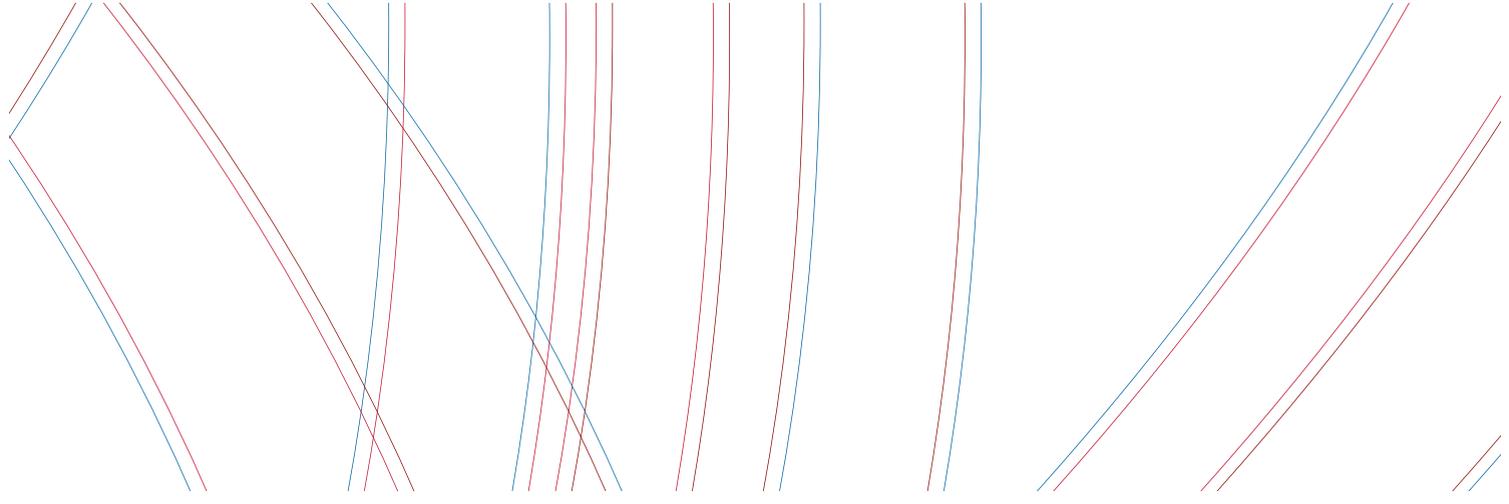


Our Sense of Place

2009 | The City of Leduc

Neighbourhood Design Strategy





Publishing Information

Title: Our Sense of Place: The City of Leduc Neighbourhood Design Strategy

Author: City of Leduc Mayor's Task Force on Neighbourhood Design

Approved: By resolution—City of Leduc City Council March 8 2010

For copies, please contact:

The City of Leduc

Department of Planning and Development Services

Acknowledgements

This report would not have been possible without the valuable contributions of the following individuals:

Mayor's Task Force on Neighbourhood Design

Greg Krischke – Mayor
Judy Archie – Alderman
Terry Lazowski – Alderman
Gord Riddell – Public member
Jackie Truitt – Public member
Kathy Wilneff – Public member
Jennifer Cardiff – City of Leduc
Mike Pieters – City of Leduc
Ken Woitt – City of Leduc

Community Workshop Participants

Duane Barker	Russ Luke
Brian Calhoun	Pat Luke
Lynne Chalmers	Ken Marshall
Megan Hilker	Sandra Maser
Brian Charanduk	John McCaffray
Jeannett Clark	Ewan McDonald
Bill Emmerzael	Eugene Miller
Roxanne Gingras	Emma Pietroleonardo
Jean Gross	Fern Richardson
Clancy Jacobs	Christine Robinson
Pat Klak	Ron Roesch
Nancy Laing	Lynn Samaroden
Susan Lehman	Neville Smith
Shane Leppky	Carol Wallace
Pearl Livingston	Tabitha White

