

Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF)

Presented to Safety &
Social SPC on July 18,
2024

Project Update Report

Introduction

Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF), through Public Safety Canada, supports municipalities in their efforts to resource projects that prevent gang and gun violence within their communities. The City of Lethbridge received funding halfway through year two of the four-year federal program and has been working in partnership with the Lethbridge Police Service (LPS) to develop programming that meets the unique preventative needs in our community.

Community Social Development (CSD) has operationalized the program to include case management and educational services with LPS serving as the primary referring source for case management services and has access to all educational supports.

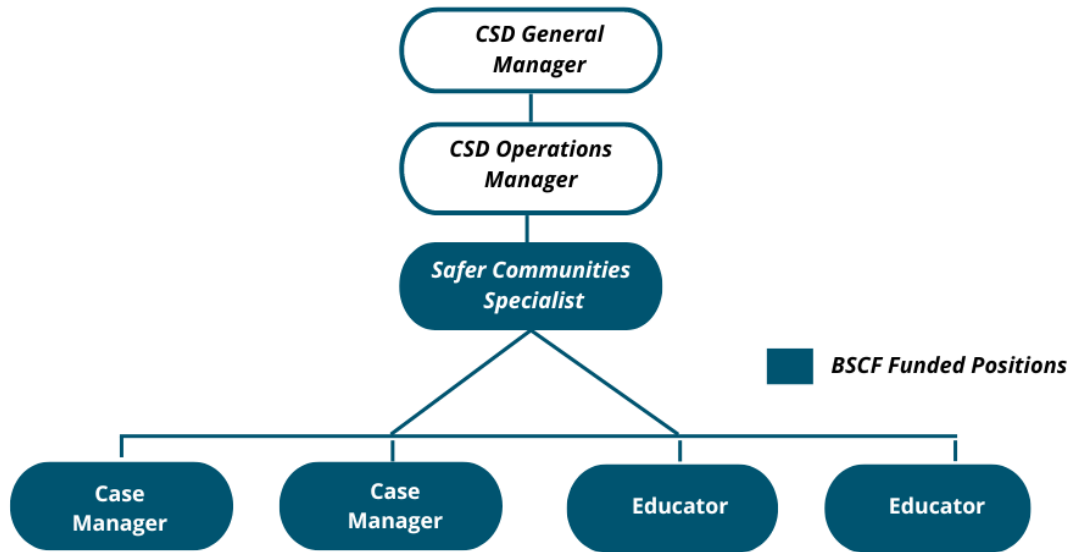
The report provides an update on efforts completed to-date through the BSCF. The report will provide and update on funding timelines, organizational structure/ position description, activities completed in year two of the work plan, the ongoing partnership with LPS, current initiatives/operations and an overview of appendices.

Timeline of Funding

- December 2022, City Administration was directed to complete grant application to Public Safety Canada for the Building Safer Communities Fund.
- July 26, 2023, City Council approved receipt of \$665,618.00 in BSCF funding for federal fiscal year 2023-2024 as required under section 248 of the Municipal Government Act.
- January 23, 2024, City Council approved receipt of \$1,045,971.30 in BSCF funding for federal fiscal years 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 under section 248 of the Municipal Government Act.
- The first year of the City's efforts (second year of the grant program) concluded on March 31, 2024.

Organizational Structure and Position Description

The following provides an overview of the organizational structure supporting the positions which are funded through the BSCF and tasked with completing activities identified in each funding year's workplan, as approved by Public Safety Canada.



Organizational Flow Chart

- Position Descriptions
 - General Manager and Operations Manager of Community Social Development provide the overall management and oversight of the BSCF team.
 - Safer Community Specialist supports with the implementation, monitoring, and assurance of BSCF. The specialist supports Case Managers and Educators with the delivery of prevention initiatives and works in collaboration with LPS to monitor program and system level performance. The Specialist also ensure grant agreement requirements with Public Safety Canada are monitored and met.
 - Case Managers provide a strength-based approach to supporting high-risk youth to identify/build upon protective factors and support systems. Case Managers receive referrals primarily through LPS to ensure the most appropriate youth are selected for case management services. They utilize and work to strengthen community partnerships to support youth on their caseloads.
 - Educators work on system-level development for programs, resources, and education to support the needs of youth in community as it relates to preventing youth gang activity and other violence. Educators work with parents/caregivers, youth serving organizations, schools, front-line workers, and the wider youth population to increase knowledge and capacity to support youth.

Year Two Project Update

- The approved workplan activities for year two were achieved which includes the following:
 - Year two of the federal fiscal grant began on April 1, 2023, and administration did not obtain approval until July 26, 2023. As a result, operations started about halfway through the year, which is reflected in the Year 2 financial actuals.
 - October 23, 2023, Safer Community Specialist hired.
 - October 25, 2023, procurement and hiring of a consultant to complete a community needs assessment; StrategyCorp was the successful proponent. The purpose of the needs assessment was to identify gun and gang themes, types of violence occurring among youth and the general community, general crime trends, emerging issues impacting our community and youth, and gaps in services specifically related to youth.
 - November 2023, StrategyCorp began needs assessment which included stakeholder and community engagement, data collection, and research on best practices.
 - November 28th, 2023, Safer Community Specialist and Operations Manager began engagement and relationship- building efforts with external partners to support the ongoing efforts of the BSCF program
 - December 2023, Workplan for BSCF years 3 and 4 submitted to Public Safety Canada, and received approval January 24th, 2024
 - January 22, 2024, two Case Managers and one Educator position filled, with the last Educator starting April 2024.
 - At the end of year two, BSCF Staff met with 20 service providers and both school divisions to discuss BSCF, strengthen relationships with key stakeholders, and mobilize community resources and support.
 - March 31, 2024, all final reports developed from the needs assessment were finalized by StrategyCorp.
 - Development of a Sustainability Framework is underway that will establish a process for finding alternative funding sources to sustain impactful activities from the BSCF Youth Needs Assessment in the event funding is not extended past March 2026.
- Partnership with Lethbridge Police Service
 - The City of Lethbridge has collaborated with the LPS Community Resource Unit on all aspects of the work completed in year two and for the development of years 3-4 workplan which is now approved by Public Safety Canada. LPS engaged in the procurement process for the consultant work, the selection process for all BSCF staff. Input from LPS was sought during the formulation of the proposal, work plan, budget for years three and four, and they played a significant role in crafting and executing the case management initiatives. BSCF staff have also participated in events at LPS such as Lethbridge Youth Academy and presenting to the College of the Rockies. LPS will continue to play a vital role in years three and four of this project and support the implementation of community initiatives.

Current Initiatives

- Referrals for case management services from LPS have begun and caseloads are now filled based priority. Case Managers provide a strength-based approach to supporting high-risk youth in identify/build upon protective factors and support systems. Case Managers will continue to utilize and strengthen community partnerships to support youth on their caseloads.
 - As of June 12, 2024, referrals have been made through LPS to the case managers and majority of those youth are now being provided supports.
- BSCF staff, alongside members of the LPS, attended the annual Gang and Guns Training Symposium in early 2024 and attended the Alberta Crime Prevention Conference in May 2024.
- In addition to conferences, BSCF staff have completed numerous workshops and have obtained training certifications to strengthen their scope and inform practices that support our community's unique needs.
 - Educators and Case Managers are actively utilizing their learnings by creating community-based initiatives that align with the city's priorities and proven to be successful in other municipalities. Staff have identified specific strategies to help increase the sense of safety and well-being and are in the process of developing and implementing initiatives such as Off the Record, community-wide campaigns to increase education of online safety, and a Community Safety Tool Kit to address factors that affect sense of safety.
 - As part of the ongoing work to address needs/gaps, Educators have been working collaboratively with school districts, community agencies, and LPS to develop and deliver resources to populations such as youth, newcomers, caregivers, and youth-serving organizations. The compiled research and resources include information regarding online safety tailored to caregivers and a school-based program on topics that are impacting youth in the community that align with the Alberta Education curriculum.

Appendices Overview

The following documents are attached to the BSCF Project Update Report as appendices:

1. Building Safer Communities: Youth Needs Assessment Implementation Plan
 - Through the Youth Needs Assessment, it identified youth engage in criminal activity for a wide range of reasons including limited opportunities to participate in pro-social activities, having the self-perception of criminal identity, limited attachment to the community, high commitment to antisocial peers, and increase of lethal substance use. Other themes from the needs assessment identified included caregivers needing education and support to navigate services, youth feeling unwelcome in public spaces, limited mental health supports, and transportation to services and programming.
 - Findings will be used to inform priorities for BSCF in years three and four.
2. What We Heard Report
 - The What We Heard Report is a high-level summary of the youth and community key findings from the stakeholder and community engagement sessions.
3. Building Safer Communities: Community Safety Key Findings Report
 - The report provides more detail on the findings from the stakeholder and community engagement sessions and the data review on crime rate trends to inform how the city can address wellbeing and safety.
 - Findings have been used to inform BSCF work, were incorporated into the safety considerations within the recently updated Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy (CWSS) and will inform future updates to the Downtown/Community Clean and Safe Strategy.
4. Downtown Insight Summary Report
 - Around the same time that the community safety findings were being evaluated, City of Lethbridge City Council approved a term of reference for a Downtown Lawlessness Reduction Task Force. An opportunity was identified for the DLR Task Force to leverage learnings from the community safety needs assessment to inform its work (e.g., the identification of actionable initiatives to address community safety). The Downtown Insights Summary Report was created as an information briefing for the Task Force.
5. Off the Record Summary
 - Off the Record is an example of one of the community-based initiatives being developed under BSCF to foster positive interactions between police and youth through organized sports events. It is featured as an appendix to highlight how BSCF and LPS are taking innovative approaches to support youth and the community.



City of Lethbridge

Building Safer Communities Fund Youth Needs Assessment
Implementation Plan

March 2024

1. Document Purpose

Document Purpose

The City of Lethbridge received funding from the Government of Canada’s Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF) to implement new community-based initiatives to prevent youth from entering gang and gun activity.

A Youth Needs Assessment was conducted to explore how youth could be best prevented from gang and gun involvement in Lethbridge. Additional themes were also explored through the assessment, such as: the barriers youth and their parents/caregivers can experience when seeking access to support services; youth engagement in criminal activity in Lethbridge, including gun and gang violence; existing efforts to support youth rehabilitation; and cross-sector collaboration to support youth. Research findings were summarized and consolidated in the BSCF Final Report. The Report includes 13 recommendations to prevent youth from entering gang and gun activity.

This document is intended to guide the implementation of recommendations from the BSCF Youth Needs Assessment. It details:

- Recommended activities to prevent youth from entering gang and gun activity;
- Supporting actions required for the implementation of each recommended activity;
- The individuals/teams with the primary accountability for supporting actions;
- The resources required to implement each recommended activity; and
- Measures through which to evaluate the success in achieving each recommended activity.

This document should be actively used and regularly referenced by the City of Lethbridge to help it monitor and report on its progress implementing recommendations from the BSCF Youth Needs Assessment. It should be viewed as a living document and regularly updated by the City of Lethbridge based on changing youth needs within the community.

