



Bragg Creek ASP - Social Needs Assessment



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Bragg Creek Social Needs Assessment Report

Integration with the Greater Bragg Creek Area Structure Plan (ASP)

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Executive Summary

The Bragg Creek Social Needs Assessment was undertaken as part of the Greater Bragg Creek Area Structure Plan (ASP) review to ensure that land use planning reflects the lived realities and aspirations of the community. This assessment integrates resident feedback, workshop discussions, key informant interviews, and comparative data analysis. It identifies the community's assets, documents its pressing social needs, and distinguishes between those that can be addressed within the ASP framework and those that fall outside of the scope of land-use planning and require broader policy, program, or partnership responses.

A Community Rich in Assets

Bragg Creek is an asset-rich community. The natural environment, including forests, rivers, wetlands, and extensive trail systems, forms the backbone of well-being and identity locally. Volunteerism is woven into the fabric of daily life, with organizations such as the Bragg Creek Trails Association, the Wellness Network, and numerous seniors' and cultural groups contributing thousands of hours annually. Gathering places like the Community Centre, Snowbirds Lounge, yoga and theatre venues, and local cafés serve as both formal and informal hubs of social life. These strengths reinforce resilience, foster intergenerational connections, and provide a strong foundation on which to plan for the future.

Emerging and Persistent Needs

While these strengths were commended, residents also identified significant social needs that are shaping the future of the community including:

Affordable & Diverse Housing: Housing across the spectrum is an identified challenge for residents of Bragg Creek. Rising home values and limited rental stock make it difficult for seniors, workers, and young families to remain in the community. There is strong demand for secondary suites, small homes, and diverse housing options.

Seniors' Supports: Nearly one-quarter of Bragg Creek residents are seniors. Many wish to age in place, yet face barriers including limited housing, transportation, and caregiver support.

Youth Spaces: Older youth lack dedicated gathering places. Programs once available locally have been discontinued, leaving gaps in engagement, recreation, and safe social spaces.

Community Gathering Infrastructure: Residents consistently voiced the need for affordable, accessible indoor and outdoor gathering spaces, including cultural venues and multi-use facilities.

Transportation & Mobility: The absence of public transit, limited active transportation infrastructure, and concerns about emergency egress from West Bragg Creek create pressing mobility and safety challenges.

Digital & Service Infrastructure: Unreliable internet and cell service hinder education, health, business, and social connection.

ASP-Addressable Priorities

The Area Structure Plan (ASP) has a direct role to play in shaping how Bragg Creek's built environment supports social well-being. Engagement findings point to six priorities that can be advanced through land use, infrastructure, and design decisions:

- **Affordable & Diverse Housing:** Zone for secondary suites, small homes, and mixed-use options that provide attainable housing for seniors, workers, and young families, ensuring residents can remain in the community across life stages.
- **Seniors' Supports:** Designate clustered sites for age-friendly housing and embed walkable design standards so older adults can access amenities and services without relying exclusively on vehicles.
- **Youth Spaces:** Plan for multi-use facilities and recreation amenities such as skateparks, pump tracks, and climbing walls that provide teens with safe and engaging places to gather.
- **Community Gathering Infrastructure:** Expand and diversify both indoor and outdoor spaces for cultural events, volunteer groups, and informal connection, including Indigenous representation through signage, art, and shared spaces.
- **Transportation & Mobility:** Strengthen active transportation networks with continuous trails, sidewalks, and safe crossings. While also incorporating evacuation planning to address the vulnerability of a single bridge in West Bragg Creek.
- **Digital & Service Infrastructure:** Secure corridors for broadband expansion and create digital hubs in community facilities to support education, employment, and health access.

Together, these ASP-Addressable Priorities ensure that land use planning supports belonging, accessibility, and resilience while preserving the community's unique character.

Needs Beyond ASP Scope

Residents also identified needs that fall outside the ASP's mandate but remain critical to well-being: mental health and social services; emergency management partnerships, incorporating evacuation planning to address the vulnerability of a single bridge across Balsam Ave; digital and service infrastructure including secure corridors for broadband expansion and create digital hubs in community facilities to support education, employment, and health access; business licensing and monitoring, as well as health service delivery coordination across community organizations. These areas require County advocacy, provincial and regional collaboration, and investment in

local service delivery. Documenting them here ensures they remain visible for future planning and partnership opportunities.

Emerging Insights and Dynamic Tensions

Four observations emerged that shape all areas of community life:

1. Strengths can also be vulnerabilities; Bragg Creek's reliance on volunteers is a strength, yet burnout is a concern.
2. Tourism and resident needs must be balanced; facilities oriented toward visitors sometimes limit access for residents.
3. Environmental stewardship is foundational; the community expects growth to safeguard forests, rivers, and wildlife corridors.
4. Equity and inclusion require attention; greater Indigenous representation and support for newcomers are essential to long-term vitality.

Conclusion

The Bragg Creek Social Needs Assessment underscores that social well-being is inseparable from land use planning. The ASP provides an opportunity to embed housing diversity, seniors supports, youth spaces, gathering spaces, transportation and mobility as well as digital infrastructure into the fabric of the community. Social well-being concerns outside the ASP's scope, predominantly Mental Health & Social Services, Emergency Services & Safety, Economic & Business Licensing and Health Service Delivery important to document for future advocacy and investment. By addressing the social well-being priorities within its scope, the ASP can strengthen Bragg Creek's identity as a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable community for current and future generations.

1. Purpose and Approach

The Social Needs Assessment as a component of the Area Structure Plan (ASP) seeks to explore, define, contextualize, and build strategic action alignment within the ASP to influence improved social well-being for the community of Bragg Creek. Social well-being can be defined simply as the extent to which community members feel connected, supported, and included in the community. Social well-being is often influenced by positive relationships, access to activities, and being able to find help when needed, as well as other factors of which relate to land use and physical community design either directly or indirectly.

As outlined in the Municipal Government Act (MGA), Alberta's municipalities have responsibility to develop and maintain safe and viable communities. Although not explicitly outlined, social well-being falls within the boundaries of safe and viable communities. Communities with higher social well-being tend to be healthier, safer, and have greater retention of citizens.