City of Leduc Workshop Participants

Kevin Cole – Public Services
Carol Hampton – Planning
Ron Hanson – Engineering
Syd Reynar – Safety Codes
Bob Scott – Protective Services
Rick Sereda – Public Services
Jason Simituk – Community Services
Tabitha White – Family and Community Support Services

Workshop Designers/Facilitators

Community Workshops:
Richard Parker – RKP Consulting
Administration Workshop:
Pieter De Vos – Culture and Community Spirit,
Government of Alberta

A special **Thanks** to **Brian Charanduk**, a local and well-respected landscape architect who shared his experience and expertise at a community workshop—thanks Brian!

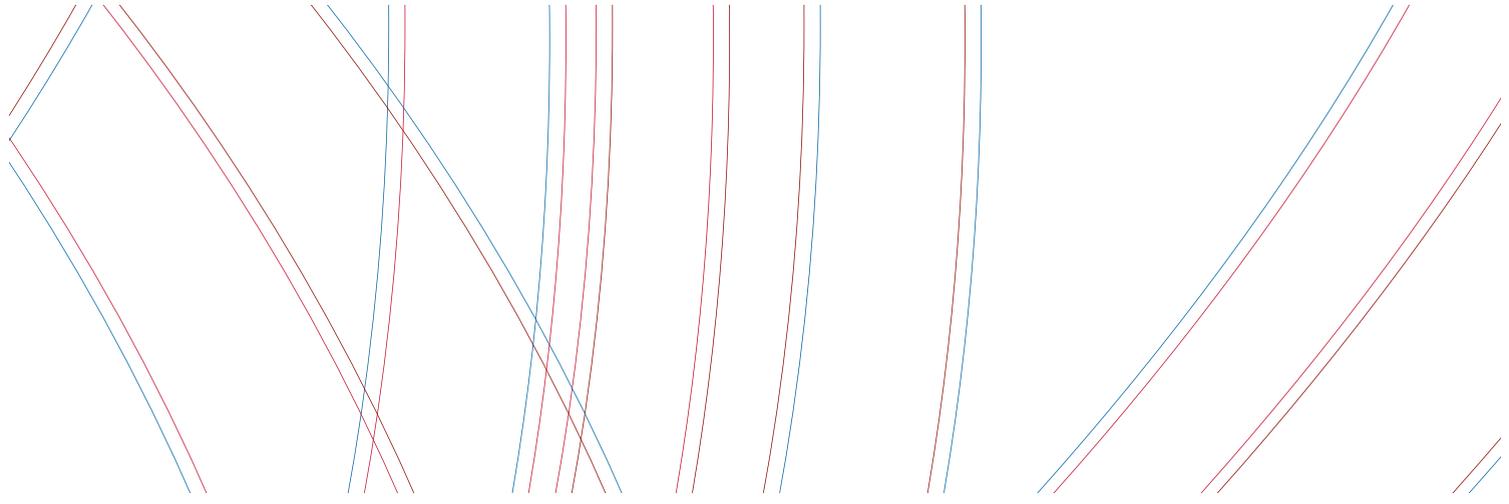


Table of Contents

Welcome—introduction	5
What is a sense of place—why is it important?	6
Sounds great—how do we create it?.....	7
The Leduc identity—who are we?	10
What is this project all about—how did you do it?	13
The Strategy—maintaining and creating a sense of place	15
Implementation—how are we going to do it?	17

Welcome to the City of Leduc's *Neighbourhood Design Strategy*, titled ***Our Sense of Place***. This strategy focuses on creating unique, livable and vibrant residential communities that provide a superior quality of life for our citizens. The City of Leduc has been well known for the high quality of life it offers through its extensive multiway path system, beautiful parks, quiet small town atmosphere and amenities of an urban centre—all within a thirty minute drive of Edmonton. This document is intended to protect that quality of life.

