

RECOVERY TASK FORCE

Interim Report

December 2020



Table of Contents

1.0	Acknowledgements	3
2.0	Executive Summary	5
3.0	Introduction	7
3.1	Purpose	7
3.2	Vision	8
3.3	Process Overview	8
4.0	Recovery Framework	9
5.0	Strategic Analysis	11
5.1	PESTLE	11
5.2	Environmental Scan	14
5.3	Cultivate the Conversation	17
6.0	Recommendations	18
6.1	Business Sector	18
6.2	Community	18
6.3	Residents	19
6.4	Recovery Task Force Recommended Desired Outcomes and Strategies	19
7.0	The Path Forward	22
7.1	Alignment with City of St. Albert Strategic and Administrative Priorities	22
7.2	Prioritization Exercise	27
7.3	Potential New Initiatives and Opportunities	28
7.4	Implementation Process Map	33
8.0	Measures	34
8.1	Measuring Progress on Outcomes	34
9.0	References	35

1.0 Acknowledgements

The COVID-19 global pandemic has challenged St. Albert, the region, the province, the country, and the world in ways we could not have predicted. COVID-19 has, and continues, to inflict immense social and economic damage. It has disrupted much of what we do as a City from recreation facility closures to transit service reductions. Many local businesses and families have faced increasing pressure and uncertainty, both socially and financially.

It was evident in the early months of the pandemic that the path to recovery was going to require new ways of thinking and creative solutions. Consequently, in May 2020, Council approved the establishment of the COVID-19 Recovery Task Force as part of its comprehensive Recovery Conceptual Plan.

The Recovery Task Force brought together members of Council, along with some of the brightest minds from the community. Task Force members represent a broad cross-section of St. Albert with experience in diverse areas including business, development, government, social profits, and consulting.

Task Force members met on a bi-weekly basis over the past eight months to explore ideas and generate strategies to assist residents, businesses and not-for-profit organizations recover from the adverse economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Task Force explored challenging and diverse topics from policies and incentives needed to help businesses adapt and innovate, to identifying opportunities to increase inclusion and community connectedness in St. Albert.

This interim report reflects the work of the Task Force to date, while acknowledging that the path to recovery will be long. There is still much work to do and the Task Force will be seeking feedback from the community and stakeholders to develop and refine its recommendations through 2021.

Recovery is a process, a process that will continue to require thoughtful leadership and community engagement. One thing that COVID-19 has shown is that we are stronger together, and that by working together we will ensure a robust recovery and a stronger, more resilient city and community in the future.

By continuing to work together, St. Albertans can continue to address and overcome the adversities of the pandemic, which I am confident we will be able to extend into our recovery efforts.

Respectfully,

Cathy Heron

Mayor, City of St. Albert

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2.0 Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on all facets of life across the globe. In the City of St. Albert, businesses have had to close their doors, residents have spent time in isolation and community partners have seen higher demands. At the onset of the virus, City Council saw the need to be proactive in planning for recovery from the effects of the pandemic, including the need to find innovative and efficient solutions that could help expedite the community's recovery post pandemic. As a result, Council delivered a mandate and struck the COVID-19 Recovery Task Force in April 2020.

The Recovery Task Force is an advisory Council Committee that brings together Council members and community leaders to recommend solutions to these complex issues.

Through a range of facilitated workshops in Spring and Summer 2020, the Task Force identified and summarized the projected post-pandemic issues as follows:

1. What new policies or incentives are needed to help businesses adapt and innovate to ensure a resilient and sustainable local economy?
2. In a post-COVID world, how do we ensure people continue to choose St. Albert as a place to live, work, and play?
3. How might we provide opportunities which increase inclusion and community connectedness within City of St. Albert, especially for the most vulnerable populations?
4. How might we enhance the ability of residents, organizations and businesses to become more resilient and thrive?

In response to these questions, the Recovery Task Force developed several strategies though the Fall of 2020 for Council's consideration, intended on achieving the following desired outcomes:

1. Accessible Services and Programs: increased access to and awareness of business and community support services and programs offered by the City and partner organizations.
2. Accelerate Growth, Investment, and Financial Diversification: create an environment that attracts new investment, supports business growth, revenue diversification, and ensures a business-friendly culture.
3. Social Sector and Business Resiliency: enhance the ability of businesses and social profits to adapt to a COVID-altered business and economic environment.
4. Community Connectedness, Vibrancy, Pride and Sense of Belonging: St. Albert is a welcoming and inclusive city, where all residents feel a sense of belonging and those in need are supported. The Recommended Strategies to achieve these Desired Outcomes and address the identified Problem Statements are provided within this report.

Table 7.1 in the report identifies initiatives that are planned for 2020-21 by the City of St. Albert, utilizing existing resources that will help to implement the Task Force's identified Strategies. Where appropriate, the Task Force looks forward to amplifying this excellent work in 2021.

Several Recommended Strategies currently have no short-term action items assigned to them are identified in Table 7.3. Given resourcing constraints, the Task Force prioritized these remaining Strategies, and are providing to Council at this time for Council's strategic planning considerations in early 2021.

The Task Force recognizes that collectively, we are still in the “response” phase of the pandemic and commends the City of St. Albert for their continued response efforts, alongside public health agencies and the Provincial Government.

As this is the Task Force's Interim Report, more work will occur through 2021 to develop a Final Report to Council and continue planning for an efficient and effective post-COVID-19 recovery.

3.0 Introduction

The COVID-19 Recovery Task Force (Recovery Task Force) met from May 2020 to November 2020 to discuss and identify options for the community to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over this period, the Task Force explored the key social and economic impacts the pandemic was having on City residents and businesses. Some of the themes from these discussions include increasing levels of loneliness and isolation, economic impacts across all areas of community life, and the realization that the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will be felt for months or years to come.

3.1 Purpose

The Recovery Task Force is an advisory Council Committee that was established in April 2020 and is a key component of implementing the City's Recovery Conceptual Plan. The Task Force is mandated with developing a report and recommendations focused on ways the City can assist residents, community partners and businesses recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic over an 18 to 24-month period.

On April 6, 2020, Council passed motion CM-20-013 which requested Administration to provide a conceptual plan for COVID-19 Recovery in St. Albert. On April 20, 2020, Council approved the concept plan and passed Bylaw 24/2020 which established the Recovery Task Force.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 virus is an acute respiratory illness which can be spread from person to person. As the virus spreads through respiratory droplets, including those created from talking, coughing and sneezing ([CDC, 2020](#)), mandatory mask policies and physical distancing have been mandated.