Completing a Social Needs Assessment involves using a variety of data including both qualitative (e.g. resident feedback) and quantitative (e.g. statistics) sources. Data is then cross-referenced and validated for accuracy to identify key themes and findings. The Bragg Creek Social Needs Assessment draws on multiple inputs including:

- The 2022 Social Needs Assessment completed for Rocky View County
- Area Structure Plan engagement results including open house responses and workshop results
- The 2025 Residential Feasibility Study
- Publicly Available Data (e.g. Statistics Canada, Alberta Government)
- Social Needs Assessment Key Informant Interviews
- July 2025 Social Needs Assessment Workshop: included an in-person workshop with invited participants to share their insights
- Online video call interviews with different local organizations and groups
- Phone call interviews with community members

The purpose of this project is to ensure the Area Structure Plan incorporates a social sustainability lens, balancing environmental stewardship, economic development, and community well-being with land use and physical design. Appendix B provides an overview of how land use planning and social well-being complement one another.

2. Community Strengths

Bragg Creek's social well-being is deeply rooted in its natural surroundings and the ways residents move through and connect within them. The following sections explore how trails, volunteerism, gathering places, and local services form an integrated web of social infrastructure that supports community health and cohesion.

2.1 Natural Environment, Trails, & Mobility Networks

The natural landscape—forests, rivers, wildlife corridors, and trail systems create a backbone of well-being for Bragg Creek. Residents identify the natural setting as a source of identity, recreation, and community health. The multiple trails, including those maintained by the Bragg Creek Trails Association, provide opportunities for physical activity, connection to nature, and informal social interaction. These trails are not only recreational but also part of the social infrastructure, with volunteers contributing many hours to maintain them, creating deep community investment and intergenerational bonds.

Connectivity is both a strength and an aspiration. The trail network linking the hamlet, Banded Peak School, and West Bragg Creek supports recreation, youth mobility, and community cohesion. Residents highlight the importance of expanding safe, non-motorized pathways to reduce dependence on cars and to better serve seniors and youth who cannot always drive. Efforts to upgrade trails for year-round use and for the County follow-through on commitments to continue to support the development of a new permanent trail centre will further anchor the trail system as social infrastructure, enabling programs for seniors, youth, Indigenous partners, and visitors.

2.2 Community Spirit and Volunteerism

Volunteerism is woven into the fabric of Bragg Creek. Groups like the Bragg Creek Trails Association, the Wellness Network, Seniors for Kids, Snowbirds, and the Environmental Coalition represent a “community of doers and givers” who build trust, leadership, and resilience. This spirit is particularly evident in seniors and intergenerational programs, where elders contribute wisdom and time, and in youth initiatives. The breadth of volunteer activity—spanning environmental work, wellness programs, and cultural events—creates a sense of belonging and mutual care.

2.3 Gathering Facilities and Cultural Spaces

Bragg Creek still has notable social hubs that are vital to the community. The Community Centre, Snowbirds Lounge, the yoga centre (“the Heart”), Swamp Donkey Theatre, and various coffee shops act as formal and informal gathering spots. These “third spaces” complement more formal facilities by offering low-stakes, inclusive opportunities for connection, such as book clubs or local performances, that contribute to mental and social well-being. Third spaces are informal, public gathering places which serve as social anchors that are separate from the home (“first place”) and work (“second place”). Land use and community design contribute to the creation and access to such social spots as third spaces.

2.4 Health, Wellness, and Service Assets

Social well-being is reinforced by local health professionals, FCSS-supported programs, and initiatives like “Thriving in Your Golden Years” and aging-in-place supports. Informal assets, such as book clubs, also have an impact on mental well-being. While access to some formal services (e.g., mental health and transportation) remains a gap, Bragg Creek’s collaborative networks—including the Wellness Network and FCSS—are working to coordinate services and amplify existing strengths.

Bragg Creek’s strengths demonstrate that social well-being is inseparable from place: the natural environment, volunteer networks, cultural hubs, and mobility systems all function as social infrastructure. These assets:

- Build resilience by connecting residents with each other and their environment.
- Foster identity and belonging through volunteerism, intergenerational programs, and cultural participation.
- Enable health and vitality by offering recreational, wellness, and service supports.

While gaps exist in coordination, accessibility, and formal service delivery, the existing foundation of assets—particularly the strong natural and volunteer base—provides Bragg Creek with a platform to strengthen social well-being into the future.

3. Identified Social Needs

Understanding the social needs of Bragg Creek requires balancing immediate community realities with long-term planning considerations. Drawing from data, workshops, focus groups, interviews, and community feedback, the following section outlines the key social needs shaping well-being.

To provide clarity, needs have been organized into two broad categories:

- Needs addressable through the Area Structure Plan (ASP): These are social needs that connect directly to land use, built environment, and infrastructure decisions—such as housing, connectivity, gathering spaces, and mobility.
- Social needs beyond the scope of the ASP: These are broader community issues that influence social well-being but require programmatic, service-based, or cross-sector responses outside of the formal ASP framework—such as mental health supports, transportation services, and intergenerational programming.

This distinction helps ensure that the ASP remains grounded in its planning mandate, while still acknowledging the wider range of social factors that shape community life in Bragg Creek.

Finally, to capture continuity and change over time, Appendix A provides a comparison of social needs identified in the 2022 Rocky View County Social Needs Assessment with those identified through this updated 2025 process. This comparison highlights where progress has been made, where needs have persisted, and where new issues have emerged.

