



Town of Pincher Creek



INNOVISIONS
— & ASSOCIATES —

Community Economic Development Strategy

2021 - 2026



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PROPRIETARY NOTICE

This Community Economic Development Strategic (CEDs) Plan was prepared by InnoVisions & Associates (InnoVisions) for the Town of Pincher Creek. The professional opinions within this document are based on information and conditions that existed at the time the work was completed, with the COVID pandemic ongoing at this time. This document relies on the accuracy of existing Town and M.D. documents supplied by the Administration, as well as subjective content gleaned through interviews with individual businesses and community residents. In some instances, InnoVisions could not, and therefore did not, verify information supplied by others. If the information seemed reasonable it has been added to the document. Where possible, every attempt to verify information was made.

Neither InnoVisions nor its' subcontractors shall be responsible for actions taken by the Town based on the information provided herein.

Note: The business cases, working examples and proposals stated within this document are concepts which are used to exemplify a recommendation(s) or activity proposed. They are not, in and of themselves, professional recommendations by InnoVisions. The Town of Pincher Creek is encouraged to conduct its' own due diligence prior to engaging any of the businesses mentioned in a case example.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town of Pincher Creek retained InnoVisions & Associates (the Consultants) to create a community economic development strategy (CEDS) and a strong action plan to capitalize on existing and emerging opportunities of the 21st century. Many of the concepts, ideas and projects in this strategy are not new and have been talked about in the community – for years. This CEDS strives to create a new path to achieve the community’s goals and bring old and new ideas to fruition.

The Town has worked hard to support business sustainability and growth, and much has been achieved. Businesses in the region however, have new and urgent issues to manage, especially as a result of the pandemic. Community support is needed for businesses to continue to provide jobs, goods and services. This CEDS is an opportunity for all community members in Pincher Creek to work together to retain current businesses and attract new ones.

Stakeholder Engagement

Through focus groups, interviews and surveys, the community told the Consultants what they want the CEDS to achieve. They want it to:

- Attract more families to reside in Pincher Creek;
- Create options for Pincher Creek youth to stay and raise their families;
- Provide more good jobs, housing and education options;
- Encourage more businesses to set up in the area; and
- Increase the number of visitors who will spend their money in and around the town.

This CEDS is a roadmap for how to meet the community’s desired outcomes. It is part of a process that builds upon the assets and benefits within Pincher Creek. The town’s long-term economic success depends on the strength of its businesses and their success in providing goods and services to both residents and visitors.

To gather relevant data, business focus groups and over 50 one-on-one interviews were conducted by the Consultants with businesses, residents and service providers. Surveys were completed in March 2020 and May 2021 to keep abreast of the impact of COVID-19 on the business community with over 200 responses. The town’s Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Risks and Results (SOARR) were confirmed via stakeholder engagement. The Consultants reviewed all existing foundational documents, studies and reports (where relevant) to ensure that all previous work was considered in this CEDS. Finally, opportunities were grouped into themes. The objectives of the community economic development strategy (CEDS) based on the outcomes of the SOARR are to:

- Retain and attract business and residents;
- Revitalize the downtown corridor;
- Add more housing options for residents and workforce;
- Streamline business interaction with the town;
- Provide more diverse jobs;
- Create opportunities for retiring business owners to sell; and
- Diversify the economy.



When the winds of change blow, some people build walls and others build windmills – Chinese proverb

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Findings of the Stakeholder Engagement

A summary report from stakeholder engagement was presented to Council and the community in Nov. 2020. Entitled 'What we Heard', it was a summary of the opinions of business owners/managers of what will help or hinder their businesses in the future. Businesses in the Town of Pincher Creek, along with those in the municipalities with the M.D. of Pincher Creek #9, are facing challenges that must be resolved. These challenges include the following seven identified issues:

1) Critical housing shortages:

- a. Housing shortages are affecting employee retention and attraction.
- b. Scarcity of housing options - right across the housing continuum from social housing to market-based, free enterprise solutions.

2) Workforce shortages are looming:

- a. Stagnant and aging population base without population replacement.
- b. A shrinking labour pool, critical staffing shortages, and job skills gaps.

3) Downtown has little vitality:

- a. High number of downtown vacancies limits investment attraction opportunities.
- b. The Town currently offers no incentives to offset development risks for more live-work-stay- play options.
- c. Limited assortment available of products and services need to position Pincher Creek as a tourist destination.

4) Baby-boomer business owners are set to retire without apparent replacements:

- a. Business retention and expansion will become more challenging as boomer entrepreneurs retire.
- b. There will be a loss of jobs, products and services needed to retain and attract residents, newcomers (for workforce) and investment.

5) Data gaps affect decision-making and service delivery:

- a. Inconsistent data collection, different measurement values and analysis creates data gaps for informed decision making.

- b. Data gaps create misleading or confusing 'pictures' for decision makers and limit predictive outcomes.

6) Some Town administrative processes require updating and streamlining to be more effective for business:

- a. Red tape – dated foundational documents and some processes for business interaction with the Town are more complex than they need to be.
- b. Communications – internal and external gaps in messaging create misunderstanding and community/investor credibility challenges.

7) The economic reality - the need to build capacity, confidence and diversify:

- a. To truly diversify the economy residents of the community must understand the current economic reality, and they must have realistic expectations regarding opportunities. There must be commitment by residents to assist in making changes or little will be accomplished. Administration cannot do it alone.
- b. There seem to be community members who are misguided in their understanding of the process of economic development. Unfounded rumours are creating issues with selling the town as a good place to invest.
- c. NIMBYism is negatively influencing community growth and sustainability. Income, social inequality and limited housing options are contributing to the workforce issues. Without a workforce no business can succeed.

These issues are impeding current businesses and preventing new businesses from choosing Pincher Creek. Resolving these issues are the path for the community to win with more jobs, better jobs, more residents and greater wealth for the community.

Council and Administration have worked hard and accomplished a number of very positive outcomes including but not limited to the Business Recovery and Resiliency Program to support businesses through the pandemic; the wayfinding signs (locally manufactured and installed) throughout the community; the recreation master plan; the supportive advocacy of the local doctors in contract negotiations with the province and in support of the new CT scanner; the new Inter-municipal Collaborative Framework

(IMCF) in partnership with the M.D.; the new Area Structure Plan (ASP) designated for future development; the Pincher Creek Child Care Centres; and partnership in the newly minted South Canadian Rockies Tourism Association partnership, etc. However, it seems the community is largely unaware of this economic development progress. It is time for a fresh approach to economic and social development — one that allows for even more achievement by involving citizens that understand the urgent need and will meet the call to action.

The Goal to Achieve is to Become Three Interconnected Hubs in a Rural Setting

For Pincher Creek, the overarching economic development goal of this CEDS is to bring together the people, partnerships and possibilities to become the foremost service and amenities hub for southwest Alberta by 2026. The reasons to do this are to meet the community’s goals by becoming three hubs in a rural setting as:

1. A health and wellness hub;
2. A business service and amenity hub for the region (and beyond); and
3. A transportation corridor and logistics hub.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The ‘town’, the collective of active residents, bright minds, virtuous organizations, special interest groups and dedicated champions, must work with Council and Administration. The execution of a long-term plan to diversify the economy and catapult the community forward must be a collaborative community effort. If it is not done as a collective with concerted effort, Pincher Creek will still be talking about the ‘opportunities’ in ten years instead of benefiting from them.

less capacity and they often lag urban centres in economic, social and health opportunities. However, rural communities when inspired are innovative, entrepreneurial and exhibit underdeveloped potential. An integral part of hubs includes economic development through the lens of the business community, and the inclusion of social development (housing, workforce, education, childcare), health (access to health and wellness services, mental health), environmental conditions (environmental planning and sustainability) and quality of life (recreation and personal growth). Hubs are coordinated partnerships and programs to leverage assets that are the key to current and future economic sustainability.

