Social Needs Assessment

2026

Prepared By :

bassa
SOCIAL INNOVATIONS INC.

Morinville

Executive Summary

The Town of Morinville undertook a Social Needs Assessment (SNA) to better understand what supports well-being in the community, where pressures are emerging, and how Administration, organizations, and the community can respond in practical, informed ways. This assessment serves as a wayfinding tool: a shared map of what matters most to the people who call this community home, and a guide for how collective action can strengthen well-being over time.

The assessment was informed by interviews with service providers and community leaders, volunteer-led community conversations, focus groups, and youth and adult surveys. Together, these approaches captured both lived experiences and system-level perspectives from across the community.

Residents described Morinville as a safe, friendly place where people care about one another and take pride in their community. Informal support, everyday connection, and volunteerism play an important role in helping people get by. These strengths are a key asset and an important foundation for future planning.

At the same time, they identified areas of growing strain that cannot be addressed through goodwill alone. As life in Morinville shifts and changes, some residents are finding it harder to access what they need, afford to participate, or feel included in community life. These challenges are often less about the absence of services and more about how people experience access, affordability, information, and involvement in their day-to-day lives.

Four priority social needs emerged through the assessment:

Belonging

Many residents feel a strong sense of connection, but belonging is not experienced equally. Youth, seniors, newcomers, people with disabilities, and residents without strong social networks described feeling less visible or less included at times. The findings point to the need for more intentional and consistent approaches to inclusion, so connection does not depend only on who you know.

Access

Access challenges showed up in how people find information, navigate supports, and reach programs or amenities. Many residents shared that they do not know what is available until they are already struggling. Access is also shaped by community design and planning decisions, including where services are located and how easy they are to reach.

Affordability (beyond housing)

Affordability was described as more than the cost of housing. Residents spoke about the combined impact of fees, program costs, indirect expenses like time and travel, and the discomfort or stigma of asking for help. These factors influence whether people can participate fully in community life.

Involvement

Many residents want to contribute to their community, but pathways into volunteering, civic participation, and local decision-making often feel limited or unclear. As a result, responsibility tends to fall on a small group of people, while others feel unsure how to get involved or whether there is a place for them.

From an Administration perspective, the SNA highlights several opportunities where they have influence, without requiring it to take on additional service delivery roles. These opportunity areas include:

- applying a consistent belonging and inclusion lens across planning, programs, events, and communications;
- improving access to information and navigation so residents can more easily find and use supports, programs, and opportunities;

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- considering access and affordability in Administration decisions, including program design, fees, scheduling, and location;
- creating clearer and more flexible pathways for involvement, including youth voice, volunteering, and civic participation; and
- convening and coordinating partners where shared ownership and alignment are needed.

The SNA does not present a fixed list of actions. Instead, it offers opportunity areas and promising practices that can inform Administration's work while leaving room for collaboration, adaptation, and shared leadership. Community organizations and residents will also find practical ideas throughout the report that can support local action and strengthen connection, access, affordability, and involvement.

The Social Needs Assessment provides a foundation for shared understanding and coordinated action. It reflects what people shared about life in Morinville today and offers a clear way to think about how Administration, organizations, and residents can work together to support community well-being over time.

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Introduction

Morinville is a community shaped by its people. It is a growing town with rural roots, strong neighbourhood connections, and a shared commitment to looking out for one another. Residents describe Morinville as a place where familiar faces matter, where people step in to help, and where a character of connection continues to anchor daily life—even as the community changes.

At the same time, Morinville is evolving. Population growth over the past two decades has stabilized at a 2.3% average annual growth rate, household compositions are shifting, and pressures related to affordability, access to services, and aging in place are becoming more visible. Today, Morinville is home to just over 10,300 residents, with a population that is younger (average age of 36.9) than the provincial average (39.0) and experiencing steady growth in its senior population. More residents are living alone, and nearly one in four (23%) households were spending 30% or more of their income on shelter costs in 2021—which signals that social well-being is increasingly shaped by both connection and constraint. [1]

This Social Needs Assessment (SNA) is grounded in that lived reality. It builds from what residents' value most about Morinville, while examining the conditions that support social well-being, the barriers people experience in daily life, and the aspirations they hold for the future. The assessment reflects stories and insights shared by volunteers, youth, families, seniors, service providers, community organizations, and municipal employees, each offering perspective on what strengthens and what strains Morinville's social fabric.

The intent of this report is not simply to diagnose issues. It is to bring forward community voice in a way that is accessible, meaningful, and actionable, supporting evidence-informed decisions for residents, organizations, and the Morinville municipal administration. Like many communities across Alberta, Morinville is navigating growth, uncertainty, and shifting social needs.

[1] Statistics Canada Census of Communities, Community Profiles (2021), My Morinville Municipal Development Plan (2025), Morinville Growth Management Study (2024).

This Document is for You

This document is for everyone in Morinville and we hope you can see your contributions reflected within it. More than a collection of needs, the document will give everyone a role in how to influence, shape, and improve community well-being. If you are a community member, this document is for you. If you work for or represent a community organization, this document is for you too. If you work for the municipality, or are an elected official, this document is also for you equally.

Community Members

Community members like you; the business owners, grandparents, mothers, fathers, and youth (among others) form the backbone of Morinville. For social well-being to thrive, a community needs to look after itself and support each other through words, actions, and meaningful interaction.

The direct feedback of community members is central to the Social Needs Assessment. As such, you can also find community-driven actions and strategies for each social need. Some may seem like things you already do, which is fantastic, and others may need some time to get going. The key is building connection and a strong social fabric, as only communities can do for themselves.

Community Organizations

Community organizations are a key support network for community members, providing support, services, and navigation for those experiencing challenges to their well-being. Sometimes referred to as the "social infrastructure" of a community, organizations help build the roads and pathways that residents in need will travel.

At each stage of the report, you will find opportunities for organizations to get involved. Just like community members, some may be things your organization is already doing, and others may take time and effort to bear fruit. The role of organizations cannot be understated as the first contact for many residents in times of need; your approach, collaborations, and actions matter greatly and have incredible ripples across the community.

Municipal Employees and Leaders

The municipality itself also plays a vital role in fostering community well-being across Morinville. Alberta's central legislation for municipalities, the Municipal Government Act (explored more below), states that municipalities have a defined purpose to develop "safe and viable communities". Although a core purpose, it also leaves room for each municipality to define how best it can influence and foster community well-being.

As a municipal leader or employee, this document will provide high-level strategic guidance that can help inform your decision-making processes over the coming years. This will include references to matching roles and responsibilities to ensure the municipality can provide the most impact across the community.

Appreciations

Morinville extends sincere thanks to everyone who contributed their time, insight, and lived experience to this Social Needs Assessment. This work was shaped by residents, youth, volunteers, community organizations, service providers, local businesses, and partners who generously shared their perspectives through conversations, surveys, and engagement activities. This also includes a variety of feedback provided to the community through the Municipal Development Plan process.

We want to acknowledge the community volunteers who hosted conversations and helped create spaces for thoughtful, respectful dialogue. Their commitment reflects the strong culture of volunteerism that helps to define Morinville. We also acknowledge the youth who shared their voices and experiences in their classrooms and spaces—your energy is essential to building a community where all ages feel valued and supported.

This assessment is stronger because of the input of the community. Every story, concern, idea, and moment of listening has helped deepen the collective understanding of community strengths and needs.

Social Well-Being and Alberta's Communities

Social well-being describes the conditions that allow individuals and families to feel safe, supported, connected, and able to participate fully in community life. Although there are many different definitions of well-being that exist, it's best for a community to define well-being for themselves. Within this project, community members shared often what well-being means to them as residents of Morinville, their feedback has been harmonized below.

This community-informed definition of well-being complements the existing community direction statement from the 2025 Municipal Development Plan, which focuses on:

Well-being is when people feel connected, supported, included, and able to thrive in a community defined by safety, neighbourliness, accessible supports, affordable living, and a small-town spirit that grows stronger alongside a growing town.
-
Combined and harmonized feedback from the Community

**"Building an inclusive, resilient community.
One where current and future generations can thrive."**
-
Municipal Direction Statement

Residents repeatedly described well-being not as a single factor, but as the interplay of many everyday experiences: finding child care, being able to access a doctor, affording recreational programs for kids, feeling welcomed at local events, or simply knowing their neighbours. When any of these elements are compromised, it reverberates through household stress, community connection, and overall quality of life.

