

TOWN OF STONY PLAIN COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

SOARING SUMMARY REPORT 2025-2026

A Stony Plain Youth LEADERSHIP Team Initiative



stonypain.com



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Stony Plain Youth LEADERSHIP (SPYT LEADERSHIP) successfully applied for and received grant funding through Primary Care Alberta to undertake a comprehensive, youth-led engagement initiative focused on better understanding the experiences, needs, and priorities of young people in the community. Through two rounds of surveys and follow-up reflection activities, youth explored topics including safety, quality of life, access to basic needs, and the physical and social environment. Findings identified that while many supports and opportunities exist within the community, barriers to access, particularly transportation, continue to impact youth participation and connection, alongside the need for safe, inclusive, and affordable spaces.

Throughout the project, the SPYT LEADERSHIP team participated in collaborative data review, asset mapping, and facilitated discussions to better understand both the strengths of the community and the challenges youth face in navigating available services. This process identified a clear opportunity to increase awareness of local resources while building youth confidence in accessing public transit.

In response, the team developed a youth-friendly instructional transit video designed to address common concerns related to safety, uncertainty, and unfamiliarity with the transit system. The project was further strengthened through engagement with transit representatives and participation in a narration workshop focused on storytelling, communication, and relatability, helping youth build practical leadership and communication skills throughout the process.

SPYT LEADERSHIP prioritized opportunity for youth to practice using the On-Demand transit system, and wanted to ensure that there were no barriers impacting access. A portion of funding from the grant was reserved for single-use passes to hand out to youth in Stony Plain, along with resources and program information to highlight the many options, services, and supports available across the region.

Collectively, these pieces help to reduce transportation barriers, increase awareness of community resources, strengthen youth connections to supports and opportunities, and foster greater confidence, independence, and belonging among local youth.



Stony Plain Youth LEADERSHIP Team (SPYT LEADERSHIP)

The Stony Plain Youth LEADERSHIP Team is a volunteer group of seven youth, ages 14–16, who meet twice per month to provide leadership, plan initiatives, and share youth perspectives within the community. Representing a range of schools, grades, backgrounds, and peer groups, the team reflects diverse youth experiences across Stony Plain.

Throughout 2025, SPYT LEADERSHIP played an active role in community engagement by helping to plan and deliver events such as Generation Celebration and Youth Day, as well as smaller programs and activities hosted at the Youth Centre. Members also participated in training opportunities, including the Community Helpers program, and contributed to important community events such as National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Pathways to Poverty.

In addition to their program and event work, the team demonstrated leadership by presenting to the Community and Social Development Roundtable, where they shared highlights of their work and key youth perspectives.

In June 2025, SPYT LEADERSHIP successfully applied for and received a grant through Primary Care Alberta, further supporting their efforts to enhance youth opportunities and well-being in the community.

Members include:

El, Grade 9
Eli, Grade 8
Evander, Grade 8
Zyla, Grade 9
Allie, Grade 11
Ayden, Grade 8
Jayde, Grade 10



SOARING

(Strengthening Opportunities for Adolescent Resilience, Inclusion, and Growth)

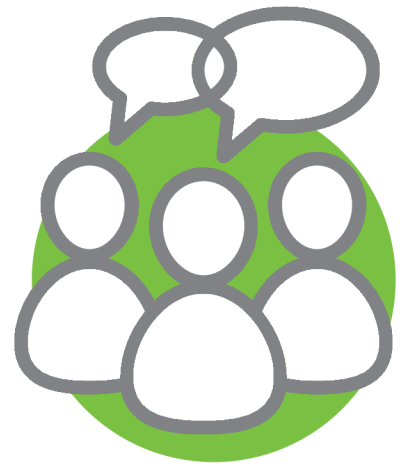
SOARING is a youth-centered approach that guides how projects are planned and carried out to support youth well-being and community impact. It is grounded in six key principles: being youth driven, prioritizing young people's voices and leadership; relationship based, building strong connections between youth, adults, and community partners; and skill building, strengthening the abilities of youth and the community. It is also knowledge informed, drawing on local insights and lived experiences; working together, encouraging collaboration and open communication; and impacting community, supporting youth to create meaningful change in their schools, peer groups, and neighbourhoods.