The conclusions and recommendations of this CEDS are motivated by a new approach to community economic development, one which shifts mindsets, revises systems, rethinks policies and builds on existing assets to advance rural community development. It focuses on ‘what works’. First, retain local businesses and residents before striving to attract new business investment or residents. Do this by building capacity for all businesses to be successful. Then, as the community becomes more investment ready (CIR) work to attract new businesses. Pincher Creek first has to invest in and improve local assets – local entrepreneurs, local institutions, local infrastructure, local partnerships and local systems. With this in mind, this Pincher Creek CEDS focuses on ‘rural development hubs’. Hubs are an approach to doing rural economic development differently.

Rural communities vary by economic base, demographics and geography. Rural communities often have fewer resources,



COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)

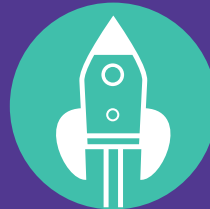
This CEDS, with 30 recommendations, calls for streamlining processes between the Town and its' existing business base; reinforcing and building the entrepreneurial capacity that exists; and creating the conditions for increased collaboration and innovation. It seeks to develop partnerships that solve

issues. By focusing on the community's strengths and assets the community can create an ambitious investment in downtown revitalization, a town-wide housing plan, and also attract residents (immigrant and newcomers) to solve the workforce shortages and population decline.



CEDS GOAL #1

**RETAIN AND EXPAND
BUSINESSES IN THE
COMMUNITY**



CEDS GOAL #2

**ATTRACT NEW
INVESTMENT &
BUSINESSES TO THE
COMMUNITY**



CEDS GOAL #3

**DEVELOP A REGIONAL
WORKFORCE**



CEDS GOAL #4

**LEVERAGE EXISTING
KEY ASSETS FOR A
DIVERSIFIED ECONOMY**

The Actions to Take

There are short-term and long-term strategies within this CEDS including and they are summarized in the following table:

 <p>CEDS GOAL #1 RETAIN AND EXPAND BUSINESSES IN THE COMMUNITY</p>	 <p>CEDS GOAL #2 ATTRACT NEW INVESTMENT & BUSINESSES TO THE COMMUNITY</p>	 <p>CEDS GOAL #3 DEVELOP A REGIONAL WORKFORCE</p>	 <p>CEDS GOAL #4 LEVERAGE EXISTING KEY ASSETS FOR A DIVERSIFIED ECONOMY</p>
<p>1.1 Develop a Business Concierge System</p> <p>1.2 A Leadership Development and Succession Planning Process</p> <p>1.3 Develop a Data Strategy</p> <p>1.4 Review the BRSP (2021) Outcomes to Move to Phase Three - An Entrepreneur Ecosystem</p> <p>1.5 Conduct a Structured Business Outreach Program</p>	<p>2.1 Develop a 21st Century Town Centre</p> <p>2.2 Incentivize New Development and Investment</p> <p>2.3 Develop a Small Business and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem</p> <p>2.4 Establish a 'Community Investment Marketplace'</p> <p>2.5 Host an Economic Development, Real Estate, Investor Forum</p>	<p>3.1 Champion a Regional Workforce Initiative</p> <p>3.2 Appoint a Workforce Housing Action Team</p> <p>3.3 Develop a Rural Immigration Initiative - Become a 'Welcoming Community'</p> <p>3.4 Link to Business Investment Options for Newcomers, Immigrants and Indigenous Entrepreneurs</p> <p>3.5 Create a Residential Growth Strategy</p> <p>3.6 Become a Training Centre in the Region</p>	<p>4.1 Create a Health and Wellness Hub</p> <p>4.2 Create a Business, Services and Amenity Hub</p> <p>4.3 Expand into Transportation Corridor and Logistics Hub</p> <p>4.4 Increase and Improve Community Assets</p>

Where to Start

Of the 30 recommendations, the following are priorities to begin execution in the fall of 2021. They are:

1. Ask the community for help. Find your *Champions*, bring on your *Partners*, create your *Action Teams*. Host a community-wide, round-table to present the CEDS strategy and get the volunteers you need.
2. Start the downtown revitalization community engagement sessions and retail analysis ASAP.
3. Champion the Workforce Housing Action Team and get the committee up and running.
4. Work with a third-party resource to develop a workforce housing and 'Welcoming Communities' action plan.
5. Pass the Investment Incentive Bylaw.
6. Streamline processes to reduce red tape issues for business.
7. Develop a staff succession plan and leadership development/mentorship program that will minimize the serious loss of knowledge and experience of the senior staff retiring in the next year. Find ways to keep retiring employees engaged as mentors and add knowledge resources to bolster the inevitable gaps.

There is a lot of work to be done for Pincher Creek to meet its' potential. It will take engaged citizens, organizations, business owners, and Council and Town staff members all committed to ACT: Advocate, Champion and Team Up.

Take Action Now

ACT: Advocate, Champion and Team Up

It is important for everyone to know what they can do, and when and how to do it.

The CEDS is not the sole responsibility of the 'Town' (Council and Administration) but of the 'town' (the entire community), By identifying partnerships and community champions that will work together to build capacity, devote resources, time, energy and budget to ACT, the CEDS can overcome the existing challenges and capitalize on opportunities.





REPORT SYNOPSIS

Section One: The Town of Pincher Creek – A Community Snapshot

1 Section one outlines the present business climate, (Pincher Creek’s opportunities and the challenges associated for business) and references the various studies that have been completed or are being completed in 2021 that tie to economic development (e.g. the Social Needs Assessment, the Health Assessment, the Recreation Master Plan and the Airport Master Plan, etc.).

Section Three: Factors Affecting Economic Growth & Investment

3 Section three provides information gathered from business one-on-one interviews, community round tables and business surveys. Using the SOARR (strengths, weaknesses, aspirations, results and risks) process, a summary outlines ‘what we heard’ during community engagement about the region’s existing and potential economic engines.

Section Five: Pincher Creek’s Community Economic Development Strategy & Action Plan – A Summary

5 Section five provides a visual illustration of the CEDS goals, four strategies to reach the goals and the corresponding activities.

Section Two: Business and Community Engagement

2 Section two includes an overview of the Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) research process and how the business community was engaged. It outlines internal and external business and resident engagement.

Section Four: Pincher Creek’s Community Economic Development Strategy – Detailed

4 Section four details the four CEDS goals and actions to reach the goals. Examples of case studies, and/or precedence models have been added to further support the action steps.

Section Six: Roles, Responsibilities and Recommendations

6 Section six provides 30 recommendations for Pincher Creek to consider that support the implementation of the Community Economic Development Strategy, including whether to Advocate, Champion and Team-up (ACT) on projects.

Strategy Outcomes within the Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

The Council for the Town of Pincher requires a Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that is a timely, relevant and workable plan for the Town to diversify the economy to meet the opportunities of the 21st century. This CEDS considers both the short and long term and contains an operational action plan.

Process

InnoVisions (the Consultants) worked with evidence-based research, and a collaborative business and stakeholder engagement process to identify and/or confirm opportunities indicated by the community. The Consultants also reviewed and, where relevant, aligned concepts and action plans with the Town’s other foundational documents, and their recommendations.

The Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) outlines strategies and action plans that best utilize community assets and advantages to support the existing business community and encourage new business investment.