2. BSCF Youth Needs Assessment Implementation Planning

Partner with youth community groups to co-design comprehensive educational campaigns (1/2)

Recommended Activity: Partner with youth community groups to co-design comprehensive educational campaigns.		
Recommended Activity Description	What specific actions can be taken to advance this activity?	Who should lead this action?
<p>Collaborate with youth community groups to co-design multifaceted educational campaigns that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight the lethal nature of prevalent drugs (e.g., fentanyl, methamphetamines, opioids, etc.) and promote awareness of available resources and supports aimed at preventing and addressing substance use among youth; Emphasize the severe legal and other consequences of engaging in criminal activities, including the impact on the lives of both victims and offenders; and Educate youth regarding their wellness and online safety (e.g., online bullying, mental health, sexual exploitation). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage school representatives and youth-serving community service providers to determine appropriate incentives for youth recruitment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BSCF Educators with support of the Safer Community Specialist
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify potential youth participants in collaboration with school representatives and youth-serving community service providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BSCF Educators, school staff, front-line workers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop promotional material to raise youth awareness of the opportunity to participate in the co-design of youth-focused educational campaigns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BSCF Educators will develop, deliver, partner, convene
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-design a plain-language Terms of Reference alongside youth to guide youth participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BSCF Educators with support from the Safer Community Specialist and the CSD Team to research, develop, partner
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a Youth Digital Wellness campaign in partnership with school divisions (e.g., their Digital Wellness Team and Student Wellness Team). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BSCF Educators will work with the school division wellness teams

Partner with youth community groups to co-design comprehensive educational campaigns (2/2)

Recommended Activity: Partner with youth community groups to co-design comprehensive educational campaigns.		
Recommended Activity Description	To accomplish this activity, what do you need (e.g., human resources, equipment / materials, training, etc.)?	How should progress towards achieving this activity be measured?
<p>Collaborate with youth community groups to co-design multifaceted educational campaigns that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight the lethal nature of prevalent drugs (e.g., fentanyl, methamphetamines, opioids, etc.) and promote awareness of available resources and supports aimed at preventing and addressing substance use among youth; • Emphasize the severe legal and other consequences of engaging in criminal activities, including the impact on the lives of both victims and offenders; and • Educate youth regarding their wellness and online safety (e.g., online bullying, mental health, sexual exploitation). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FTE support (e.g., BSCF Educators, City Communications & Engagement Department staff) to lead engagement with community partners and youth and develop campaign materials. • Collaboration with Alberta Health Services Health Promotion Coordinators working in school divisions. • Collaboration with community partners – especially schools and the Lethbridge Police Service – to support content development (e.g., related to crime prevention). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of youth participating in the campaign co-design process. • Youth satisfaction with campaign co-design process (e.g., % of youth satisfied with the campaign co-design process). • Number of unique community members who access and interact with educational campaigns (e.g., the number of individuals who see digital campaign content, the number of likes, comments, shares). • Campaigns are created. • Number of events where information is available for the public. • Number of campaign presentations delivered publicly or in classrooms. • Decrease in the number of online bullying reports and sexual exploitation. • Decrease in the number of arrests related to drug offenses amongst youth / school suspensions or expulsions due to drug-related incidents.

Increase youth justice supports in Lethbridge (1/2)

Recommended Activity: Increase youth justice supports in Lethbridge.		
Recommended Activity Description	What specific actions can be taken to advance this activity?	Who should lead this action?
<p>Collaborate with local criminal justice partners to enhance the provision of youth justice supports that address risk factors associated with gang/gun violence and general criminal activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with local criminal justice partners, (e.g., Lethbridge Community Corrections and the Lethbridge Police Service), to explore opportunities to expand the provision of youth justice supports, such as the Youth Justice Committee. Explore the feasibility of launching pilot program(s) to determine the viability and efficacy of enhanced supports. Engage in discussions with local Indigenous criminal justice partners, (e.g., Kainai Community Corrections and the Blood Tribe Police Service), to explore further opportunities for providing culturally sensitive and community-based restorative justice programs to benefit young offenders in Lethbridge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BSCF Safer Community Specialist & Educators, will partner with , Lethbridge Police and Probation, to deliver, educate, and research BSCF Educators, Case Managers, and Safer Community Specialist will research, collaborate, partner, and develop

Increase youth justice supports in Lethbridge (2/2)

Recommended Activity: Increase youth justice supports in Lethbridge.		
Recommended Activity Description	To accomplish this activity, what do you need (e.g., human resources, equipment / materials, training, etc.)?	How should progress towards achieving this activity be measured?
<p>Collaborate with local criminal justice partners to enhance the provision of youth justice supports that address risk factors associated with gang/gun violence and general criminal activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding source(s) for new youth justice initiatives (e.g., Alberta Community Restorative Justice grant) and additional Youth Justice Committee resources (e.g., volunteers). Ongoing collaboration with LPS, the Youth Justice Committee, culturally appropriate restorative justice program leads (e.g., healing circles), and other restorative justice program leads. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth satisfaction with youth justice supports. Number of referrals / increase in referrals. Recidivism rates. Data from LPS

Assemble a dedicated youth wellness collaborative alongside community partners (1/2)

Recommended Activity: Assemble a dedicated youth wellness collaborative alongside community partners		
Recommended Activity Description	What specific actions can be taken to advance this activity?	Who should lead this action?
<p>Convene a strategic working group / table with key community partners, (e.g., LPS, school divisions, and community / provincial agencies), focused on co-creating and implementing initiatives to improve youth wellness as well as exploring collaborative approaches for improving access to services (e.g., resource sharing, collective advocacy, development of integrated support hubs, etc.).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities to create a youth well-being collaborative within Lethbridge. For example, through the operationalization of a holistic, solutions-focused Youth Case Conference Table. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Table to mobilize community agencies and professionals from varied social service institutions as well as other stakeholders (e.g., the City of Lethbridge, the Lethbridge Police Service, Lethbridge School District 51, etc.). Ensure all relevant stakeholders are engaged to support with sustainability of Youth Case Conference Table. Co-design a plain-language Terms of Reference and / or other collaborative governance materials alongside youth well-being collaborative participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BSCF staff and youth serving organization: Research, Develop, Partner BSCF will work in collaboration with partners to develop

Assemble a dedicated youth wellness collaborative alongside community partners (2/2)

Recommended Activity: Assemble a dedicated youth wellness collaborative alongside community partners		
Recommended Activity Description	To accomplish this activity, what do you need (e.g., human resources, equipment / materials, training, etc.)?	How should progress towards achieving this activity be measured?
<p>Convene a strategic working group / table with key community partners, (e.g., LPS, school divisions, and community / provincial agencies), focused on co-creating and implementing initiatives to improve youth wellness as well as exploring collaborative approaches for improving access to services (e.g., resource sharing, collective advocacy, development of integrated support hubs, etc.).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable funding to continue youth well-being collaborative post-BSCF funding expiry in two years. • Sustainable partnerships to continue BSCF initiated activities post-BSCF funding expiry in two years. • FTE support for “backbone” collaborative activities (e.g., facilitating dialogue amongst collaborative participants, coordinating collaborative activities, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant satisfaction with collaborative involvement. • Term of reference has been developed collaboratively with partners • Number of collaborative meetings. • Number of cases brought before the committee to support with referrals, or number of referrals made from the table.

Increase in-school youth supports in Lethbridge (1/2)

Recommended Activity: Increase in-school youth supports in Lethbridge.		
Recommended Activity Description	What specific actions can be taken to advance this activity?	Who should lead this action?
<p>Collaborate with the Lethbridge Police Service and Lethbridge school representatives to explore feasible options for providing enhanced in-school support for youth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage the Lethbridge Police Service and school representatives to evaluate options for enhancing in-school support for youth in light of a reduced presence from LPS Youth Engagement Officers. For example, could a recommendation be provided to the Lethbridge Police Commission to support consistent and proactive LPS officer engagement with youth in schools? How could BSCF Educators and Case Managers support LPS officer engagement with youth in schools? Identify if FCSS preventative services would be applicable within school districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BSCF staff: Research, Advocate, and Convene

Increase in-school youth supports in Lethbridge (2/2)

Recommended Activity: Increase in-school youth supports in Lethbridge.		
Recommended Activity Description	To accomplish this activity, what do you need (e.g., human resources, equipment / materials, training, etc.)?	How should progress towards achieving this activity be measured?
<p>Collaborate with the Lethbridge Police Service and Lethbridge school representatives to explore feasible options for providing enhanced in-school support for youth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify what supports schools are open to and areas they would like more support in. Identify gaps, and research strategies and best practices at addressing needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction of LPS calls to schools. Better outcomes of student-police interactions.

Continue community mobilization and capacity building to address youth safety and wellbeing in Lethbridge (1/2)

Recommended Activity: Continue community mobilization and capacity building to address youth safety and wellbeing in Lethbridge.		
Recommended Activity Description	What specific actions can be taken to advance this activity?	
Continue integrating BSCF Case Managers within existing youth safety and well-being collaboration and governance structures in Lethbridge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with existing members of the High-Risk Youth meeting to introduce BSCF Case Managers and their role and identify opportunities for further collaboration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer Community Specialist
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend relevant community meetings/tables and report back to BSCF Educators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer Community Specialist and BSCF Case Managers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with community agencies to identify new trends/gaps related to youth safety and wellbeing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSCF Educators
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build presentations to address the needs of the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSCF Educators

Continue community mobilization and capacity building to address youth safety and wellbeing in Lethbridge (2/2)

Recommended Activity: Continue community mobilization and capacity building to address youth safety and wellbeing in Lethbridge.	
Recommended Activity Description	To accomplish this activity, what do you need (e.g., human resources, equipment / materials, training, etc.)?
<p>Continue integrating BSCF Case Managers within existing youth safety and well-being collaboration and governance structures in Lethbridge.</p>	<p>FTE support from BSCF Case Managers, and on-going funding exploration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of presentations / updates provided by BSCF Case Managers to relevant groups. • Number of community agencies actively engaged. • Number of presentations made. • Number of updates received from relevant groups.

Evaluate the feasibility of enhancing existing free-transit support to at-risk youth in Lethbridge (1/2)

Recommended Activity: Evaluate the feasibility of enhancing existing free-transit support to at-risk youth in Lethbridge.		
Recommended Activity Description	What specific actions can be taken to advance this activity?	
<p>Determine whether barriers to accessing the Lethbridge Fee Assistance Program for bus passes could be reduced for at-risk youth in the community.*</p>	<p>Who should lead this action?</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define “at-risk youth.” E.g., youth with Case Managers? Youth without Case Managers who are at-risk of gang and gun activity? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD staff: Research, Develop
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimate the number of youth within Lethbridge who meet the at-risk youth definition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD staff, youth serving organizations, and school districts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage at-risk youth to identify the specific transportation barriers they experience (e.g., limited awareness of the Lethbridge Fee Assistance Program, inability to pay for the 1/3 of the bus pass not covered through the Lethbridge Fee Assistance Program, limited public transit options for accessing prosocial activities). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD and Transit: Engage, Convene
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine eligibility criteria for enhanced youth transit support (e.g., the extent to which at-risk youth need to be referred for enhanced free transit support and by whom). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD and Transit: Research, Develop

*For example, could the remaining 1/3 of funding for a Lethbridge Transit bus pass be covered through an alternative funding source for at-risk youth? Could the three-month reapplication requirement be reduced to minimize the administrative burden for at-risk youth and their families? Could the bus pass cost for at-risk youth be lowered to align with the cost for seniors' bus passes?

Evaluate the feasibility of enhancing existing free-transit support to at-risk youth in Lethbridge (2/2)

Recommended Activity: Evaluate the feasibility of enhancing existing free-transit support to at-risk youth in Lethbridge.		
Recommended Activity Description	To accomplish this activity, what do you need (e.g., human resources, equipment / materials, training, etc.)?	How should progress towards achieving this activity be measured?
<p>Determine whether barriers to accessing the Lethbridge Fee Assistance Program for bus passes could be reduced for at-risk youth in the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable funding to enhance transit support for at-risk youth. Ongoing collaboration with the City of Lethbridge Transit Department. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receipt of additional funding (e.g., from the Government of Alberta). If no additional grant funding and/or funding from other levels of government is identified, Lethbridge Council approval of enhanced transit support funding for at-risk youth. Number of Lethbridge Transit bus passes provided to eligible youth.