Alberta's municipalities are governed by the Municipal Government Act (MGA), which serves as the legislative framework that defines the scope of a municipal government. It lays out the purpose, accountabilities, and responsibilities of a municipal government aligned with three broad areas of purpose:

- To provide good government.

- To provide services, facilities or other things that, in the opinion of council, are necessary or desirable for all or a part of the municipality.

- To develop safe and viable communities.

While the MGA does not explicitly define "community well-being," associated documentation makes it clear that well-being is a core dimension of municipal viability. Communities that cannot support the social needs of their residents face long-term challenges not only in quality of life, but in sustainability, retention, and civic participation.
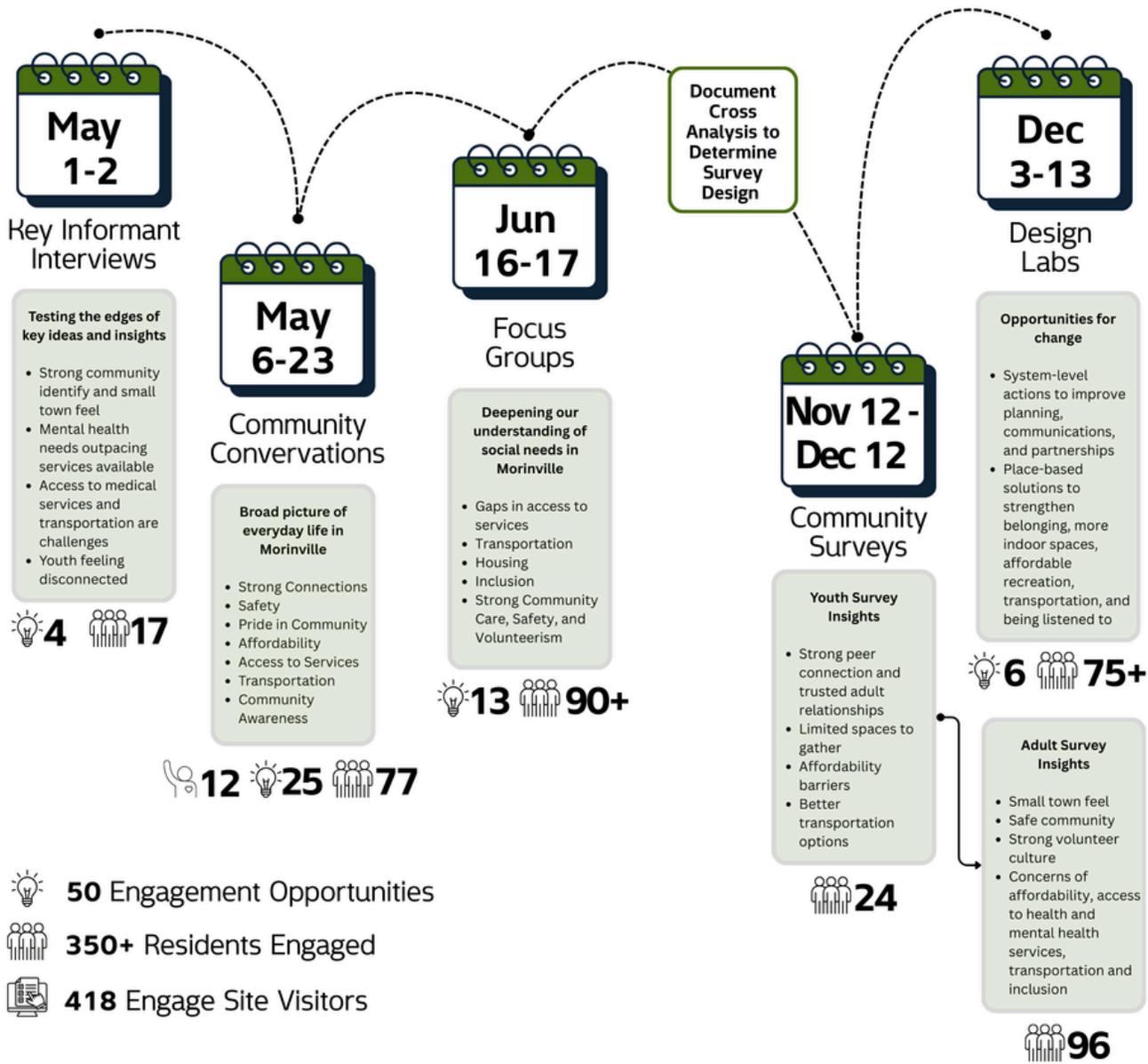
For this reason, municipalities play a foundational role in shaping well-being, even when they do not directly deliver every service. Their influence is best understood as condition building: municipalities cannot "force" well-being, but they can create the conditions that allow well-being to emerge for residents. For example, facilities such as the Morinville Leisure Centre help people meet, form relationships, and stay active. This is the direct result of condition building by a municipality – providing the opportunity for residents to engage in well-being by supporting activities both directly and indirectly because of municipal influence.

Engagement Approach

The 2025 engagement process was intentionally designed to reach a broad cross-section of Morinville residents— including those who do not typically participate in municipal consultations. Volunteers played a central role, hosting community conversations in living rooms, workplaces, faith communities, coffee shops, and informal social circles.

This decentralized, relationship-based approach enabled people to speak candidly with hosts they trust. Alongside these conversations, youth and adult surveys captured quantitative indicators of belonging, safety, affordability, access, and community involvement. Key informant interviews further provided systemic and organizational perspectives from local service providers and Administration.

Across all engagement channels, the emphasis was on listening deeply, reducing barriers to participation, and ensuring that people felt their experiences mattered — even if they were sharing something difficult. This commitment to inclusion is reflected throughout the report.

May 1-2
Key Informant Interviews

Testing the edges of key ideas and insights

- Strong community identify and small town feel
- Mental health needs outpacing services available
- Access to medical services and transportation are challenges
- Youth feeling disconnected

💡 4 👥 17

May 6-23
Community Conversations

Broad picture of everyday life in Morinville

- Strong Connections
- Safety
- Pride in Community
- Affordability
- Access to Services
- Transportation
- Community Awareness

🗣 12 💡 25 👥 77

Jun 16-17
Focus Groups

Deepening our understanding of social needs in Morinville

- Gaps in access to services
- Transportation
- Housing
- Inclusion
- Strong Community Care, Safety, and Volunteerism

💡 13 👥 90+

Document Cross Analysis to Determine Survey Design

Nov 12 - Dec 12
Community Surveys

Youth Survey Insights

- Strong peer connection and trusted adult relationships
- Limited spaces to gather
- Affordability barriers
- Better transportation options

👥 24

Adult Survey Insights

- Small town feel
- Safe community
- Strong volunteer culture
- Concerns of affordability, access to health and mental health services, transportation and inclusion

👥 96

Dec 3-13
Design Labs

Opportunities for change

- System-level actions to improve planning, communications, and partnerships
- Place-based solutions to strengthen belonging, more indoor spaces, affordable recreation, transportation, and being listened to

💡 6 👥 75+

💡 **50** Engagement Opportunities

👥 **350+** Residents Engaged

📋 **418** Engage Site Visitors

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Complementary Municipal Plans and Studies

Morinville has a wide range of existing municipal plans that range from planning core infrastructure such as streets and sewers, to housing assessments, recreation plans, and more. When building the Social Needs Assessment, these plans were reviewed and cross-referenced to identify areas of connection with this plan.

Critically, this stage was done between focus group engagement and the development of the community and youth survey tool. This was done to ensure the survey focused beyond components contained in other plans to truly bring forth the impact of barriers on the social well-being of residents. This was especially true for two big elements; transportation and housing. These were noted early and often in the engagement process; however, they are also covered in depth in existing municipal plans including the recently updated Municipal Development Plan (MDP). Below is a summary of reviewed plans and strategies and their complementary directions that support community well-being.