Figure 1: CEDS development – the process



Outcomes

1. A clear direction for Pincher Creek's economic development over the next five to ten years.
2. Identification of high-level priorities with short, and long-term actions that will guide economic growth and sustainability in the community.
3. Business and community input is captured throughout the process and reflected in the recommendations.
4. A practical yet aspirational economic development vision for Pincher Creek to focus on for the next five years.
5. A strategic plan that was developed from community engagement strives to inspire businesses and residents to take action to move the vision forward.
6. Town departments will consider and integrate economic development principles in their plans, projects and processes.
7. Increased collaboration and resource sharing.
8. A performance measurement framework that suggests roles and priorities to ensure success.



Aligning with the Community's Goals

The Town and M.D. of Pincher Creek have completed a number of 'studies' over the last ten years. Community stakeholders have actively engaged in the process. There are many similarities of these other studies to the CEDS processes including surveys, interviews and key findings from SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) or SOARR (Strengths, Opportunities, Actions, Results and risk) processes. What is missing in many of the documents is an action plan which Council accepts and then directs Administration to allocate staff, budget and resources to implement. It is also important that there be adequate help for Administration by community champions who help to implement the plan. A strategy without resources, or the capacity to implement it, will remain a dusty document on the top shelf.

As part of the CEDS process, the Consultants reviewed foundational documents to create a framework to link the various recommendations (where applicable) and integrate them into the larger CEDS document. This provides the Council and community leaders with options to designate staff to focus efforts, resources, policies, and programs that coordinate and leverage activities. Doing so will achieve a common vision to benefit the entire business community in the town and the Municipal District of Pincher Creek (M.D.).

The enduring issue for the town leaders to resolve is finding the champions within the community who will play the key roles in implementing the strategy.

Table 1: Relevant foundational documents and/or studies integrated into the CEDS

DOCUMENT REVIEW	TIES TO THE COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
Housing Needs Assessment: 2010 & 2016 Town of Pincher Creek – Affordable Housing Project (plus 2018 update)	Workforce and residents' housing needs, vacancy shortfalls that affect businesses' ability to retain or attract workers.
The Town of Pincher Creek Strategic Plan 2018-2022	Economic development; a strategy to foster growth; municipal partnerships; community social needs including efficiencies in operations.
Municipal Development Plan ([MDP] 2013); Land-use Bylaw ([LUB] 2005) & amendments	Need to update the LUB and MDP to have more shelf-ready documents to support development innovation, multi-use, multipurpose buildings and revitalize downtown and neighbourhoods.
A Look at Pincher Creek through the eyes of a visitor. Rodger Brooks, Destination Development, Inc. (2007)	A tourism assessment findings and suggestions (300 pages), authentic branding, visitor target marketing, etc.
The Apple Tree Feasibility Study – Rotary Club 2020 & the Apple Tree Project: Local Investment Roadmap (2021)	Main street redevelopment, revitalization and vibrancy plan for the downtown corridor. The concept includes additional commercial and residential space options. Placemaking.
Social-Economic Impact Assessment of the Shell Waterton Complex (2018)	The social and economic impact of losing a major employer, significant philanthropic contributors and tax generator will before the region can diversify has serious implications to future sustainability.
Community Health Needs Assessment [CHNA] Dec. 2020. AHS South Zone	Ties to housing, social capital programing, barriers to health and wellness, medical and mental health.
Social Needs Assessment [SNA] March 2020 Greater Pincher Creek Area	Identifies and assesses economic, social and environmental issues and needs that affect residents, newcomers and immigrants.
Inter-municipal Collaborative Framework (2020)	Town and M.D. Councils agreement to collaborate through joint planning, sharing operational costs of regional assets, services and programs.
Recreation Master Plan (2020)	Downtown revitalization, attracting and retaining youth, young facilities, & central service and amenity hub concept for quality of life. Facility upgrades and recreation trails. Reference to tourism.
Airport Master Plan (2020); Airport Business Case (Pending, Sept. 2021)	Airport Master Plan – links to the flow of goods, services, people and the Province's ongoing Transportation and Aviation strategies

CURRENT SITUATION ANALYSIS

Pincher Creek is surrounded by Southern Alberta's prime farming and ranching land. The primary economic engines of the region are agriculture, natural resource industries and wind energy. Pincher Creek is also known for its vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem, with 406 licensed businesses (2020), with approximately 15% of the Town's licensed businesses registered as home-based enterprises. The business community has seen unprecedented growth in 2021 despite the pandemic. Over 50 new businesses have acquired Town business licenses in 2021, however there is no actual count right now as some businesses closed during the pandemic.

It is important to know that while the number of businesses is growing the main street section of the town is experiencing a continuing high vacancy rate and the situation is becoming dire as once there is no longer a critical mass of businesses there becomes few reasons for a customer to venture downtown. Commercial spaces are not easy to lease in this economy.

While the focus of this CEDS document is primarily on the Town of Pincher Creek, it is important to note that businesses operate in trade regions and are not bound by geographic or electoral boundaries. The Municipal District of Pincher Creek No. 9 (M.D.) has an estimated 100 businesses (a figure more difficult to capture as there is no business licensing program in the M.D.).

The largest business sectors within the region include construction, retail, accommodation and food service, agriculture, and public administration. Major employers include Holy Spirit School Division, Livingstone Range School Division, Alberta Health Services, Government of Alberta, the Town of Pincher Creek, TransAlta, Pieridae, Vestas, and Walmart.

The greatest numbers of people in the labour force by occupation are largely in sales, service, trades, transport and finance according to the National Occupational Codes (NOCS). This data, however, is from 2017 statistics. No more current information is available.

Figure 2: Pincher Creek licensed businesses 2015 - 2020



Infrastructure. The Town has ample infrastructure to grow. The water and wastewater system, inclusive of water rights, will support a community of up to 13,000 residents. There is enough capacity to support other communities in the region. *In 2010, AECOM completed the Pincher Creek Regional Water Feasibility Study (2010) to evaluate the ability to provide potable water to Cowley, Lundbreck, Pincher Station, Beaver Mines and Twin Butte. The report provided content on what upgrades were needed if the population were to grow to 13,000 within a 25-year window.ⁱ

Pincher Creek has excellent internet throughout the community for residents and businesses alike. Via Axia, the median upload speed (Mbps) in 2019 was 180 Mbpsⁱⁱ, one of the fastest in the region. Cell service is a bit of a challenge due to connectivity issues related to being in a valley, having a large hill in town and having large, mature trees throughout the community.

Shovel-ready land. The town has very little municipality owned parcels of property. There is a small, serviced, two-acre, industrial park that is zoned for commercial and industrial development. Administration is in the process of completing a new Area Structure Plan (ASP) in the NE quadrant. All industrial and commercial business locations meet the Town's 2005 Engineering standards for water, wastewater and infrastructure, and there is capacity to 'build up versus out'.ⁱⁱⁱ If growing 'out' is the direction of future

Councils there will be the need to annex land from the M.D. Currently, no designated residential housing development areas are allocated in the community.

Value of Building Permits. Pincher Creek saw over \$5 million in building permits in 2020, an increase of 7.55% from 2019. The commercial segment accounted for the largest growth.^{iv} 40 new building permits filed in 2020 will bring in \$4 million in new development.

Taxes. On a regional basis, the Town of Pincher Creek has a higher non-residential tax base in comparison to the municipalities of Cardston, Claresholm, Fort Macleod and Crowsnest Pass. However, in comparison to other communities with a similar population, tax base, property assessment and recreation facilities, the Town’s mill rate is relatively on par with other municipalities.