Explore the feasibility of a transit pass pilot program for eligible youth (1/2)

Recommended Activity: Explore the feasibility of a transit pass pilot program for eligible youth.		
Recommended Activity Description	What specific actions can be taken to advance this activity?	Who should lead this action?
<p>Consider the implementation of a pilot program, offering free transit passes to eligible youth in the community during the summer months and/or evenings to support greater access to prosocial activities and other necessary destinations, (e.g., social service appointments), during non-school hours. If a free transit pilot program for eligible youth is not possible, explore alternatives for enhancing youth transit options.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine eligibility criteria for transit pass pilot program (e.g., the extent to which at-risk youth need to be referred to the program and by whom). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD and Transit: Develop
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the extent to which other funding could support with a transit pass pilot program.* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD and Transit: Evaluate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage the City of Lethbridge Transit Department to determine potential options for increasing youth access to prosocial activities (e.g., modifying transit routes, a youth shuttle like the Go Friendly Shuttle for older adults, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD and Transit: Engage

*For example, the “development and delivery of prevention intervention initiatives addressing risk factors associated with gun and gang violence, including but not limited to mentoring, counselling, skills development and recreational opportunities” [BSCF activity](#).

Explore the feasibility of a transit pass pilot program for eligible youth (2/2)

Recommended Activity: Explore the feasibility of a transit pass pilot program for eligible youth.		
Recommended Activity Description	To accomplish this activity, what do you need (e.g., human resources, equipment / materials, training, etc.)?	How should progress towards achieving this activity be measured?
<p>Consider the implementation of a pilot program, offering free transit passes to eligible youth in the community during the summer months and/or evenings to support greater access to prosocial activities and other necessary destinations, (e.g., social service appointments), during non-school hours. If a free transit pilot program for eligible youth is not possible, explore alternatives for enhancing youth transit options.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable funding to provide enhanced transit support for at-risk youth. Ongoing collaboration with the City of Lethbridge Transit Department and youth-focused community providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receipt of additional funding (e.g., from the Government of Alberta). Number of free transit passes provided to eligible youth.

Improve youth access to prosocial activities across different parts of the City (1/2)

Recommended Activity: Improve youth access to prosocial activities across different parts of the City.		
Recommended Activity Description	What specific actions can be taken to advance this activity?	Who should lead this action?
<p>Engage City partners to assess the feasibility of providing existing prosocial programming in different City facilities or City partner facilities on a rotating basis to enhance youth access to activities that are typically concentrated in specific locations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leveraging existing resources (e.g., youth and community services spatial analysis), plot existing prosocial programming at City and partner facilities across different neighbourhoods. Determine the number of pre-existing youth-focused prosocial activities / programming offered in Lethbridge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD and Opportunity Lethbridge: Research, Partner, and Convene
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm which neighbourhoods have limited access to prosocial activities and apply other analytical lenses (e.g., neighbourhood-specific community safety and well-being risk factors). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD, Opportunity Lethbridge, and Planning and Development: Research
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage City partners to assess the feasibility of providing existing prosocial programming in different City facilities or City partner facilities on a rotating basis to enhance youth access to activities that are typically concentrated in specific locations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD: Advocate and Partner
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If existing prosocial activities cannot be offered in underserved neighbourhoods, engage the City of Lethbridge Transit Department to determine potential options for increasing youth access to prosocial activities (e.g., modifying transit routes, a youth shuttle like the Go Friendly Shuttle for older adults, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD: Research and Advocate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine whether existing funding (e.g., Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) funding) could be leveraged for youth transit to prosocial activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD and CWSS Governance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify which specific programs within funded organizations are considered 'prosocial' and enhance data collection on these programs via Schedule D's. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD: Research

Improve youth access to prosocial activities across different parts of the City (2/2)

Recommended Activity: Improve youth access to prosocial activities across different parts of the City.		
Recommended Activity Description	To accomplish this activity, what do you need (e.g., human resources, equipment / materials, training, etc.)?	How should progress towards achieving this activity be measured?
<p>Engage City partners to assess the feasibility of providing existing prosocial programming in different City facilities or City partner facilities on a rotating basis to enhance youth access to activities that are typically concentrated in specific locations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing collaboration with the City of Lethbridge Transit Department, other Infrastructure Services Departments, and youth-focused community providers (e.g., Building Brains Together). Community of Practice for Coordinated Access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of youth-focused prosocial activities offered in new locations. The number of youth participants attending prosocial activities in new locations. Increased access to activities in areas experiencing barriers % of positive change experienced by participants per specific program (by leveraging FCSS data). (how many locations they can offer their services – Ivan)

Use existing funding sources to provide grant opportunities to expand youth access to prosocial activities and cultural programming (1/2)

Recommended Activity: Use existing funding sources to provide grant opportunities to expand youth access to prosocial activities and cultural programming within Lethbridge.		
Recommended Activity Description	What specific actions can be taken to advance this activity?	Who should lead this action?
Offer a grant to community organizations interested in providing prosocial programming in underserved areas of the City. Offer a grant to community organizations interested in providing culturally appropriate opportunities for youth to connect with their cultural heritage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine eligibility criteria for grantees and programming parameters (e.g., one-time event vs. continuous programming, on-site vs. off-site programming, ability to serve priority youth populations, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD: Explore
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop grant application guide / new communications assets to support grant applicants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD: Develop
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate criteria related to supporting at-risk youth in Lethbridge into other City grant opportunities (e.g., grants related to FCSS funding). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD/CWSS Governance, building evaluative criteria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing grant application processes (e.g., the City's Community Event Support Grant) to determine if applicant barriers could be reduced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD: Review, Evaluate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the City's Fee Assistance Program processes and determine whether resident barriers could be reduced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD: explore barriers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage youth-focused community service providers, other stakeholders, and residents to deepen understanding of challenges experienced by different subsets of youth (e.g., youth whose first language is not English). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BSCF Educators: Convene, Research

Use existing funding sources to provide grant opportunities to expand youth access to prosocial activities and cultural programming (2/2)

Recommended Activity: Use existing funding sources to provide grant opportunities to expand youth access to prosocial activities and cultural programming within Lethbridge.		
Recommended Activity Description	To accomplish this activity, what do you need (e.g., human resources, equipment / materials, training, etc.)?	How should progress towards achieving this activity be measured?
<p>Offer a grant to community organizations interested in providing prosocial programming in underserved areas of the City. Offer a grant to community organizations interested in providing culturally appropriate opportunities for youth to connect with their cultural heritage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable funding to continue providing grant opportunities for prosocial activities and cultural programming in Lethbridge for at-risk youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of new prosocial activities offered by grant recipients. Criteria related to supporting at-risk youth is incorporated into relevant City grant opportunities.

Advocate for the expansion of youth mental health services in Lethbridge (1/2)

Recommended Activity: Advocate for the expansion of youth mental health services in Lethbridge.		
Recommended Activity Description	What specific actions can be taken to advance this activity?	
<p>Advocate to provincial and federal government bodies for the scaling up of youth mental health services in Lethbridge, emphasizing the critical need for additional youth-serving mental health professionals (e.g., Child Psychiatrist, ect).</p>	<p>Who should lead this action?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD/ CWSS Governance 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather existing City of Lethbridge data regarding mental health services (e.g., from Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy research, partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Lethbridge: Advocacy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage youth-serving mental health providers in the community to gather additional data regarding youth mental health services in Lethbridge (e.g., service utilization rates, wait times, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Lethbridge: Advocacy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a baseline of existing mental health providers / services available to youth in Lethbridge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Lethbridge: Advocacy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate data and quantify gaps / barriers to mental health services for youth and whether existing funding could be used for mental health professional recruitment (e.g., FCSS counselling funding). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Lethbridge: Advocacy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop data-informed supporting materials for consideration by City Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD: Explore, Develop
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore how barriers could be reduced for at-risk youth and their families in accessing Integrated Coordinated Access (ICA) services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD/ CWSS Governance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize youth access to counselling resources through the ICA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD/ CWSS Governance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch a campaign to have more youth-serving counsellors as part of the ICA system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD/ CWSS Governance

Advocate for the expansion of youth mental health services in Lethbridge (2/2)

Recommended Activity: Advocate for the expansion of youth mental health services in Lethbridge.		
Recommended Activity Description	To accomplish this activity, what do you need (e.g., human resources, equipment / materials, training, etc.)?	How should progress towards achieving this activity be measured?
<p>Advocate to provincial and federal government bodies for the scaling up of youth mental health services in Lethbridge, emphasizing the critical need for additional youth-serving mental health professionals (e.g., Child Psychologists).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City FTE support for data collection, analysis, and presentation. • City Council support (due to advocacy with other levels of government). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which relevant, high-quality data is gathered from City partners (e.g., Canadian Mental Health Association). • Increase youth access to preventative mental supports in line with FCSS funding

Collaborate with regional partners to secure funding for better housing options for vulnerable youth (1/2)

Recommended Activity: Collaborate with regional partners to secure funding for better housing options for vulnerable youth.		Who should lead this action?
Recommended Activity Description	What specific actions can be taken to advance this activity?	
<p>Explore forming a coalition with regional partners to collectively advocate for dedicated funding within the Government of Alberta's Stronger Foundations Affordable Housing Strategy to specifically address the housing needs of vulnerable youth; the Strategy explicitly specifies 'youth exiting government care' as a target population requiring enhanced support.</p> <p>Campaign for the Province to officially acknowledge and include additional vulnerable youth groups – such as emancipated, unhoused and/or formerly incarcerated youth, and Indigenous youth transitioning from reserves to urban centres – as designated target populations within the Strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate existing data regarding the housing needs of vulnerable youth and potential information gaps (e.g., Point-In-Time counts, By-Names List). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD: Explore, Evaluate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage youth-focused community service providers to develop a deeper understanding of Lethbridge's current state regarding youth homelessness and housing insecurity (e.g., youth under the care of Children and Family Services). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD: Explore, Advocacy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage community partners regarding existing data collection capabilities and opportunities to gather more comprehensive data regarding the housing needs of different types of youth (e.g., unhoused and/or formerly incarcerated youth, and Indigenous youth transitioning from reserves to urban centres). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD: Evaluate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research leading practices for gathering data on vulnerable youth (e.g., regarding hidden homelessness in youth). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD: Research

Collaborate with regional partners to secure funding for better housing options for vulnerable youth (2/2)

Recommended Activity: Collaborate with regional partners to secure funding for housing solutions for vulnerable youth		
Recommended Activity Description	To accomplish this activity, what do you need (e.g., human resources, equipment / materials, training, etc.)?	How should progress towards achieving this activity be measured?
<p>Explore forming a coalition with regional partners to collectively advocate for dedicated funding within the Government of Alberta's Stronger Foundations Affordable Housing Strategy to specifically address the housing needs of vulnerable youth; the Strategy explicitly specifies 'youth exiting government care' as a target population requiring enhanced support.</p> <p>Campaign for the Province to officially acknowledge and include additional vulnerable youth groups – such as emancipated, unhoused and/or formerly incarcerated youth, and Indigenous youth transitioning from reserves to urban centres – as designated target populations within the Strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced data collection capabilities. For example, through collaboration agreements or Memorandums of Understanding with partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The availability of more accurate data regarding youth homelessness and housing insecurity. Youth identified on the By-Names List are connected to resources

Use existing funding sources to provide grant opportunities to community service providers to expand support services geared towards parents / caregivers (1/2)

Recommended Activity: Use existing funding sources to provide grant opportunities to community service providers to expand support services geared towards parents / caregivers.	
Recommended Activity Description	What specific actions can be taken to advance this activity?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage parent- and caregiver-focused community service providers (e.g., Family Centre Lethbridge, Family Ties Association), other stakeholders, and residents to deepen understanding of challenges experienced by different subsets of parents / caregivers (e.g., grandparents, newcomers, single parent householders, etc.).
Offer a grant to community organizations interested in providing programming for parents/caregivers to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to support their youth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine eligibility criteria for grantees and programming parameters.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop grant application guide / new communications assets to support grant applicants.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate criteria related to supporting parents and caregivers in Lethbridge into other City grant opportunities.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage parent- and caregiver-focused community service providers regarding key performance indicator collection and potential for tracking data related to parent/caregiver support services through existing data collection processes.
	Who should lead this action?