Symptoms of the virus include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Nasal congestion or runny nose
- Sore throat

These symptoms typically present themselves within two to 14 days, so 10 to 14-day isolation periods have been implemented. Additionally, some populations, including those with underlying health conditions, infants and the elderly, are considered more high risk.

3.2 Vision

The Recovery Task Force established the following Vision to guide its work:

Acting as a catalyst for economic and social resiliency by supporting innovative approaches that enhance community connection and sustainability towards a future where all St. Albert residents and businesses can thrive.

3.3 Process Overview

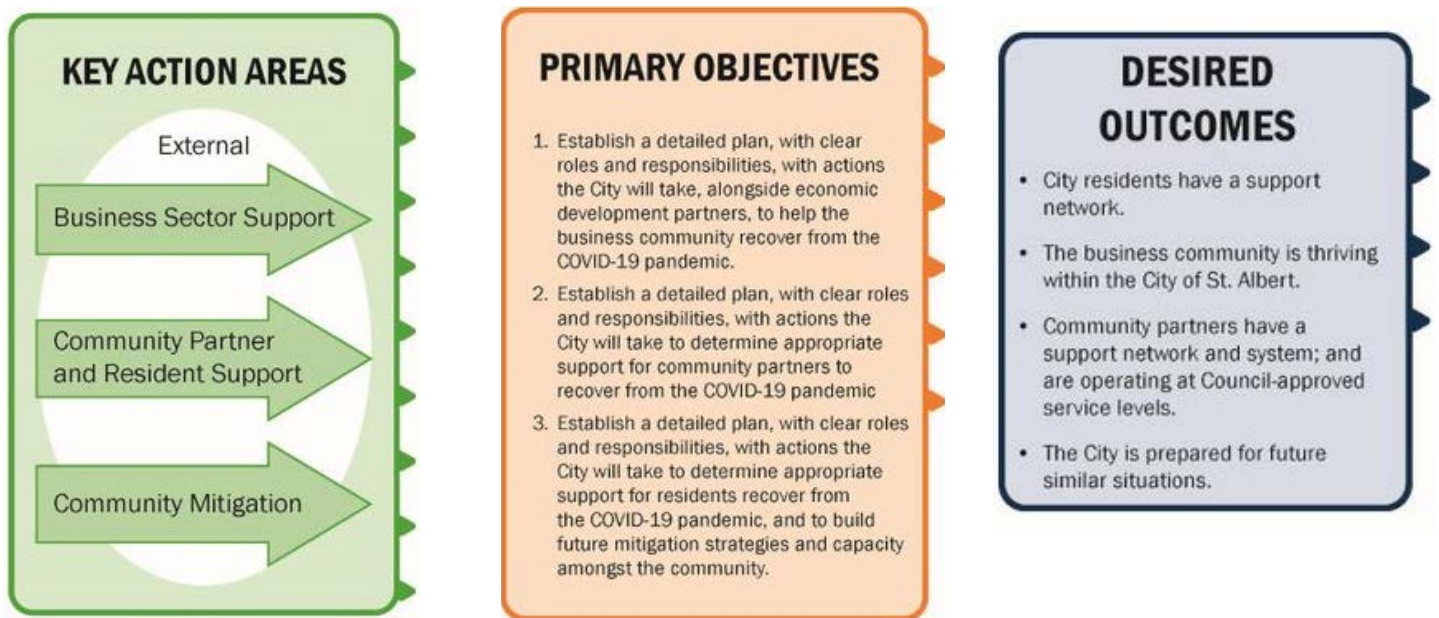
The Recovery Task Force met on a bi-weekly basis through a combination of in-person and online formats. In addition to their experience and networks, Task Force members were provided with subject matter expertise and support from Administration. The Task Force used a strategic policy framework to identify key opportunities and challenges, develop problem statements, identify options and recommendations to address these issues, and map a path forward. Responding to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and supporting the community and business recovery was the focus of these discussions.

The Recovery Task Force developed four problem statements to frame the analysis, discussions and recommendations.

- What new policies or incentives are needed to help businesses adapt and innovate to ensure a resilient and sustainable local economy?
- In a post-COVID-19 pandemic world, how do we ensure people continue to choose St. Albert as a place to live, work, and play?
- How might we provide opportunities which increase inclusion and community connectedness within St. Albert, especially for the most vulnerable populations?
- How might we enhance the ability of residents, organizations and business to become more resilient and thrive?

4.0 Recovery Framework

The conceptual plan (see Appendix 1) identifies three Key External and four Key Internal Action areas. The work of the Recovery Task Force focused on the external action areas: Business Sector Support, Community Partner and Resident Support, and Community Mitigation.



Recovery Task Force Mandate:

According to the Conceptual Plan, the desired end state for the City of St. Albert recovery efforts and the work of the Recovery Task Force is:

- The City of St. Albert has fully recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic, is operating sustainably, and we are recognized as one of the best communities in Canada to live in.
- The City adopts new ways of service delivery the contribute to long-term recovery and future sustainability, reflecting a post-COVID-19 pandemic operating environment.

The Task Force's Mandate, per its Terms of Reference, is to be an advisory committee that focuses on, and makes recommendations to City Council as a key component of the City's Recovery Concept Plan.

Quick-Win Accomplishments

Early in its mandate, the Recovery Task Force received presentations from St. Albert Administration related to development bonds, a potential solar farm project, and the City's creation of a new Municipal Development Plan. Each of these initiatives are anticipated to enable economic diversification and stimulate economic growth.

In the case of development bonds, the Recovery Task Force recommended to Council that the City include the use of development bonds as a form of security from developers to reduce red-tape to development. This was shortly adopted by Council, making the City of St. Albert one of the first municipalities in Alberta to adopt such a practice.

Members of the Recovery Task Force identified opportunities to support outdoor patios for businesses, and this was quickly acted upon by the City's Planning and Development Department and by Council, with the approval of Bylaw 30/2020 and the establishment of a streamlined process to set up minor patios and sidewalk retail pop-ups on City-owned lands.

The Recovery Task Force also recommended that Council advocate to the Province for the establishment of symptomatic and asymptomatic testing sites in St. Albert. Shortly after this, the Province unveiled asymptomatic testing at local pharmacies and in November 2020, established a mobile testing centre at Servus Place.

5.0 Strategic Analysis

To establish recommendations to support community-wide recovery, the Recovery Task Force undertook a process of identifying and developing problem statements. To support this, both a PESTLE Analysis and Environmental Scan were undertaken. A PESTLE uses brainstorming to identify projected key themes, and an Environmental Scan uses data from relevant organizations to identify trends. This section explores the results of these findings and summarizes the information to be addressed by the problem statements.

