

The Parklandia Project - Update

Introduction:

In 2013 Parkland County Administration developed and implemented a youth engagement strategy called The Parklandia Project. It was developed to be an ongoing collaborative program with local schools, and Parklandia has been coordinated every year since then and Parkland County staff are preparing for the fifth cycle of Parklandia to commence in January of 2018.

Facts (Background Information):

Project Highlights

Parklandia is an educational program based around a fictional community. It teaches grade six students the basics of community planning within a local government setting. The County provides lessons, worksheets, and activities and teachers are tasked with coordinating the projects in the classrooms. The [Parklandia Program book](#) outlines the components of the program and provides individual lesson plans and worksheets. The main components of program include a classroom session with County Planners, where students are presented with planning concepts and theories. The remaining modules are set up to be self-guided by the teachers with video lessons building on knowledge of planning concepts, classroom debates where formal knowledge is exercised and a final project, where students are given the opportunity to develop their own unique community.

The final projects are presented at a School Planning Fair coordinated by grade 6 teachers, with the support of school administrators. The Parklandia Project continues to be a collaborative effort between Parkland County staff and Parkland School Division No. 70 teachers, with support from Council and adjacent municipalities. This year's fair was organized by faculty at Blueberry School, with Planner judges from Stony Plain and Parkland County. There were seven creative projects that addressed issues from transportation to housing affordability, one team even wrote and sang a national anthem.

Municipal Development Plan (MDP)

Parklandia was originally created as a youth engagement tool for the MDP to gather feedback on planning for the future in Parkland County. However, it was modified to be an ongoing program and as such it continues to raise the interest of students (and their parents) in local community planning. Through the final projects and presentations, the County gained further insight into the values and priorities of future decision makers.

Awards

- **2014:** The Parklandia Project received an Alberta Professional Planners Institute (APPI) Award of Excellence and was featured in an article in the APPI Planning Journal (Spring 2015, Issue 15).
- **2015:** The Parklandia Project received a Canadian Institute of Planners Award for Planning Excellence for New and Emerging Planning Initiatives and was featured in Plan Canada (Fall 2015, vol. 55 no. 3). The Jury summary stated: "the Jury viewed this Parkland County submission as an excellent example of engaging and exciting young minds through planning, who in turn engage their parents and other members of their community. This tool is innovative and is applicable across the country. "

Participation

Over the last four years, approximately 509 students in 18 classes have participated in the Parklandia Project. Parkland County staff from Planning and Development as well as Community Sustainability have delivered the lessons. Parks, Recreation and Culture Services has also expressed interest in participating in the program next year. Council Members and the Mayor have attended the Planning Fairs each year.

Cost

The Parklandia Project takes approximately 70 hours for the Project Manager per year to run, with a budget of \$1,500 for teacher and classroom materials and refreshments.

2017 Teacher Survey Comments

"The materials aligned very well with the outcomes of the projects and their evaluation criteria! The project was a memorable learning experience. Thank You!"

"I am not a workbook teacher, so did not use the worksheets. I would love to have a planner out for the actual planning of the project and come to classes when students are actually working on the project and give constructive criticism while they are learning and creating"

"I love the activity - takes a lot of class time - however learning, collaborating, problem solving, using creativity, innovation, communicating, thinking critically, managing information are competencies that are used in this project. Students are reflective and resourceful which helps with their personal growth and well-being. The last competency - cultural and global citizenship is also addressed in that students are actively involved building their community to make it a valued and diverse place to live. Again, I would reiterate the value in having one of the planners from the county or town to pop in for a block and observe and make suggestions to help children during their learning time."

"LOVE LOVE LOVE PARKLANDIA project and working hand in hand with the County of Parkland!"

Analysis

1. Long-Term Strategic Plan – 2040 and Beyond

One Parkland: Powerfully Connected

Responsible Leadership

- Students learn about many aspects of local government and leadership. Students can gain an interest in complete communities at a young age leading to active and informed residents.
- The program is a coordinated effort between County departments, the School Division, neighbouring municipalities, and Mayor and Council.
- The Program uses open and transparent engagement.

Conclusion/Summary:

The Parklandia Project has been a great learning experience for students as well as Parkland County staff and local teachers. This collaborative project helps to strengthen community partnerships and benefits local students.

Author: Mary McInnes, Planner

Department: Planning and Development Services

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