It was during the Alberta oil boom that word got out of this great little city located just south of Edmonton. Between 2006 and 2008, Leduc's residential development increased by 77% and its population grew by over 10% per year—a five-fold increase over historical averages. Leduc changed and it changed fast. New residential communities seemed to pop up over night, crews busily installed new roads and other infrastructure, and an array of new services and businesses opened their doors to the Leduc community.

Among all this rapid change, it remained a priority of city council to protect the unique Leduc identity and ensure the city continued to be livable and vibrant. In 2008, the mayor established the Mayor's Task Force on Neighbourhood Design with a two-fold mandate: (1) to determine the community's vision for residential neighbourhoods; and (2) develop guidelines that would direct the development of new residential areas towards that vision. The guidelines are a supplement to the strategy, which is intended to provide a more general overview of Leduc's vision for residential development. Specifically, this strategy is intended to outline other approaches—in addition to implementing the guidelines—that the city can do to further its commitment to good planning and maintenance of that strong *sense of place* for which Leduc is known.

What is our *sense of place*—why is it important?

Planning a community is about managing growth and change—specifically, balancing the physical (what things look like), social (how we use things), and environmental (natural) aspects of our community. A sense of place is where these three areas of responsibility meet to create a unique and meaningful identity for the community. It is about using the physical design and layout of a community to create those special spaces that allow us to socialize and interact with others and to appreciate and experience nature. Sense of place exists when people care about, are connected to and feel a sense of ownership over their community.

“A well-defined place is more than a location or space—it has deep meaning and a distinct character—it has evolved over time and is anchored in the values, ideals and activities of the people who live there”.¹

The benefits of having great spaces and a sense of place are extensive and include:

Enhanced quality of life: by promoting a sense of belonging and providing opportunity to socialize.

Enhanced community safety: encouraging activity on our streets and in our public areas means more eyes to watch what is going on. Experts agree, this is the most effective way of reducing crime and promoting feelings of safety—and it's free!

Enhanced health of citizens: poor diet and lack of exercise is a leading cause of death in North America, second only to cigarette smoking.² Getting out and being active increases the health of our citizens and reduces health care expenditures.

Enhanced environmental protection: what is good for us, as it turns out, is also good for our environment.

¹www.placemaker.ca

² http://bodyandhealth.canada.com/condition_info_details.asp?disease_id=95

Sounds great—how do we create it?

Creating a sense of place is about using urban design to create spaces that people are drawn to, want to use and take ownership of. Typically, greater value is placed on multi-modal transportation systems, such as our multiway and future public transit; community livability, which focuses on building communities that meet the daily needs of all residents, including those of varying ages and economic means; and on encouraging diversity, not only in terms of different housing styles and types, but also diversity in the people (age, ethnicity, economic means and professions) and household structures (young professionals, singles, couples, empty nesters) that live in each community.

While a connection to place—or sense of place—is between individuals and their communities, planners and developers have a role to play by ensuring that the design of neighbourhoods includes opportunity for great spaces to be created. The current literature suggests that creating this opportunity can include the following:

Mixed-use developments: mixed-use developments are just that: developments that have a mixture of different uses. In some cases, this may mean having a retail store on the main floor and residential above (such as the pet store near the 50th Ave./50th St. intersection). In other cases, it may mean having a variety of different uses (residential, commercial, recreational and/or educational) on the same block, similar to a village-centre idea. Having a diversity of uses in the same area increases the activity on the streets, enhances the quality of the public spaces and locates services within convenient proximity to residential areas, which in turn promotes walkability and the use of other active modes of transportation. When combined with higher densities, mixed-use developments also increase the viability of public transit.



Figure 1: Illustration of a mixed use complex – Edmonton (source: Cory Labrecque).

Housing opportunity and choice: places need people to be great—providing a diversity of housing style (architecture), type (single-detached, duplex, townhouse, apartment) and tenure (homeownership, rental) provides expanded consumer choice and encourages a diversity of people to live in a single neighbourhood.