5.1 PESTLE

This PESTLE analysis looks at six different areas that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the community, from a Political, Economic, Social, Technology, Legislative, and Environmental perspective.

Political impacts:

To manage the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, recovery programs are being offered by all orders of government: federal, provincial and municipal. However, the responses and programs differ on each level due to limitations and responsibilities placed on each.

Municipalities are not recognized as a level of government under the Federal constitution, which creates pressure to be recognized and provided with fiscal tools. At a political level, municipalities have faced a variety of barriers for recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic including:

- Push for regional projects and solutions
- Increased downloading of responsibility for service delivery to municipalities—the need to “do more with less”
- Increased need to establish non-traditional revenue streams, as property taxes and grants are becoming less reliable

This analysis found that politically, there has been a push to do more with less. Municipalities have been tasked with using pre-COVID-19 pandemic budgets to respond and recover from the impacts of the virus. This influences how services are delivered and has forced municipalities to re-imagine their current methods of delivery. Federal and Provincial supports in fall 2020 made these challenges more manageable for municipalities. While support funding is intended to support economic stimulus and support recovery, both the Federal and Provincial governments are projecting increased debt levels.

Economic Impacts:

The global pandemic has influenced the economic base of municipalities hard, with a recession already in place prior to the pandemic, the pandemic fast-tracked a period of economic instability in Alberta. Overall, the economy has had to quickly change to accommodate to the

changes in society. This has included protection for regions with more economic diversity, with less reliance on oil and gas as an economic backer.

Many brick and mortar businesses temporarily closed early in the pandemic and/or shifted their business model to offer alternatives to in-store shopping, such as online storefronts. Businesses were also challenged to comply with public health orders, which meant restrictions placed on gathering spaces, including hotels, restaurants, bars, casinos and theatres, likely had impacts on revenues.

Businesses that moved to temporary work-from-home models may choose to remain so permanently, which will reduce overhead costs but could also change the way business is conducted in the long-term future. The federal government saw a 110.8% increase in retail e-commerce sales from May 2019 to May 2020 ([Aston et al. 2020](#)). With retail e-commerce soaring to an all-time high, business may not have incentive to offer in store service if consumers keep this trend. This could have an impact on future municipal revenues, as a result of commercial vacancies.

It is projected that consumers have slowed down on discretionary spending due to job losses and economic uncertainty.

Social Impacts:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, social patterns have drastically changed in response to the uncertainty and heightened concerns about health and safety. Since March 2020, Canadians have been experiencing higher levels of anxiety, depression, stress and addiction. In survey done by the Health Quality Council of Alberta (HQCA), they found that 70% of Albertans were feeling more stressed out during the COVID-19 pandemic ([HQCA, 2020](#)). Past research has shown that these mental health impacts have been known to continue for up to two years after an emergency response. Causes of decreased mental wellness include: higher levels of financial and emotional strain, increased parental exhaustion and burnout and a breakdown in social supports. With more social isolation amongst populations, we have seen an increase in levels of loneliness.

However, despite these impacts to mental health, there have potentially been positive impacts on our social well-being. People may have placed greater emphasis on connecting with their families and communities through volunteering, although there are less in-person opportunities. Home lives have also had drastic changes, including more home and personal improvement projects and increased time to spend with family.

Similarly, we have observed changes in shopping habits, from more online shopping, to higher rates of curbside pick-ups, people are actively trying to reduce non-essential shopping. As well, there has been a higher level of support for local businesses which may be linked to people's desire to know where their goods and services are coming from.

Businesses and entertainment industries have also had to adapt quickly to social distancing policies. Experiential consumerism allowed people to enjoy concerts and museums from their

own home, while allowing them to maintain physical distance. Similarly, fitness classes and resources moved online which helped maintain a semblance of normality in a time of uncertainty.

Technology impacts:

To minimize contact and maintain physical distancing, technology has been pushed further to create solutions for new problems. Businesses are now using technology to conduct meetings, facilitate work-from-home environments and continue to have a presence in the community.

With an increase of online business, there has been many opportunities to go paperless, which has been adopted by many businesses to reduce contact and in turn, reduce costs. Although there is the potential for some resistance to the adoption of technology, due to increased screen time, many people have been keen to include these technology-oriented practices into their lives.

Legislative Impacts:

In response to COVID-19 pandemic governmental bodies adapted policies to account for new practices. Changes were made to Provincial public health orders, changes to labour laws, occupational health and safety (OHS) / safety regulations and sick leave. Major mandates and changes included:

- Mandatory isolation for 14 days for anyone returning to Canada from other countries, or are a close contact of someone with COVID-19
- Minimum 10-day isolation for those presenting symptoms or are a confirmed case of COVID-19
- Outbreak standards for many health care facilities
- Increased operational protocols
- All employees are eligible for 14-day leaves which can be taken more than once and are unpaid by employer

Environmental Impacts:

The COVID-19 pandemic has had many impacts on the everyday lives of people, including enhanced anxiety surrounding environmental factors. Due to the nature of the virus, many environmentally friendly practices have had to take a backseat to overall public health.

Many grocery stores and coffee shops have stopped accepting reusable bags and cups to minimize unessential contact between customers and employees. Although this change has decreased contact, it has increased consumer packaging. Along with an increase in single use items such as cups and plastic bags, there has been increased waste generation due to the need for masks and gloves. There has been an increased awareness regarding recycling and waste reduction from the City.

Consumers are moving further away from natural cleaning products to ensure their own health and safety. From sanitization wipes to products using more chemicals, there has been an

increase in home poisonings due to chemical exposure. The risks associated with chemical use have increased due to the prevalence of them in homes during this time.

Although we have been able to reduce carbon emissions from vehicles and decreased air travel, there is still an increased awareness surrounding our impact on the environment. Consumers have also become more aware of their food production, with increased interest in knowing how and where their food is made.

5.2 Environmental Scan

Environmental scans allow us to gain a better understanding of the populations being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the areas in which they are being impacted and to what extent they are being impacted. This scan will draw on information and statistics gathered from both the City and Statistics Canada to address the predicted themes brought up in the PESTLE Analysis and create concise problem statements for the Task Force to address.