2025 Draft Municipal Development Plan (MDP)

Long-range statutory land use and growth plan that sets a shared vision, strategy, and policy informed by resident feedback.	Policies for complete, walkable neighbourhoods with local parks, services and community spaces directly support SNA access and connection priorities.
	Housing policies promoting a mix of types, tenures and potential non-market options align with SNA affordability and housing needs.
	Safety and mobility policies reflect SNA transportation and access issues.
	Community wellness, downtown vitality and partnership actions reinforce SNA priorities around belonging, involvement and shared responsibility.

2019 Community Needs Assessment

Comprehensive assessment of Morinville's social needs and community well-being.

Provides the last full picture of social needs and service capacity before 2025, giving the new SNA a baseline for comparison from a qualitative means.

2018 Resident Survey

Statistically reliable survey of resident satisfaction with overall quality of life, safety, and municipally funded programs, services, and facilities; identifies key positives and negatives.

Offers pre-pandemic baseline data on quality of life, safety and satisfaction with services that the SNA can use to see what has changed.
Captures strengths such as small-town feel, friendliness and sense of safety.

2019 Parks, Recreation, Culture & Trails (PCRT) Master Plan

Strategic framework for recreation, culture and trail systems, positioning them as essential to community health, inclusion and environmental quality.

Establishes recreation, culture and trails as key contributors to personal and community well-being, mirroring the SNA's wellbeing lens.

Identifies barriers to participation (cost, awareness, scheduling, facility condition/location) that remain relevant in SNA engagement findings.

Sets directions for trail connectivity, facility investment and inclusive programming that helped the SNA interpret current feedback on spaces like the MLC, downtown, and neighbourhood parks.

2016 Regional Recreation Needs Assessment

Region-wide assessment of recreation needs and facilities	Shows that demand for aquatics, walking tracks and connected trails has been present for many years, giving historical context to similar 2025 SNA feedback.

2020 Transportation Master Plan (TMP)

Long-range plan for a safe, efficient and sustainable multi-modal transportation network.	Provides the underlying network vision and planned improvements that shape how residents physically access services, work, schools and recreation.
	Identifies existing and future walking/cycling connections and gaps that align with SNA stories about safety, mobility and isolation.

2024 Growth Management Study

Technical study providing current and projected data on population, housing, employment, and land needs; supports complete community principles and phasing in the Draft MDP.	Growth projections by age, dwellings and employment help the SNA anticipate where and for whom social needs (e.g., seniors, families, youth)will grow. Identification of future residential and employment areas and timing supports SNA recommendations. Emphasis on complete, connected neighbourhoods and a more balanced employment base supports SNA goals around access, affordability and reduced commuter dependency.

2024 Retail Gap & Complementary Sectors Analysis

Market analysis of Morinville's trade area, existing retail mix spending leakage	Recommendationsto strengthen Coeur de Morinville and other nodes as mixed-use, walkable commercial areas align with SNA priorities for more local social hubs.

Together, these complementary plans show that Morinville has a strong planning foundation for many of the issues that surfaced in the Social Needs Assessment. The legacy documents (2016–2019) provide historical baselines for quality of life, social needs, recreation expectations, and participation barriers, while the more recent work (Growth Management Study, Retail Gap Analysis, and Draft MDP) sets a clear direction for complete, connected neighbourhoods and a balanced local economy.

The 2025 Social Needs Assessment (SNA) adds value within this planning ecosystem by focusing on how these policies and infrastructure decisions are experienced in people's lives. It highlights who is still facing barriers, where gaps remain, and how large-scale issues like transportation and housing affordability intersect with community well-being. Because the SNA has been built in alignment with this suite of plans—and sequenced to avoid duplicating their content, its opportunity areas are designed to complement existing strategies, budgets, and partnerships. This alignment will help ensure that future social well-being actions are both grounded in lived experience and realistically implementable through Morinville's current municipal planning framework.

Community Strengths

Throughout the community engagement cycle, residents described Morinville as a community where people know each other, look out for their neighbours, and take pride in where they live. These strengths show up in everyday moments of care, as well as in the spaces, programs, and partnerships that bring people together and support connection.

This section highlights the community assets and strengths residents pointed to as shaping everyday life in Morinville and how people stay connected. For a detailed list of existing programs and services across the community please continue to Appendix D.

Key Strengths at a Glance

These elements together illustrate what social well-being currently looks like in Morinville. Residents describe well-being not as a single program or service, but as the everyday conditions that allow people to feel safe, connected, and supported across all stages of life.

Residents shared that when neighbours look out for one another, when youth and families have reliable places to turn, and when public spaces feel welcoming and accessible, a strong foundation for community resilience is created. The day-to-day expressions of this type of community character help people participate in community life with confidence and ease.

For Morinville, the existing combination of safety, informal care, strong youth supports, vibrant public spaces, volunteerism, and a committed social service network creates a social environment where belonging can flourish. It means people are likely to reach out for help when needed, contribute to community life, and stay rooted in the town over time. Together, these assets support and strengthen social well-being and reinforce the community character that residents value so deeply.

Priority Social Needs

If social well-being is the goal, social needs are like potholes, red lights, or other barriers that get in the way of a community reaching the goal. Social needs can also be understood through a pyramid model, similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs:

Although this model focuses on the individual, it can also be expressed through a community lens.

Physiological needs can be considered the basic needs of social well-being (e.g., shelter, access to food, clothing, etc.)

Safety and health include emergency services, health services, and recreation, among others.

Love & belonging can be considered the social fabric of a community, sometimes referring to the social capital of a community. This is the collection of relationships that form a community.

Identifying social needs includes reviewing community feedback, context, and data to bring understanding to the broad expressions of collective needs.

Most often, they are found in the bottom three areas of the pyramid as those are the foundational elements for a community to thrive.

For Morinville, four broad categories of social needs have been identified through a mixed-methods approach that combines community feedback with data to provide a picture of the social needs, along with how it is impacting the lives of residents.

Belonging

Belonging is one of Morinville's biggest strengths—and one of its quietest vulnerabilities. Many feel connected, but others feel unseen, uncertain, or outside the circle. A thriving community holds space for both realities.

Thriving in Belonging

When belonging is strong, people feel comfortable staying, participating, and showing up as themselves. Newcomers build relationships more easily, long-time residents remain engaged, and more people describe Morinville as feeling like home across all stages of life. Neighbours recognize one another, community events reflect a wide range of residents, and people feel both welcomed and valued in everyday spaces

> *I don't really feel a sense of belonging... I work in the city. This is just where I live.*
>
> Survey Participant

Municipal Opportunities

- Embed belonging into municipal planning and service design by applying a social inclusion lens.

- Further amplify inclusive community events, spaces, and shared gathering places by continuing to invest in and steward public spaces.

- Strengthen municipal communication as a broad tool to support belonging by promoting municipal and community programs and services.

Opportunities for Community Organizations

- Offer pop-up outreach or "info corners" at places people already go (library programs, the Leisure Centre, school events, markets, cafés, Alexander First Nation events).

- Build "on-ramp" features to programs or events that help people enter social networks like greeters at the door, +1 invitations, etc.

- Offer micro-volunteering (30–60 minutes) and "try-it" roles to create low-pressure roles for contribution.

- Continue emphasizing coordination, shared awareness, and consistent referral practices across organizations. Co-host across groups to reduce social silos.

76%
Active sense
of belonging

24%
NO active sense of
belonging

66%
of newcomers to
Morinville felt actively
welcomed and included

87%
Youth feel they
belong in
Morinville

83%
Youth feel respected
and accepted for
who they are

62%
feel their identity and background are
respected and valued in Morinville

Community Member Opportunities

- Try the 3–1–1 neighbour habit: Learn the name of 3 neighbours, check in with 1 person who lives alone (or seems less connected) & make 1 small offer of help each season.

- Adopt a "first hello" norm and commit to being the first to say hello in shared spaces (parks, trails, school pickup lines, arenas).

- Be the "bridge" for someone new. If you see a newcomer, invite them to one thing you already do: a walking route, a festival, a kids' program, a local volunteer shift.

Love that a sense of community feels like a core value shared by all who live here.

Adult Survey Participant

Since we moved here three years ago, we have yet to feel overly connected to the community...I often rely on Facebook groups to keep me in the loop.

Survey Participant

Access

Access to health and social services is an active pressure point for Morinville residents. These access gaps (health, transportation, information, among others) are pushing people out of the community for essential needs and weakening long-term well-being of residents and the community.