Use existing funding sources to provide grant opportunities to community service providers to expand support services geared towards parents / caregivers (2/2)

Recommended Activity: Use existing funding sources to provide grant opportunities to expand support services geared towards parents / caregivers.		
Recommended Activity Description	To accomplish this activity, what do you need (e.g., human resources, equipment / materials, training, etc.)?	How should progress towards achieving this activity be measured?
<p>Offer a grant to community organizations interested in providing programming for parents/caregivers to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to support their youth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable funding to continue parent / caregiver support services post-BSCF funding expiry in two-years (FCSS). Enhanced data collection capabilities. For example, through collaboration agreements or Memorandums of Understanding with partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of new support services offered by grant recipients to parents and caregivers. Criteria related to supporting parents / caregivers incorporated into relevant City grant opportunities.

Highlight positive youth contributions in the community (1/2)

Recommended Activity: Highlight positive youth contributions in the community.		
Recommended Activity Description	What specific actions can be taken to advance this activity?	Who should lead this action?
<p>Launch a marketing campaign through the City's Communications and Media Department, in partnership with local media outlets, to highlight positive contributions of youth in the community, showcasing stories of their achievements and the supportive roles of local agencies and businesses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage the Lethbridge Police Service and other community partners to determine how positive youth contributions could be best amplified/communicated, the types of youth contributions that should be featured, and how youth achievements could be selected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Lethbridge Internal Departments: Advocate, Convene, Partner, Invest
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene local partners (e.g., community agencies, school divisions, Downtown Lethbridge BRZ, etc.) to identify compelling stories of youth achievements and positive community involvement that meet youth achievement parameters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD: Convene, Advocate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify new opportunities for youth-focused events in Lethbridge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSD: Monitor

Highlight positive youth contributions in the community (2/2)

Recommended Activity: Highlight positive youth contributions in the community.		
Recommended Activity Description	To accomplish this activity, what do you need (e.g., human resources, equipment / materials, training, etc.)?	How should progress towards achieving this activity be measured?
<p>Launch a marketing campaign through the City's Communications and Media Department, in partnership with local media outlets, to highlight positive contributions of youth in the community, showcasing stories of their achievements and the supportive roles of local agencies and businesses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal City resources support to develop and execute a marketing campaign (e.g., create shareable multimedia content, such as articles and videos). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of unique community members who access and interact with related communications (e.g., through X, Instagram, City website, etc.). Number of positive youth contributions sentiments in the news and/or social media

Evaluate strategies / options to boost awareness of existing navigation resources (1/2)

Recommended Activity: Evaluate strategies / options to boost awareness of existing navigation resources.	
Recommended Activity Description	Who should lead this action?
<p>Assess different tactics for the City to amplify awareness of existing system navigation resources (e.g., Community LINKS, Integrated Coordinated Access Network) to ensure youth and their families can access necessary tools and guidance. For example, organize and facilitate community workshops to educate youth and their parents / caregivers on using existing navigation systems to access a broad range of services tailored to young people.</p>	<p>What specific actions can be taken to advance this activity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage a presence at community events that involve youth to showcase available resources and supports (e.g., Community LINKS, Integrated Coordinated Access Network, Youth Navigators etc.). Target events such as Lethbridge Play Day, Summer Camps, Boo Bash, and other activities by groups like the Family Centre, Building Brains Together, BGC Lethbridge, etc. Utilize ICA partners (e.g., Volunteer Lethbridge, BBBS, BGC) to assist with logistics, registration, and other administrative tasks during presentations/workshops.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BSCF Educators: Develop, Implement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host and / or ensure resource / support representatives have completed Cultural Competency training to ensure inclusivity and understanding of diverse cultural backgrounds among the participants. Provide language interpreters to target newcomer demographics.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead targeted efforts aimed at facilitating better representation and engagement from youth-serving organizations within ICA system.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educators and Safer Community Specialist as tier 3 system navigators: Convene and Partner Safer Community's Specialist, BSCF Educators, ICA Technician

Evaluate strategies / options to boost awareness of existing navigation resources (2/2)

Recommended Activity: Evaluate strategies / options to boost awareness of existing navigation resources.		
Recommended Activity Description	To accomplish this activity, what do you need (e.g., human resources, equipment / materials, training, etc.)?	How should progress towards achieving this activity be measured?
<p>Assess different tactics for the City to amplify awareness of existing system navigation resources (e.g., Community LINKS, Integrated Coordinated Access Network) to ensure youth and their families can access necessary tools and guidance. For example, organize and facilitate community workshops to educate youth and their parents / caregivers on using existing navigation systems to access a broad range of services tailored to young people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from the City’s Communications team. • Tool for collecting data on workshop attendance, demographics, participant satisfaction via testimonials, success stories, etc. • Marketing materials (e.g., flyers, posters/toolkits, digital graphics to promote the workshops through various channels). • Social media presence / access to spread the word about the workshops and engage with the community. • A dedicated webpage or online platform where participants can learn more about the workshops and register to attend (keeping this attached to ICA). • Promotional support from established tables and forums (e.g., COP, CART, community partners); partner promotion of the BSCF. • Printed materials (e.g., handouts, brochures, and informational materials about the navigation and referral systems for workshop participants to take home). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % increase in the utilization of existing digital navigation resources. • Number of referral to a youth serving organization within the ICA system • Post survey regarding information presented • Number of community events attended



Community Safety Engagement – What We Heard Report

April 2024



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Project Summary & Background

The City of Lethbridge (“the City” or “Lethbridge”) engaged StrategyCorp – a strategic advisory firm – in November 2023 to help advance their community safety, well-being, and inclusion work in light of their receipt of funding through the Government of Canada’s Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF).

Through this project, the City sought to explore how new community-based initiatives could be implemented to prevent youth from participating in gun and gang activity. The City also aimed to examine how existing community safety and wellbeing-related plans could be updated to broaden their geographic reach and ensure they address recent community challenges. A key element of this work was a needs assessment focused on both general community safety and the experience of youth within the community specifically.

Engagement & Research

To inform the needs assessment, StrategyCorp conducted several research activities, including:

- Community Safety Survey (1,704 total responses);
- A Youth Needs Assessment Survey (52 responses);
- 11 interviews with cross-sectoral representatives;
- 1 focus group with community agencies;
- 1 focus group with school division representatives; and
- 2 Community Pop-Ups (i.e., informal in-person engagement opportunities).

Deliverables/Outcomes

The City of Lethbridge requested that StrategyCorp create a high-level summary of key themes from the stakeholder and community engagement completed as a part of this project.

Summary of Key Themes

The stakeholder and community engagement process was designed to facilitate the collection of information related to two distinct yet interrelated focus areas: a youth needs assessment and a community needs assessment.

Youth Needs Assessment Summary

The youth needs assessment stream concentrated on identifying how youth could be best prevented from gang and gun involvement in Lethbridge. Insights from the youth needs assessment can be categorized into 12 distinct themes:

1. **Transportation Access:** Many youths in Lethbridge find the public transportation system challenging to use due to inefficient routes and high costs. This difficulty can restrict their ability to reach essential social services, healthcare, and prosocial activities, contributing to a sense of isolation. This challenge highlights the need for improvements in the City's public transportation system to better support youths' needs.
2. **Prosocial Opportunities:** Numerous prosocial opportunities exist in Lethbridge, such as sports, arts, and other recreational activities. However, access to these opportunities is often uneven across the City, and affordability is a significant concern for many families. Despite the existence of fee assistance programs, administrative barriers can make them difficult to access, limiting youth participation and suggesting a need for more evenly geographically distributed and affordable options.
3. **Mental Health:** Many youths in Lethbridge are faced with complex mental health challenges (e.g., social anxiety, depression). These challenges have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the pervasive use of social media. However, access to professional mental health support is limited in Lethbridge, leading to growing concern and frustration within the community. Despite these challenges, increased awareness and advocacy present an opportunity for the community to prioritize mental health services and create a supportive environment for youth struggling with mental health issues.
4. **Substance Use and Addiction:** Lethbridge is witnessing an increase in the use of highly addictive and lethal drugs like opioids and methamphetamines among its youth. Substance use can lead to criminal activity and the experience of significant trauma, affecting both users and non-users. The public consumption of drugs and the witnessing of overdoses contribute to a sense of insecurity and distress among many youth. However, amidst this concerning trend, there is an opportunity for enhanced education and prevention efforts targeting youth to mitigate substance use and addiction, promoting healthier choices and lifestyles.

5. **Safe & Welcoming Spaces:** Some youths in Lethbridge feel unwelcome in public spaces, which has further contributed to feelings of social isolation. Although some local businesses have made efforts to create welcoming spaces for youth, there is a need for more widespread initiatives to foster an environment where all youth feel included and can engage in positive activities within the community.
6. **Safe & Affordable Housing:** Housing is a significant issue for different types of youth in Lethbridge, including unhoused youth and those under the guardianship of Children and Family Services. A lack of affordable and safe housing options affects their well-being and safety, pointing to the need for more affordable and suitable housing options for youth in Lethbridge.
7. **Parental/Caregiver Supports:** Many parents and caregivers in Lethbridge are not equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to assist youth in navigating specific challenges, such as mental health crises and anti-social behaviour. In some cases, other obstacles, including financial hardship, cultural barriers, and personal viewpoints, can further complicate this assistance. These challenges underscore the need for more resources and support for parents and caregivers, in addition to reinforcing the importance of highlighting existing programs for parents and caregivers.
8. **Service Access Barriers:** Despite the existence of various programs and services designed to support youth in Lethbridge, a range of barriers can hinder youth from accessing these supports. These barriers include limited availability, geographical dispersion, and a lack of awareness about these resources. More accessible and well-publicized services are needed.
9. **Youth Criminal Activity:** Youth in Lethbridge engage in criminal activity for various reasons, including drug addiction, peer pressure, a lack of prosocial activities, and exploitation by family members or community acquaintances. This situation highlights the need for more effective interventions and supports to deter youth from engaging in criminal activity.
10. **Youth Gun and Gang Activity:** There has been an increase in the use of a variety of weapons, including replica guns, by youth involved in criminal activities in Lethbridge. While youth gang activity is generally less structured, it is still prevalent. These trends point to the need for more preventative strategies to deter youth from engaging in gun and gang activity.
11. **Rehabilitation of Young Offenders:** The youth criminal justice system in Lethbridge plays a crucial role in rehabilitating young offenders. However, more resources and volunteers are needed to expand these efforts effectively. As schools continue to navigate complex challenges pertaining to their students, there is an opportunity for them to provide more dedicated support services for students.

12. **Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Lethbridge boasts strong collaboration among various organizations that support youth. However, there are opportunities to enhance this collaboration by focusing more on proactive decision-making and early identification of at-risk youth. Despite having youth tables, many initiatives do not include preventative measures.