Figure 2: A unique condominium complex that includes both duplex and apartment style housing – Leduc (source: Jennifer Cardiff)

Pedestrian-friendly streetscapes: all the great aspects of a community cannot be appreciated or enjoyed from a car—it requires getting out and enjoying the community as a pedestrian. Creating safe, interesting and attractive streetscapes encourages people to get out and experience their communities. Other benefits of encouraging walkability of neighbourhoods include:



Figure 3: A street crossing designed with aesthetics and pedestrian safety in mind - Edmonton (source – Cory Labrecque).

- increased safety from having more activity on the streets,
- increased health and fitness of area residents,
- increased equity by providing transportation options for those who don't drive or have access to a vehicle,
- reduced transportation costs for individuals and families, and
- improved air and water quality from reduce vehicle use.



Figure 4: Unique street signage reinforces the neighbourhood theme – Leduc (source: Cory Labrecque)

Distinctive and attractive communities: residential neighbourhoods have meaning when they reflect the local values and the unique historical, cultural and geographical context of the area. Neighbourhoods that incorporate these elements through design and attention to the public realm tend to have a stronger sense of civic pride and increased community cohesion and are more likely to retain their vitality and value over time.

³Smart Growth Network et al: 33-34

Parks, open spaces and natural areas: creating meaningful public spaces is at the heart of developing and retaining a sense of place—and diversity is key. It is important for residents to have access to active parks for playing and passive parks for quiet relaxing, to have areas to hold festivals and community events, and to have access to natural areas that allow the great outdoors to be appreciated and experienced.



Figure 5: Rendering of the development plans for Telford Lake – Leduc (source: City of Leduc)

Participatory planning processes: to have meaning to residents, places must reflect the community's needs and values, which can only be done by involving people in the design process. When a sense of place is established, people want to be involved in decisions that affect them and their community. Participatory planning processes that respect the opinions of all residents are key to establishing and maintaining a sense of place and a meaningful community.



Figure 6: Village centre in McKenzie Towne – Calgary (source: Carma Developers LP)

The Leduc Identity—who are we?

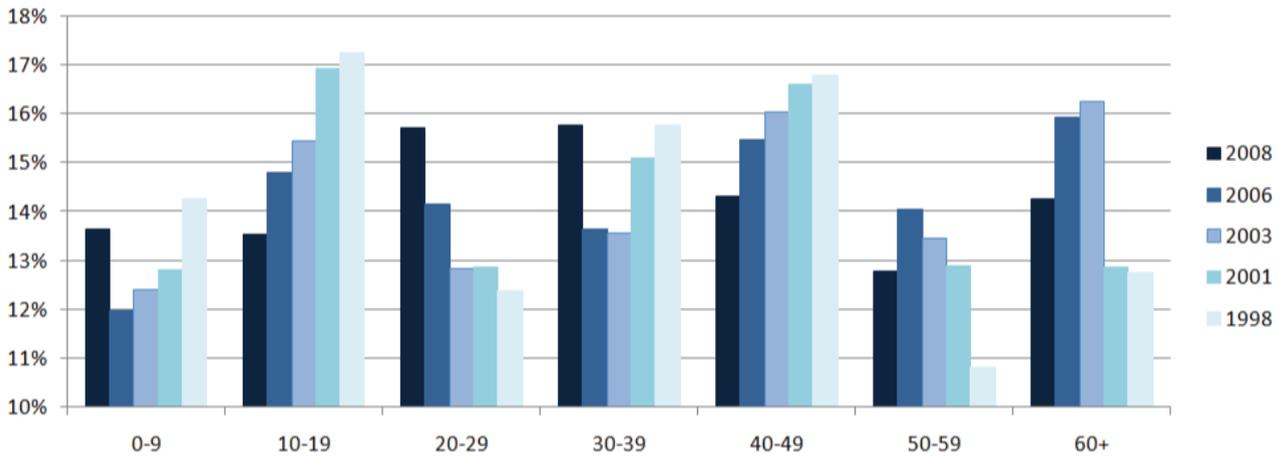
In March 2007, city council held their first community visioning workshop with the intent of determining who the Leduc community really was and what they wanted their Leduc to be. Since this time, city administration has regularly engaged the community on major projects and, as a result, has developed a good sense of who the Leduc community is and what they value.