Table 2: Regional non-residential tax comparisons (2020)

Indicators (2020)	Pincher Creek	Cardston	Claresholm	Fort Macleod	Crowsnest Pass
Population	3742	3,676	3,823	3,052	5,389
Mill rate (non-residential)	16.37**	12.79	11.38	12.21	12.9
Businesses	283*	157	206	206	215
Property Assessments	\$1.226M	\$337.1M	\$426.9M	357.7M	N/A

Source: The Alberta Regional Dashboard, Custom Run, 2020.

***Note:** The Alberta Regional Dashboard indicated that there were 283 businesses in Pincher Creek in 2020 versus the Town’s records which show 406 licensed business

** Town of Pincher Creek



Pincher Creek saw over \$5 million in building permits in 2020, an increase of 7.55% from 2019. The commercial segment accounted for the largest growth. 40 new building permits filed in 2020 will bring in \$4 million in new development.

Business community support. There is a designated economic development officer (EDO), who also manages the Town events and communications. There are two very active business organizations in the community, the Pincher Creek & District Chamber of Commerce and the Pincher Creek Women in Business (WIB) organization. The WIB has over 300 members.

COVID-19 Support – Building a Resilient Business Community. During the development of this CEDS, the impact of COVID-19 drastically affected business- especially those in the hospitality industry, accommodations, food, beverage, retail, events, massage therapy, hair dressing etc. In response to COVID-19, the Town of Pincher Creek and the Pincher Creek & District Chamber of Commerce partnered in April 2020 to launch the Business Recovery Support Program (BRSP). Community leaders recognized that small business is the backbone of the economy and that these businesses needed assistance to survive the pandemic. The BRSP was developed to keep local firms in operation and provide a unified, collaborative approach to support businesses in recovery. Funding ‘vouchers’ of up to \$1,500 were provided to each participating business. Participating companies were matched with a business advisor, strategist, resource, and/ or other solution to manage challenges. Over 40 companies participated including six agri-businesses in an agriculture specific workshop that extended over ten weeks, and included business planning, management, risk assessment and succession planning. Over \$500,000 was spent by consumers in local businesses as a result of the #PCLoveLocal campaign. Endeavours to extend this program to later transition into a small business and entrepreneur ecosystem will go far in developing business resilience.

Location is One of Pincher Creek ’s Leading Competitive Advantages

The town of Pincher Creek’s location in the region, and the community’s proximity to key transportation corridors, are leading competitive advantages. The town, located in the M.D. of Pincher Creek #9 (M.D.), is the largest municipality in the area. Pincher Creek is a commercial centre, central to 14 smaller municipalities. Within a 50 km radius it has a trade population of over 32,000 residents, and within a 100 km radius it has a trade population of 210,000^y (2020) residents. Trade population is key when analyzing how to support economic growth and community sustainability.

Table 3: Pincher Creek’s trade population (2020)

2020	Population	Within 50 km of Pincher Creek	Within 100 km of Pincher Creek
Pincher Creek	3472		
M.D. of Pincher Creek #9	2899	32,000 residents in the trade population	210,000* residents in the trade population
Piikani 147	1538		
Total	8179		

Source: Alberta Dashboard. *There are 34 communities within 100 km of Pincher Creek including the City of Lethbridge. Adapted from Statistics Canada, regional population (custom data request, March 2, 2021).

The town is a central hub for the region and provides a variety of public and private education options. It has K-12 schools within the Livingstone Range School Division #68 and the Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Regional Division. There is a two unique sports academy, the Livingstone Ski Academy which accepts international students and the Matthew Halton High School Hockey Academy. There are also two municipally run childcare centres. There is an active acute care hospital and a range of retail, commercial and industrial businesses. The community has a number of recreation facilities and is located in close proximity to Castle Mountain Resort (CRM); Castle Mountain Provincial Park, Crownest Pass, Waterton Lakes National Park and the Old Man Reservoir.

Connectivity to Market. Access to market is important for business to sell their goods and services. The town is well connected to roads and runways in the region. The town benefits from several major transportation corridors along Highways 3, 6 and 567. These provide access to markets and the movement of people, goods, services and information. Highway 3 (the Crowsnest Highway) runs east to west, and is a key transportation corridor to reach the British Columbia market and sea ports of the west coast. Over 4,000 vehicles travel past the Highway 3 and Highway 6 intersection each day. Of these, it is estimated that over 650 are heavy trucks and trucks.^{vi}

To the east, Highway 3 intersects Highway 6 and connects in Lethbridge to the CANAMEX/North-South Trade Corridor linking Canada to the United States and Mexico transportation routes. This busy corridor saw an estimated 98,000 trucks

and 145,000 passenger vehicles cross through the Coutts, Alberta to Sweetgrass, Montana border.^{vi}

Border crossings at Carway, above Montana, USA is just 70 kilometers SE of the community. Commercial freight and passenger flights are available through the Lethbridge airport (70 kms) and the Calgary International Airport (226 kms).

Table 4: Distance and times to major markets

DISTANCE AND TIMES TO MAJOR MARKETS			
Lethbridge	Calgary (International Airport)	Carway (US Land Crossing)	Vancouver (Seaport)
100 km	226 km	70 km	1163 km
1 hour	2.5 hours	1 hour	12 hours

Pincher Creek has an airport (CZPC) with a very long paved and well maintained tarmac and runway located just NW of the community. The long (6597 ft. (2011m)) and wide (100ft) runway strip, and the depth of paving (ability per square inch of loading) allows for heavier and larger planes. The high quality and upgraded condition of the runway can largely be attributed to the airport’s most active tenant, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, who operate the wildfire fighting Bomber Base servicing the Canada/USA border and up to Livingstone Gap. Owned by the M.D., the airport has a small passenger building, and nine hangers located on a quarter section of land. Stars and a number of local pilots use the airport but aside from them it is largely underutilized. In the fall of 2020, the Regional Airport Advisory Committee, the M.D., Town, Crowsnest Pass and the Village of Cowley joined forces to look at ways to better utilize this valuable asset. In 2020, an Airport Master Plan was completed, and an Airport Business Case is to be completed in the fall of 2021.

Canadian Pacific Railway provides service that runs from east to west bordering Highway 3. Pincher Station, located three kilometers to the north of the Town no longer has active train stops. There is a low-speed siding branch line located at Pincher Station. Lethbridge has a major freight handling facility, with tracks connecting to all major markets.

Economic Indicators at a Glance. There is limited, current and/or accurate economic and demographic information for the Town of Pincher Creek. Statistics Canada data is out of date (2016). While some of the data will be updated in March of 2022, the new complete census data will not be available until fall 2022 or later. The statistics are an issue for the community as a review of the various community foundational documents found that there is a discrepancy in much of the data. The ‘apples to apples’ comparisons of data sets is difficult due to errors in the catchment area chosen for collection. This results in erroneous forecasted numbers versus actual ones and makes some analysis within the foundational documents suspect. E.g., Stats Canada data differs from the Town data on business, and Alberta Health Services (AHS) uses data from the Local Geographical Area (LGA) which includes include the Town of Pincher Creek, Municipal District (M.D.) of Pincher Creek (Hamlets of Beaver Mines, Lowland Heights, Lundbreck, Pincher Station, and Twin Butte), Village of Cowley, and Piikani Nation, which is a slightly different jurisdiction than the M.D. of Pincher Creek.



Pincher Creek’s population has had limited growth in the last 10 years creating one of the biggest barriers to business – a very limited labour pool. However, good news - from 2019 to 2020 the population increased by 32 people (the single biggest increase in over six years). A baby boom perhaps? The largest segment of growth occurred in the 0-14 years of age category which represents approximately 17% of the community. The 25 to 49 years of age group represent 27% of the population, and the biggest single age group is the 55 to 59 years of age.