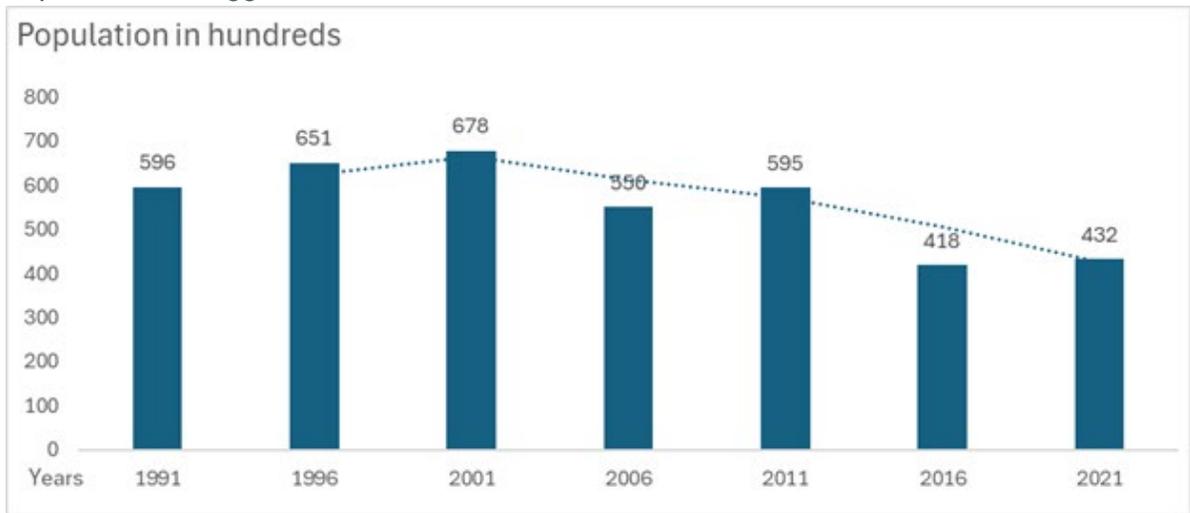
3.1 Needs Addressable through ASP

Some social needs in Bragg Creek can be directly influenced through land use, infrastructure, and design decisions embedded in the Area Structure Plan. These needs focus on how the built environment supports belonging, accessibility, safety, and quality of life; for example, through housing options, mobility networks, and gathering spaces. Addressing these needs within the ASP ensures that social well-being is considered alongside physical growth and environmental planning.

3.1.1 Affordable & Diverse Housing: secondary suites, small homes, and mixed-use housing

In 2021, Statistics Canada recorded a total of 195 private households in the community. Of these, 87.2% were owner-occupied, while 12.8% were rental units. Over the past three decades, shifts in population size and growth have played a pivotal role in shaping the local housing landscape. The community's population stood at 596 in 1991, rose to 651 by 1996, and reached a peak of 678 in 2001. However, subsequent intercensal periods saw notable declines, which directly impacted housing demand and availability. Between 2011 and 2016, the population dropped sharply by 29%, followed by a modest recovery of 3.3% between 2016 and 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2023).

Population of Bragg Creek 1991 to 2021



Source: Statistics Canada (2023), *Census Profile*, 2021 Census of Population

As a result, between 2006 and 2021, no new housing units were constructed in the community, according to the data. During this period, the median dwelling value reached \$700,000, while the median household income in 2020 stood at \$115,000. Affordability remains a concern, with 21.6% of households allocating 30% or more of their income toward shelter costs—an indicator of housing affordability issues.

Seniors—defined as individuals aged 65 and older—make up 23% of the community’s population, and a median age of 48.4 years highlights a pronounced trend toward aging (Statistics Canada, 2023). Population forecasts suggest that this demographic shift will persist in the coming years, reinforcing the need for thoughtful planning. Accordingly, the County must take a proactive approach to addressing both the immediate and long-term housing and social support needs of older adults. This includes ensuring the community remains inclusive, accessible, and adaptable to their evolving requirements. In addition, sites should be indicated as appropriate for future rezoning as to enable seniors care facilities as a land use.

Municipalities can foster housing diversity through Area Structure Plans (ASPs) by intentionally guiding new development to include a well-rounded mix of housing types, densities, and tenures. This planning approach ensures that the evolving social and economic needs of the community are met—for instance, by integrating smaller, accessible units for seniors alongside spacious homes suited for growing families. By creating inclusive and adaptable neighbourhoods, municipalities can attract new residents, stimulate population growth, and strengthen the local tax base, ultimately enhancing the sustainability of community services and amenities.

In addition, the strategic direction of the Area Structure Plan should prioritize the development of social infrastructure that revitalizes the local economy—positioning the

area as both a vibrant destination for leisure and tourism, and a welcoming, family-oriented community where people choose to settle and thrive.

3.1.2 Seniors' Supports: accessible housing, walkable design, and clustered services

Seniors are a significant and growing demographic in Bragg Creek, comprising 23% of the community's population, with forecasts showing this proportion will continue to rise. Residents repeatedly emphasized their strong desire to remain in the community as they age, citing the importance of staying near friends, natural spaces, and familiar supports. However, barriers include limited seniors' housing options, gaps in home-visit and caregiver supports, and transportation challenges for medical appointments and social activities.

Community stakeholders pointed a desire for walkable design that allow seniors to downsize without leaving Bragg Creek, and to access amenities and services without relying exclusively on personal vehicles. The former seniors' transportation program into Calgary was discontinued, creating new reliance on volunteers. Programs such as Snowbirds Lounge activities and intergenerational initiatives with Banded Peak students provide important social connection but require stable facilities and ongoing investment.

Through the ASP, land use can designate clustered sites for seniors' housing developments and encourage compact, accessible design that integrates housing, trails, and services. Beyond the ASP, service-based strategies must address caregiver supports, transportation programs, and in-home assistance to sustain older adults' independence and well-being.

3.1.3 Youth Spaces: dedicated youth centre, skatepark, pump track, climbing wall

Youth in Bragg Creek face unique challenges of geography and mobility. School-aged children are bused directly home after school, making it difficult to access community activities and spaces. At present, there is no dedicated youth centre, and past programs such as dance and gymnastics have been discontinued. While the Jr. Forest Wardens and church-based youth groups remain active, teens have consistently voiced the need for informal, social, and recreational hangouts. Residents identified specific amenities, including a skatepark, pump track, and climbing wall, as highly desired by local youth.