Who is Leduc?

Over the last decade, Leduc has grown and matured into a sophisticated urban centre. While still a family-oriented community—with high proportions of children, youth and young adults—growing numbers of young professionals, singles and seniors are being drawn to Leduc. With its urban amenities—including a hospital, theatre for the performing arts and world-class recreation centre—proximity to the Edmonton International Airport, and one of the fastest growing employment bases in the region, Leduc is becoming a community of choice for a diversity of people.

Between 2006 and 2008, Leduc experienced an average growth rate of 10% per year, which is significantly higher than the 2% average growth rate experienced between 1981 and 2005. This unprecedented growth saw an increased proportion of young families (youth aged 0 to 9, and adults aged 20 to 39) in the City of Leduc demographics. While no information is available to suggest a reason for these sudden and substantial increases in these particular age groups, it is thought that it may be due to the extreme growth experienced in the capital region and the desire of young families to seek out a more affordable and convenient lifestyle that is typically found in smaller urban centres such as Leduc.

Certainly encouraging and maintaining a diverse population is a key ingredient of livable and vibrant communities. The City of Leduc understands this and will continue to promote the many attributes of the community in the hope of welcoming people from all walks of life to become part of our great and growing city.



What attributes of the community do citizens value and appreciate?

The multiway: Certainly a defining element of Leduc—if not *the* defining element—is the over 35 kilometers of multiway path system. Leduc citizens are passionate about their multiway, which is evident not only by the large and ever increasing number of people that use the system, but by the number of people that get involved in the multiway’s maintenance and continued expansion.

Small town feeling: Ask someone from Leduc what they love about their city, and you are bound to hear “that small town feeling.” While Leduc is a sophisticated urban centre home to over 21,597 people, it has maintained that “small town feeling”—or sense of place—to many. As one workshop participant described it, “everywhere I go I see someone I know, but I don’t know everyone I see, and that suits me.”

Community Celebrations: Leduc is well known as a community of festivals. With well over ten annual community events held each year—each with tremendous turn-out—Leduc citizens have shown their desire to regularly celebrate with family, friends and neighbours, and to maintain that robust community spirit that makes Leduc *Leduc*.

Safety: Citizens of Leduc continue to have strong feelings of safety. As the community grows, priority remains to ensure crime rates stay low and feelings of safety remain high.

Diversity: Leduc has it all without the crowds and congestion of major metropolitan centres. From ma-and-pa shops to big-box supercentres; from outdoor skating rinks to one of largest recreation centres in the province; from local festivals to a theatre for the performing arts; from large lake-side homes to apartment buildings, Leduc has something for everyone, and most of it is within a 15 minute drive or 30 minute walk.

International Connection: while a strong community spirit has developed in Leduc, citizens also appreciate their easy and convenient access to the rest of the world made possible by Leduc's unique proximity to the Edmonton International Airport and the CANAMEX (International) Trade corridor, locally known as the QE2 Highway. Such international access provides unparalleled business and job opportunities, not to mention fantastic travel advantages.

What is this project all about—how did you do it?

With the rapid rate of growth the City of Leduc began experiencing in 2006, the city’s mayor and council became increasingly concerned with the lack of coordination and public input into the development of residential neighbourhoods. In early 2008, The Mayor’s Task Force on Neighbourhood Design was established with the mandate of determining the Leduc community’s “residential neighbourhood design needs,” and developing and implementing a strategy to ensure that new residential development meets those needs over time.

The project had three specific goals:

- To communicate to developers the City’s expectations in terms of the design of residential areas;
- To provide a common understanding within city administration regarding neighbourhood design; and
- To generally allow for well thought-out and integrated residential areas.

The Mayor’s Task Force consisted of nine individuals representing the political municipal leadership, community-at-large, and technical expertise from city administration specific to neighbourhood design.