The median family income in 2018 is \$85,460, up 2.14% from 2017. This figure is \$16,320 (16%) less than the provincial average of \$101,780.00.

The median age (41.3 years) of the Town’s population is slightly older than the provincial average of 37.8 years of age. The community has a higher percentage of third generation families living in the area (77%) versus the provincial average of 57%. The high number of intergenerational families could account for the enduring commitment to the success of the community and possibly an unwillingness to embrace change. People have stayed and solved problems creating deep roots.

Figure 3: Pincher Creek’s population: median age

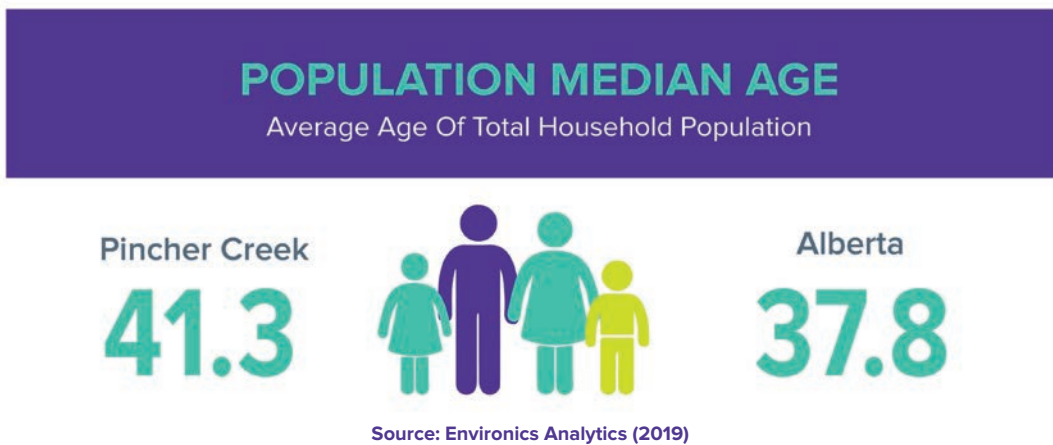
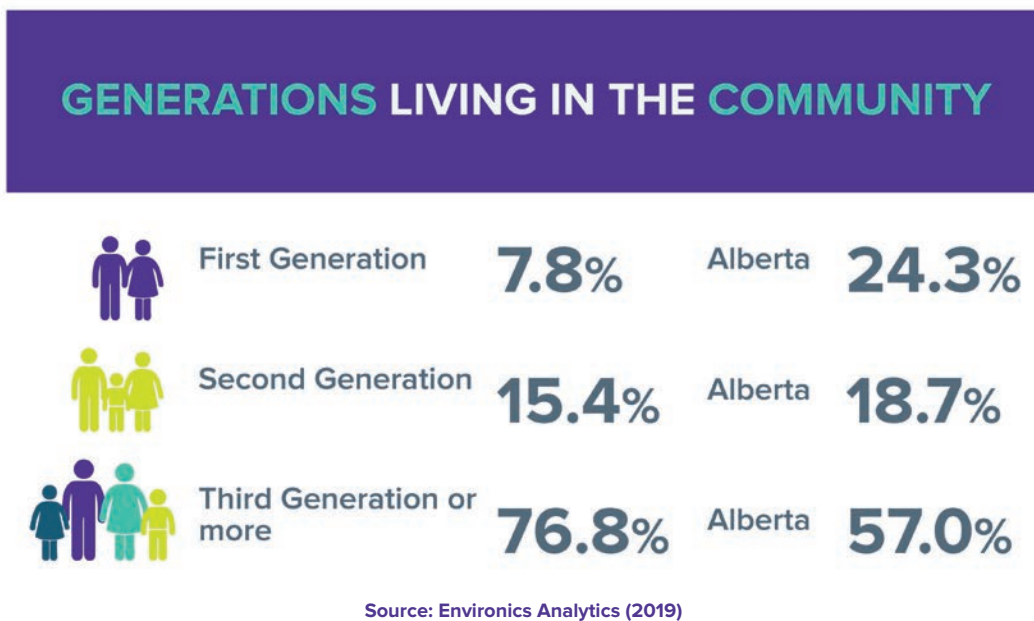


Figure 4: Pincher Creek’s population: median age and generations at home



2.0

BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As a starting point in the process of creating a five-year plan for Pincher Creek's Economic Strategy, the Consultants, via the Economic Development Department, reached out to both the business community and resident stakeholders. Input was gathered through one-on-one meetings with businesses and organizations, through two online surveys (in partnership with the Pincher Creek & District Chamber of Commerce [Business Support Recovery Program]), and via two focus groups held in early 2020.

The primary goal of the **business engagement process** was to capture business owners' perspectives on the opportunities and challenges of operating a business in the region. The questions asked were both quantitative and qualitative.



Figure 5: Pincher Creek business focus group (2020)

Overall, an estimated 230 to 250 businesses participated in the online survey, focus groups and one-on-one interviews. In some cases, the businesses were interviewed in 2020 and again in 2021 to measure any changes. Collectively, the respondents from the commercial, industrial and home-based enterprise categories represented approximately 50% of the Town and M.D. businesses, an excellent level of participation considering that the project began in the fall of 2019 and was to be completed in spring of 2020 (but COVID hit). The second round of online surveys and interviews were conducted Feb. to June of 2021. The participation in the second survey was lower than the previous year, likely due to COVID fatigue and the time of year (spring to summer.)

To raise the profile of the project and to actively involve more businesses, the Economic Development Department participated in dozens of community events where the primary attendees were Pincher Creek and/or M.D. business owners. Announcements and updates were made at the Women in Business events, the Pincher Creek & District Chamber of Commerce meetings, and a number of business owners were appointed to the Business Recovery Support Program (BRSP) as Business Ambassadors to build awareness of the support resources. In addition, news media releases, Facebook posts and the Town Newsletter with CEDS content were circulated to keep the community engaged and to ensure that residents and businesses had a chance to share their vision for Pincher Creek's future.



Table 5: Business engagement opportunities and responses

EVENT	AUDIENCE/CONTACTS	RESPONDENTS
Business Engagement Surveys BRSP program	Businesses (surveys emailed to all licensed businesses, CofC members, etc.)	May 2020 (134) May 2021 (70)
Business one-on-one interviews	Businesses (35 invitations)	35 owners/managers
Business round table(s)	Open invitation – Nov. 28, 2019 & Feb. 5, 2020	63*
Facebook, newsletter, newspaper articles	Monthly	n/a
Events: Community Information Night; Council updates; Farmers Market, etc.	Businesses n/a	450
Announcements at community events	Women in Business (306) Chamber members (135) Chamber e-newsletter (199)	640 reach
Key opinion leaders; industry experts, advisors 1-on-1 interviews		52

Source: Town of Pincher Creek, Marie Everts

*Note: Some business owners own more than one business



3.0

FACTORS AFFECTING ECONOMIC GROWTH AND INVESTMENT

Start with the end in mind. Pincher Creek has a number of excellent built and natural resources in and around the community. The Consultants used the community asset mapping process to focus means for Pincher Creek to welcome more residents, be attractive to new investment, and meet the needs of the whole community. A key starting point of economic development is mapping out an inventory of community assets and amenities (Pincher Creek and the

M.D) and then exploring options to leverage the assets to meet the emerging needs of the community. It is NOT just about filling the gaps or deficiencies.

The assets considered are: people; leadership; manmade and natural assets; land & buildings; businesses; and community spirit.