From a land use perspective, the ASP can prioritize multi-use spaces adaptable for youth activities, ensuring that young residents have safe, engaging places to gather. Beyond the ASP, program coordination between Bragg Creek and Redwood Meadows is essential to avoid duplication and to strengthen youth supports across the region.

3.1.4 Community Gathering Infrastructure: expanded indoor/outdoor meeting places, cultural spaces

Workshops highlighted the need for expanded indoor and outdoor spaces where groups can meet affordably and reliably. Free or low-cost meeting spaces are limited, which is

especially challenging for volunteer-driven organizations. Informal cultural assets—such as the Swamp Donkey Theatre, yoga studios, and local coffee shops—currently fill part of this gap. Residents also raised the importance of welcoming design elements, such as Indigenous signage, public art, and outdoor gathering spaces like firepits and rinks, to reinforce inclusion and cultural connection.

The ASP can shape the built environment by ensuring that public and cultural spaces are designed to be multipurpose, accessible, and central to the hamlet. Beyond the ASP, stronger coordination, programming, and funding support are needed to maximize the use of existing facilities and sustain grassroots cultural initiatives.

3.1.5 Transportation & Mobility: active transportation networks and trail connectivity

Connectivity emerged as one of Bragg Creek’s most celebrated assets—and most pressing challenges. Residents and visitors alike enjoy the multitude of recreational trails and spend time improving access. However, recreational trails are just one component for connection and access, residents shared key challenges including:

- Safe active transportation: Seniors and youth lack independent mobility options, making walkable and bikeable connections within the hamlet and to Banded Peak School a priority.
- Service connectivity: The loss of the privately run commuter bus and seniors’ transportation programs has left a gap in access to Calgary and regional services.

The ASP can embed connectivity into its design framework, ensuring continuous non-motorized routes, safe crossings, and integrated trail linkages with residential and commercial areas. Beyond the ASP, coordinated transportation programs, carpooling supports, and seniors’ shuttle services will be essential to strengthen social well-being and safety.

3.2 Needs Beyond ASP Scope

Other social needs identified through this process fall outside the direct mandate of the ASP. These needs relate more to programs, services, and community support that depend on partnerships, funding, and coordination among social agencies, volunteers, and other levels of government. While not formally addressed through the ASP, documenting and acknowledging these needs is vital as they reflect and shape everyday experiences of well-being in Bragg Creek and can inform advocacy, collaboration, as well as future social and service planning.

3.2.1 Mental Health & Social Services: counseling, wellness programs, support networks

Residents and stakeholders raised consistent concerns about limited access to mental health supports in Bragg Creek. Service providers noted growing waitlists and increased

emotional distress across all ages, with residents often forced to seek care in Cochrane or Calgary, compounding barriers due to distance and transportation.

Informal activities like book clubs and intergenerational gatherings were described as filling some of this gap, offering connection where formal support is lacking. While the ASP may support the creation of spaces for wellness programs, the delivery of mental health services lies with health providers and policy systems beyond the planning framework. Future social planning is encouraged to prioritize advocacy for local or regional programs, ensuring local mental health supports keep pace with growth and demographic change.

3.2.2 Emergency Services & Safety: evacuation planning, RCMP response times, disaster readiness

Community members highlighted concerns around wildfire and flood risk, as well as the limited emergency egress across Balsam Ave where a single bridge creates a potential evacuation bottleneck. Residents also pointed to delayed RCMP response times due to deployment from Cochrane. While the ASP can note infrastructure vulnerabilities, the operational aspects of emergency preparedness and response, including but not limited to fire mitigation, evacuation planning, and policing, require broader intergovernmental collaboration. Bragg Creek Trails' partnership with Alberta Forestry and Parks on FireSmart projects is an example of community-level stewardship that could be expanded. Strengthening formal partnerships and protocols will ensure residents feel secure in the face of emergencies.

3.2.3 Economic & Business Licensing: monitoring impacts of local enterprises

Residents noted that local business development, particularly in areas like breweries and alcohol sales, has social impacts that ripple through the community. Concerns were expressed that seniors' gatherings often become alcohol-centered, and questions were raised about whether increased business activity aligns with community well-being. Business licensing falls outside of the ASP's land use purview but could benefit from County-level policy and monitoring to better track the balance between economic development and social outcomes. Engagement participants suggested that formalized systems could help identify trends that may influence health, safety, or service demand, such as an influx of (aforementioned) certain business types.

3.2.4 Health Service Delivery: clinics, home care, medical transport for seniors

Bragg Creek's seniors and their families expressed a strong desire to age in place, yet current service gaps force many to leave the community when they can no longer drive or manage rural homes. The discontinuation of formal seniors' transportation to Calgary has placed new burdens on volunteers, while home visit and caregiver supports remain limited. Though the ASP can influence age-friendly housing and walkability, it cannot deliver the medical, transportation, or in-home care services that seniors rely upon. Residents called for renewed investment in programs that support independence, social

connection, and access to health care. Advocacy and inter-agency coordination will be crucial to ensuring Bragg Creek's older adults can remain connected and supported.

3.2.5 Digital & Service Infrastructure: corridors for broadband, digital hubs in community facilities

Reliable digital connectivity is now recognized as a cornerstone of community well-being, shaping access to education, employment, health services, and social connection. For Bragg Creek, however, residents consistently identified unstable internet and gaps in digital access as barriers to both daily life and long-term community development. These challenges are compounded by the hamlet's geography and low-density settlement pattern, which make commercial investment in broadband expansion less attractive.

The consequences of limited connectivity can be broad and have impact on education, employment, health, social services, and community cohesion. To address these challenges, the County can explore designating digital corridors and utility rights-of-way to ensure space for broadband expansion and future-proofing as technologies evolve. Embedding digital infrastructure in future land-use planning aligns Bragg Creek with broader regional and provincial priorities for connectivity.

In addition, community facilities can be leveraged as digital hubs. For example, the community centre, Snowbirds Lounge, or the proposed new trail centre could integrate shared workspaces, public Wi-Fi, and digital access points to support residents who lack reliable home connections. These hubs could serve multiple purposes: enabling remote work, offering learning opportunities for youth, and ensuring seniors and vulnerable residents have access to online health and service platforms.