Thriving in Access

When access is working well, residents know what supports exist and how to access them without frustration or stigma. People can get help earlier, closer to home, and with fewer hand-offs between systems. Services feel coordinated rather than fragmented, and residents spend less time navigating systems and more time focusing on their well-being.

I can find the support services I need…

55% Agree   **14%** Neutral   **31%** Disagree

50% Find Health Services

39% Find Mental Health Services

88% indicate feeling welcome or safe accessing supports

59% feel local businesses provide what they are looking for

52% feel that Morinville has the services needed to age

83% Youth know where to find help

75% Youth feel comfortable asking for help

Municipal Opportunities

- Use the municipality's convening role to strengthen coordination by bringing system leaders together to support alignment and smoother navigation for residents.

- Support clear and consistent access points for residents by enabling shared tools, directories, and communication.

- Integrate access considerations into transportation, land use, and facility planning by incorporating access to health and social services into decisions related to walkability, mobility, and the location of community amenities.

- Advocate for regional and provincial alignment by using municipal voice and local data to communicate the impacts of service gaps.

> *I tried to access mental health services for my child… She suffered through some serious trauma and was still turned away.*
>
> Adult Survey Participant

> "
>
> If I am not able to drive, Morinville becomes not only undesirable, but very unsafe.
>
> Community Conversation Participant
> "

Opportunities for Community Organizations

- Make access pathways visible and easy to understand by using plain language, clear intake steps, and simple "what to expect" information across websites, posters, and social media.

- Continue and strengthen warm referrals, follow-up check-ins, and shared consent practices.

- Share consistent information across organizations, such as program eligibility criteria and program availability.

- Use trusted community spaces as access points by offering information, referrals, or periodic drop-in support in the library, schools, recreation facility, and other community hubs where residents already feel comfortable.

Community Member Opportunities

- Ask for help early, even if you are unsure where to start. Connect early with a trusted organization, community worker, or service provider to help clarify options before stress escalates.

- Use trusted spaces as a first step, start in a familiar place such as the library, school, or a community program. These spaces often serve as informal gateways to information and referrals.

- Support others with navigation when you can by helping a friend or neighbour make a call, fill out a form, or attend an appointment.

- Advocate collectively for local access of services by sharing experiences through surveys, consultations, and community conversations.
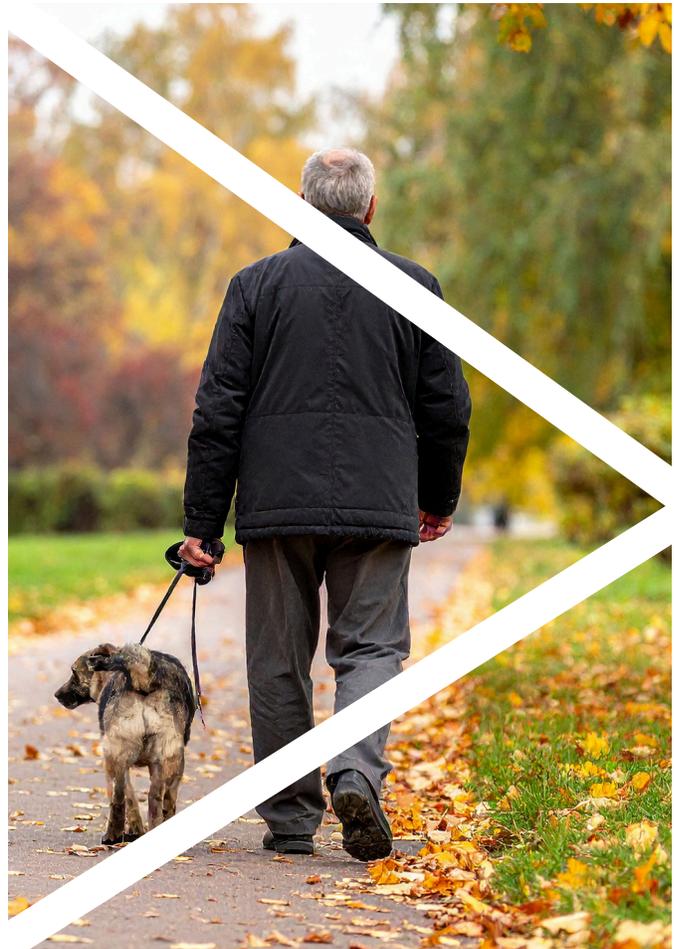
Affordability (beyond housing)

Affordability isn't just about the cost of living—it's about the cost(s) of belonging. When daily essentials and recreation are hard to afford, people pull back from community life.

Thriving in Affordability

When affordability pressures are eased, people are able to participate more fully in community life. Families, seniors, and youth are not forced to choose between basic needs and recreation, connection, or preventive supports. More residents shop, play, volunteer, and gather locally because costs are manageable and opportunities feel within reach.

> " *Recreation is always the first line eliminated in our budget.*
>
> Adult Survey Participant "

1 in 4 people in Morinville cannot afford healthy food

25% of people in Morinville feel that recreation or community activities are outside their budget

38% feel childcare options are not affordable

36% feel childcare options are not accessible to them

1 in 5 youth feel they cannot afford to participate in activities that interest them

33% Youth feel they cannot find part-time work in Morinville

Municipal Opportunities

- Consider affordability impacts across municipal decisions by applying an affordability lens to fees, program design, and amenity planning.

- Align and harmonize fee assistance approaches where possible by exploring opportunities to coordinate subsidy programs and access policies across municipal services and with regional partners to reduce complexity and increase fairness.

- Support access to low-cost and no-cost opportunities by continuing to prioritize affordable public spaces, programs, and events.

- Where possible, make use of federal and provincial grants to support youth employment.

- Use municipal influence to reduce indirect costs of participation by considering scheduling, program design, location, and transportation access.

- Implement the housing and development policy strategies and recommendations of the Municipal Development Plan.

> " *Food costs are troublesome - recreation is a luxury.*
>
> Adult Survey Participant "

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Opportunities for Community Organizations

- When planning programs or events, design with affordability in mind and build financial dignity into service delivery.

- Where possible, make use of federal and provincial grants to support youth employment.

- Normalize sliding-scale and subsidy options and clearly communicate subsidy options, fee assistance, or "no-questions-asked" support.

- Share information about low- and no-cost options consistently, especially highlighting free or low-cost activities, community meals, libraries, and recreation options can shift perceptions of access.

> *Because of higher costs, or lack of products,I find myself leaving Morinville to go to other towns for goods and services. I find myself spending more of my time leaving Morinville and driving versus being in our community.*
>
> Survey Participant

- Partner to reduce duplication of costs – collaboration between organizations (shared spaces, joint programming, pooled resources) can help stretch limited funding and reduce participant costs.

A little extra data on affordability

- Employment rates in the community have declined from a high of 75% in 2006 to 65% in 2021 (the most recently available data).[1] However, this may be exaggerated by the global pandemic during that time.

- The total number of EI recipients in Morinville has increased 15% between 2023 and 2024.[2] Although incorporations were up 20.3% from 2023 to 2024, total number of businesses had a 9.5% reduction during the same period and sit at the lowest overall total over the last 10 years. [3]

[1] Government of Alberta Regional Dashboard. Morinville Employment Rate. https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/morinville/employment-rate/#/

[2] Government of Alberta Regional Dashboard. Morinville Employment Insurance Recipients. https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/morinville/employment-insurance-recipients

[3} Government of Alberta Regional Dashboard. Morinville. https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/morinville

Community Member Opportunities

- Share information within your networks and by word of mouth about free and low-cost opportunities.

- Swap, share, and reuse where possible (for example, equipment sharing, clothing swaps, ride-sharing, and informal exchanges)

- Talk openly about affordability, including naming cost as a real pressure, which can help reduce stigma and make it easier for others to ask about options or supports.