Emerging Social Impacts brought on by COVID-19:

The City of St. Albert's Community Services Department has gathered statistics on the social issues which have been documented as impacting our community. The impacts are as follows:

Mental health and addictions: Provincially, there has been an increase in suicide rates, Emergency Room visits due to opioid toxicity, increases in distress line users, and a 27% increase in drug and alcohol consumption ([HQCA, 2020](#)). In St. Albert, we have been able to observe these effects locally as we saw a 35% increase in the use of counselling supports, with 52% being related to COVID-19 anxiety. St. Albert is therefore seeing an increase in the numbers of people coping with anxiety, depression, stress and addiction.

Social isolation: Social isolation can impact both physical and mental health; impacts are associated with depression, cognitive decline, poor sleep quality, a weaker immune system and potential heart problems. Distress lines across Canada have also been reporting higher incidents of loneliness. This is consistent with the findings from Community Services.

Seniors have been experiencing higher levels of isolation and the effects from this. Statistics Canada has found that 12% of people aged 65 and older have felt socially isolated and 24% reported low participation rates ([Statistics Canada, 2020](#)). There has been an increase in calls received by Stop Abuse in Families (SAIF) from seniors and community associations who have been working to connect seniors to the community, such as the St. Albert Seniors Association, who had to cancel opportunities for community connection.

Domestic Violence: Isolation increases the risk of intimate partner violence, child and elder abuse and as a result, we have been seeing higher instances of domestic violence. Within the first two months of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a 42% increase in calls to Alberta's sexual violence line. Furthermore, 80% of Canadians are concerned about the possibility of violence in the home, which is reflected in St. Albert as counselling services are being accessed at higher volumes.

Equality issues: Due to the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, certain groups are being impacted harder than others. Some of these groups include women, who are assuming more responsibility for care of children, seniors and the ill. As well, due to the pay gap, women are also more likely to have reduced hours, work part time, or be required to leave their jobs to deal with additional complications which arose from the COVID-19 pandemic, such as lack of childcare. During the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, women accounted for 63% of the 1 million jobs lost, and 70% of the losses for workers aged 25-54. ([Canadian Women's Foundation, 2020](#)).

Further, other marginalized groups including LGBTQ2S+ are disconnected from their traditional support systems and more racist incidents are occurring. In a recent study done by Statistics Canada, they found that 28% of participants had experienced discrimination based on race, sexuality and gender since the beginning of the pandemic ([Statistics Canada, 2020](#)).

Financial instability: Many people have experienced job loss or reduced hours, with 29% of all Canadians reporting that they are unable to meet all financial obligations and essential needs. To combat this, the federal government rolled out the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB); however, this program recently ended for those who were enrolled. Marginalized groups are also being more significantly impacted financially due to the COVID-19 pandemic; a statistic reflected in St. Albert's population. In March 2020, the St. Albert Food Bank created over 400 hampers for 1,230 individuals in the community. As well, seniors in the community have expressed concern over food security, requesting frozen meals and groceries from the St. Albert Seniors Association.

State of the Economy:

Based on data sets from the City and Statistics Canada, there has been several key statistics brought to the attention of the Recovery Task Force.

- In both Calgary and Edmonton, unemployment has been on the rise from January to April 2020. This will impact St. Albert as many residents are employed in Edmonton and surrounding areas.
- A recent survey completed by Y Station for the city of St. Albert, found that close to 1 in 3 households in St. Albert have experienced a job loss or reduction in income as a result of COVID-19.
- Labour force participation rates have declined by over 4% as well in both regions over the same timeline.
- Home-based business licenses have decreased slightly from 2019 to 2020. However, there are more home-based licenses than brick and mortar licenses.
- Industries that have shown negative changes in employment include utilities, manufacturing, forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying oil and gas, educational services, transportation and warehousing, construction, business, building and other support services, accommodation and food services, health care and social assistance, public administration.

- In St. Albert, similar services are being impacted with healthcare and social assistance and public administration.
- From a May 2020 Business survey completed by Economic Development and the St. Albert Chamber of Commerce, results included that business were reporting:
 - A decrease in revenues (87%)
 - Changes in how business operates (61%)
 - Cancellation of non-essential work-related meeting, events, and/or gatherings (50%)
 - Closed office/business location (46%)
 - Increase in expenses (40%)
 - Reduced business hours (36%)
 - Staff absences due to voluntary self-isolation or caring for a loved one with COVID-19 (17%)
- Businesses have taken advantage of several government services, including Canada Emergency Business account, Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance, CERB, Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), Workers' Compensation Board premium payment deferral, income and property tax deferral.

Analysis Summary

Municipalities are trying to do more with less, ensuring residents have the same level of services yet dealing with increased costs as a result of the pandemic. The analysis' revealed the following key themes:

- The City will likely be unable to increase fees as we attempt to maintain service levels with less fiscal resources.
- With a 35% increase in the use of counselling services and 400 food hampers created for 1,230 individuals, the demand for social services has increased. More residents are requiring access to the current services available and it will be vital to support these individuals.
- Higher incidents of loneliness (26% of St. Albert respondents indicated feeling isolated from friends and family as a result of the pandemic) will require the community to work to increase social connectedness through alternative means, especially as we enter the winter months.
- Businesses (61%) have had to change how they operate, which will impact tax revenue, meaning the City will need to look at how they support and encourage businesses in St. Albert.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically impacted our environment and eight of the goals outlined in the Environmental Master Plan, which will require a significant emphasis when looking at the "new normal."
- In a Fall 2020 survey, 96 percent of St. Albert households rated their quality of life as good or very good. This reflects a 2 percent decrease over the same measure in 2019, prior to the pandemic.
- In the same survey, 50% of respondents stated the pandemic has significantly or greatly impacted their household; 24% responded not at all, or hardly impacted.

5.3 Cultivate the Conversation

For the month of November 2020, the Recovery Task Force opened an online forum on the City's "Cultivate the Conversation" tool to engage the community. The Task Force asked the public to respond to the following questions:

- What do you think should be done within the community to **support local businesses and social profits?**
- What do you think should be done within the community to support the **overall St. Albert Community?**
- What do you think should be done within the community to support **residents?**

Thirty-one responses were received, and the Task Force identified a set of key themes that were within the scope of the Recovery Task Force's mandate:

- Support for local businesses in St. Albert
- Promote year-round activities to support community connections
- Establish a toolkit for businesses to help navigate and adapt to changing COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines
- Increase awareness surrounding mental health supports available to the community

The Task Force believes these themes are reflected in our Recommendations to City Council.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 Business Sector

Key Themes

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on City businesses. From the extended shutdown, to changing consumer purchasing behaviours, and the costs associated with meeting new health and safety measures, businesses are under increasing pressure to adapt business processes and adjust to the “new normal”.