4. Emerging Insights and Dynamic Tensions

In addition to the specific social needs identified, the engagement process and document review revealed a set of broader themes across multiple areas of community life. These emerging insights are not specific needs in themselves, but rather patterns that surfaced repeatedly in workshops, interviews, and secondary analysis. Sometimes referred to as dynamic tensions, they provide context for understanding how Bragg Creek's strengths, challenges, and identity intersect, and they highlight dynamics that influence several of the priority areas outlined earlier in the report. Documenting these emerging insights provides awareness of complex themes impacting across multiple areas of community life.

4.1. Strengths can also be vulnerabilities (e.g., volunteer burnout)

Bragg Creek benefits from a highly engaged volunteer base, with groups such as Bragg Creek Trails Association mobilizing more than 150 volunteers and over 13,000 hours annually to maintain and enhance local amenities. This deep culture of giving has been integral to building and sustaining social infrastructure, from trails to seniors' programs. However, workshop participants and interviewees consistently flagged that the same few individuals often carry much of the workload. This concentration of responsibility makes volunteer networks fragile, raising concerns about burnout and sustainability. While volunteerism is a major community asset, the lack of formal coordination structures and funding support risk undermining the resilience it enables.

4.2. Tourism infrastructure sometimes conflicts with residents' needs

The natural environment and trails are strong draws for visitors, making Bragg Creek a hub for recreation and day tourism from Calgary and beyond. However, this influx of visitors creates tension with resident priorities. Workshop participants noted that the community often feels "built for tourists, not for residents". Roads, trails, and facilities become congested during weekends, leading some residents to avoid the hamlet altogether during peak times. Businesses and services are often oriented towards tourists rather than meeting everyday community needs, and this has also shaped the built environment; for instance, café spaces may be full on weekends, leaving fewer places for residents to gather. Balancing tourism-driven economic benefits with resident well-being and access to local amenities may be a contextual challenge for the ASP and broader community planning.

Strategies for balancing tourism with resident needs could include dual-use and shared infrastructure planning. Since tourism and resident infrastructure often overlap, investments should be designed with dual benefits in mind including upgrading trails, the trail centre, parking, and roads so they can handle peak weekend use, but ensure designs also improve weekday access for locals (e.g., better sidewalks, or upgrading the trail centre to also be a resident social gathering hub). Another strategy could be for the County to foster a policy approach which incorporates resident-first planning principles into the ASP, ensuring baseline services and livability standards are protected before tourism investments are approved. Lastly, a recommendation is that communications could also ensure the benefits to residents from

tourism are reflected in communication materials meaningful geared towards residents. This communication could focus, not solely on the financial benefits of tourism, but more so on the social benefit of tourism; for example, bolstering more places to gather, supporting more trails to connect and the trails centre, as well as volunteer opportunities.

4.3. Environmental stewardship remains central to identity and resilience

Bragg Creek residents consistently emphasized that the forests, rivers, wetlands, and wildlife corridors are not only treasured amenities but also essential to the community's identity and future resilience. The community views itself as stewards of these lands, with organizations actively engaging in fire mitigation, hydrology restoration, and ecological protection projects. For instance, Bragg Creek Trails collaborates with Alberta Forestry and Parks on wildfire protection and erosion management. Workshop participants also highlighted concerns over water and sewer infrastructure being at capacity, vegetation clearing, and the need to protect ecological corridors as growth occurs. Stewardship of the natural environment is therefore not a peripheral issue but a foundational expectation of planning; maintaining Bragg Creek's character and resilience depends on embedding environmental protection directly into land-use decisions.

4.4. Stronger Indigenous representation and newcomer supports

While Bragg Creek is recognized for its community cohesion, workshop discussions pointed to its relatively homogeneous population and the need for more intentional efforts to foster inclusion. Participants suggested incorporating Indigenous art, bilingual signage (English and Tsuut'ina), and formal land acknowledgements into community spaces to better reflect and honour neighbouring First Nations. At the same time, barriers for newcomers – whether new residents to Canada or families moving in from elsewhere in Alberta or another province / territory – include limited gathering spaces, challenges hearing about and accessing programs, as well as digital connectivity gaps that make social integration harder. The community's strengths in informal networks can inadvertently exclude those not already connected, such as young families or immigrant households. To ensure long-term vitality, Bragg Creek requires a deliberate approach to equity and inclusion, embedding cultural recognition and opportunities for diverse groups to participate fully in community life.

5. Conclusion

The Bragg Creek Social Needs Assessment Report demonstrates that social well-being is inseparable from land use planning. The Area Structure Plan (ASP) offers an important opportunity to ensure that physical growth and environmental stewardship are matched by investments in the built environment that strengthen belonging, improve accessibility, and reinforce resilience.

Through the ASP, the community has clear opportunities to advance the identified as Needs Addressable through ASP, including affordable & diverse housing, seniors' supports, youth spaces, community gathering infrastructure, transportation & mobility, and digital & service infrastructure. Embedding these priorities into the ASP framework will create the conditions for residents to remain rooted, included, and supported in place and experience a higher quality of life as the community evolves.

The engagement process also surfaced a number of pressing concerns that extend beyond the scope of the ASP. These social well-being needs will require coordinated responses from multiple levels of government and service providers and include mental health & social services support, emergency services & safety planning, economic & business licensing considerations, and health service delivery coordination. Thus, while not actionable through land use policy, these needs are nonetheless critical to document, serving as a foundation for advocacy, future partnerships, and targeted investments.

Finally, the four Emerging Insights and Dynamic Tensions section offers broader guidance for both planning and community development. These contextual insights and tensions emphasize that strengths can sometimes become vulnerabilities, that tourism infrastructure must be balanced against resident priorities, that environmental stewardship is central to the community's identity, and that equity and inclusion demand more intentional efforts. Together, these insights highlight the importance of approaching land use decisions with a holistic perspective that considers not only physical design but also the social dynamics and cultural character that make Bragg Creek unique.