Greg Krischke
mayor

Gord Riddell
public member

Mike Pieters
planner/engineer

Judy Archie
alderman

Jackie Truitt
public member

Ken Woitt
planner

Terry Lazowski
alderman

Kathy Wilneff
public member

Jennifer Cardiff
planner

Two half-day community workshops were held to establish the community’s vision for residential neighbourhoods and to get the community’s direction on the important elements to take into consideration when developing new residential areas. In total, 30 individuals participated in the workshops.

To ensure that the Mayor’s Task Force understood the implications of each initiative identified in the community workshops, city administration was asked to provide their input. Representatives from the

1. Background Research

A literature review summarizing the current literature on neighbourhood design was prepared for task force.

2. Community Workshops

Two half-day community workshops held were held to establish the community's vision for residential neighbourhoods.

3. City Administration Workshop

City administration completed a workbook and participated in a workshop to comment on the data collected from steps 1 and 2.

4. Data Analysis

The Mayor's Task Force analyzed the data collected from steps 1 through 3.

5. Draft Document

A draft strategy and design guidelines were prepared by the Mayor's Task Force.

6. Open House|Feedback

The draft strategy and design guidelines were presented at a public open house and sent to community workshop participants for comment. Amendments were made based on the feedback received prior to council adopting the strategy and design guidelines.

departments of engineering, planning and development, building and safety codes, community development and service planning, public services, family and community social services and protective services completed a workbook and participated in a day-long workshop to identify and discuss the costs, challenges and consideration of each initiative identified by the community.

Based on the information collected through the background research, community workshops and city administration workbook and workshop—the Mayor's Task Force completed a draft *Neighbourhood Design Strategy*. This draft was provided to the local development community, city administration and community workshop participants for comment. This was followed by a public open house, held on December 2, 2009.

The draft *Neighbourhood Design Strategy* was amended based on the feedback received, and presented to council on March 8, 2010 for adoption.

The Strategy—maintaining and creating a *sense of place*

Creating and maintaining a sense of place is about good urban design and creating great public spaces.

Based on the direction provided by the Leduc community, the City of Leduc is committed to implementing the following strategies to do just that.

1. The City shall develop neighbourhood design guidelines that outline the City's expectations regarding the development of new residential areas; and which promote:
 - 1.1. Walkability
 - 1.2. Mixed-use developments
 - 1.3. Housing diversity
 - 1.4. Attention to aesthetics and urban design
 - 1.5. Eco-friendly technologies and designs
 - 1.6. Development of public gathering spaces
 - 1.7. Integrated parks system
 - 1.8. Development of diverse parks and open spaces
 - 1.9. Protection of natural and environmentally sensitive areas
 - 1.10. Integrated and safe transportation network

2. The City shall update its *Guidelines for A.S.P and O.L.P Preparation in the City of Leduc* (February 1999) to reflect the *Neighbourhood Design Strategy* and *Neighbourhood Design Guidelines*. This update shall include the following:
 - 2.1. A specified consultation process that outlines the developers requirement to work with and engage city administration throughout—and early on in —the process of developing area structure plans, outline plans and all other statutory development plans completed by developers.
 - 2.2. Specific information regarding the development of public places and specifying the vision of the proposed area in area structure plan proposals.

3. The City shall incorporate 3D imaging and/or modeling of proposed developments to understand the urban design implications of proposed developments.
4. The City shall develop a public education program regarding planning, the planning process and how citizens can get involved. This shall include providing information on the City's website.
5. The City shall be actively involved in all stages of the development of area structure plans, outline plans and all other statutory development plans that affect land within the City's jurisdiction.
6. The City shall review its Land Use Bylaw, and amend as necessary while maintaining conformance with the Capital Region Plan, to ensure regulations allow for innovation and creativity. The City shall investigate the feasibility and appropriateness of incorporating smart codes into the Land Use Bylaw.
7. The City shall review their recreation contribution policy to determine (a) appropriate levels of funding to be paid by developers and/or home builders to support the continued development of public spaces; and (b) outline developer, home builder and City responsibilities in developing public spaces.
8. The City shall maintain a city-wide multiway master plan to coordinate the future expansion of the multiway trail system
9. The City shall review their landscape standards to ensure they incorporate crime prevention through environmental design, low-maintenance landscaping techniques, and eco-friendly and place-making design principles.
10. The City shall investigate the feasibility of establishing a public art program.
11. The City shall review its engineering standards to ensure they incorporate the use of natural systems, such as bio-swales, where feasible.
12. The City shall continue to seek funding from other levels of government to support the implementation of the neighbourhood design strategy and promote the incorporation of sense of place design principles.