The Recovery Task Force identified several areas where businesses would benefit from enhanced support to successfully pivot in a post-COVID-19 environment. These include:

- Streamlining business service delivery;
- Providing incentives for new development and growth initiatives;
- Creating opportunities for mentorship programs;
- Enhancing the City’s incubation ecosystem;
- Leveraging existing advantages in technology infrastructure; and
- Developing partnerships to drive innovation and development.

6.2 Community

Key Themes

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of connection, to community and one another, as a cornerstone of mental and social well-being. Supporting programs and organizations that build community connection will be an essential part of any recovery effort.

The community organizations and the social profit sector play a key role in community building and support. These organizations are facing many of the same challenges impacting the business sector, while at the same time needing to balance an increase in demand for services and supports, with reduced revenues and limits to fundraising opportunities. A thriving business and social profit sector are necessary for ensuring a sustained and widespread recovery from the pandemic.

The past several months has also highlighted that St. Albert is a great place to live, work and play. The river valley, green spaces and trail system provided residents with excellent opportunities to stay safe and healthy while enjoying the best the city has to offer. The need to extend these types of spontaneous use activities into the winter months was identified as an opportunity to be explored.

The Recovery Task Force also recognized the opportunity to revisit and reimagine St. Albert’s marketing strategy. In addition to its many physical attributes, St. Albert residents and

businesses enjoy the benefits of safe communities, modern infrastructure and a business positive environment.

6.3 Residents

Key Themes

The scope of the psychosocial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals and families has been immediate and far-reaching. Communities across the province have recorded increases in the incidence of domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and calls to crisis counselling.

The combined impacts of social isolation increased financial pressures, remote work pressures and in some cases, home schooling is leading to increased reports of exhaustion, burnout and anxiety. These impacts are not felt equally, with vulnerable populations being more at risk for negative outcomes.

The Recovery Task Force recognized that ensuring St. Albert residents are aware of and have access to needed supports and information must be a priority. The City has a role to play as a “Bridge Builder” to help residents connect to the supports and services available in the community.

6.4 Recovery Task Force Recommended Desired Outcomes and Strategies

With these key themes in mind, and with the intent of solving the following problem statements:

1. What new policies or incentives are needed to help businesses adapt and innovate to ensure a resilient and sustainable local economy?
2. In a post-COVID world, how do we ensure people continue to choose St. Albert as a place to live, work, and play?
3. How might we provide opportunities which increase inclusion and community connectedness within City of St. Albert, especially for the most vulnerable populations?
4. How might we enhance the ability of residents, organizations and businesses to become more resilient and thrive?

The Recovery Task Force recommends the following Desired Outcomes and Strategies to St. Albert City Council to assist with Recovery efforts.

DESIRED OUTCOME 1:
Accessible Services and Programs

Increased access to and awareness of business and community support services and programs offered by the City and partner organizations.

Strategy 1.1

Increase on-line delivery of City services in a streamlined manner to residents, businesses, and social profits.

Strategy 1.2

Assess the City's procurement policies to identify opportunities to support local and regional businesses.

Strategy 1.3

Increase community awareness of the programs and supports available through both the City and partner organizations to assist those in need.

DESIRED OUTCOME 2:
Accelerate Growth, Investment, and Financial Diversification

Create an environment that attracts new investment, supports business growth, revenue diversification, and ensures a business-friendly culture.

Strategy 2.1

Facilitate partnerships and collaborations with local and regional partners to generate revenue opportunities.

Strategy 2.2

Attract investment in key sectors that align with existing and growing strengths (e.g. logistics, Artificial Intelligence, natural green spaces).

Strategy 2.3

Continue to promote a culture of excellent customer service, including e-platforms, to support business investment and growth.

Strategy 2.4

Explore options for business incentive programs.

Strategy 2.5

Ensure St. Albert's levies and fees are regionally competitive for investment and development.

Strategy 2.6

Develop an external marketing campaign to promote St. Albert as investment ready, and as a city to live, work and play.

DESIRED OUTCOME 3: Social Sector and Business Resiliency

Enhance the ability of businesses and social profits to adapt to a COVID-altered business and economic environment.

Strategy 3.1

Create opportunities to connect community mentors and/or support networks with businesses and social profits needing additional management support.

Strategy 3.2

Identify opportunities to enhance and innovate business incubation in St. Albert.

Strategy 3.3

Reimagine and strengthen the City's relationship with partner organizations that provide social services to residents and facilitate connections between social profit organizations looking to increase efficiencies and reduce costs through a shared service model.

DESIRED OUTCOME 4: Community Connectedness, Vibrancy, Pride and Sense of Belonging

St. Albert is a welcoming and inclusive city, where all residents feel a sense of belonging and those in need are supported.

Strategy 4.1

Expand opportunities to increase neighbourhood and community connection.

Strategy 4.2

Enable smaller, spontaneous use activities that encourage residents to participate in year-round outdoor activities (e.g. pop-up firepits).

Strategy 4.3

Enable volunteer led projects that foster healthy, engaged communities (e.g. community gardens, block parties).

Strategy 4.4

Develop an internal marketing campaign, accessible to businesses and residents, that celebrates St. Albert's unique attributes (e.g. Tool Kit for residents)

7.0 The Path Forward

7.1 Alignment with City of St. Albert Strategic and Administrative Priorities

The City of St. Albert has a number of core services and corporate initiatives that are planned for 2021 that can help execute on Recovery Outcomes and Strategies. There is enhanced opportunity to apply a recovery lens against this work in 2021, through many of which, the Recovery Task Force can be utilized as a promoter or sounding board.

As a champion, the Recovery Task Force can act as ambassadors to bring additional attention and awareness to this work within the St. Albert community. As a sounding board, the Recovery Task Force can provide strategic advice to City Administration as work progresses to assist in expediting recovery.