Community Needs Assessment Summary

The community needs assessment stream focused on gathering broad input from the community regarding safety and perceptions of safety in Lethbridge. Responses to the Community Safety Survey revealed a generally neutral sentiment towards safety within the community, with a smaller number of individuals feeling either completely safe or unsafe.

Overnight and evening periods are perceived as the least safe times in Lethbridge, and particular neighbourhoods, notably downtown and the northside of the City, were identified as areas of concern. The most pressing safety and wellbeing issues identified were substance use/addiction problems, homelessness, crimes against property and persons, and inadequate access to health services. Additionally, 65% of participants expressed a lack of effective community safety and wellbeing initiatives, indicating a need to enhance awareness of, or improve these initiatives.

Input from the Community Safety Survey and other engagement conducted as a part of the community needs assessment was utilized to develop qualitative themes in line with the six elements of the [Downtown Clean and Safe Strategy](#) Action Plan:

1. **Enforcement:** Many community members have expressed disappointment in policing and the justice system, advocating for both an increased police presence and a focus on crime prevention and rehabilitation. The Lethbridge Police Service (LPS) Watch Program has met mixed reactions, with some advocating for increased diversity and transparency in training among volunteers.
2. **Security:** As discussed above, many community members perceive downtown and North Lethbridge as unsafe, especially near facilities serving unhoused individuals. This perception negatively impacts local businesses and deters foot traffic. Assault rates and theft have been increasing significantly in the community, contributing to the perceived lack of safety. Limited foot traffic in City parks also makes some community members feel unsafe.
3. **Outreach:** Community patrols supporting unhoused individuals and those facing mental health or addiction challenges are seen as vital for enhancing community safety. Direct outreach support, providing transportation, hygiene care, and nutritional assistance to vulnerable individuals, is also seen as crucial and effective in supporting LPS and reducing police response times. The provision of preventative support by community patrols creates more time for LPS to focus on incident response.

4. **Cleaning:** Nearly 1 in 4 residents surveyed expressed concern about unclean public spaces, and close to 1 in 5 residents surveyed highlighted enhanced cleanliness as a key improvement opportunity for community safety and wellbeing. Some residents suggested expanding programs that make the City clean, safe, and vibrant, like garbage cleanup, sidewalk sweeping, and graffiti removal.
5. **Built Environment Improvements:** Some community members believe enhancements to public infrastructure, like installing water fountains and planting more trees, can improve safety. Concerns about snow and ice on community paths and roads, and enforcing traffic rules, were also raised. Improved lighting and increased surveillance across the City, especially in areas with limited foot traffic, are desired.
6. **Promotion:** There is a need to drive greater foot traffic to areas perceived as unsafe in Lethbridge to enhance individuals and businesses' sense of safety. There is an opportunity for the City to make it easier for people to organize events (e.g., through enhancing the promotion of available grants, incentives, and financial supports for local street activation) to increase the attraction of individuals to different neighbourhoods.
7. **Other:** The open use of drugs in public, as well as the visibility of unhoused individuals and those experiencing a mental health and/or addiction crisis, negatively affect the community's perception of safety. Some community members view harm reduction services negatively, associating them with petty crime. Others believe education about unhoused people and individuals experiencing mental health and addiction challenges could be improved to inspire more understanding and compassion.

City of Lethbridge – Building Safer Communities Fund

Community Safety Key
Findings Report

April 2024





DOCUMENT PURPOSE

The City of Lethbridge (“the City” or “Lethbridge”) is in the process of updating various plans and strategies aimed at creating an “inclusive and safe community where residents can access the social services and resources they need.”¹ One such plan is the City’s [Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy](#), which seeks to “inform and improve community wellbeing and safety in Lethbridge.”²

To inform the updating of the City’s Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy, the City has requested that StrategyCorp summarize key community safety findings from its research activities related to the City’s Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF) project.

BSCF community safety research involved several activities, such as a Community Safety Survey, interviews with cross-sectoral representatives, focus groups with community agencies and school division representatives, and community pop-ups (i.e., informal in-person engagement opportunities).

This document provides an overview of key findings regarding community safety and perceptions of safety in Lethbridge. It also includes relevant recommendations from StrategyCorp’s BSCF Final Report. Information included within this document is intended to support Lethbridge in updating the City’s Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy.

¹ City of Lethbridge, [Community Social Development Reports and Studies](#).

² Ibid.

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STRUCTURE OF THIS DOCUMENT

First, this document presents key quantitative findings from the BSCF Community Safety Survey, which was launched in mid-December 2023 and closed in mid-January 2024. Survey results - gathered from a total of 1,704 responses - meet the threshold for statistical significance, maintaining an error rate of less than $\pm 3\%$ based on a population of 106,550 (as per the 2023 municipal census).

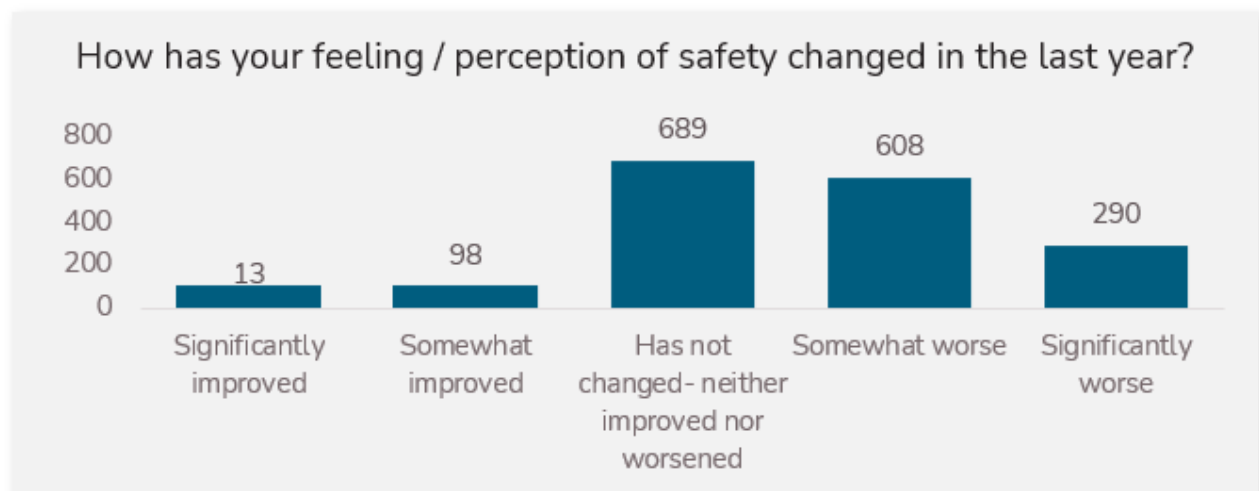
Second, this document outlines key qualitative themes related to community safety that were identified through stakeholder and community input. Six key themes are identified that align with key elements of the City's [Downtown Clean & Safe Strategy](#) (i.e., enforcement, security and promotion, outreach, cleaning, built environment improvements), in addition to a seventh theme related to the visibility of vulnerable populations.

COMMUNITY SAFETY SURVEY FINDINGS OVERVIEW

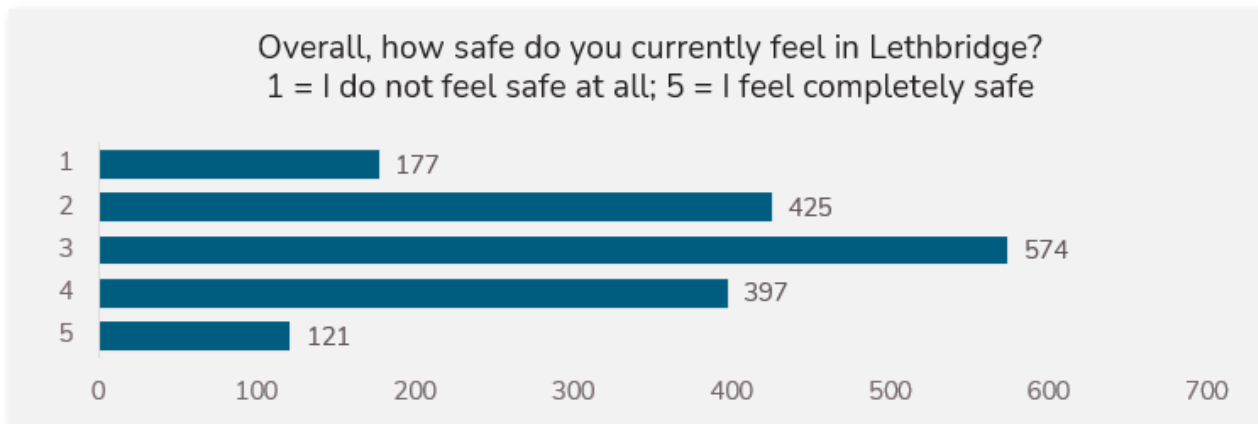
In the BSCF Community Safety Survey, participants were asked several questions regarding their feelings of safety and their perception of safety in Lethbridge. Key survey takeaways are included as follows.

Perceptions and Feelings of Safety

Community members were asked how their feeling / perception of safety has changed in the past year. Options ranged from significantly improved to significantly worse. While many community members surveyed reported that their feeling / perception of safety has not changed over the last year, a notable 53% of participants indicated that their feeling / perception of safety has either somewhat or significantly worsened. By contrast, 7% of community members reported an improvement, whether somewhat or significantly, in their feeling / perception of safety over the past year. Results indicate that, overall, the feeling / perception of safety among most community members in Lethbridge has deteriorated recently.

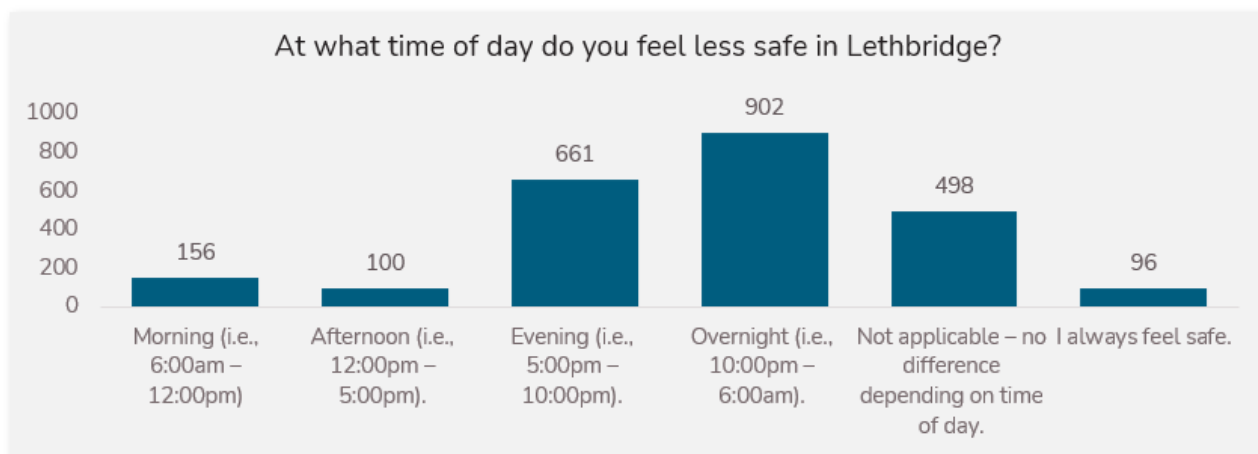


Community members were also asked to rank their feeling of safety in Lethbridge on a scale of 1 (i.e., I do not feel safe at all) to 5 (i.e., I feel completely safe). Most participants indicated that they do not feel a sense of absolute safety or complete insecurity in Lethbridge.