By embedding social well-being needs into the Area Structure Plan, Bragg Creek can strengthen its identity as a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable community. This alignment between planning, service delivery, and community voice ensures that Bragg Creek remains a place where residents of all ages and backgrounds can thrive, today and into the future.

Appendix A – Social Needs Comparison

Community Strengths

Emerging from the Area Structure Plan (ASP) engagement and key informant interviews are some early findings of important and vital assets for the community of Bragg Creek. Assets form the foundation of social well-being and when activated well, serve as protective factors for emerging social challenges.



Natural Environment

This is by far the most consistently celebrated strength of Bragg Creek. Community members repeatedly emphasized their deep appreciation for the forests, trails, river and creek corridors, wetlands, and wildlife habitat. The surrounding wild spaces are seen not only as aesthetic and recreational treasures but also as essential to Bragg Creek’s identity.

People describe the valley and forests as central to their lifestyle, with specific

appreciation for the sense of tranquility, access to nature, and walking trails that support both physical health and mental well-being. The natural feel of the area is something residents strongly wish to retain and protect. Several responses expressed concern about preserving this environment amid potential development, indicating that these assets are not only valued but perceived as vulnerable.

Some feedback also flagged ecological awareness, referencing the need to support habitat connectivity and avoid paving or fencing that interrupts wildlife movement. The desire to protect natural hydrology and avoid fire risks also came through, showing that residents view the natural landscape not just as a luxury, but as something to steward responsibly.

Social Capital & Community Cohesion

Though less frequently mentioned than nature, some workshop responses highlighted the value of community connection. While not always explicitly stated, the appreciation for Bragg Creek’s neighborliness, small population size, and volunteer-driven culture was evident in related

discussions (particularly in workshop and interview transcripts). Residents clearly value a tight-knit community atmosphere where informal relationships and local knowledge thrive.

This underlying social fabric is what enables many of the more formal or place-based strengths (e.g., events, programs) to function in the first place. There's an unspoken sense that Bragg Creek's strength lies not only in its place, but in its people's stewardship of that place.

Community Facilities

While not as central in the written feedback, several responses across datasets (workshops, interviews, and focus groups) referenced the importance of the Community Centre, the library, and other shared facilities as community anchors. These spaces are seen as vital for both formal programming and informal connection – from fitness and book clubs to intergenerational gatherings.

That said, concerns were also raised about limited hours and staffing at these facilities, suggesting that their value is high, but capacity is limited. The fact that they are mentioned in the context of appreciation and worry simultaneously underscores their importance.

Mobility & Accessibility

A few responses pointed to walkability and trail access as valued features, especially where they connect homes to nature or community amenities. Comments about preserving or enhancing non-vehicular access – such as pathways and connectivity between nodes – show an appreciation for being able to move through the community without always relying on vehicles. This overlaps with environmental values but also ties into health, aging-in-place, and youth independence.

Cultural Identity and Character

Some feedback touched on Bragg Creek's distinct character – its small-town, natural, and rural feel. While less frequent, this theme is significant. There's a quiet pride in how Bragg Creek doesn't feel like the city, and many responses suggest residents want to see future planning that respects and preserves this unique identity.

Comparative Analysis of Social Needs

The table below compares key social priority areas identified in the 2022 Rocky View County Social Needs Assessment (SNA) with findings from 2024 Bragg Creek focus groups, interviews, ASP Open House feedback, and ASP workshop results. It highlights which needs have shifted, intensified, or newly emerged for Bragg Creek since 2022.

Social Need	2022 RVC SNA – Findings & Priorities	2024 Bragg Creek – Current Insights
Mental Health Supports	Identified as the top priority County-wide. Demand for mental health services had been rising for a decade and intensified by COVID-19. In 2022 this was a <i>newly elevated need</i> compared to 2010. Over 75% of residents said it's <i>"important or very important"</i> to have local mental health supports.	<i>Still a critical need, with signs of further intensification.</i> Service providers report <i>increased emotional distress</i> across all ages and growing waitlists for counseling/support. Local stakeholders noted few local services in Bragg Creek, so residents rely on outside programs (Cochrane/Calgary), which adds wait times and access barriers. The community expects that as Bragg Creek grows, <i>"there will be mental health issues"</i> and stressed the importance for investments in social/mental health programs alongside physical development. Even informal community activities (e.g. a library book club) are seen as valuable for mental well-being by providing social connection. Overall, mental health remains a high priority and appears to have intensified due to post-pandemic and economic stressors.
Seniors' Supports (Aging in Place)	The SNA found a strong desire for services that help seniors remain in their homes longer and stay active in the community. ~88% of residents deemed seniors' support <i>"important/very important."</i> Key needs included help with shopping, meals, housekeeping, yardwork, and more opportunities	<i>Heightened focus in 2024, as gaps persist and pressures grow.</i> <i>"Aging in place is a critical topic in the Bragg Creek area; residents are 'forced' to leave their community."</i> This local observation reflects that many seniors currently must move away (to Calgary, Cochrane, etc.) when they can no longer drive or maintain rural properties. Participants noted that while some new seniors' initiatives started (e.g. intergenerational programs through the library or Seniors-for-Kids Society), services still do not meet demand. Key barriers to aging in place include transportation and home care – <i>"transportation is still a challenge – particularly for seniors... to access Calgary"</i>