The vision of SOARING is that Alberta youth are resilient, connected, and have the support needed to live healthy, safe, and active lives. This grant encourages youth to reflect on what makes their community strong, while also identifying barriers or challenges that may affect different groups. Using a health equity and upstream approach, youth focus on preventing challenges before they arise by understanding risk and protective factors and recognizing barriers within physical and social environments.

SOARING projects are designed to create lasting impact, prioritizing initiatives that improve the lives of youth over time, rather than one-time events.

What we heard

Survey Overview



To support their SOARING project, the Stony Plain Youth LEADERSHIP Team conducted two rounds of surveys as part of their initial community engagement. The goal was to first understand the challenges and barriers experienced by youth in the community, and then provide an opportunity for youth to prioritize what matters most to them.

The first survey included questions related to safety, basic needs, quality of life, and the physical and social environment. The survey was fully developed by the youth leadership team, using guidance, definitions, and suggested frameworks provided by Primary Care Alberta. This youth-led process ensured that the questions reflected relevant issues and captured authentic youth perspectives.

Following the distribution of the first survey, the Stony Plain Youth LEADERSHIP Team conducted a second survey to further prioritize the key themes identified. Youth were asked to rank these themes from most to least important and were given the opportunity to explain their choices.

Total Participants: 34

Ages 12–23

**Most respondents
were ages 14–15**

Sense of Safety

Do you feel safe in our community?

78% of respondents feel safe in the community.

Participant Quote:

"I live in a safe neighbourhood where there are lights and people we know."



Key Themes

Positive perceptions:

- Strong sense of community and friendliness ("people are always friendly")
- Small-town atmosphere contributes to feeling safe
- Well-lit streets in some neighbourhoods
- Familiarity with neighbors and community members
- Inclusive events that involve youth

Concerns and challenges:

- Feeling less safe at night
- Safety concerns in specific areas (e.g., skatepark, certain "sketchy" locations)
- Reports of harassment and substance use in public spaces
- Experiences of discrimination (including homophobia and racism)
- Concerns about crime (e.g., theft)
- Limited safe infrastructure for biking (narrow sidewalks, road safety risks)

Safety is conditional, varying by location, time of day, and personal identity.

Quality of Life

Rate your quality of life.

39% Great

50% Good

6% Fair

6% Poor

Participant Quote:

"It's okay, my parents get enough money to support my family but sometimes they don't and it sucks. There are lots of places to go and hangout for youth like me so I'm decently happy."



Key Themes

What supports quality of life:

- Supportive family relationships
- Strong friendships and social connections
- Access to housing, food, and basic needs
- School satisfaction and extracurricular activities

Challenges impacting quality of life:

- Family financial stress
- Mental health struggles
- Feeling stuck or dissatisfied with broader environment
- Social conflict

Quality of life is influenced by relationships, having needs met, and social connections.

Basic Needs

Food Security

100% report consistent access to food

Access to Necessities (eg: food, shelter, hygiene, etc)

89% always have access to necessities

11% have access some of the time

Healthcare Access

89% can access healthcare when needed

11% say access is most of the time.

Most youth reported strong access to basic needs and services, though there are some gaps in consistency.



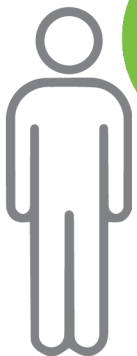
What aspects of Stony Plain's **physical environment** do you find beneficial or challenging?

The physical environment refers to aspects like our surroundings and places to be or visit or hangout. This could include buildings, parks, landscapes, climate, water bodies and vegetation.

"I enjoy the walking paths and parks which are near my home."