Figure 6: Community assets



Source: InnoVisions & Associates

PINCHER CREEK’S CORE ASSETS – OPPORTUNITY IDENTIFICATION

The Consultants engaged the community and conducted a SOARR assessment as part of the work of this project. Conducting a SOARR Assessment is a method of beginning a comprehensive strategic plan. The purpose is to identify Strengths, Opportunities and Aspirations by consulting community stakeholders and then expertly assess the potential Risks and Results (SOARR) of taking action. There are other models such as SWOT (Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats) that have been done in the community before for many other projects and those were also considered in this report.

The useful insights and analysis gained by engaging in stakeholder consultation informs what is desired by the community for the future. The questions used to direct the discussion through the SOARR model are outlined in Figure 7 below. The SOARR Assessment provided background information that was used to consider alternative courses of action.

Figure 7: Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Risks and Results (SOARR) questions



Source: InnoVisions & Associates

3.2

‘WHAT WE HEARD’

A key objective of the business stakeholder engagement was to determine the best way to market to non-local individuals and entrepreneurs what living life and doing business in Pincher Creek feels like. Building on Pincher Creek’s strengths and leveraging the Town’s key amenities (also called assets or attributes) is the way to capitalize on opportunities.

The objectives of the community economic development strategy (CEDS) based on the outcomes of the SOARR are to:

- Retain and attract business and residents;

- Revitalize the downtown;
- Add more housing options for residents and workforce;
- Improve businesses’ interactions with the town;
- Provide more diverse jobs;
- Create opportunities for retiring business owners to sell; and
- Diversify the economy.

See Appendix A for a comprehensive list of the SOARR focus group’s responses.

Figure 8: ‘What we Heard’ from community engagement



Source: InnoVisions & Associates



EXISTING AND EMERGING ECONOMIC ENGINES

Knowing the economic drivers of the region, and understanding how they are aligned, is critical to the success of an economic development strategy. Economic sectors were reviewed to inform big-picture thinking around how Pincher Creek can best leverage those sectors to retain current businesses and seek new businesses. Understanding the international, national and local policies, and market trends that affect any given economic sector is key as attraction and retention activities must be tailored to support them.

Today, key economic engines and pillars in southwest Alberta are natural gas (oil and gas), agriculture and wind energy. Key employers are institutions such as the hospital, schools and municipal government. Other sectors with emerging growth potential include recreation (both indoor and outdoor) and tourism. Frequently stated as having the highest growth potential, the reality is that there are very few tourism operators and at this time there are challenges to operating outside of the peak season months of May to October.

Each of the sectors has challenges and opportunities. As the government(s) continue to offer more post-COVID recovery programs and provide stimulus dollars, having a focused plan to support growth sectors is critical. Leveraging people, partnerships and possibilities through a rural hub concept will be key.

Oil and Gas

The Shell Waterton complex operated in the region for over 60 years (with their natural gas plant located just outside of Pincher Creek). In 2015, Shell announced the possible closure of the facility within 10 -15 years due to declining production.^{viii} The natural gas plant has been a major employer, a substantial philanthropic community contributor and consistent tax generator since the 1950's. The Southwest Alberta Sustainable Community Initiative (SASCI), a not-for-profit organization, commissioned a Socio-Economic Impact

Assessment (SEIGN) to consider the effects of the closure. Despite the effects on the region, the study indicated those interviewed felt the region's diverse economy had and would sustain itself through the closure.

In 2019, Shell sold its local assets to Pieridae Energy Ltd.^{ix} The natural gas plant is still a major employer in the region. With the change in ownership comes some risk to the town. The operational longevity of the natural gas reservoir is uncertain. Pieridae is too new to the area to know whether or not they will fill the shoes of Shell in their contributions to community stability.

Agriculture

Agriculture continues to be one of the region's largest employers with over 2,000 farms and ranches in the area. The livestock ranchers in the region recognize and value the unique grasslands. The Pincher Creek area has a very rich, biodiverse ecosystem of native grasslands and tame pasture. Ranchers are working hard to preserve the original prairie grasses. The environmental stewardship of these intergenerational ranchers has shifted government policy to protect and restore natural areas. The red flags regarding regional agriculture are the current drought, continuing fluctuation of prices and political influences affecting market prices.

East of Pincher Creek, in one of Canada's most fertile growing regions, are large-scale production crops. With over 140 growing days per year, the M.D. has some of Alberta's most fertile land. In the last several years, agri-businesses have started to venture into farm-to-fork partnerships, culinary tours and ranching staycations.

Uncertainty facing the agriculture industry is pressing and should be of concern. In 2021, some counties and M.D.s in Alberta have declared a 'state of agriculture emergency', signaling another hard year for farmers and ranchers.

The Energizing Agriculture Transformation (EAT) project,

3.3

completed by AlbertaSW Regional Economic Alliance in 2020, indicated that approximately 60% of the farmers and ranchers in the region are 60 years of age or older. More importantly, only 11.6% have a succession plan, of these who do have a plan 96.6% are based on succession by family members.^x

Recently, the Saputo Dairy Plant, located in the village of Glenwood just 25 minutes south of Pincher Creek and one of the region's largest agri-food processors, announced they will be closing operations and terminating 25 employees in 2021.

Resource Extraction – Forestry and Mining

Forestry: once an active area for commercial logging and clear-cutting, the area has shifted to limited forestry development. The focus now is more on watershed sustainability, improving watershed protection, and wildlife habitat management especially around fish stock and the protection of the head waters. Spray Lakes Sawmills and HC Forest Products (mill) operate within the M.D.

Alberta Forestry and Agriculture manages the wildfire, water bomber-base out of the Pincher Creek airport.

Mining: The highly anticipated Riversdale Metallurgical mine to be located 50 minutes west of Pincher Creek and employ approximately 450 people is facing environmental regulatory approval challenges.^{xi} The Alberta Energy Regulator just denied them an operating license which will have a chilling effect on all potential investment in the resource sector.

Alternative Energy

Wind Energy: Pincher Creek is the location of one of Canada's first wind farms. Mild winters and warm breezy summers make the region ideal for wind energy. The Canadian Wind Energy Association (CanWEA) regards southwest Alberta as one of the country's strongest wind generating regions. The winds range from gentle chinook winds to sheer winds coming off the mountains. The industry continues to grow in the region, with new technology and innovations being adopted to deal with the high fluctuations in wind.

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations. In 2019, Pincher Creek

became one of 20 'charging' communities as part of the Peaks to Prairies Charging Corridor, a network of EV communities. The community is hoping to draw tourists from Alberta, B.C., Montana to their network. The EV chargers are built and maintained by ATCO.

Emerging Opportunities

Hospital/HealthCare: The Pincher Creek Health Care Centre (hospital) is one of the busiest acute care hospitals in the Alberta southern zone. On average, the hospital delivers over 100+ maternities a year. As a very active and high-functioning hospital with seven physicians and two anesthesiologists, Pincher Creek is often the destination for OR surgery services and ambulatory care in the region, even taking in cases from larger facilities such as the Chinook Regional Hospital (CRH) in Lethbridge. Within the region over 50,000 patients go through the rural west emergency departments (Pincher Creek, Crowsnest Pass, Cardston and Raymond ERs) compared to the CRH, which saw 70,000 patients.

- » The facility has a 24/7 emergency department, 16 acute care beds, and two operating rooms (OR). Unlike many rural hospitals, the Pincher Creek hospital provides a high number and diverse range of medical services: obstetrical labour, delivery and maternal care; geriatrics; audiology; general surgeries; radiology/laboratory; respiratory; and home care services. The hospital has local and visiting surgeons and specialists from many disciplines.
- » The facility is a teaching hospital. In addition to practice, they teach many disciplines for both doctors and nurses (RNs and LPNs), pharmacists, respiratory students and unit clerks, etc. for practicum hours laddered into Pincher Creek from a wide range of academic institutions. The medical students can come for one rotation or for all nine; each rotation is a different specialization for varying subjects.
- The facility is part of the University of Calgary Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (UCLIC) which is a research-based, educational experience that allows students to learn in the 'continuum of patient care'. It is an initiative that increases medical students'

exposure to general practice in rural medicine, and also provides experience working with patients with undifferentiated problems. <https://cumming.ucalgary.ca/ruralmedicine/undergraduate/ucllic>.