- Support local initiatives when able. Choosing to participate in or volunteer with programs that emphasize accessibility helps

Involvement

Morinville has a deep well of residents who want to get involved, and the door into community life feels narrow. This mismatch limits belonging, strains volunteers, and reduces the shared energy that keeps a community resilient.
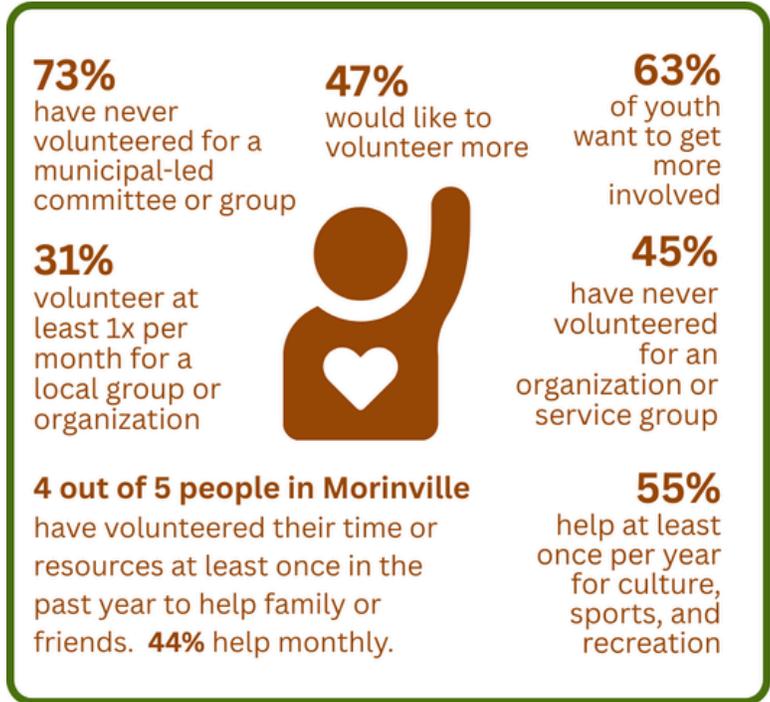
Thriving in Involvement

When involvement is strong, more residents contribute in ways that fit their lives and capacities. Volunteerism is visible but not concentrated among the same small group, and participation feels accessible rather than intimidating or clique driven. People feel their time, voice, and contributions matter, and community life is something they help shape, not just observe

Municipal Opportunities

- Strengthen pathways for civic and community involvement in municipal committees.

- Incorporate diverse forms of involvement into municipal engagement processes that reflect real life by offering accessible, flexible, and relevant opportunities for residents.

- Support youth voice and leadership opportunities within the municipality and its programs.

> " *Locals have their groups already and it's not easy to get integrated or included at all.*
>
> Adult Survey Participant "

73% have never volunteered for a municipal-led committee or group

47% would like to volunteer more

63% of youth want to get more involved

31% volunteer at least 1x per month for a local group or organization

45% have never volunteered for an organization or service group

4 out of 5 people in Morinville have volunteered their time or resources at least once in the past year to help family or friends. **44%** help monthly.

55% help at least once per year for culture, sports, and recreation

Opportunities for Community Organizations

- Offer multiple ways to get involved by providing short-term, seasonal, or task-based opportunities allows more people to participate.

- Design involvement opportunities for different life stages and ages – offering varied formats and times supports broader participation.

- Close the loop with participants by sharing how involvement made a difference helps people feel their time matters and encourages continued engagement.

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Community Member Opportunities

- Start small and build from just one event, one shift, or one season and view that as enough to begin.

- Invite someone to join you, whether it's a one-time volunteer shift, a community event, or a local activity.

- Check community calendars and social media occasionally to find opportunities that fit your current life.

> "
> *It's really hard to get people involved...offering programs - and only a small group of people show up.*
>
> Focus Group Participant
> "

> "
> *We are very involved with our schools and community groups. We have had the pleasure of getting to volunteer with so many great people and work with our youth. We get the chance to meet so many families from our community.*
>
> Survey Participant
> "

Promising Practices in Community Well-Being

Based on community feedback and municipal priorities, several strategic directions are emerging for Morinville's future social development work. These directions aim to strengthen coordination, reduce barriers, and enhance community connection.

Beyond addressing each singular social need, Morinville has an opportunity to leverage emerging and promising practices in community well-being to enhance how administration, community organizations, and community members are currently working to address current and future social needs.

Promising practices are different best practices in that they are strategic level approaches rather than specific actions. This makes them infinitely customizable in their application to the variable contexts of each community. For Morinville, this means these promising practices can be applied in a way that reflects administration, community organizations, and the community whether in whole, or in part. In reading through the promising practices, take time to imagine how they can be customized and applied across the spectrum of social needs.

Using a Municipal Roles and Responsibilities Framework

Social well-being in Morinville is shaped by residents' daily experiences—whether they feel connected to their neighbours, can access essential supports, participate fully in community life, and afford the necessities that allow them to thrive. Because these experiences intersect across many systems and municipal touchpoints, responsibility for social well-being cannot sit within a single team or department. It must be understood and supported as a corporate-wide function.

A Municipal Roles and Responsibilities Framework offers administration a structured method for embedding social well-being across the organization. This approach ensures that departments operate with a shared understanding of how municipal decisions influence belonging, access, affordability, and involvement—pillars identified through community engagement. This does not necessarily mean adopting a whole new framework, it can be imagined as providing consistency to the existing methods and approaches used by administration. By adopting a consistent framework, Morinville can strengthen alignment across departments, increase clarity in decision-making, and reinforce its commitment to building conditions that enhance social well-being for all residents.

Levels of Municipal Responsibility

The framework organizes municipal responsibility into three levels. These distinctions help departments clarify their role in relation to other partners and the broader system.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY
Administration has a clear mandate, capacity, or municipal lever to lead the response.

Examples Include:
- Inclusive public spaces
- Local recreation and FCSS services
- Municipal bylaws and development regulations
- Community safety within municipal facilities

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY
Administration is one of several partners who collectively influence outcomes.

Examples Include:
- Affordability initiatives
- Community awareness and communication
- Mental health navigation
- Youth and family engagement strategies

COMPLEMENTARY RESPONSIBILITY
Administration supports or enables action led by another primary system or organization.

Examples Include:
- Provincial health services
- Non-profit program delivery
- School-based supports
- Federal housing and income programs

Adapted from The City of Red Deer Social Policy Framework (2015)

By identifying the level at which Morinville holds responsibility, departments can focus their efforts appropriately and avoid overextension while still contributing meaningfully to community well-being.

Municipal Roles

In addition to responsibility levels, administration can create consistency within the available municipal roles to guide its choices and actions. Many, if not all, of these roles are currently being demonstrated by administration in some form or another. As an example, within this project alone, Morinville played the role of funder (funding the Social Needs Assessment), convener (bringing stakeholders and community together), and coordinator (coordinating volunteer engagement).

As such, this approach is not about replacing what is already happening but providing shared language and consistency of expectations. In other communities, this shared language has resulted in greater alignment and relationships between community organizations and administration. For example, organizations can feel empowered to request a specific type of support from their municipal partners which creates clarity, and administration can respond in-kind. Mutual expectations in this case lead to better use of resources and increased impact across the community.

Convener
Bringing people and organizations together to explore, strategize, and work through opportunities and challenges.

Capacity Building
Providing support needed to improve the ability of other organizations to generate positive results on shared objectives.

Educator
Communicating, supporting, and development knowledge, understanding, and awareness.

Advocate
Influencing informed decisions and policy through organized efforts.

Planner/Regulator
Plans, policies, and regulations affect community actions and contribute to wellbeing.

Funder
Funding, financial investments, and procurement practices enhance access to resources and support wellbeing.

Coordinator
Providing direct support to groups and organizations to enhance focus, productivity, and results.

Service Provider
Programs and services are delivered directly to people and organizations.

Adapted from The City of Red Deer Social Policy Framework (2015)

These roles are intentionally flexible. Departments may fulfill more than one role depending on the context, partners involved, and nature of the issue.

Amplifying the Framework Across Morinville's Municipal System

The value of this framework lies in its practical and flexible application. Morinville can embed the model into existing processes—such as budgeting, planning, capital project development, program design, and interdepartmental collaboration—to ensure a consistent approach to social well-being.

Cross-Departmental Alignment

Because each department influences social well-being differently, coordinated action and decision-making ensures that municipal decisions reinforce one another rather than working at cross-purposes.