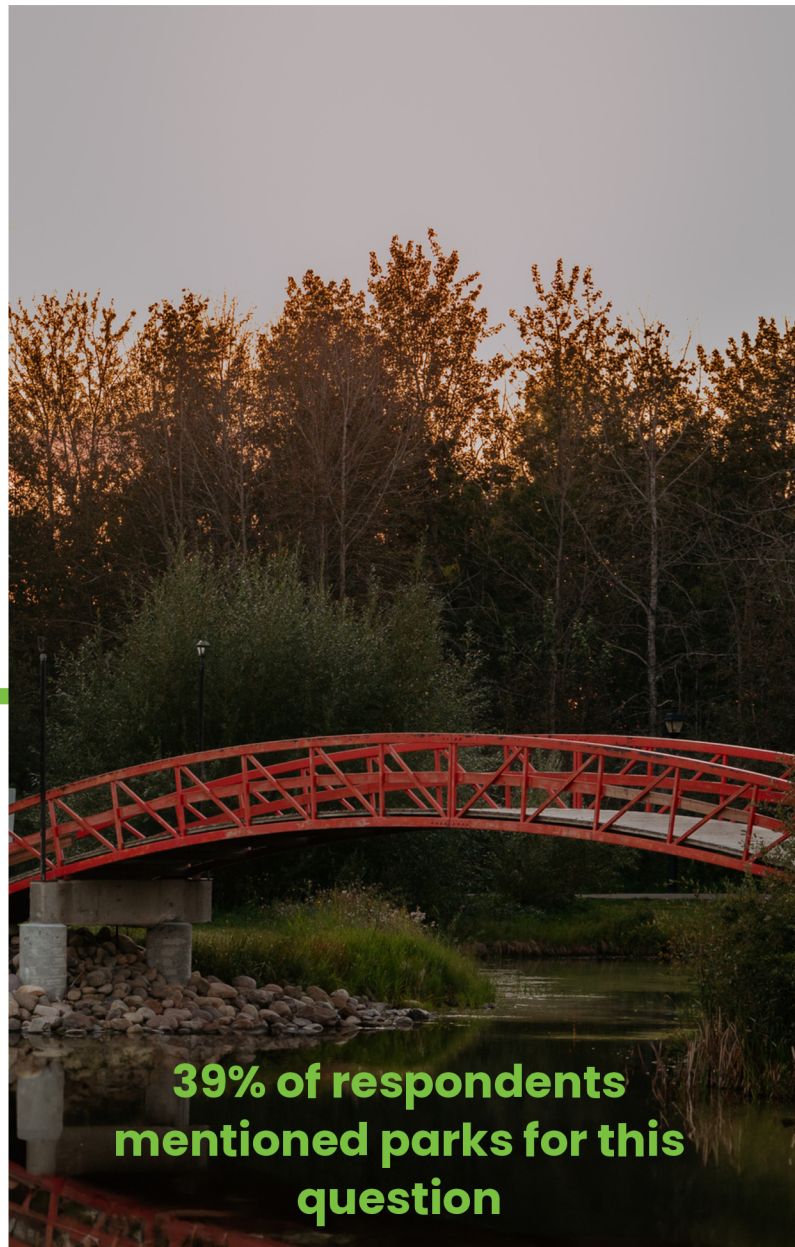
"I think it's great we have a lot of places to go. But it's annoying that a bunch of sidewalks end randomly."

"I love Dog Rump! I love hanging out there and gathering with friends, it would be nice to have horse trails near the town though."



"I find the downtown welcoming, the only challenge is the sidewalks."

"I think the parks and pathways are very well placed. It allows for you to travel through the town very well although one challenging aspect is at night, Stony Plain's lighting isn't very good. So overall, it's very good aside from that."



39% of respondents mentioned parks for this question

"I find the library beneficial."

"I find that a lot of things are far away from where I live."

"Stony Plain could definitely use more teenager/ kid hangout spots as there isn't much for us that we have to drive way out of town for which isn't viable."

What aspects of Stony Plain's **social environment** do you find beneficial or challenging?

The social environment refers to aspects like your family, friends, groups you may be a part of, etc. This could include relationships, cultural norms, values and social institutions.

"I find that racism and discrimination is being normalized a lot which is really not cool because I should not have to be afraid that someone is going to hurt me because of my colour."