Implementation—how are we going to do it?

	Strategy	Responsible Department	Other Contributions	Resources		Completion Date
				Funding Required	Time	
Immediate 2009 Implementation						
1	The City shall develop neighbourhood design guidelines that outline the City's expectations regarding the development of new residential areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> long-range planning 	Input provided by the development community and city administration departments of: current planning, engineering, CDSP, protective services, public services, safety codes.	Completed		
2	The City shall update its <i>Guidelines for A.S.P and O.L.P Preparation in the City of Leduc</i> to reflect the <i>Neighbourhood Design Strategy</i> and <i>Neighbourhood Design Guidelines</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> long-range planning 	Input provided by the development community and city administration departments of: current planning, engineering, community services and planning, protective services, public services, safety codes.	\$0 required	2 months	Dec 2010
Short-term 2010 Implementation						
3	The City shall incorporate 3D imaging and/or modeling of proposed developments to understand the urban design implications of proposed developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> long-range planning 	Input provided by the development community and city administration departments of: current planning, information technology and geomatic services	Funding may be required for: software and/or training	8-12 months	Dec 2010

continued on next page...

4	The City shall develop a public education program regarding planning, the planning process and how citizens can get involved		Input provided by the departments of: current planning and communications. May be developed as part of MDP process and/or public engagement framework process.	\$0	4 months	Dec 2010
6	The City shall review its Land Use Bylaw, and amend as necessary, to ensure regulations allow for innovation and creativity. The City shall investigate the feasibility and appropriateness of adopting a smart code in place of its land use bylaw.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • long-range planning • current planning 		Land Use Bylaw update to commence upon completion of the MDP	1 year	Dec 2011
7	The City shall review their recreation contribution policy to determine (a) appropriate levels of funding to be paid by developers and/or home builders to support the continued development of public spaces; and (b) outline developer, home builder and city responsibilities in developing public spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community development and service planning • long-range planning 			\$0	3 months Dec 2010
9	The City shall review their landscape standards to ensure they incorporate crime prevention through environmental design, low-maintenance landscaping techniques, and eco-friendly and place-making design principles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community development and service planning • long-range planning 			\$0	2 months Dec 2010
11	The City shall review its engineering standards to ensure they incorporate the use of natural systems, such as bio-swales, where feasible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engineering • long-range planning 			\$0	2 months Dec 2010

Long-term | 2011+ and Ongoing Implementation

5	The City shall be actively involved in all stages of the development of area structure plans, outline plans and all other statutory development plans that affect land within the City's jurisdiction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • long-range planning • current planning 	Input provided by the development community and engineering processes shall be incorporating into the updated <i>Guidelines for A.S.P and O.L.P Preparation in the City of Leduc</i> (refer to strategy 2)	\$0	On-going	
8	The City shall maintain a City-wide multiway master plan to coordinate the future expansion of the Multiway trail system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community development and service planning 	Input provided by the departments of: current planning, engineering, protective services, public services.	\$0	On-going	
10	The City shall investigate the feasibility of establishing a public art program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community development and service planning • long-range planning 	Input provided by the departments of: current planning, engineering, public services.	\$0 completed in-house	6 months	Dec 2011
12	The City shall continue to seek funding from other levels of government to support the implementation of the neighbourhood design strategy and promote the incorporation of sense of place design principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inter-governmental affairs • long-range planning 		\$0	On-going	