For example:

- Planning can advance accessibility and inclusion in community design.
- Recreation and FCSS can strengthen belonging and involvement through programs and preventative supports.
- Engineering can improve safety, mobility, and access to services.
- Community Safety, Emergency Services, & Enforcement directly supports a sense of safety, justice, and security.
- Economic Development can support affordability and local opportunity.
- Communications can ensure residents know how to engage and where to access supports.

Clarity for Council and Administration

By standardizing how roles are identified, Council and Administration benefit from clearer recommendations, stronger rationale for decisions, and greater alignment with strategic outcomes.

Stronger Partnerships and Systems Coordination

A consistent municipal role provides partners with predictability. When community organizations, regional partners, and provincial systems understand how Morinville approaches social well-being, collaboration becomes more efficient, intentional, and effective.

This framework is not a standalone policy—itis a way of thinking and working across the municipal corporation. When applied consistently, it becomes a foundation for decision-making that helps Morinville uphold its identity while preparing effectively for the future.

Amplifying Cross-Sectoral and Regional Partnerships

Municipalities play a critical role in shaping the conditions that support social well-being, not by delivering all services directly, but by using their influence to convene systems, align policy, and guide decision-making. Strengthening these leverage points offers a promising pathway to reduce access barriers, improve coordination, and ensure municipal actions support residents' ability to thrive across life stages.

Strategic Systems Convening

Morinville has an opportunity to convene local and regional system leaders two to three times per year to align around shared social priorities and emerging pressures. These convenings could include leadership from the Municipality, school districts, RCMP, health and social service organizations, housing providers, and relevant regional partners, with particular focus on cross-cutting issues such as access, affordability, safety, and service navigation.

Regular systems convening builds shared understanding, supports early identification of gaps and policy friction points, and positions the municipality as a neutral steward of collective problem-solving—without expanding its direct service delivery role.
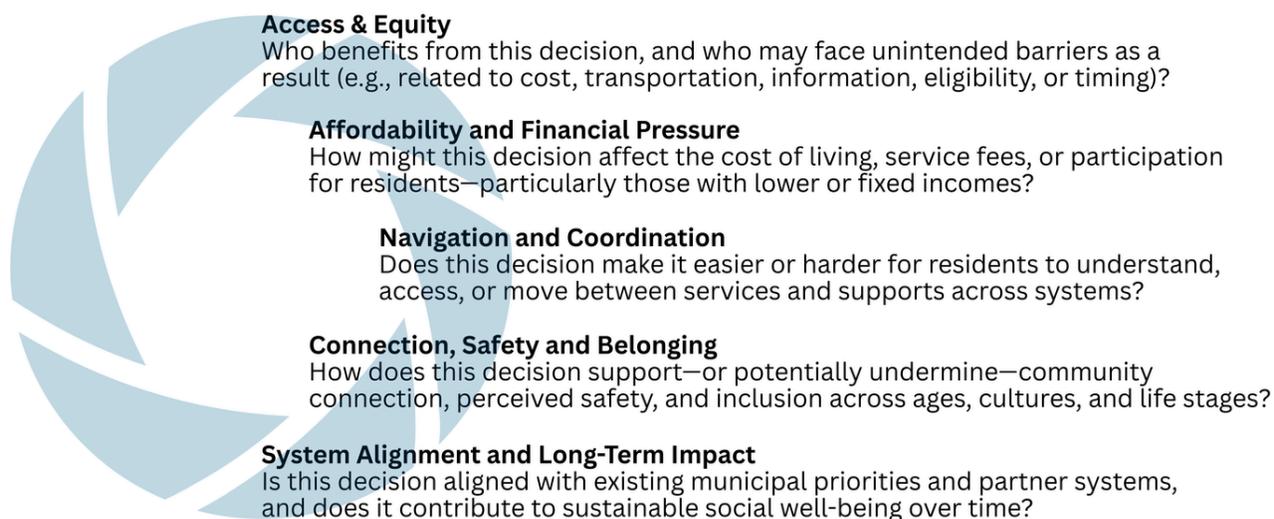
Policy Alignment in Support of Social Well-Being

Through its governance role, Morinville can support periodic review of how administrative and partner policies interact to influence residents' access to services and overall well-being. This includes identifying where policies, procedures, or eligibility requirements—across systems—may unintentionally create barriers or inequities. By facilitating dialogue and alignment where appropriate, Morinville can help strengthen communication pathways, clarify roles, and reduce fragmentation. As a promising practice, policy alignment ensures municipal decisions are informed by system realities and lived experience while respecting the distinct mandates of partner organizations.

A Social Well-Being Decision-Making Lens

To reinforce these efforts, Morinville could introduce a simple, shared social well-being lens to inform Council and administrative decision-making.

Applied alongside financial, legal, and operational considerations, this lens would guide reflection on how proposed policies, plans, or investments may affect access, affordability, inclusion, safety, and service navigation. Used consistently, a social well-being lens supports transparent, values-based governance, helps anticipate unintended consequences, and ensures decisions align with community priorities—strengthening Morinville's role as a steward of conditions that enable residents to thrive.

For example, when considering a new policy, plan, investment, or partnership, decisions makers could ask:

Access & Equity
Who benefits from this decision, and who may face unintended barriers as a result (e.g., related to cost, transportation, information, eligibility, or timing)?

Affordability and Financial Pressure
How might this decision affect the cost of living, service fees, or participation for residents—particularly those with lower or fixed incomes?

Navigation and Coordination
Does this decision make it easier or harder for residents to understand, access, or move between services and supports across systems?

Connection, Safety and Belonging
How does this decision support—or potentially undermine—community connection, perceived safety, and inclusion across ages, cultures, and life stages?

System Alignment and Long-Term Impact
Is this decision aligned with existing municipal priorities and partner systems, and does it contribute to sustainable social well-being over time?

Leveraging Municipal Regulatory Authority

As Morinville continues to grow, municipal regulatory systems play an increasingly influential role in shaping community outcomes. Development pressure, changing economic conditions, and rising expectations around affordability and access mean that how regulations are designed and applied can either support social well-being—or unintentionally constrain it.

Approaching regulatory authority through a social well-being lens allows Morinville to align growth, efficiency, and quality of life.

Municipal regulatory authority is one of the most direct ways a municipality shapes residents' daily experience of community life. Decisions related to zoning, development standards, business licensing, and permitting influence what exists in the community, where it is located, and how easily residents can access opportunity, services, and employment. In this context, regulation is not only a compliance function, but a key municipal role that can either enable participation and inclusion or create unintended barriers.

In Morinville, many of the social priorities identified through engagement—such as housing affordability, youth employment, access to services, and economic vitality—are closely connected to regulatory choices. Land-use and development regulations influence whether smaller-scale and diverse housing options can be built to support seniors, young adults, and families.

Business licensing and permitting processes affect how easily local entrepreneurs and small businesses—often key employers of youth—can open, adapt, or expand. Zoning and site design requirements shape whether services, recreation, and employment are located within walkable or accessible areas, or whether residents must leave the community to meet every day needs.

Applying a social well-being lens to regulatory practices does not mean lowering standards or compromising safety. Rather, it invites the municipality to assess whether regulations are aligned with community goals, proportionate to risk, and clear to those navigating them. Streamlined processes, coordinated reviews across departments, and predictable timelines can reduce unnecessary red tape while maintaining accountability—supporting housing providers, employers, and service organizations to contribute more effectively to community well-being.

Morinville
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Implementation:
From Understanding to Action

This Social Needs Assessment provides Morinville with a shared understanding of community strengths, pressures, and priorities. Implementation is not about starting from scratch, but about aligning, coordinating, and strengthening what already exists, while responding intentionally to areas of strain identified through engagement.

The steps below outline how Morinville can move from understanding to action in a way that is realistic, flexible, and grounded in community voice. As Administration considers how to move from understanding to action, the following section highlights municipal-level ideas to explore that reflect community input and Senior Leadership feedback.

Municipal Opportunities: Ideas to Explore

The following diagrams highlight potential municipal opportunities to explore - informed by community feedback, engagement insights, and comments received during draft review.

These ideas are not recommendations or commitments, but are intended to support reflection and discussion about where and how the municipality may have influence or leverage, rather than to prescribe actions or create new obligations. The opportunities are framed to align with current municipal plans, policies, and capacities, and are offered as starting points for consideration as Morinville continues to advance belonging, access, affordability, and involvement over time.

