectations for service quality continue to exceed typical comparators.
- Aging facilities and growing demand for modern facilities pressure service capacity.

GOALS	STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA	DIVISIONAL COORDINATION
1. Actively support Government of Alberta and shelter operator's efforts in locating 24-hour emergency shelter.	• Strong Community Connections	Corporate Services Development & Infrastructure Energy, Land & Environment
2. Develop a recreation renewal prioritization framework.	• Strong Community Connections	Corporate Services Development & Infrastructure Energy, Land & Environment
3. Create a cost recovery, user fee, and equitable access framework.	• Strong Community Connections • Fiscal Responsibility	Corporate Services
4. Implement Next Generation 911 system.	• Organizational Effectiveness and Reliable Services	Corporate Services
5. Further develop downtown vibrancy, safety, and cleanliness initiatives.	• Strong Community Connections	City Manager
6. Advocate for and enable housing, mental health and addiction supports.	• Strong Community Connections	Corporate Services Development & Infrastructure Energy, Land & Environment

GOALS

DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

MANDATE

Maintain core infrastructure aligned with service levels, affordability, and long-term sustainability and cultivate business friendly environment.

CONTEXT

- Satisfaction with traffic management and improving the flow of traffic has declined and offers room for improvement.
- The business community has expressed concerns with permit processing times.
- Infrastructure renewal remains a top priority, with condition issues across roads and water assets.
- Capital work can disrupt mobility and requires better coordination.

GOALS	STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA	DIVISIONAL COORDINATION
1. Improve permit processing times and report quarterly.	• Organizational Effectiveness and Reliable Services	Corporate Services
2. Implement an AI-assisted infrastructure prioritization project to verify and improve on existing data.	• Organizational Effectiveness and Reliable Services	Corporate Services
3. Review and redesign permit and technical project review processes.	• Organizational Effectiveness and Reliable Services	City Manager Corporate Services Energy, Land & Environment Public Services
4. Drive innovative and cost-competitive approaches to infrastructure maintenance including pipe lining approach for water and sanitary sewer.	• Organizational Effectiveness and Reliable Services • Fiscal Responsibility	Corporate Services
5. Improve coordination of capital project planning and execution to reduce disruption for residents and business.	• Organizational Effectiveness and Reliable Services	Corporate Services Public Services

ENERGY, LAND & ENVIRONMENT (ELE)

MANDATE

Manage energy and land businesses to deliver sustainable dividends with services that are safe, affordable, reliable and that promote economic growth; and provide value-add environmental strategy and compliance services for the organization.

CONTEXT

- Residents expect affordable, stable energy utility rates and reliable service delivery.
- Energy commodity revenue volatility, together with a material deterioration of the natural gas production business's contribution to the City's financials, is creating financial uncertainty and pressures on rates and budgeting.
- Municipal land remains a key driver of economic growth with the opportunity to support market demand.
- Opportunity exists to leverage assets for growth in energy, industrial development, and emerging sectors.
- The need for disciplined investment decisions and clear business cases is increasing.
- Increased stringency of regulatory compliance requirements, together with electricity market redesign, are pressuring existing resources.

GOALS	STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA	DIVISIONAL COORDINATION
1. Support energy utility affordability and reliability with the establishment of a critical spare parts strategy.	• Fiscal Responsibility • Organizational Effectiveness and Reliable Services	Corporate Services
2. Harness energy assets to support economic growth by executing energy agreements.	• Economic Growth through Asset Expansion	City Manager Corporate Services
3. Identify options to access additional high pressure natural gas supply to the City.	• Economic Growth through Asset Expansion	City Manager Corporate Services
4. Progress Saamis Solar project through next stage-gates by securing off-take agreement followed by construction.	• Economic Growth through Asset Expansion	City Manager Corporate Services
5. Enable economic growth by leveraging City-owned land assets, including a decision to address Arena lands.	• Economic Growth through Asset Expansion	City Manager Corporate Services Development & Infrastructure
6. Develop water management strategy to enable industrial growth.	• Economic Growth through Asset Expansion	Corporate Services Development & Infrastructure Public Services

COUNCIL'S DIRECTION

This Strategic Plan sets Council's direction for 2027–2030. It identifies the priorities and outcomes that will guide decisions, budgets, and investments over the next four years.

WHAT COMES NEXT

Council and Administration will use this plan to guide annual budgeting, business planning, and major decisions.

Detailed departmental business plans and performance measures will support implementation internally.

Progress will be shared publicly through future reporting and budget updates.

OUR COMMITMENT

Council's focus for this term is responsible stewardship, economic opportunity, reliable services, and public confidence.

Plan approved by Council
July 6, 2026

Medicine Hat