	<p>for seniors to socialize (to prevent isolation). The 2010 assessment had similarly flagged seniors' care, housing, and coping with aging parents as major concerns.</p>	<p><i>supports</i>" – and the lack of nearby medical or home support services. Social isolation remains an issue; there are a few informal gatherings (e.g. a seniors' coffee group at the local ice cream shop), but no dedicated seniors' centre. The need for seniors' housing options is newly emphasized (see Affordable Housing). In summary, seniors' support needs have intensified, with urgent calls for better transportation, local services, and housing to enable aging in place.</p>
<p>Children & Youth Supports</p>	<p>A 2022 priority area. Four key needs were identified: (1) more child/youth programming, (2) parenting support programs, (3) after-school care options, and (4) support for children/youth with special needs. Around 75% of residents and youth prioritized having youth programs; over half wanted after-school care and parenting resources. The SNA noted broad concern for youth opportunities and well-being across the County.</p>	<p><i>Continued priority, with some shifts in focus. Bragg Creek is a small community, and stakeholders report that older youth (teens) are underserved.</i> There is "a 13–16 crowd that really [doesn't] have a space to gather without too much adult involvement" – no youth centre or hangout, which may lead to boredom or out-of-town travel. The local school (K-8) and community centre are gathering points, but the school's increasing focus on academics has "limited access to youth from a social perspective" (i.e. fewer extracurricular/social activities). In 2024, new stressors for families are noted: higher cost of living and parenting stress. Service providers observe rising anxiety among youth (and parents), partly due to these stressors, though details are currently limited. The community did respond with a "Screenagers" educational event to address teens' screen time and mental health, indicating awareness of emerging youth issues. Overall, youth needs remain significant – especially for teen engagement, mental health, and family support – and may be intensifying in complexity (digital challenges, stress) even as baseline programming needs (after-school care, etc.) persist.</p>
<p>Community Connections (Sense of</p>	<p>Identified as a priority social need in 2022. The SNA highlighted the strong sense of</p>	<p><i>Still a strength, but challenged by geography and capacity.</i> Bragg Creek stakeholders affirm a "strong sense of community" in the hamlet. Neighbors know and support each other, and community events</p>

<p>Community & Inclusion)</p>	<p>community in RVC as a <i>strength</i> – residents felt the County is a good place to raise a family and quality of life is high. However, improving community connections (reducing isolation, increasing events and neighborly support) was seen as important. The 2022 data did not provide Bragg Creek-specific details but county respondents valued community events and opportunities to connect.</p>	<p>(markets, fairs, “Snowbirds” senior socials) are well-attended. However, outlying rural areas feel less connected – those living in dispersed acreages or on the edge of the area may not experience the same cohesion. A lack of gathering spaces and community infrastructure is noted: aside from the community centre (which itself is “<i>struggling with staffing</i>” and limited hours) and a few cafes, “<i>there are not a lot of places for people to get together in Bragg Creek</i>”. This can hamper inclusion, especially for newcomers or those outside the hamlet core. Volunteer burnout is a concern as the same people organize events. Digital connectivity gaps (see Access below) also hinder community cohesion for those who can’t easily connect virtually. In summary, Bragg Creek’s communal spirit remains strong, but the capacity and infrastructure to support community connection are strained, making this an area to bolster going forward.</p>
<p>Collaborative Partnerships (between organizations)</p>	<p>The 2022 SNA’s fifth priority was to improve collaboration among service providers and community organizations. This was seen as a way to address needs more effectively across the County – breaking silos, sharing resources, and coordinating programs (especially given the rural context).</p>	<p><i>Some progress, but still evolving.</i> Bragg Creek and neighboring areas form the Bragg Creek & Area Wellness Network (an inter-agency committee initially sparked by the 2013 floods). This network brings together various non-profits, FCSS, library, etc., and Rocky View County now helps fund it to improve sustainability. Participants note this as a positive step toward partnership. However, many groups are still “<i>finding out about one another...from various pockets</i>”, indicating ongoing fragmentation. Because Bragg Creek is small, there are relatively few local agencies; partnerships often involve regional providers (Cochrane, Calgary) which can be complex. During the focus group, participants discussed avoiding duplication and improving information-sharing, suggesting that better coordination is still a need. Overall, collaborative efforts have slightly improved, but building robust partnerships remains an important goal.</p>
<p>Affordable Housing & Cost of Living</p>	<p><i>Not a top-5 priority in 2022, but noted as a concern.</i> The SNA</p>	<p><i>High and growing concern in 2024.</i> Community feedback indicates that housing affordability has become a significant issue. Bragg Creek’s home</p>

<p>(New/emerging priority)</p>	<p>reported “a need for more affordable housing” in the County and rising worries about rural homelessness. In 2018–2022, housing affordability wasn’t as prominently discussed in Bragg Creek, possibly due to its smaller population. However, even then, some residents were concerned about limited housing options for seniors and young families.</p>	<p>prices and rents have risen, making it hard for young families, lower-income workers, and even some seniors to live here. At the 2024 Open House/Workshop, residents urged allowing secondary suites or “granny suites” to create affordable housing options while preserving rural character. There is also a call to “<i>prioritize housing for local workers and seniors</i>” so that those who work in the community (or long-time residents) can actually afford to stay. Quotes from participants highlight that Bragg Creek is currently skewed toward “<i>seniors (long-term) and families that can afford a mountain lifestyle</i>” – implying many middle-income families cannot afford to move in or remain. This represents a newly intensified need since 2022, likely driven by regional housing market pressures and the desire for a more age-diverse, inclusive community. Plans for any new development are seen as an opportunity to include attainable housing forms (e.g. smaller homes, mixed price points) to meet this social need.</p>
<p>Access to Services & Infrastructure (Transportation, Internet, etc.)</p>	<p><i>Emerging need noted in 2022.</i> The SNA (and previous County plans) highlighted transportation as a gap – “<i>strong need to continue to develop transportation services that enable access to social services</i>”. Rural residents without a car face isolation. Internet connectivity was not explicitly detailed in 2010/2022 reports, but generally, infrastructure access (health, phone, internet) is part of rural quality of life.</p>	<p><i>Persistent gap, more acute with growth.</i> Bragg Creek remains car-dependent, with no public transit and long drives to most services. In 2024 this is still cited as a major barrier, especially for youth and seniors: “<i>transportation is still a challenge – particularly for seniors and teens to access Calgary supports</i>”. Additionally, digital infrastructure has come to the forefront: parts of Bragg Creek “<i>still have dial-up internet and no cell phone coverage</i>”, which is striking in 2025. This lack of reliable high-speed internet affects students (online learning), remote workers, and anyone needing telehealth or online services. The local library helps fill some gaps by providing internet access and a place to be online, but not all can easily get there. Poor connectivity compounds social isolation for those in the most rural pockets. Overall, access to both transportation and broadband has not improved since 2022 and may be more pressing now as more essential services move online. Addressing these</p>

		infrastructure needs is seen as crucial to improving social inclusion and access to help.
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(Sources: 2022 Rocky View County Social Needs Assessment, Bragg Creek 2024 Focus Group & Interview findings, 2024 Open House/Workshop feedback.)