DESIRED OUTCOME 1:

Accessible Services and Programs

Strategy	Current Initiatives	Potential Task Force Role	Impacted Focus Area	Lead	Expected Completion
1.1 Increase on-line delivery of City services in a streamlined manner to residents, businesses, and social profits.	Economic Development will be providing on-line access to business licencing.	Champion	Business	Economic Development	Q4 2020
	Planning and Development is transitioning to more online service delivery and will utilize the Recovery Task Force to promote this work as it progresses.	Champion	Business/Residents	Planning and Development	2021
1.2 Assess the City's procurement policies to identify opportunities to support local and regional businesses.	The City will implement the findings of the Procurement Review and will be seeking innovative procurement opportunities.	N/A	Business	Finance	Ongoing Core Service
1.3 Increase community awareness of the programs and supports available through both the City and partner	The City will continue to promote distress lines, local services and city counselling services through a variety of communication strategies. (e.g. Gazette ads, street signs) as well as adding	N/A	Community/Residents	Community Services	Q4 2021

organizations to assist those in need.	enhanced strategies such as advertising in city recreation facilities.				
DESIRED OUTCOME 2: Accelerate Growth, Investment, and Financial Diversification					
Strategy	Current Initiatives	Potential Task Force Role	Impacted Focus Area	Lead	Expected Completion
2.1 Facilitate partnerships and collaborations with local and regional partners to generate revenue opportunities.	The City will identify and recommend opportunities for investment in long-term revenue generating infrastructure.	N/A	Business/ Community/ Residents	CAO Office	Ongoing Core Service
2.2 Attract investment in key sectors that align with existing and growing strengths (e.g. logistics, Artificial Intelligence, natural green spaces).	Work on developing a corporate promotion strategy will begin in early 2021. The strategy will include tools to position St. Albert as a place for growth, development and investment. The strategy will also include the use of “non-traditional” channels (e.g. brokerage outreach, BILD Alberta engagement, online data toolkit).	Sounding Board	Business/ Community/ Residents	Economic Development Strategic Services	Ongoing Core Service
	Engage St. Albert’s business and thought leaders, including the Recovery Task Force, as Community Ambassadors to further promote the City’s competitive advantages by leveraging their existing networks and expertise.	Sounding Board	Business/ Community/ Residents	Economic Development	Ongoing Core Service
	The City is working to implement the long-term planning framework which stresses the need to incorporate Smart City strategies across the corporation and will continue to support the recognition of St. Albert as a Smart City.	N/A	Business/ Community	Strategic Services	Q4 2021

2.3 Continue to promote a culture of excellent customer service, including e-platforms, to support business investment and growth.	<p>The City recently completed a Competitive Analysis and work has started on implementation.</p> <p>The report can be shared with the Recovery Task Force, and as implementation occurs, the Task Force can be utilized as a sounding board and champion through 2021.</p>	Sounding Board	Business	Planning and Engineering	Q4 2021
2.4 Explore options for business incentive programs.	The City is engaged in the initial stages of exploring opportunities arising from Bill 7. Additional work has started regarding non-tax-based incentives.	Sounding Board	Business	Economic Development	Ongoing
2.5 Ensure St. Albert's levies and fees are regionally competitive for investment and development.	The City is currently exploring ways the current cost estimates for off-site levy projects can be reduced. The City is also exploring alternate ways of funding growth projects. In the recently completed Competitive Analysis the City's off-site levy rates were comparable within the region.	Champion	Business	Engineering	Ongoing
2.6 Develop an external marketing campaign to promote St. Albert as investment ready and as a city to live, work and play.	Develop marketing tools focussed on St. Albert's competitive advantages to attract identified key sectors.	Sounding Board Champion	Business	Strategic Services Economic Development	Q4 2021
	Adjust the current marketing approach to better focus on a city-wide approach to promotion that highlights St. Albert's investment readiness.	Sounding Board Champion	Business	Strategic Services Economic Development	Q4 2021
	Look at ways to package St. Albert's investment case with taxes, infrastructure, fast access, etc. to incent private sector investment.	Sounding Board Champion	Business	Economic Development	Q4 2021

	Incorporate testimonials from businesses highlighting St. Albert's business positive environment.				
DESIRED OUTCOME 3: Social Sector and Business Resiliency					
Strategy	Current Initiatives	Potential Task Force Role	Impacted Focus Area	Lead	Expected Completion
3.1 Create opportunities to connect community mentors and/or support networks with businesses and social profits needing additional management support.	Economic Development is looking at starting a business mentorship program in January 2021. The Recovery Task Force could act as a champion for the program.	Champion	Business	Economic Development	Q1 2021
3.2 Identify opportunities to enhance and innovate business incubation in St. Albert.	Economic Development is working to develop and implement a foundational program with key regional partners that fosters entrepreneurship and assists with innovation and commercialization for local business stakeholders.	N/A	Business/ Community	Economic Development	Q3 2021
3.3 Reimagine the City's relationship with partner organizations that provide social services to residents and facilitate connections between social profit organizations looking to increase efficiencies and reduce costs through a shared service model.	The City will implement recommendations from the Social Programming for Synergistic Opportunities report that identifies ways to better support social profits and support collaboration.	Sounding Board	Community	Community Services	Q4 2020
	Capitalize on opportunities for collaboration emerging from the monthly meetings between the social profits and Community Services.	N/A	Community	Community Services	Ongoing Core Service

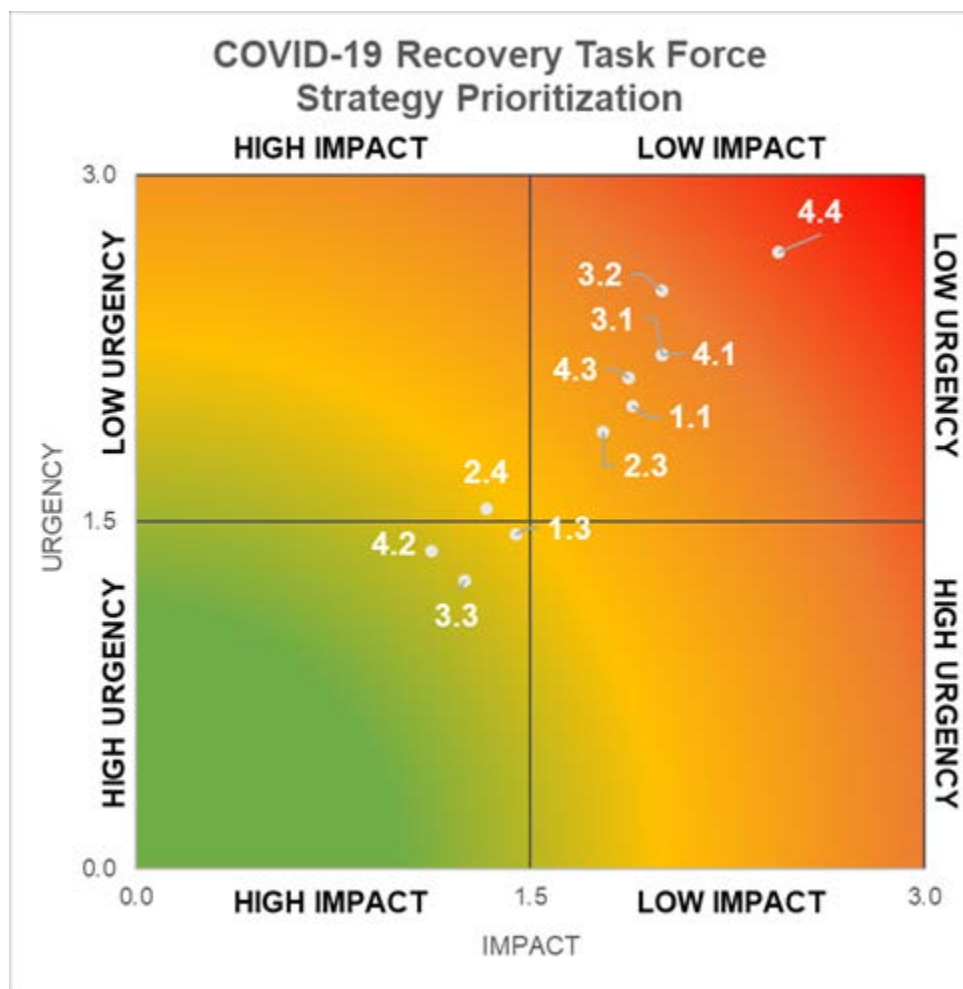
DESIRED OUTCOME 4:
Community Connectedness, Vibrancy, Pride, and Sense of Belonging