Belonging

Planning and Service Design

Consider applying a consistent social inclusion lens across municipal planning, program design, and facility use to assess how decisions influence who feels welcomed and able to participate.

Public Spaces and Events

Explore ways to further leverage municipal spaces, events, and amenities as low-barrier gathering places that support everyday connection, especially for newcomers, seniors, and youth.

Communications

Explore opportunities to strengthen Administration communications as a tool for belonging by improving how community and municipal opportunities are shared, framed, and accessed beyond informal social networks.

Access

Convening and Coordination

Support the exploration of the municipality's role as a system convener by bringing together local and regional service partners to improve coordination, navigation, and shared understanding of access gaps.

Information and Navigation

Explore opportunities to support clearer, more consistent access points for residents through shared directories, wayfinding tools, or aligned communication practices.

Land Use and Mobility

Examine how access to health and social services can be more intentionally considered in transportation planning, land use decisions, and the siting of community amenities.

Affordability

Fees and Program Design

Identify opportunities to apply an affordability lens to municipal fees, programs, and amenities to understand cumulative cost impacts on participation.

Policy Alignment

Explore opportunities to better align municipal fee assistance, subsidy, or access policies internally and with partners to reduce complexity and improve equity.

Indirect Cost Reduction

Consider how scheduling, location, transportation access, and program design choices can reduce indirect costs of participation for residents.

Involvement

Civic Engagement

Explore more flexible and accessible pathways for civic and community involvement by offering time-limited or varied engagement opportunities that fit residents' day-to-day lives.

Youth Engagement

Explore ways to strengthen youth voice within municipal processes and programs, particularly in shaping spaces, activities, and decisions that affect them.

Participation Culture

Strengthen how the municipality models and supports inclusive involvement practices that reduce reliance on the same small group of volunteers and lower barriers to entry.

Implementation Considerations

Present the Social Needs Assessment to Council for Information

Present the Social Needs Assessment to Council to generate a shared foundation for future decision-making. Presenting does not create new obligations or programs. Rather, it positions the assessment as a guiding document that can be referenced across municipal planning, budgeting, priorities, and partnership work.

By presenting the assessment, Morinville supports that belonging, access, affordability, and involvement are shared community concerns that requires coordinated attention over time.

Launch and Share the Social Needs Assessment with Community Partners

Following adoption, a coordinated launch helps ensure the Social Needs Assessment is understood, accessible, and used. Sharing the findings with community organizations, service providers, regional partners, and residents supports transparency and reinforces that community input has been heard and valued.

Presenting the assessment builds shared understanding across sectors by creating common language and clarity. When partners see how it aligns with existing plans and services, it becomes easier to reference in conversations, funding applications, and joint initiatives.

Build Department-Based Action Considerations

The Social Needs Assessment can be used to inform how departments consider social impacts within their existing mandates. Departments have the ability to influence social well-being through decisions related to planning, recreation, transportation, communications, and service delivery. Utilize the Municipal Opportunities sections of this report for starting ideas.

Prop Up Community-Involved Action Areas

Many of the opportunities identified through the Social Needs Assessment sit beyond municipal control and are best addressed through shared ownership. Enable the process by convening local and regional action tables focused on the identified social needs and opportunities.

Implementation supporting community-led action coordinates services and actions by reducing barriers, encouraging collaboration, and strengthening connections between groups.

Morinville's role is to help create the conditions for this work to happen by convening partners, sharing information, supporting coordination, and amplifying what is already working.

Opportunities for Action Coalitions could include:

- Activate and engage Morinville's youth
- Increase community capacity to support seniors to age in place and stay connected
- Explore expanding access to, and the impact of, affordability programs
- Seek socially innovative ways to increase affordability, such as coordinating seed banks, toy libraries, or snow angel programs, as examples.

Evaluation Recommendations

To support learning and accountability over time, Morinville may wish to explore opportunities for evaluation. This could include leveraging the data collected through this Social Needs Assessment as a baseline, and engaging third-party support to help track progress, reflect on outcomes, and identify areas for adjustment. In a Social Needs Assessment context, evaluation is best understood as a learning tool that:

- Looks backward by establishing baselines
- Looks sideways by supporting shared learning across departments and partners
- Looks lightly forward by informing reflection and potential adjustment over time

Third-Party Evaluation

To support unbiased and evidence-based evaluation, accountability and learning, Administration could consider:

- Using the data collected through this Social Needs Assessment as a baseline to inform future reflection and reporting.

- Exploring the use of third-party evaluation support, where appropriate and resourced, to help assess outcomes and inform adjustments over time.

Highlight Table of Engagement

Type of Engagement	Date	Purpose	Audience
Key Informant Interviews	May 1 & 2	Gather insight into systemic issues, priority needs, and emerging concerns across Morinville from experienced service providers, community leaders, and municipal staff.	4 interviews with 17 participants
Community Conversations	May 6 – 23	Gain insight into emerging social needs across Morinville through volunteer-led community conversations.	12 volunteers 25 conversations hosted 77 participants
Focus Groups	June 16 – 17	Hear directly from residents who may be experiencing social, economic, or systemic barriers.	13 focus groups hosted 90+ participants
Surveys	Nov 13 – Dec. 13	Gather broad input from youth and adult residents to validate and deepen understanding of community needs.	96 adult respondents 24 youth respondents:
Design Labs	Dec. 3 – 4; 13	Shifted the work from identifying needs to exploring practical, cross-sector solutions.	6 Design Labs hosted 75+ Participants

Detailed Table of Engagement

Type of Engagement	Date	Purpose	Audience	Participants	Summary of Insights
Key Informant Interviews	May 1 & 2	Gather deep insights into systemic issues, priority needs, and emerging concerns across Morinville from a broad cross-section of experienced service providers, community leaders, and municipal staff.	Targeted individuals representing municipal departments, nonprofit and social service organizations, education, health, business, and faith communities.	4 Interviews\n\n17 Participants from community stakeholder groups such as the RCMP, Morinville, Fusion Café, Cadets, Homeland Housing, & the Morinville Library, among others.	Morinville has a strong community identity and small town feel . Social supports are present, but many may not know about them. Mental health needs are outpacing services. Access to medical services is a challenge Transportation is a long-standing barrier to well-being. Youth can feel disconnected due to limitations in program availability. Strength in volunteerism, but burnout is a risk.
Community Conversations	May 6 – 23	Gain knowledge of emerging social needs across Morinville through volunteers hosting semi-structured conversations with their circles and capturing results in notes shared with the project committee and hired consultants.	Volunteers: Targeted outreach to community stakeholder members, including social organizations, business owners, educators, service providers, and faith communities.\n\nParticipants: The primary requirement for participation is being a resident of Morinville (or	12 volunteer inputs\n25 conversations hosted\n4 with adults, 3 parents with young children, 2 youth, 2 with seniors\n77 participants	Community conversations surfaced a broad picture of everyday life in Morinville. Residents highlighted strong connection, safety, and pride in the community, alongside growing concerns about affordability, access to services, transportation, and community awareness. This stage identified shared priorities

Detailed Table of Engagement

Type of Engagement	Date	Purpose	Audience	Participants	Summary of Insights
Focus Groups	June 16 – 17	These focus groups are designed to hear directly from individuals who may be facing social, economic, or systemic barriers in our community.	People with lived experiences to provide critical insight into the real challenges people are facing—insight that can't be captured through data alone	13 focus groups hosted	Focus groups deepened understanding of how social needs are experienced in daily life, particularly for people facing barriers. Participants highlighted gaps in access to services, transportation, housing, and inclusion, while also naming strong community care, safety, and volunteerism as key strengths. This stage clarified where systems break down and who is most affected.
Surveys	Nov 13 – Dec. 13	Gather broad input from youth and adult residents to validate and deepen understanding of community needs.	All community members invited	Adult Respondents: 96 Youth Respondents: 24	Youth reported strong peer connection and trusted adult relationships, but identified limited spaces to gather, affordability barriers, and few local activities as major gaps. Many youth expressed a desire for more places to belong, more to do in winter, better transportation, and opportunities to have their voices heard in community decisions. Adult survey responses highlighted strong pride in Morinville's safety, small-town feel, and volunteer

Detailed Table of Engagement

Type of Engagement	Date	Purpose	Audience	Participants	Summary of Insights
					culture, alongside growing concerns about affordability, access to health and mental health services, transportation, and inclusion for newcomers, seniors, youth, and people with disabilities. Respondents emphasized the strain of rising costs and the need for better communication and local services.
Design Labs	Dec. 3 – 4; 13	Design labs shifted the work from identifying needs to exploring practical, cross-sector solutions.	Municipal leadership and staff, service-provider community partners, and youth	6 Design Labs hosted	Adult design labs focused on translating identified social needs into practical, system-level actions by embedding well-being into planning, communication, partnerships, and existing municipal strategies. Youth design lab participants focused on practical, place-based solutions that would strengthen belonging and well-being, including more indoor and year-round hangout spaces, affordable recreation, transportation options, and opportunities to shape programs that reflect youth interests. Youth emphasized the importance of being listened to and having safe, welcoming spaces to connect.