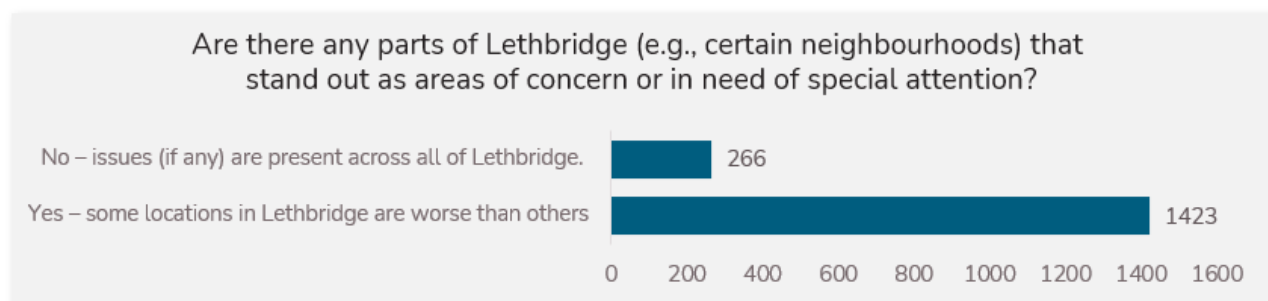


Time of Day and Areas of Concern

To probe further on community members' feelings / perceptions of safety, participants were asked if they feel less safe in Lethbridge during different times of day. Options included the morning, afternoon, evening, and overnight. Participants were also given the option to select "no difference depending on time of day" and "I always feel safe." Overall, community members surveyed expressed a heightened sense of unease in the evening (i.e., 5:00pm – 10:00pm) and overnight (i.e., 10:00pm – 6:00am).



In addition to time of day, community members were also asked if they perceive specific neighbourhoods in Lethbridge as more concerning for community safety than others. 84% of survey participants identified certain neighbourhoods as areas of concern. In open-ended survey questions, downtown Lethbridge and the northside of the City were frequently mentioned by participants as areas in need of special attention. This feedback underscores the importance of targeted efforts and interventions in specific areas to enhance overall community safety and wellbeing.



Priority Community Safety and Wellbeing Issues

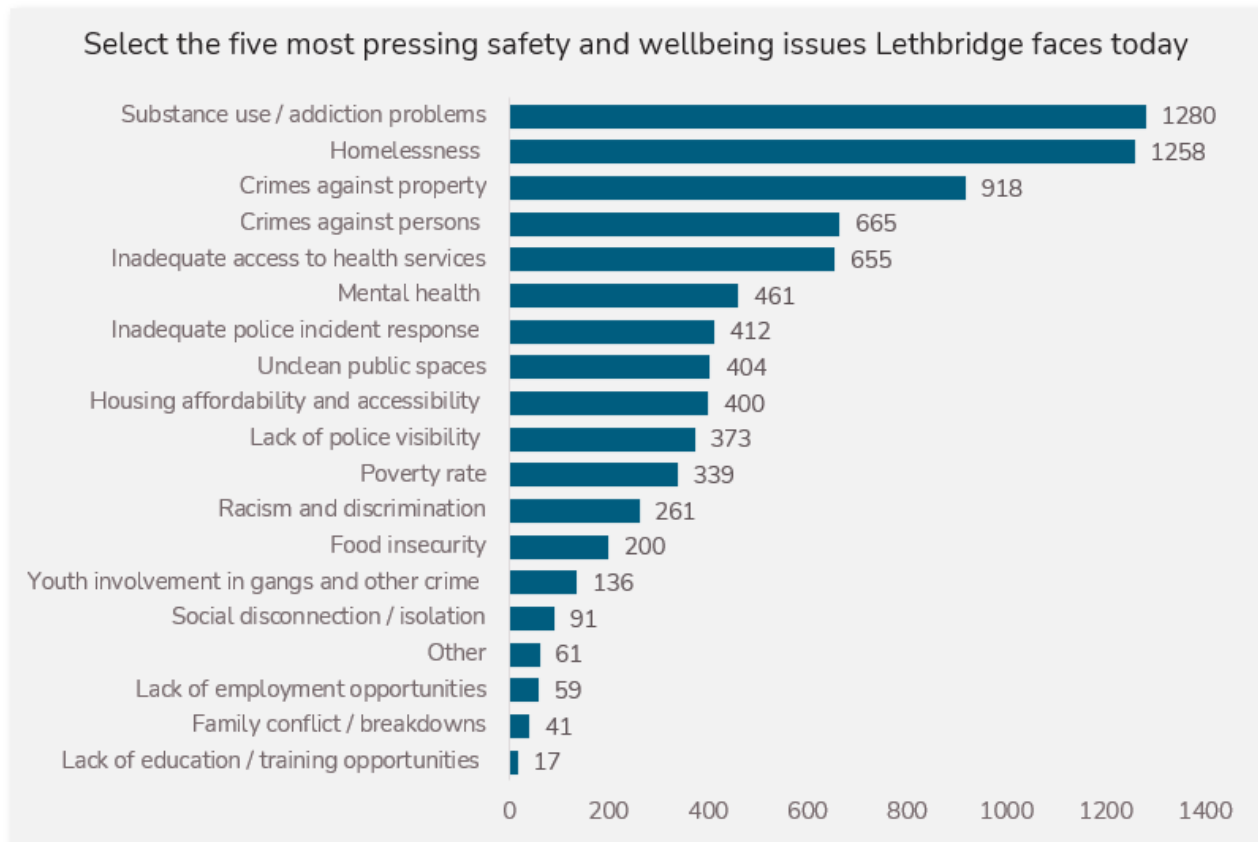
To better understand specific community safety and wellbeing challenges in Lethbridge that contribute to negative feelings / perceptions of safety, survey participants were provided with a list of ~20 community safety and wellbeing issues. From this list, participants were asked to rank the top 5 community safety and wellbeing issues in Lethbridge.

75% of survey respondents identified substance use and addiction as the highest priority community safety and wellbeing issue in Lethbridge, while 74% of survey respondents indicated that homelessness is a high priority issue within the community. Complementing these concerns, crimes against property, crimes against persons, and inadequate access to health services were also identified as significant community challenges.

Effectively responding to high priority community safety and wellbeing challenges within Lethbridge (i.e., substance use/addiction problems, homelessness, and crimes against persons and property) requires that the City and its partners continue working towards preventative, social development-oriented interventions through strategies like the Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy. The proactive promotion of community safety and wellbeing through a community development-oriented approach will help the City address the root causes of highly visible community safety and wellbeing challenges and reduce the likelihood of future occurrences that contribute to community members' lack of perceived safety (e.g., open drug use in public spaces).

Conversely, community safety and wellbeing issues such as a lack of employment opportunities, limited education/training options, and family conflict/breakdown were perceived as less pressing by survey participants. Community members surveyed do not appear to have connected high priority community challenges such as homelessness with challenges like family/conflict breakdown, indicating that there could be an increased role for the City in better educating community members regarding high priority community issues like homelessness and substance use/addiction challenges and the complex factors that contribute to these challenges. For example, how economic and societal issues like poverty and a lack of affordable housing, as well as individual and relational factors like sudden unemployment and/or interpersonal violence, can contribute to homelessness.³ Enhanced educational efforts regarding homelessness and substance use/addiction problems can help reduce stigma of individuals who are unhoused or are suffering from mental health and / or addictions challenges in Lethbridge and reinforce the importance of diverse community supports.

³ Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, [Preventing Homelessness](#).



Priority Community Safety and Wellbeing Improvement Opportunities

Community members were also asked to prioritize improvement opportunities to enhance their sense of safety and wellbeing. Like identifying pressing community safety and wellbeing issues, survey participants were provided with a list of ~20 community safety and wellbeing improvement opportunities.

The highest priority improvement opportunities identified by surveyed individuals include enacting more robust measures to prevent and address crimes against persons and property, increasing support for substance use and addiction services, expanding shelters and safe spaces for vulnerable populations, and increasing access to health services.

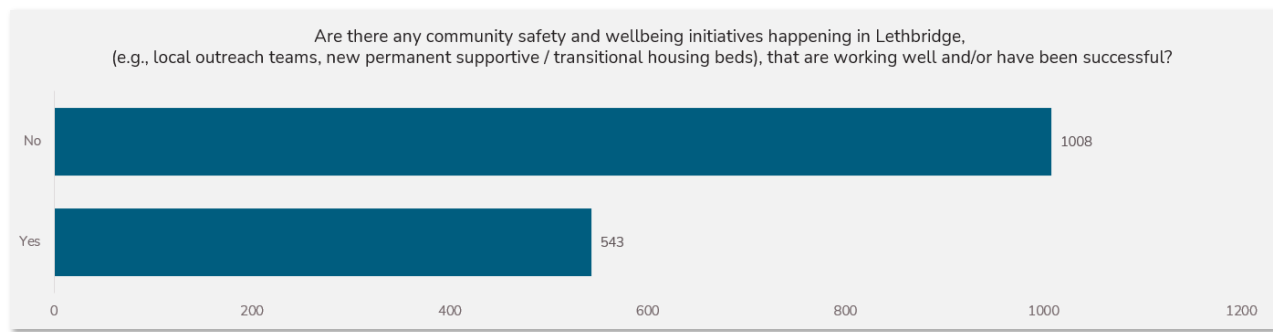
Rounding out the top five priorities for safety and wellbeing enhancements is increasing the visibility of police. It's noteworthy that although this ranks as the fifth-highest priority improvement opportunity, the lack of police visibility itself was identified as only the tenth most pressing safety and wellbeing issue by survey participants. There is an opportunity for Lethbridge to further evaluate community members' perception of the police and how police visibility contributes to feelings / perceptions of safety to inform community safety and wellbeing initiatives.

The community safety and wellbeing improvement opportunities least prioritized by community members include alleviating social disconnection and isolation, strengthening family support services, and facilitating quicker access to street outreach teams. Some community members may have ranked these improvement opportunities as lower priority because they believe sufficient supports exist. For example, in open-ended questions, many surveyed participants mention their appreciation of existing direct outreach supports (e.g., hygiene care, nutritional assistance, harm reduction) in Lethbridge. However, the lower prioritization of alleviating social disconnection and isolation and strengthening family support services may indicate that there is a lack of understanding amongst community members regarding how these improvement opportunities help to effectively address higher visibility community safety and wellbeing issues such as mental health, substance use, and homelessness.



Awareness of Existing Community Safety and Wellbeing Initiatives

Lethbridge has several initiatives to support inclusion, safety, and wellbeing in the community. To gauge how aware community members are of these initiatives, community members were asked to select whether they think existing community initiatives are working well. 65% of survey participants noted the absence of effective community safety and wellbeing initiatives in Lethbridge. This perception could stem from either a lack of awareness regarding these initiatives or a perception that existing initiatives are ineffective (e.g., due to high visibility challenges such as substance use and homelessness). There is an opportunity for Lethbridge to further investigate the root causes of this perception; doing so could unveil opportunities to enhance awareness of existing initiatives, better promote these initiatives, or/or improve initiatives.



STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS OVERVIEW & COMMUNITY SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

Community safety and wellbeing stakeholders and the public were provided with multiple digital and in-person consultation opportunities to provide their perspective regarding community safety in Lethbridge. Key takeaways from interviews, focus groups, community surveys, and community pop-ups are included as follows.

Theme #1: Enforcement

While many community members perceive crime as a significant challenge in Lethbridge, there is a lack of consensus regarding how crime can be best addressed.

Stakeholder & Community Insights

Many community members have concerns about how crime is addressed in the community.