Strategy	Current Initiatives	Potential Task Force Role	Impacted Focus Area	Lead	Expected Completion
4.1 Expand opportunities to increase neighbourhood and community connection.	Community Services delivers this as part of its ongoing core operations (i.e. virtual mental wellness workshops for neighbourhoods).	Champion	Community	Community Services	Ongoing Core Service
4.2 Enable smaller, spontaneous use activities that encourage residents to participate in year-round outdoor activities (e.g. pop-up firepits).	Outdoor recreation amenities such as playgrounds, trails, parks, outdoor rinks, picnic sites, tennis etc. provide an opportunity for residents to take part in free recreation activities. These are all seasonally available. More promotion of these amenities could be done.	Champion	Community	Parks and Recreation	Ongoing Core Service
4.3 Enable volunteer led projects that foster healthy, engaged communities (e.g. community gardens, block parties).	Community Services supports these initiatives as part of its ongoing core operations. The Recovery Task Force could champion a winter block party proposal.	Champion	Community	Community Services	Ongoing Core Service

7.2 Prioritization Exercise

In addition to shining a recovery lens on existing and planned 2021 City efforts, the Recovery Task Force and City Administration identified a number of potential new initiatives or opportunities. Given the current fiscal realities and resourcing constraints, a prioritization exercise was undertaken to provide Council with a recommended path forward to recovery, regarding these new items.

Recovery Task Force members completed a survey ranking each strategy for both impact and urgency. This ranking was used to prioritize each strategy and inform Task Force discussions regarding sequencing of the strategies and initiatives, and form potential Short, Medium, and Long-Term actions, that are identified in Section 7.3.



7.3 Potential New Initiatives and Opportunities

The Table below provides a high-level overview of new actions that could be taken by the City of St. Albert and within the community. These Strategies, and the potential new opportunities associated with them will likely require additional resources and are being provided to St. Albert City Council for planning considerations in 2021.

Based upon finite resources, and the results of the Prioritization exercise above, the Task Force sees the following Strategies having a greater sense of near-term Council consideration:

- 1.3: Increase community awareness of the programs and supports available through both the City and partner organizations to assist those in need.
- 2.4: Explore options for business incentive programs.
- 3.3: Reimagine the City's relationship with partner organizations that provide social services to residents.
- 4.2: Enable smaller, spontaneous use activities that encourage residents to participate in year-round outdoor activities (e.g. pop-up firepits)

The Task Force will undertake further planning activities in 2021, and the remaining Strategies are identified as Mid- or Long-Term considerations at this time, subject to future resourcing and the evolving pandemic and post-pandemic environment.

Section 7.4, "Implementation Process Map," is the Task Force's potential roadmap for implementation in 2021 of Sections 7.1 and 7.3, understanding that the COVID-19 pandemic remains an evolving situation and that the Task Force plans on conducting a visioning session in late January 2021.

DESIRED OUTCOME 1:
Accessible Services and Programs

Strategy	Opportunities	Impacted Focus Area	Timing
1.1 Increase on-line delivery of City services in a streamlined manner to residents, businesses, and social profits.	Develop a suite of services for Social Profits with an online component.	Community	Mid-term
	Streamline in-person access to services utilizing a hybrid approach for accessing services in-person, online, or by phone.	Business/ Residents	Mid-term
	Identify opportunities to provide City services at different locations such as Servus Place, kiosks, etc.	Business/ Residents	Mid-term
1.3 Increase community awareness of the programs and supports available through both the City and partner organizations to assist those in need.	Enhance promotion of City and community partner/non-profit programs and services. Enhancements in this area will ensure residents who need them are aware of what is available and where they can be accessed.	Community/ Residents	Short-term
	Identify new ways of connecting with our most in need populations through enhanced partnerships and communications with community partner organizations.	Community/ Residents	Short-term
	Enhance partnerships with stakeholders to provide business support services to St. Albert's businesses (e.g. Export Development Canada, Business Development Bank of Canada, Business Link, etc.).	Business	Short-term
	Leverage existing network of recreation, sport and community partners who deliver programs and services to the community. These organizations often have means to subsidize access to programs and services that are not always widely communicated.	Community/ Residents	Short-term
	Create one central information hub for community organizations to share their information and build awareness.	Community/ Residents	Short-term

**DESIRED OUTCOME 2:
Accelerate Growth, Investment and Financial Diversification**

Strategy	Opportunities	Impacted Focus Area	Timing
2.3 Continue to promote a culture of excellent customer service, including e-platforms, to support business investment and growth.	Develop a concierge service model that provides a single point of access for City businesses to access services and information.	Business	Mid-term
2.4 Explore options for business incentive programs.	Develop targeted incentive programs, such as Downtown revitalization, to address emergent business needs.	Business	Short-term

**DESIRED OUTCOME 3:
Social Sector and Business Resiliency**

Strategy	Opportunities	Impacted Focus Area	Timing
3.1 Create opportunities to connect community mentors and/or support networks with businesses and social profits needing additional management support.	Use existing networks to facilitate conversations and identify specific needs in this area.	Community/ Business	Mid-term
3.2 Identify opportunities to enhance and innovate business incubation in St. Albert.	Complete a Gap Analysis of the existing business incubation environment within St. Albert and develop recommendations for next steps.	Business	Mid-term
3.3 Reimagine the City's relationship with partner organizations that provide social services to residents.	Further engage with the social profits to build understanding of specific needs. (e.g. larger social profits have internal infrastructure and resources but need predictable funding. Smaller social profits would benefit from support/expertise in areas such as HR, IT, Strategic Planning).	Community	Short-term