Appendix B - Social Needs and Land Use Planning

Integrating social needs into land use planning is critical for building healthy, sustainable rural communities. Research and policy guidance increasingly recognizes that community design and “social infrastructure” profoundly affect residents’ well-being. Below is a summary of how key social needs – mental health, senior support, community connectedness, and affordable housing – intersect with land use planning, and why considering social infrastructure in Area Structure Plans (ASPs) is vital for sustainable rural development.

Mental Health & Built Environment

The design of communities can promote or hinder mental health. Studies show that access to parks, recreation, and social gathering places can reduce stress and isolation, thereby improving mental well-being (Astell-Burt et al., 2022; Fenton et al., 2017; Wood et al., 2017). Land use planners can support mental health by zoning for green spaces, trail systems, and community facilities that encourage physical activity and social engagement – factors known to correlate with better mental health outcomes. For example, ensuring an ASP includes a community hall, library, or even informal meeting spots can provide the social contact that buffers emotional distress. In Bragg Creek’s context, this means planning not just for houses but for places where people can connect and access programs, echoing public health advice that community design choices have “*major effects on health*”.

Senior Support & Age-Friendly Planning

Land use planning plays a central role in enabling seniors to age in place. Age-friendly community design – a concept promoted by WHO and AARP – calls for accessible housing, walkability, and proximity to services for older adults. This means ASPs should allow for housing forms like bungalows, secondary suites, or seniors’ apartments within the community, so that long-time residents aren’t forced out due to housing or care needs. Research on healthy aging emphasizes providing “*equitable and accessible age-friendly housing options, home modifications, and community planning*” to help older adults remain safely in their homes and neighborhoods. Land use policies (e.g. relaxed zoning for secondary suites or clustered seniors’ cottages) directly influence whether such options exist. Transportation is another facet: rural plans that account for transit shuttles or locate senior housing nearer to town centers can mitigate isolation. In short, planning decisions should incorporate senior supports – recognizing that an age-friendly rural community requires intentional design for mobility, housing, and services access.

Community Connectedness & Social Infrastructure

“*Social infrastructure*” refers to the facilities, services, and spaces that allow community life to flourish – from schools, parks and libraries to halls and churches. It is “provided in response to the basic needs of communities and to enhance quality of life, equity, stability and social well-being”, acting as the “*building block*” of social capital. Academic literature links strong social

infrastructure to sustainable communities, noting that neighborhood-level provision of such facilities significantly affects residents' well-being and community sustainability. In practical terms, this means that ASPs should map out not only land uses for housing or commerce, but also plan for community amenities and gathering places. Municipal policies echo this: for instance, Rocky View County's Municipal Development Plan defines social infrastructure as the fabric that *"develops community identity and supports quality of life"*, and it directs that any new Area Structure Plan *"shall address the need for institutional and community land uses"* (like schools, recreation, emergency services) as part of the planning process. Without these considerations, new developments risk becoming "bedroom communities" lacking cohesion. Including social infrastructure in ASPs is thus critical to foster community connectedness, volunteer networks, and civic engagement – all essential for a resilient rural community.

Affordable Housing & Inclusive Growth

Land use planning is a key lever for addressing housing affordability, which in turn is a fundamental social need. Research on social determinants of health identifies stable, affordable housing as crucial for community health and equity. In rural areas, large lot zoning and limited housing types can inadvertently drive up costs and exclude certain groups (young families, low-income workers). Planning authorities are increasingly encouraged to use tools like mixed-use zoning, density bonusing, or land trusts to create a supply of affordable homes. For instance, allowing higher density in appropriate hamlet locations or permitting secondary suites and granny flats (as Bragg Creek residents suggested) are land-use decisions that can expand affordable housing stock without compromising rural character. Affordable housing is also tied to the local economy – without it, businesses struggle to attract staff, and communities can lose generational continuity. From a policy standpoint, aligning housing with land use is so important that some regions have integrated housing targets into their planning laws. While rural Alberta ASPs may not set numeric targets, they can designate areas for various housing forms. The overarching principle is that inclusive, affordable housing should be planned, not left to chance, in order to support the social fabric. This directly feeds into sustainable development: communities with a range of housing options are more economically and socially sustainable over time.

Why This Matters for Sustainable Rural Development

Sustainable rural development requires balancing environmental stewardship, economic vitality, *and social well-being*. Often, rural plans focus on land, water, and infrastructure, but social sustainability is equally vital. If the people living in a rural area do not have their basic social needs met (access to healthcare, education, safety, a sense of belonging), the community cannot thrive long-term. Indeed, the UN emphasizes that *"sustainable rural development is vital to the economic, social and environmental viability"* of nations – underlining that social factors (like poverty reduction, services, equity) are core components. Integrating social infrastructure into ASPs means that as Bragg Creek grows or changes, it will do so in a way that supports quality of life for residents. This can prevent common pitfalls of rural growth, such as social isolation, inequity, or community decline. Furthermore, planning for social needs helps build resilience – communities

with strong social networks and services are better equipped to handle crises (fires, floods, economic downturns) and adapt sustainably.

In summary, academic research and planning best-practice call for a holistic approach: land use plans should not only dictate the placement of roads and lots, but also ensure that mental health, senior supports, social connection opportunities, and affordable housing are factored into the design of the community. By doing so, rural areas like Bragg Creek can enhance their social capital and well-being alongside physical development – truly embodying sustainable development’s social pillar. As one planning study put it, the notion of social infrastructure is *“crucial to building a healthy community and sustainable environment”*. It strengthens human and social capital, which in turn reinforces the other dimensions of sustainability. Therefore, embedding social needs into the ASP is not an “extra,” but rather a foundational strategy for the long-term vitality of Bragg Creek and similar rural communities.

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