Detailed Table of Engagement

Focus Group Participants	Design Lab Participants
• Four Winds public school • Municipal Employees • G.H. Primeau School • Morinville Public School (K – Gr. 4) • Morinville Community Library • Youth at the Youth Loft • Community Open House Engagement • Higher grounds • Rendez-Vous Centre • MLC, drop-in for program participants • Aspen House • Meadows of Morinville Social Group • Military Group	• Municipal staff • Military FamilyResource Centre (MFRC) • Town of Morinville Leadership • Four Winds PublicSchools • 2 classes - grade 9, and grade 7 • Morinville Public School • Morinville Social Support Agencies • 8 community members from Morinville • My Loft Teens

Detailed Engagement Summary

The Social Needs Assessment used a staged engagement approach that allowed understanding of community well-being in Morinville to deepen over time. Each stage builds on the one before it, moving from high-level perspectives to lived experience, validation at scale, and finally to shared problem-solving. Together, these stages tell a story of how community strengths and challenges were identified, understood, and translated into practical directions for action.

Key Informant Interviews: Establishing the System View

The process began with key informant interviews to establish an initial understanding of social well-being from a system and service perspective. These conversations helped identify known pressures, service gaps, and emerging trends related to growth, affordability, access to supports, and community connection.

This stage provided important context about how social needs show up across sectors such as housing, recreation, health, and family supports. It also highlighted areas where informal community strengths are compensating for limited or fragmented systems. These interviews shaped early hypotheses and helped frame the questions explored in later engagement.

Community Conversations: Understanding Everyday Experience

Community conversations expanded the lens beyond systems and services to everyday life in Morinville. Held in informal settings and led by trusted volunteers, these conversations revealed what residents value most and where they are starting to feel strain.

Participants consistently spoke about Morinville's strong sense of safety, friendliness, and a shared pride in neighbourly connections. At the same time, concerns emerged around affordability, transportation, access to services, and awareness of available supports. Growth was a recurring theme, with residents expressing both optimism and worry about whether infrastructure and services are keeping pace.

This stage helped clarify shared priorities and community values, while also identifying early warning signs before challenges become crises.

Focus Groups: Deepening Lived Experience

Focus groups marked a clear shift from identifying what issues exist to understanding how those issues are lived. This stage provided grounded, human detail about how gaps in transportation, health access, housing, and communication compound one another, particularly for seniors, youth, newcomers, military-connected families, and people with disabilities.

Participants described how challenges such as transportation, limited local services, housing pressures, and access to mental health supports often overlap and compound one another. Focus groups also revealed how heavily residents rely on informal supports, volunteer networks, and personal relationships to meet needs that would benefit from clearer systems and coordination.

Importantly, this stage reinforced that Morinville's challenges are not rooted in a lack of care or community spirit, but in limited infrastructure, service fragmentation, and increasing pressure on informal supports as the community grows.

Surveys: Validating and Expanding Insights at Scale

The youth and adult surveys validated earlier findings and showed how many experiences are shared across the community.

Youth survey responses confirmed that while many youth feel emotionally supported by peers and trusted adults, they continue to experience structural exclusion community life. Limited hang out spaces (especially year-round), affordable activities, transportation, scheduling barriers and limited or unknown opportunities for youth voice were consistently identified as obstacles to belonging. Youth expressed a strong desire to be involved and to belong, but identified physical space, cost, and access as major barriers.

Adult survey responses confirmed strong pride in Morinville's safety, friendliness, and volunteer culture, while also highlighting growing concern about affordability, access to health and mental health services, transportation, and inclusion. The surveys demonstrated that rising costs are affecting daily life and participation for many households, and reinforced that informal support networks alone cannot meet growing and changing needs.

This stage confirmed that earlier themes were not isolated experiences, but shared patterns affecting a broad range of residents.

Design Labs: Moving from Insight to Action

Design labs marked the transition from understanding needs to co-creating responses.

Adult design labs focused on how systems can respond more effectively. Participants emphasized embedding social well-being into planning, neighbourhood development, recreation, communication, and economic development. Rather than creating new programs, there was a strong focus on alignment, coordination, and improving awareness and navigation of existing supports. Partnerships, including those with military-connected services, were identified as key opportunities.

Youth design labs focusedon practical, place-based solutions. Youth prioritized indoor and year-round spaces, affordable recreation, transportation, and being meaningfully involved in shaping programs and spaces. Their ideas were concrete and grounded in daily experience, reinforcing that belonging is closely tied to physical space, access, and feeling heard.

Together, the design labs demonstrated that sustainable solutions require both system-level alignment and lived-experience insight.

Overall, this stage helped clarify that solutions should be:

- Practical and flexible
- Aligned with existing plans and policies
- Focused on coordination rather than creating entirely new programs
- Supportive of community strengths, such as volunteerism and youth engagement

and youth solutions should be:

- Practical and grounded in daily life
- Strongly tied to space, cost, and access
- Motivated by connection, not consumption
- Dependent on trust and follow-through from adults

Bringing the Stages Together

Across all five stages, understanding evolved from identifying issues, to understanding lived experience, to validating patterns, and finally to exploring how the community and municipality can respond together.

This layered approach confirmed that Morinville's strongest asset is its people and sense of care for one another. At the same time, it highlighted that informal strengths alone cannot meet growing and changing needs. The assessment process created a shared understanding that social well-being must be intentionally embedded into planning, services, and community spaces to support residents now and into the future.

Existing Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) Programs

Child & Youth Programs

- Afterschool Hangout (Grades 3–6)
- Babysitting Course (Ages 12+)
- Day Trips (Ages 11+)
- Fall Day Camps (Ages 6–11)
- Home Alone Course (Ages 10+)
- Leaders in Training
- Low Sensory Santa Photos
- Lunch at the Loft (Grades 9+)
- MY Instagram
- MY Loft (Grades 7–12)
- National Youth Week
- Pink Shirt Day Initiative
- Silly Sprouts Play (with Families First Society)
- Spring Day Camps (Ages 6–11)
- Summer Day Camps (Ages 6–11)

Adult & Senior Programs

- 1:1 Support
- Adult Learning Support and Workshops
- Alberta Seniors' Week
- Educational & Wellness Workshops
- Elder Abuse Awareness
- Connection and Social Events
- Craft, Create, Connect
- Music & Memories
- Grandparents' Day
- Home Support Programs
- Information and Referrals
- International Men's Day
- Lite Up the Nite Viewing
- Thrifted Fashion & Clothing Swap
- The Giving Tree

Community Programs

- Community Support Navigator Program
- Community Grant Program
- Communities of Practice
- Dignity Closet
- Eat Well Hampers
- Eat Well Workshops
- Information and Referral
- International Women's Day
- Keep Warm Morinville (with Midstream Support Society and Fusion Thrift Shoppe)
- Military History Living Library
- Pride Picnic and Initiatives
- Volunteer Grant
- Volunteer Program

Other Existing Programs in Morinville

- Bike Rodeo
- Community Events and Festivals such as (but not limited to) Canada Day, Festival Days, Halloween Dance, Alberta Culture Days, and Lite Up the Nite
- Emergency Fund Program
- Fitness and Recreation Programs
- Indigenous Person Day
- MLC Youth Takeover

- Pembina Youth Activate
- Sturgeon Regional Positive Ticketing Program
- Summer Travelling Adventure
- Town-Wide Garage Sale
- Rock the Rails
- Wellness and Recreation Access Program