While several community members expressed disappointment with policing and the justice system, the reasons behind this dissatisfaction differ. For example, while some community members would like to see an increased police presence, faster response times, and stricter law enforcement, others advocated for an increased focus on crime prevention and the rehabilitation of individuals who have committed a crime.

While the Lethbridge Police Service (LPS) Watch Program helps many community members feel safe, some individuals would like to see the program evolve in response to community needs.

The perception of the Watch Program varies among community members, with some viewing it as effective while others consider it ineffective. For instance, some individuals expressed a desire to enhance diversity among participants of the LPS Watch Program; these individuals noted the importance of including more volunteers with backgrounds outside of correctional studies and increasing representation from equity-deserving groups.

Other community members highlighted that they would appreciate increased transparency regarding how Watch volunteers are trained, as well as the opportunity to provide feedback to inform the training of volunteers. For example, some community members would like to know whether volunteers are trained in harm reduction approaches and anti-racism. For these community members, it is important that Lethbridge's growing diversity is acknowledged and informs volunteer behaviours.

Recommendations for Addressing Community Enforcement Needs

1.1 Support increased interaction between LPS, local businesses, and community members.

It is recommended that the City work alongside LPS to support the “Community Engagement” pillar of their 2023-2026 Strategic Plan to increase engagement between officers, local businesses, and community members to build and sustain trust. For example, by supporting the hosting of additional Community Conversations events through which LPS shares information with and answers questions from the community, or recreational events like volunteer sports tournaments in City parks.

Events should be used to educate community members regarding local crime rates and trends and why officers approach community issues like they do (e.g., legislative constraints related to open drug use). Public engagement should also promote existing LPS open data tools (i.e., the LPS Crime Map and LPS Traffic Violations Map) while educating community members regarding the potential stigmatization of specific neighbourhoods through these tools.

1.2 Support continued interaction between LPS and members of equity-deserving groups.

It is recommended that the City work with LPS to support the “Community Engagement” pillar of their 2023-2026 Strategic Plan to increase engagement between officers and members of equity-deserving groups (e.g., Indigenous Peoples, LGBTQ+ individuals) and other populations with unique needs (e.g., newcomers).

Existing initiatives should be leveraged to support the ongoing training of LPS officers based on the needs of these groups. For example, Action 1.8 of Lethbridge’s Community Wellbeing Strategic Plan outlines working with system and community partners to develop and deliver capacity building and training on trauma-informed care, integrated service delivery, harm reduction and person-centered services across frontline responders and services.

The City should also engage with LPS to consider how greater transparency can be created for community members, specifically regarding officer training and education, to ensure current training curricula aligns with residents' needs.

1.3 Increase the diversity of the Watch volunteers.

The City of Lethbridge is encouraged to partner with LPS to explore opportunities to increase the diversity of the Watch. For instance, through the development of an intentional, action-oriented diversity recruitment plan to inform upcoming volunteer recruitment campaigns. In doing so, insights should be drawn from LPS' initiative to increase recruiting efforts and attract candidates from under-represented groups, as outlined in the "Healthy Organization" pillar of their 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.

1.4 Help community members feel safer in the evening and overnight.

It is recommended that the City collaborate with LPS to assess why community members feel less safe in the evening and at night and develop a plan to address community evening and overnight safety concerns. This may involve initiatives such as enhancing public education and increasing LPS activities in the evening and overnight.

1.5 Enhance LPS visibility in North Lethbridge.

It is recommended that the City of Lethbridge engage with LPS to determine the feasibility of expanding the operations of the LPS Downtown Policing Unit (DPU) into North Lethbridge or whether a similar unit to the DPU could be created for North Lethbridge.

Theme #2: Security & Promotion

Downtown Lethbridge and North Lethbridge are generally seen as less safe by most community members.

Stakeholder & Community Insights

Specific areas in Lethbridge are perceived as unsafe by many community members.

Many community members expressed feeling unsafe in downtown Lethbridge (e.g., Galt Gardens) and North Lethbridge (e.g., North Legacy Ridge/Legacy Park). Community members also identified feeling unsafe near facilities serving unhoused individuals. This perceived lack of safety can lead to a decrease in foot traffic downtown, particularly at night, negatively impacting local businesses. For instance, while many community members would like to support downtown businesses, some now avoid going downtown, resulting in some businesses shutting down. Business owners cited vandalism, employee safety concerns, and a loss of customers as the main reasons for the closure of their businesses.

Generally, community members highlighted open drug use, petty crime, loitering, and aggressive behaviour in downtown Lethbridge and North Lethbridge as key contributors to their perceived lack of safety. Some of these concerns are reflected in real crime trends in Lethbridge. For example, theft rates in the City have been increasing since 2015, with theft being one of the most common property crime types.⁴ Assault rates and theft from auto rates have also been on the rise since 2014, while break and enter rates have seen significant increases since 2018.⁵

⁴ StrategyCorp's Building Safer Communities Fund Final Report – Appendix A.

⁵ Ibid.

A lack of pedestrian traffic can cause some community members to feel unsafe during recreational activities.

While many community members appreciate the City's parks (e.g., Indian Battle Park), some community members feel unsafe when enjoying parks due to limited foot traffic. Some community members mentioned that better attracting community members to City parks and increasing foot traffic would help them feel safer. Others indicated that enhancing the Watch presence in parks would enhance their feelings of safety.

Recommendations for Addressing Community Security & Promotion Needs

2.1 Increase Watch coverage at City parks.

It is recommended that the City of Lethbridge engage with LPS to determine whether Watch volunteer patrols could be expanded in City parks to make them safer and more welcoming spaces.

2.2 Make it easier for people to organize events.

It is recommended that the City enhance the promotion of available grants, incentives, and financial supports for local street activation and placemaking activities (e.g., the Community Event Support Grant) while also evaluating whether geographically limited street activation and placemaking grants (e.g., the Re-imagine Downtown Activation Grant) could be extended to other community safety hotspots in Lethbridge.

In addition, the City should determine whether Lethbridge's event approval process could be simplified for applicants and whether permit fees could be reduced for events in downtown Lethbridge, North Lethbridge, and other community safety hotspots. To help community members host different types of events, there is an opportunity for Lethbridge to continue developing resources like the Neighbourhood Block Party Planning Guide.

2.3 Help drive foot traffic in downtown Lethbridge and North Lethbridge.

It is recommended that the City consult with business representatives and local business owners to evaluate if existing popular events could be made more frequent and potential partnership opportunities for new events.

Theme #3: Outreach

Direct outreach services for unhoused individuals and those facing mental health or addiction challenges are widely recognized as essential contributors to community safety and wellbeing in Lethbridge.

Stakeholder & Community Insights

Community patrols are appreciated by many community members.

Community patrols targeting unhoused individuals and those facing mental health or addiction challenges were highlighted by community members as vital for enhancing their sense of safety. These outreach efforts garnered praise for their respectful and humane approach and ability to foster trusted relationships within the community.

Direct outreach support is also seen as an important community service by many people in Lethbridge.

Some community members emphasized the crucial role of service providers offering transportation and direct outreach support (such as hygiene care, nutritional assistance, and harm reduction) to vulnerable individuals in the community who may be unhoused or experiencing mental health or addiction challenges. Others view these services as effective in supporting LPS and reducing police response times.

Recommendations for Addressing Community Outreach Needs

3.1 Explore the expansion of diversion / outreach services.

It is recommended that the City engage community partners to determine the feasibility of extending diversion / outreach service hours and the resources required to do so. At the same time, the City should advocate to the Government of Alberta for the funding required to expand these services.

3.2 Explore the expansion of community patrols.

It is recommended that the City engage community patrol representatives to determine their interest in making nightly patrols more frequent and the required resources to do so. It is recommended that the City advocate to other levels of government for the funding required to expand community patrols, if desired by patrol representatives.

3.3 Enhance knowledge sharing amongst frontline service providers.

It is recommended that the City engage the Watch, LPS Community Peace Officers, and outreach / community patrol representatives to identify opportunities for partnership and knowledge and resource sharing between these groups. For instance, opportunities may exist for these groups to better direct clients to one another and enhance client service uptake through the distribution of promotional pamphlets detailing available services and program offerings. Additionally, these groups may further explore how the work of one group can complement another's efforts to better address community safety gaps.

Theme #4: Cleaning

The cleanliness of streets, sidewalks, and public facilities is an important contributor to community members' sense of safety and security.

Stakeholder & Community Insights

Clean streets and sidewalks help many community members feel safe.

Although not identified as the highest priority by community members in the Community Safety Survey, nearly 1 in 4 residents expressed concern about unclean public spaces, encompassing streets, sidewalks, and parks, as one of the most pressing safety and wellbeing issues facing Lethbridge today. Additionally, close to 1 in 5 residents highlighted that enhanced cleanliness of streets and sidewalks is a key improvement opportunity for community safety and wellbeing, contributing to a sense of security in Lethbridge.

Many residents emphasized the positive impact of programs aimed at enhancing the cleanliness, safety, and vibrancy of the City, such as garbage cleanup, sidewalk sweeping, and graffiti removal, on their sense of safety. Some residents explicitly expressed a desire for the expansion of these services in Lethbridge. For instance, some community members suggested extending the operating hours of needle debris collection services to ensure coverage in the afternoon.

Recommendations for Addressing Community Cleanliness Needs**4.1 Explore the expansion of clean streets / sidewalks initiatives.**

It is recommended that the City engage local business representatives to determine the resources required for extending existing street/sidewalk cleaning and needle debris collection programs, such as increasing operational hours beyond the current limit of two hours per day. Subsequently, the City should advocate to the Government of Alberta for the necessary funding to support the expansion of these programs.

Theme #5: Built Environment

Enhancements to public infrastructure could help maximize the usage of City facilities and amenities by community members.

Stakeholder & Community Insights

Pedestrian and cyclist safety is top of mind for many community members.

While public recreational facilities are appreciated in the community, some community members mentioned that enhancements could be made to help them feel safer enjoying such facilities, including installing additional water fountains and planting more trees, among other enhancements. Other community members highlighted that snow and ice on community walking paths and roads causes them to feel unsafe navigating the City during the winter season (e.g., roads around Cor Van Raay YMCA).

In addition, some community members indicated that traffic rules could be better enforced in the City, particularly stopping at crosswalks, and preventing road racing. The Melcor area and Whoop-Up Drive were specifically highlighted as problematic areas for pedestrian and cyclist safety by community members.

Improved lighting and visible surveillance infrastructure would help some community members feel safer.

Some community members highlighted how improved lighting and increased surveillance would help them feel safer across the City, especially in areas where foot traffic can be limited (e.g., downtown Lethbridge). It was suggested that these enhancements would help community members feel more confident of their safety when supporting local businesses and using recreational facilities across Lethbridge.

Recommendations for Addressing Built Environment Needs in the Community

5.1 Continue actively engaging community members regarding pedestrian and cyclist safety

It is recommended that the City continue seeking community feedback regarding pedestrian and cyclist safety and mobility initiatives in Lethbridge via Get Involved Lethbridge and other community engagement opportunities.

It is also recommended that the City lead and / or support educational campaigns led by partners related to pedestrian and cyclist safety (e.g., LPS participation in province-wide programs like the Selective Traffic Enforcement Program).

5.2 Continue providing grants, incentives, and financial supports to improve Lethbridge's built environment.

It is recommended that the City continue offering grants, incentives, and financial supports for local organizations to make built environment improvements in Lethbridge (e.g., the Crime

Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Grant, the Urban Core Property Improvement Grant).

5.3 Build capacity regarding CPTED assessments.

The City should facilitate CPTED training for individuals within the City from multiple organizations and departments, including but not limited to LPS, Planning & Development, Facilities, Parks, and Community Social Development to support greater CPTED proactivity.

