



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2021 AND BEYOND

- FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS -

WHY DID THE DISTRICT NEED TO UPDATE THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY? (Strategic Plan page 6)

The last Economic Development Strategy was updated in 2018 and since then a lot has happened in our community. Over the past four years, the District has been challenged with several economic disruptions. In 2017, wildfires caused widespread evacuations; in 2018, extreme smoky conditions due to regional wildfires lead to sharply reduced tourism activity. In 2019, mill closures and curtailments directly impacted over 400 employees in the region. Then came 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic. Through it all, the businesses and residents have remained resilient and determined to grow back stronger.

The District recognizes the need for a plan that will provide direction to transition the economy to become even more resilient, grow the economic diversification base, and transition into a community that will be better prepared for future economic disruptions. There are no silver bullets that solve community challenges. Addressing any communities' challenges takes a coordinated, multipronged approach. And it takes time.

We also have to remember that economic development is a marathon, not a sprint. Having a strategy provides focus and direction for moving forward. Implementing recommendations will require long-term community investments and momentum and patience for the next few years to come. Our new Strategy is a "living" document that will need to be reviewed and updated over time to changes in the marketplace, changes in our community and even how successfully implementing the current strategy changes our goals down the road.

WHAT ARE THE SIX THEMES OR PILLARS? (Strategic Plan page 17)

1. An Inclusive and Effective Economic Development Program (7 activities)
2. A Modern and Comprehensive Economic Development Toolbox (5 activities)
3. The Cariboo Leader in Business Development and Support (8 activities)
4. A Desirable Community for Working and Living (9 activities)
5. Supporting Economic Diversity and Opportunities (Tourism-3 activities; Agriculture-4 activities; Forestry-2 activities; Retail-4 activities = 13 altogether)
6. Be Prepared for Disasters (1 activity)

WHAT DO THE PILLARS AND STRATEGIES MEAN? (Strategic Plan page 17)

It means we have our work cut out for us. Each strategic pillar is linked to a number of smaller strategies that support that main theme or pillar. There are 43 activities in all over the 6 strategic pillars.

Out of these 43 activities or strategies, ten of them are considered short-term priorities. This means they need to be started so the other strategies can be built on the results. As well, we have to be careful of how much work we take on at one time – we have 1.5 staff in the office to help work on this so we don't want to overload them. We have to approach potential partners to see how they can best work with us on different projects and that has to be built in the budget. Hopefully we will be able to receive additional grant funding to support this ongoing work but we will have to see how it goes.

We will be using all the tools at our disposal to move forward on these priorities as we don't want to lose momentum.

WHAT IS AN IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX? (Strategic Plan page 4)

A part of the Economic Development Strategic Plan, an implementation matrix is being developed providing the specific action steps required to complete the Short-Term Priority Strategies.

It provides the roadmap (Strategic Plan page 17) necessary to ensure the Economic Development Strategy stays on track, is accountable and is monitored to ensure objectives are being met or adjusted depending on existing or evolving conditions at the local level and beyond. The matrix provides the action steps and identifies potential partners, budget requirements and timelines.

HOW DID WE ENGAGE WITH THE COMMUNITY THROUGH THIS PROCESS? (Strategic Plan pages 12-13)

We had planned more direct community engagement opportunities but because of COVID we had to really streamline our public and in-person engagement.

With the SFU Assessment Study they were able to interview about 50 local and regional stakeholders. It was less than we were hoping but it was still enough variety to bring forward 49 action items.

With the final strategy we had an online survey that received 414 responses from locals and nearby communities.

From the beginning of this process, it was evident there is broad support for economic development. It was also clear though, that it must be well managed, focused, new partnerships developed, and that increased engagement with the business community is necessary.

THERE ARE SOME ACTIVITIES IN THE UPDATED STRATEGY THAT ARE ALREADY GOING ON. WHY ARE THEY IN THE STRATEGY?