- The teaching hospital component is a valuable recruiting arm for the community. Six of seven physicians were past students in the community.
- » The Associate Medical Clinic operates from within the hospital with seven physicians who provide a diverse range of medical services. (The number of physicians in the community is projected to go down from seven to five in the fall of 2021 pending retirements and a maternity leave.) The ‘ideal’ physician count according to local physicians are approximately 11 doctors. While the clinic is privately-owned, they are funded through the Primary Care Network. Each physician provides maternity services, and there is surgical capacity in the fully functioning operating rooms serviced by anesthesiologists, (another rare service in smaller rural centres). The hospital welcomes specialists to treat patients in the region and they receive patients from larger centres that are on wait lists for surgery.
- » New onsite equipment and upgrades to the hospital will expand services, facility utilization and training opportunities. In May 2021, the province granted the hospital \$3.1 million to be spent on a new computerized tomography (CT) scanner, a service that will reduce patient travel times and improve wait times for diagnostic services. In addition, the hospital was granted over \$6 million to support other upgrades within the hospital.^{xii}
- » The health centre was built as a prototype hospital and can be physically expanded. The facility was engineered and built with the capacity to add two more wings.
- » The Windy Slopes Foundation is a very supportive, local, charitable foundation that supports the hospital by purchasing equipment, etc.
- » There is medical supports business growth potential based on the hospital. For example, a maternity program means young mothers with needs for goods for infants and service supports such as lactation (breast-feeding) Consultants. More diagnostic services means more people travelling to the region resulting in greater hotel occupancy and increased restaurant patronage.

Tourism – tourists and the visitor experience: The Alberta government has stated that the SW Alberta region is an area of potential development for tourism and has set aside money to make it happen. The decline in natural resources development, and government policies that are currently dominating public discourse based on environmental priorities, means that tourism is one of the likely growth industries for Pincher Creek. Economic success for the area in tourism (the visitor experience) will mean creating a destination that targets tourists willing to spend money on lodging, food and amenities. It will require a regional partnership to create many reasons to come, to stay and to return. There will be a push to increase campsites and recreational amenities like pathway developments at the expense of the municipality. Those pushing for these fiscally burdensome activities don’t recognize that these don’t bring the kind of tourists that will spend money in the community. Tourism development efforts should be considered with an affluent tourist in mind who will support more than the gas stations and drive-thru restaurants in the area.

A new Destination Management Organization (DMO) called the South Canadian Rockies Tourism Association has been set up in the region to guide the development of tourism. This is a logical outcome given that tourists come to visit the wider region. Packaging regional attractions and amenities, and then effectively marketing them will be key to the success of this organization. While the organization is very new, they have an active board and were recently granted over \$80,000 to begin to develop tools and resources for the region.

There are many tourism-based projects that have been started (and paused) or are just starting within the region. It is creating confusion and misunderstandings with tourism operators, regional stakeholders and government decision makers. Some of these projects are:

- The Building a Successful, Tourism Investment, Opportunity Network (BASTION) project, through the Alberta SouthWest Regional Economic Development Alliance, is looking at tourism business investment opportunities;
- The AlbertaSW REDA was also the driver of the Crown of the Continent project in the southwest corner of Alberta. The project links a 73,000 square km ecosystem in Alberta, B.C. and Montana with geo-tourism opportunities.

3.3

One of the key partners is National Geographic. In 2021, there have been discussions about reviving the connections from this project to align with the new DMO.

<https://crownofthecontinent.net/entries/southwest-alberta/6b8bb03b-3c1e-4f03-ae8e-e049aa7ca534>

- In March 2020, AlbertaSW's Crown of the Continent project won third in the "Best of Americas" category of 'Sustainable Top 100 Destination' awards. The green sustainability certification and award could be tied to future environmentally sustainable regional positioning projects.
- The Yellowstone to Yukon (Y2Y) Conservation Initiative engaged Consultants in July 2021 to look at specific economic opportunities in the region, specifically the Castle Parks. The project is to review how the recreation opportunities in the area can create a sustainable economic sector that will thrive alongside traditional industries like ranching, farming, forestry and oil and gas.
- Travel Alberta's Alberta Tourism Information System (ATIS) program is expanding their digital marketing platform to help tourism companies expand market research.

- The Alberta government is developing a new 10-year strategic plan for tourism, but at this stage, who will do what, what will be done and how is all very muddy. New programs from the province and feds have come out since the last COVID wave. There are over 25 different travel and tourism grants available and creating a great deal of confusion for business owners and operators. (<https://alberta.grantwatch.com/cat/44/travel-and-tourism-grants.html>). At this time, there does not appear to be much collaboration between Travel Alberta, Alberta Jobs, Innovation and Economy, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry: Investment Attraction and Export and/or any department with a tourism or workforce development initiative related to tourism. This is both a blessing and a curse if Pincher Creek, via the new DMO, launches an entrepreneur development program to support tourism, events, the film industry, agri-tourism, etc. It puts Pincher Creek in the driver's seat but it also means a need to provide resources to ensure success.





COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN – IN DETAIL

How can Pincher Creek capitalize on economic opportunities? First, a number of challenges need to be resolved or mitigated. Assets can be leveraged to offset challenges with solutions that will guide Administration, Council and Community leaders in prioritizing goals and assigning resources (people, processes and programs) to capitalize on the chosen opportunities.

Figure 9: Challenges impeding business retention, new investment and long-term community sustainability



There are seven ‘challenges’ that hold the community back. Until these challenges are directly addressed and resolved, the community will continue to decline in population and lose the ability to keep existing businesses or attract new investment.

These seven challenges are priorities. They were first identified by businesses, and then additional research was completed to substantiate that the challenge or business barrier does indeed exist. These challenges are relevant to not only the Town, but also to the M.D. of Pincher Creek and the entire southwest region. These challenges (in no particular order) are:

1) Data gaps affect decision-making and service delivery:

- a. Inconsistent data collection, different measurement values and analysis creates data gaps for informed decision making.

- b. Data gaps create misleading or confusing ‘pictures’ for decision makers and limit predictive outcomes.

2) Some Town administrative processes require updating to be more effective for business:

- a. Inconsistent data collection and analysis make it difficult to make informed decisions.
- b. Data gaps create misleading or confusing ‘pictures’ for decision makers and limit predictive outcomes.

3) Baby-boomer business owners are set to retire without apparent replacements:

- a. Business retention and expansion will become more challenging as boomer entrepreneurs retire.
- b. There will be a loss of jobs, products and services needed to retain and attract residents, newcomers (for workforce) and investment.

4) Downtown has little vitality:

- a. High number of downtown vacancies limits investment attraction opportunities.
- b. The Town presently offers no incentives offered to offset development risks for more live-work-stay- play options.
- c. Limited assortment available of products and services need to position Pincher Creek as a tourist destination.

5) Workforce shortages are looming:

- a. Stagnant and aging population base without population replacement .
- b. A shrinking labour pool, critical staffing shortages, and job skills gaps.

6) Critical housing shortages:

- a. Housing shortages are affecting employee retention and attraction.
- b. Scarcity of housing options - right across the housing continuum from social housing to market-based, free enterprise solutions.