"No challenges from an infrastructure or parks and rec standpoint as there are many opportunities and ways to connect with people here. Only challenge I face is my friends and myself commuting from Edmonton as the 560 bus only runs on weekdays."

"It's not easy to find places to meet new people often and there isn't really much places to hang out with friends unless you are able to pay money."



"Having friends around helps my quality of life!"

"Because Stony Plain is so interconnected, many parts are beneficial, like the community dance programs at KARAR, and the new Stony Plain Public Library, as well as at the Youth Centre."



39% of respondents mentioned friends for this question

"I find the numerous community activities beneficial to the social environment."

"I have my family and friends who support me."

"There's lots of drama between my friends, the school doesn't help when there are conflicts, my parents argue over finances and taxes. It's nice to get away from home and school sometimes."

In your **ideal community**, what would you change or add?

- “More opportunities to do things without having to pay. Or just places to go without having to pay to have fun.”
- “I would only change the sidewalks. Some of the turns are also cramped, given the rentable e-bikes and poles blocking the way.”
- “We would have more say in things.”
- “More public transportation.”
- “Lots more equity in an environment where people can understand other people’s needs over what’s fair or not.”
- “I would add a little more park spaces and more funding for public services that people can enjoy.”
- “More parks/ bike trails.”
- “I wish we had less bigots or more stuff enforced to make everyone feel safe.”
- “More diversity in things to do, like a bridle path in parks or an indoor playground.”
- “Maybe add a new rec centre for swimming and everything instead of just Spruce Grove, maybe a new movie theatre, maybe some security or something around parks and trails.”
- “Simply the lighting for drivers and pedestrians at night. The town is fairly well planned out and generally I don’t see any problems aside from that.”

Youth envision an ideal community that prioritizes inclusivity, safety, and equity while offering accessible recreation, improved infrastructure and transportation, and meaningful opportunities for youth voice and participation.



Youth Priority Ranking

Most to Least Important

- Access to Safe Spaces
- Free or Low-Cost Activities
- Public Outdoor Safety
- Transportation

Youth emphasized that safety is the top priority, noting that feeling secure and welcome is essential before participating in community activities. Many highlighted the need for more safe, supervised spaces where they can socialize and express themselves, especially for teens and those facing financial or personal barriers. Affordability and accessibility were also key themes, with some youth unable to attend activities due to cost, transportation, or family circumstances. Overall, responses show that improving safety, access, and inclusivity would help youth feel more engaged and supported in their community.

"It's extremely important that to even try to get youth more involved that we feel safe to do so."

"I think access to safe spaces is important for our youth. Considering that many adolescents go through a lot and have trouble processing feelings, having a safe space is very important for our well-being."

"Sometimes I want to do activity's but my parents aren't home so I have to miss it and sometimes I'm really sad."

"Often I find due to my house's location and myself only having one parent, I find it diffiucult to make it to any activities. If there were nearby locations that would bring people in busses to the main location."



"Comfortable spaces and public safety is essential for teens (especially as a girl) to feel at ease in their communities and have places to go when needed."

Project Development

STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

- **Review & Reflection:** The team reviewed survey results over several sessions, identifying key themes and priorities. Through this process, they recognized that while many supports exist in the community, transportation is a significant barrier to accessing them.
- **Define Project Focus:** Based on these findings, SPYT LEADERSHIP shaped a project focused on increasing awareness of services and improving youth confidence in using transit. This included developing the idea of a “how-to” transit video to make the system easier to understand.
- **Building Understanding:** Through asset mapping and conversations about transit, the team explored the broader landscape of services and the specific challenges youth face, including uncertainty, safety concerns, and lack of familiarity with the system.
- **Support Access:** To reduce barriers, the team allocated funding for single-use transit passes, giving youth the opportunity to practice using transit and build confidence.
- **Promote & Share:** Along with the single-use passes, information about local resources and activities will be provided, helping to raise awareness of transit options and the many services available to youth.