The recommendations in the Economic Development Strategy are designed to be comprehensive and includes some activities that are either currently planned or underway. This report coordinates with and reinforces productive activities that are already in place. By having all the activities in the plan we can see how they build on each other and the best way to coordinate, partner, and prepare timelines.

For 100 Mile House to strengthen and diversify the economy and build a community with a great quality of life, all those pieces need to be in place. They need to be working in harmony with each other, and they need to grow together.

HOW WERE REPORTS LIKE THE SFU CED ASSESSMENT USED? (Strategic Plan page 6-7)

This is an example of how the Economic Development Strategy relates to other strategies. The Strategy was developed in coordination with previous plans and studies undertaken by 100 Mile House. Other plans utilized include Business Walk Reports, Wildfire Report and the Labour Market Study.

The CED Assessment study completed by SFU Community Economic Development's Mill Closure Response Team in October 2020 identified 49 specific action items. These items were reviewed and evaluated and, together with 100 Mile House Council, were prioritized. There are several action items from that study reflected in the completion of this Strategy. This alignment recognizes that economic development efforts must be coordinated to positively affect the quality of life and economy of 100 Mile House.

OVERALL, WHAT DID THE SWOT TELL YOU ABOUT 100 MILE HOUSE? (Strategic Plan pages 14-15 and Appendix B, page 59)

SWOT stands for Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats and provides a tool to inventory these areas of the community and assess what factors would support future growth.

The SWOT was developed through stakeholder discussions, survey information, and consultant observations. This SWOT is not all-inclusive, it was meant to focus on those areas that will directly impact future economic development efforts in the community and region.

Overall, it is clear that 100 Mile House has some significant strengths. However, it is important to address identified weaknesses to capitalize on the strengths. Failure to recognize and work towards improvement will make it difficult to achieve the community's goal towards a sustainable and prosperous economy.

Details of the SWOT analysis are included in Appendix B of the Strategic Plan but an example of a strength and weakness looks like this:

1. One real strength was *Tourism Assets combined with a Strong Supply of Accommodations*. A combination of pubs and restaurants, specialty stores, a wetland,

ski trails, endless lakes, and ample accommodations gives the community an advantage over many seeking a location to spend a relaxing vacation. As a vacationer, the area has a significant number of diverse assets and services one may require but small enough to offer a friendly welcome and relaxed atmosphere. 73.5% of all survey respondents consider tourism to be a key economic driver for the community.

2. One of the weaknesses was some felt there was *insufficient support for the business sector*. Smaller businesses felt they had greater difficulty accessing succession planning, mentorship, expansion, human resources, customer base access, encouraging shop local and more. It highlighted that local government needs to do better communication and we need to work better with our partners, like Community Futures, that provide some of those services.

The chart on page 15 was compiled from a combination of comments received from the survey and observations from the consultants and Appendix B provides greater detail and insights of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that are listed.

WHAT IS AN EXAMPLE OF ANOTHER HIGHLIGHT IN THE STRATEGY? (Strategy Plan page 28 & Appendix C page 66)

The Strategy makes a number of references to a Business Retention and Expansion Program (BRE). Some communities add Recruitment in there as well. But it really is a foundation activity in the short term that a community can build on over time that will help other strategies find success. Over time, BRE programs build stronger ties with businesses and goodwill among the public and private sectors in the community. Successful BRE programs can encourage businesses to continue to invest in the community and resist those opportunities that come along for them to relocate.

This program takes a team of individuals from the District office, our partners and the community.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

To successfully accomplish these economic development themes/goals will require an unprecedented level of cooperation and communication. Working together with other partners toward greater goals is essential. Implementing recommendations will require long-term community investments and continued momentum and patience for years to come.

We know that 100 Mile House can do this because our history from the Cariboo Waggon Trail to the Cariboo Wildfires is filled with resiliency, community support and economic sustainability. We look forward to working with our community!



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