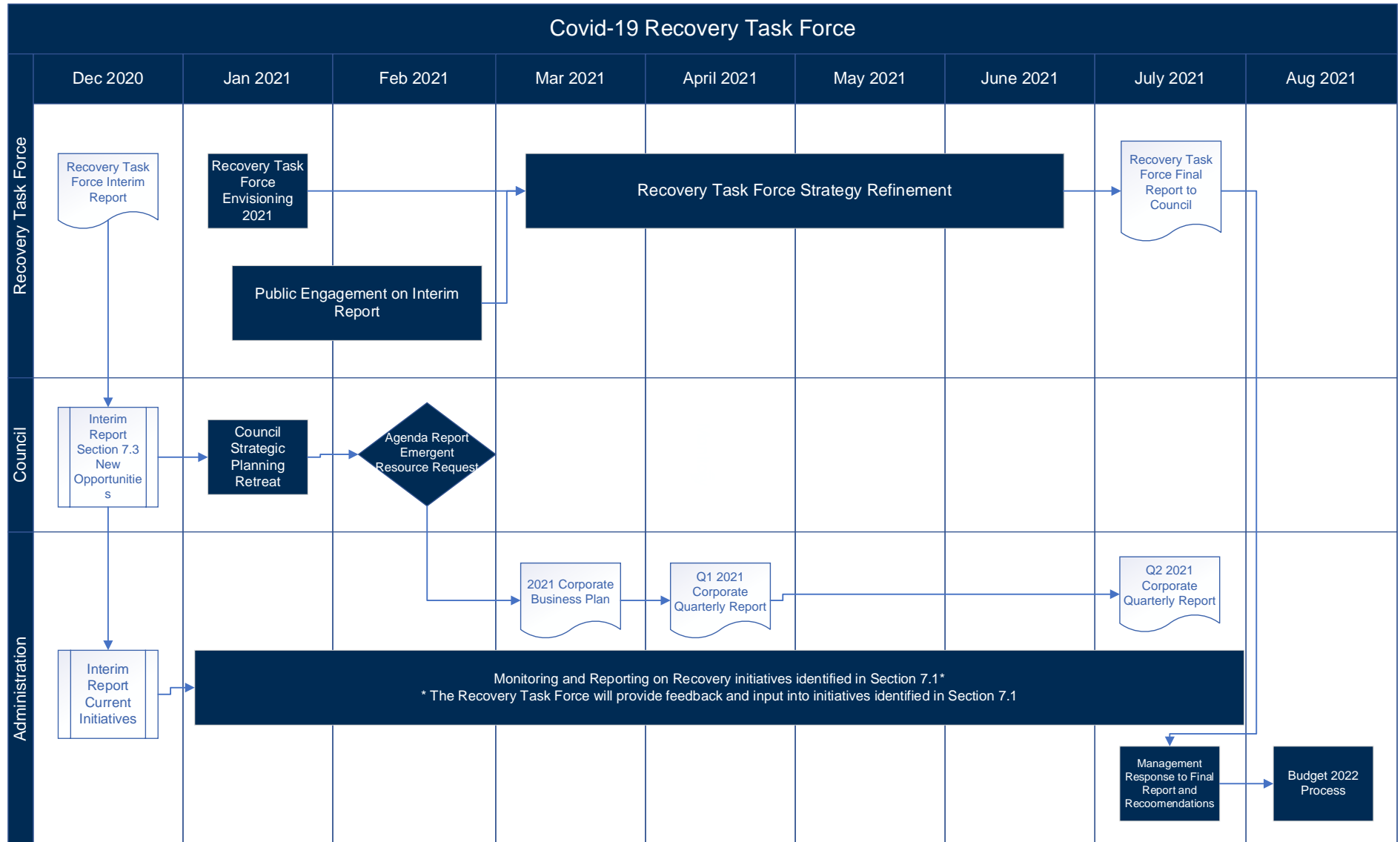
DESIRED OUTCOME 4:

Community Connectedness, Vibrancy, Pride, and Sense of Belonging

Strategy	Opportunities	Impacted Focus Area	Timing
4.1 Expand opportunities to increase neighbourhood and community connection.	Utilize Bang the Table platform as an engaging landing space for community groups (e.g. Spruce Grove)	Community/Residents	Mid-term
	Explore the feasibility of Community/Neighbourhood Associations within the municipality, that are responsible for volunteer-led recreation and neighbourhood events.	Community/Residents	Mid-term
4.2 Enable smaller, spontaneous use activities that encourage residents to participate in year-round outdoor activities (e.g. pop-up firepits)	Planning and Development can look at enabling more permanent flexibility, for items that enhance walkability and outdoor use.	Residents	Short-term
	Continue the Roaming Recreation Crews that were active during summer 2020 to promote year-round activities.	Residents	Short-term
4.3 Enable volunteer led projects that foster healthy, engaged communities (e.g. community gardens, block parties).	A Post-COVID community event should be pursued, that looks to leverage existing strengths in grassroots organizations and volunteers.	Community	Mid-term
	The City could examine internal policies/practices that may impede these activities moving into the future.	Community	Mid-term
4.4 Develop an internal marketing campaign, accessible to businesses and residents, that celebrates St. Albert's unique attributes.	Develop a marketing campaign and tool kit that reinforces St. Albert's well-known strengths, but also challenges existing negative perceptions (i.e. "sleepy" "expensive" "unfriendly to private sector"). Quality of Life is the bare minimum in this competitive environment, any marketing campaign needs to be about much more.	Community	Long-term
	Enhance resident engagement to inspire involvement (e.g. through online photo submissions) and on Bang the Table platform.	Residents	Mid-term

	Tap into existing groups, including volunteers and Council Committees - Youth Advisory Committee, Seniors Advisory Committee, BAM, Neighbourhood Connectors, Natural Helpers to amplify and build community recovery and resilience through a shared recovery/resilience Communications Strategy.	Community Residents	Mid-term
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7.4 Implementation Process Map



8.0 Measures

8.1 Measuring Progress on Outcomes

The City of St. Albert tracks many “Quality of Life” Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that measure changes in community well-being. Further work will be undertaken between the Interim Report and Final Report of the Recovery Task Force to identify which existing, or potential new metrics should be monitored to track progress on the Desired Outcomes identified in this report.

9.0 References

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