Theme #6: Public Visibility of Vulnerable Populations

Many community members mentioned that the open use of drugs, the visibility of unhoused individuals, and the visibility of individuals experiencing a mental health and/or addictions crisis negatively affects their perception of safety.

Stakeholder & Community Insights

The open use of drugs in public causes some community members to feel unsafe.

Through the Community Safety Survey, some community members indicated that people using drugs openly in the community (e.g., in Galt Gardens, in the downtown core, etc.) is detrimental to their sense of safety. Youth consulted also mentioned that seeing visible drug use makes them feel unsafe, especially in the downtown area.

There is a lack of consensus regarding the previous role harm reduction services played in Lethbridge.

During community engagement, some community members praised harm reduction services for supporting drug users and preventing overdoses. Some substance users in particular mentioned feeling safer thanks to these facilities. On the other hand, some individuals view harm reduction services (e.g., supervised consumption) negatively, citing a correlation between the existence of these services and petty crime.

Community members identified homelessness and mental health and substance use as the most significant community safety and wellbeing challenges within Lethbridge.

Some community members shared that seeing unhoused people and those experiencing mental health and / or addictions crises in public places – such as Park Place Mall – makes them feel unsafe. For example, some respondents mentioned these individuals make them uncomfortable because their behaviour could be unpredictable. These concerns were validated by the Community Safety Survey, where 74% of community members indicated that homelessness (including encampments) was one of the most pressing safety and wellbeing issues Lethbridge faces today.

Other community members indicated that education regarding unhoused people and individuals experiencing mental health and / or addictions challenges could be improved to inspire more

understanding and compassion for these individuals.

Other Recommendations for Addressing Community Safety Needs

6.1 Continue educational campaigns to reduce stigma related to homelessness and mental health and / or addictions.

It is recommended that the City continue developing community engagement and public education strategies and campaigns about homelessness and mental health and / or addictions challenges to reduce stigma and inspire more compassion for unhoused individuals and individuals experiencing a mental health and / or addictions crisis.

To support this recommendation, the City should leverage initiatives related to Action 4.8 of Lethbridge's Community Wellbeing Strategic Plan: Develop innovative community engagement and public education strategies and campaigns aimed at reducing stigma and promoting understanding regarding mental health, substance use, crime and safety, racism, and discrimination.

6.2 Increase the promotion of community safety and wellbeing supports and initiatives.

It is recommended that the City enhance the promotion of its and its partner's community safety and wellbeing-related educational resources and tools to boost public awareness of them and maximize their uptake (e.g., the Getting Connected Booklet).

It is also recommended that the City help partners promote their successes through local media outlets to raise awareness of existing community safety initiatives.

DOWNTOWN INSIGHTS

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

PROJECT SUMMARY & BACKGROUND

The City of Lethbridge (“the City” or “Lethbridge”) engaged StrategyCorp – a strategic advisory firm – in November 2023 to help them advance their community safety, well-being, and inclusion work in light of their receipt of funding through the Government of Canada’s [Building Safer Communities Fund](#) (BSCF).

Through this project, the City sought to explore how new community-based initiatives could be implemented to prevent youth from participating in gun and gang activity, and how existing plans (e.g., the [Downtown Clean and Safe Strategy](#), the [Community Clean and Safe Strategy](#), etc.) could be updated to broaden their geographic reach and ensure they address recent community challenges. A key element of this work was a needs assessment focused on both general community safety and the experience of youth within the community specifically.

Concurrently, Lethbridge City Council approved a terms of reference for a Downtown Lawlessness Reduction (DLR) Task Force.¹ The Task Force is seeking to explore the root causes of “lawless behaviours” and their impact on the community and is currently gathering stakeholder feedback.² An opportunity was identified for the DLR Task Force to leverage learnings from the community safety needs assessment to inform its work (e.g., the identification of actionable initiatives to address community safety).

ENGAGEMENT & RESEARCH

To inform the needs assessment, StrategyCorp conducted several research activities, including:

- A Community Safety Survey (1,704 total responses);
- A Youth Needs Assessment Survey (52 responses);
- 11 interviews with cross-sectoral representatives;
- 1 focus group with community agencies;
- 1 focus group with school division representatives;
- 2 Community Pop-Ups (i.e., informal in-person engagement opportunities); and
- An analysis of relevant Canadian Socio-economic Information Management System (CANSIM) data.

DELIVERABLES/OUTCOMES

The City of Lethbridge requested that StrategyCorp create a high-level summary of needs assessment feedback related to the City’s downtown core.

¹ lethbridgenewsNOW - [Downtown Lawlessness Reduction Task Force officially operational in Lethbridge](#).

² Global News - [Combating lawlessness in downtown Lethbridge](#).

WHAT WE HEARD

SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES

Throughout the stakeholder and community engagement completed as part of StrategyCorp's work with the City of Lethbridge, the safety of the downtown core and the well-being of its inhabitants consistently emerged as a central focus. For example, in the Community Safety Survey, when asked if there are any parts of Lethbridge (e.g., certain neighbourhoods) that stand out as areas of concern or need special attention, 84% of survey participants said yes. Of those who said yes, approximately 80% (i.e., 4 out of 5) of individuals singled out downtown as a particularly pressing concern.

Several related themes emerged pertaining to community safety and well-being within Lethbridge's downtown core through needs assessment research:

THEME 1: COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PUBLIC SPACES

Many residents feel unsafe in downtown Lethbridge, particularly in and around Galt Gardens. Concerns were raised about drug use, criminal activity, and a general sense of insecurity, especially after dark. There is unease in downtown public spaces for many individuals, with worries about vandalism, property theft, and overall disorderliness highlighted. Specifically, areas around the Lethbridge Shelter and Resource Centre and the Streets Alive Mission were called out as areas of heightened concern. Some community members advocated for increased efforts from the City to address safety issues downtown, including initiatives to improve lighting and visible surveillance infrastructure.

Some safety concerns reflect real crime trends in Lethbridge. For example, an analysis of CANSIM data indicated that theft rates in Lethbridge have been increasing since 2015. Theft rates are one of the most common property crime types in the City. Assault rates and theft from auto rates in Lethbridge have also been increasing significantly since 2014, while break and enter rates have increased significantly since 2018.

THEME 2: HOMELESSNESS AND ADDICTION ISSUES

Many residents in Lethbridge voiced concerns over the visibility of homelessness and individuals who are experiencing a mental health and / or addictions crisis, particularly in downtown areas and near shelters. These residents often connected the visibility of homelessness and mental health and / or addictions challenges with increased crime rates and safety risks. There's a strong desire amongst many residents for stricter measures against drug dealing and consumption to enhance safety, in addition to more robust support services (e.g., affordable housing and increased mental health and / or addictions supports).

THEME 3: IMPACTS ON LOCAL BUSINESSES

Safety concerns in downtown Lethbridge negatively affect local businesses, with many residents reluctant to visit Lethbridge's downtown core due to safety issues, particularly around the downtown bus terminal and shopping areas. This avoidance of downtown has contributed to the closure of some businesses.

Owners cite vandalism, employee safety concerns, and declining customers as key reasons for shutting down operations. Despite a desire to support local businesses, many community members opt to avoid downtown altogether, negatively affecting local economic activity. In addition, reduced foot traffic downtown often exacerbates feelings of unease among individuals who need to visit the area, further contributing to a perceived lack of safety and further deterring potential customers from supporting local businesses.

THEME 4: COMMUNITY INVESTMENT AND URBAN PLANNING

Several respondents criticized the City's investment choices, suggesting that funds could be better used to address the root causes of safety concerns rather than aesthetic improvements or certain public infrastructure initiatives they view as unnecessary (e.g., downtown bike lanes). Some community members also expressed concerns about the placement of shelters and addictions services in residential areas and noted their desire for these facilities to be moved away from homes and businesses.

THEME 5: POLICE PRESENCE AND RESPONSE

Many residents expressed dissatisfaction with policing in downtown Lethbridge, and cited concerns about "inadequate law enforcement," slow response times, and a lack of visible police presence. However, the causes of this dissatisfaction varied. For example, while some community members advocated for an increased police presence, faster response times, and stricter law enforcement (i.e., getting tougher on crime), others advocated for an increased focus on crime prevention and the rehabilitation of individuals who have committed a crime.

THEME 6: CLEAN STREETS, SIDEWALKS, AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

The cleanliness of downtown streets, sidewalks, and public facilities significantly impacts many community members' sense of safety and security. Nearly 1 in 4 survey respondents identified unclean public spaces, including streets, sidewalks, and parks, as one of Lethbridge's most pressing safety and well-being concerns. The Clean Sweep Program was praised by several residents for enhancing their feelings of safety. Moreover, there is a desire among some residents for the program to expand further, with suggestions such as extending the hours of operation for the Needle Debris Collection Program to provide coverage in the afternoon.

Appendices 5



OFF THE RECORD

WHAT IS OFF THE RECORD?

Off The Record is a program designed to foster positive interactions between youth and law enforcement through engaging activities. This initiative plans to organize open sport events in neighborhoods that have decreased sense of safety identified through the Building Safer Communities Needs Assessment and Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy. The initiative will bring barrier-free access to recreational sport opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

For many youth, their first encounter with justice—whether in school, their neighborhoods, or social service settings—is through law enforcement. The nature and circumstances of this contact can have a significant and lasting impression on a young person. This opportunity aims to increase positive interactions between police and youth to increase the sense of safety, reduce crime, victimization, and recidivism; and foster trust between young people and law enforcement.


WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Sports play a pivotal role in building resiliency and protective factors for youth by providing them with a structured environment, a sense of belonging, and opportunities for personal growth. Off The Record encourages young individuals and law enforcement officers break down barriers and stereotypes, which promotes empathy and understanding through connections based on shared experiences and mutual respect. This collaborative effort not only promotes positive interactions but also humanizes both parties, fostering empathy and understanding. Participation in sports fosters self-esteem and confidence as young individuals set and achieve goals, experience success, and learn to cope with failure. Through sports, at-risk youth can develop valuable life skills, build meaningful relationships, and ultimately, pave the way for a brighter future.

WHO ELSE IS DOING IT?

Feedback from other communities that have implemented similar programming to Off The Record indicates that community members feel safer during program hours and hold a more favorable view of local police departments.

VANCOUVER, BC



At-risk youth are offered a chance to grow and learn in a supervised and supportive environment, taking part in late-night basketball programming. VPD officers volunteer to participate in the games and mentor the youth.

NIGHT HOOPS

LONDON, UK



Rookie League traces back to a group of police officers who noticed a gap in organized sports opportunities for disadvantaged youth within their community. They recognized that sports could serve as a bridge to connect officers with local children, break down stereotypes and create positive role models in the community.

ROOKIE LEAGUE

LOS ANGELES, CA



Building community trust and offering positive alternatives to communities impacted by violence is essential to enhancing public safety. Launched in 2008, SNL has become a summer staple in the Los Angeles communities most impacted by gang violence.

SUMMER NIGHT LIGHTS

CONCLUSION

Through regular engagement in sporting activities, youth gain opportunities to interact with police officers in a non-threatening environment, allowing for open communication and the establishment of trust-based relationships. These interactions lay the foundation for crime prevention as youth develop a sense of accountability and respect for authority figures, thereby reducing antisocial behaviors and promoting positive decision-making. Additionally, sports provide a platform for mentorship, where police officers can serve as role models, offering guidance, support, and encouragement to at-risk youth. Through their involvement in sports, young individuals learn valuable life skills, build self-confidence, and develop a sense of belonging within their community. Overall, the collaboration between youth and police in sports activities fosters community cohesion, promotes crime prevention efforts, and cultivates trust-based relationships essential for building safer and more resilient communities.