ASSET MAPPING AND EXPLORATION

As part of their project, SPYT LEADERSHIP participated in a presentation from the WestView Primary Care Network Community Connectors, who guided the team through an asset mapping exercise. This activity helped youth identify a wide range of existing supports and opportunities available in the community. Key free programs and services highlighted included the Stony Plain Youth Centre, the Stony Plain Public Library, and the Alberta Parenting for the Future Association, all of which provide accessible supports for youth and families.

The team also identified a variety of organized extracurricular opportunities that contribute to youth well-being, such as church groups, sports teams, and dance and performing arts programs. In addition, youth reflected on informal “third spaces” where they feel welcome and connected, including parks and trails, as well as local coffee shops and retail spaces.

These discussions highlight that Stony Plain has a strong foundation of community supports and spaces for youth, with an opportunity to improve awareness of and access to these existing resources.



Understanding Transit

To better understand local transportation options, SPYT LEADERSHIP participated in a learning session with a transit representative from Spruce Grove. Through this discussion, the team explored how the regional transit system operates, who uses it, and how youth can access it.

Within the group, some members had prior experience using transit, while others had not. This highlighted a key gap in familiarity and comfort with the system, reinforcing earlier findings that awareness and confidence are barriers to use.

Why Youth Use Transit

The team identified some benefits from using transit:

- **Affordability:** Transit is often cheaper than driving, eliminating costs such as fuel and parking
- **Convenience:** Provides an option for those who cannot drive or do not have access to a vehicle

Types of Transit Services

Youth learned that the system includes two main service types:

- **Commuter Service:** A fixed service that connects the region to Edmonton.
- **Local On-Demand Service:** A flexible system without fixed routes, where riders book trips based on their needs. This model is used due to lower ridership levels that do not support a full fixed-route system.



Key System Information

- The on-demand transit service has been operating for approximately eight years, while the commuter service has been in place for around 20 years
- Bus stops are located on major collector roads, rather than on every street
- Transit vehicles are typically smaller buses branded for the region

Important Considerations

The session also highlighted key information riders need to know:

- How and where to book a ride
- Where bus stops are located
- What the service costs (including use of fare systems such as reloadable transit cards)
- Understanding that transit must be booked in advance and is not a “drop-in” system
- Recognizing transit vehicles and knowing what to expect when boarding





NARRATION WORKSHOP

SPYT LEADERSHIP participated in a narration workshop hosted by Integra Films to develop the script for their instructional video. The session focused on storytelling, maintaining a strong youth voice, and ensuring the video clearly meets its goal of helping youth understand how to use transit.

Youth learned how to identify their target audience, clearly define their intent, and incorporate humour to make the video engaging and relatable.

Together, they applied this structure to guide viewers through an experience, ensuring the information is clear, relatable, and actionable. Prior to filming, the team drafted their script, refined their messaging, and completed the required approval process through Communications.



PROJECT SUMMARY

This project is an excellent example of the leadership, collaboration, and commitment to creating positive change that youth contribute to Stony Plain and the region at large. Throughout this initiative, participants provided valuable insights, identified challenges and barriers impacting their peers, and developed a resource designed to increase awareness of and access to local transportation options. The impact of initiatives like this extends far beyond youth in Stony Plain, benefiting residents of all ages across Stony Plain, Spruce Grove, and Parkland County.

The informational video developed through this initiative is featured on municipal websites across the region, increasing awareness of On-Demand Transit while demonstrating the partnerships, collaboration, and youth leadership that contributed to its completion. To further support youth engagement with the service, 165 single-use transit passes (valid for one return trip) are being distributed to youth in Stony Plain during the summer of 2026, providing an opportunity to experience the service firsthand. Informational postcards linking to transit resources and local supports accompany the passes, helping youth learn about available services and stay connected within the community.

This initiative demonstrates the impact of youth-led engagement, highlighting the innovative ideas, lived experience, and practical solutions that emerge when young people are empowered to identify challenges and lead meaningful community initiatives. Through their efforts, SPYT LEADERSHIP strengthens youth voice in community development and showcases what young people can achieve when they are provided with opportunities to lead, collaborate, and create meaningful change.



stonypain.com/youth
780-968-3846
youth@stonypain.com