7) The economic reality – the need to build capacity, confidence and diversify:

- a. To truly diversify the economy residents of the community must understand the current economic reality, and they must have realistic expectations regarding opportunities. There must be commitment by residents to assist in making changes or little will be accomplished. Administration cannot do it alone.
- b. There seem to be community members who are misguided in their understanding of the process of economic development. Unfounded rumours are creating issues with selling the town as a good place to invest.
- c. NIMBYism is negatively influencing community growth and sustainability. Income, social inequality and limited housing options are contributing to the workforce issues. Without a workforce no business can succeed.

These challenges were identified by the many community stakeholders who comprised the attendees of the numerous community engagement sessions conducted by the Consultants. In addition, interviews with existing and potential businesses, key stakeholders, some Administration and Elected Officials were also completed. Documents prepared by other Consultants for the community as well as Town foundational documents internal administrative were read and

analyzed. Addressing the challenges should become a priority for Pincher Creek.

Following are the seven challenges in greater detail, and the consultant's recommendations and potential actions to resolve or mitigate the challenges.

Challenge: Some Town administrative processes need to be updated and streamlined.

A firm's perception of the local business climate, and their interpretation or experience of Town processes, policies and bylaws, affects their decision to invest or re-invest in a community. While overall the Council and Administration strive to meet the community's needs, there are still ways to create more of a pro-business culture. Based on the businesses interviewed and/or surveyed, Pincher Creek businesses would appreciate streamlined processes related to development permits, a reduction of delays in processing applications, increased communication/response times, and to a lesser extent, reduction in taxation.

The Town office serves two clients – residents and businesses.

Businesses become frustrated when they are made to run around to various departments to complete the documentation required by the Town (or province). While there has work been done over the last few years to streamline internal processes, more needs to be done to truly become 'pro-business' and then to leverage this as a benefit to market doing business in Pincher Creek. From the recreation department, to IT, to waste services, to planning and engineering, each department has policies, regulations and requirements that affect businesses in a direct or indirect way. Make it easier to do business! The economic development department is only one spoke in the larger wheel that is the Town.

Issues exist with planning, permitting, zoning and development process bottlenecks. The present planning department documents/processes are too cumbersome from the businesses' perspective. Examples were given of unclear terminology that lead to misinterpretation and often mistrust; delays that cost businesses money and were often connected to a lack of pre-established development rules or lack of area plans (ASP); and there are too many discretionary and direct control sites.

- » The current system of being routed to planning and development first, who then may also have to engage the Oldman River Regional Services Commission (ORRSC) as the senior planner, is too complicated of a process. While this referral procedure, set up in the 1980's and 90's, is common to many smaller communities in Alberta, it is not an effective process where emerging business trends indicate flexibility is required. The Consultants became aware of businesses delayed four, five and even six months in expansion plans due to the required permitting and/or rezoning processes and discovered other firms that have chosen to locate elsewhere as the firm's 'perception' was that Council has turned down similar developments so likely would refuse theirs' too. Whether perception or reality, this is lost tax revenue and lost goodwill with business.

The long-range planning documents are dated. These are often the first documents reviewed by large developers/ investors. While still relevant, the Land-use bylaw (LUB [2005]) and the Municipal Development Plan (MDP [2013]) are not current. The MDP is a long-range, key policy document that indicates how the community will be organized in the future. As the MDP ages, the higher the likelihood that subdivisions, infrastructure and planning will become 'piece-meal' developments. For example, there have been 31 (of 38) approved amendments to the LUB since 2005. The majority are minimal in scope and do not provide much flexibility when it comes to innovative design for 'live – work – stay – play' studios, secondary suites and/or temporary modular structures such as 'granny' suites throughout the community needed to address the housing shortage and provide more alternatives to types of housing available. There is some flexibility in the downtown corridor and the adjacent block which have Commercial Transition C-4 zoning which allows for residential mixed with commercial development, but more is needed throughout the community. Aside from the particular downtown corridor, there are limited options for multi-use, multi-family residential and commercial buildings, or even structured commercial/industrial areas. There are no 'off the shelf, ready to go', housing development plans or designated areas.

- » The LUB and MDP should be flexible enough to encourage new development and innovation, and to address emerging circumstances that negatively affect businesses.

There are work arounds that Council can implement with changes that still adhere to the Municipal Government Act (MGA), while supporting business. A great example, to reduce red tape and permit wait times, in Feb. 2021, Council approved pop-up patios for restaurants during the pandemic – a positive but temporary measure. Time is of the essence for restaurants to survive and a permitting process that takes too long is not helpful.

At times - Council is too involved in operations. On occasion, businesses and residents suggested Council was overly involved in day-to-day Town operations – at times impeding business. It happens in all communities, especially smaller communities where Council members wear many hats. While the majority of those interviewed saw Council and Administration as being progressive, responsive and hardworking, there were examples given of undue involvement by some Council members. If they are in fact true, they indicate improper interference by some Council members that should be addressed by Council. The following examples were provided by interviewees:

- A Councillor's personal involvement in the negotiations around the location of the waste recycling facility;
- Projects apparently discussed in an 'in camera' session of Council but which were then disclosed outside the chambers (confidential presentation of this strategy for example);
- Speaking with community members about downtown building vacancies and possible punitive actions related to private businesses; and
- Councillors not recusing themselves from all involvement in a matter when in a conflict of interest.

Whether or not the stories relayed by businesses to the Consultants are true, the challenge is that they have spread within the community and are believed to be true creating mistrust of the very governance processes put in place to ensure transparency and fairness. If left uncorrected, this will impede businesses' confidence and deter new business investors.

- » Fact vs. fiction. As is often the case in many small communities where business owners sit on Council, or are active in the business community, some Pincher Creek Council members are accused by business (or a resident) of overstepping their governance role from time to time.

While it is assumed that an individual Council members' intentions are good and without malice, businesses and residents alike indicated that they believed there were cases where it councillor or even Council as a whole was used as the route to circumvent the Town's administrative decisions on an ad-hoc basis.

- » Any 'perception/reality' of political interference can inhibit new business investment and calls into question the ethics of the decision makers. Direction should be given by Council to Administration only through the proper processes related to Council meetings. Direction should never be given by individual councillors acting on their own, even if well meaning.
- » Good governance requires that 'In camera' sessions must remain confidential to Council only, and a proper code of conduct for Council members regarding conflict of interest must be enforced. Knowing when to recuse or not recuse oneself when in a conflict is necessary. Often the offending Councillor is the very one who cannot see that they are in a conflict of interest and operating out of bounds. For that reason, Council as a whole must watch for this and rein it in. Just because a member of Council has the skill, knowledge and/or training to 'do' something, does not mean that they should. At times, there is a perception and perhaps real confusion regarding who is accountable or answerable for a task, and who is responsible. It is important to ensure that Council can hold Administration accountable for operational results. This cannot be done if Council is meddling in any way.
- » Administration works hard to ensure well researched options to bring to Council for decision and they add their professional opinion for the benefit of Council. Council must follow process in the face of public pressure. Councils will always face NIMBYism of some sort when making hard decisions, but if a proper, fair and transparent process is followed by all Council members then, regardless of the decision made, the system will be seen to have worked. It has come to the consultant's attention that a proposal for a row housing development was withdrawn by a developer (the developer owned the land and it was already zoned multi-family) due to NIMBY

lobbying tactics directed at Council. A critical loss when housing is in such high demand.

There must be a clear line between governance and operations. Council must have the backbone to withstand opposition to the less favourable decisions when they address critical issues. They must also take credit when outcomes are achieved and these should be communicated and celebrated. In 2021, the town Council and Administration was subjected to a Municipal Accountability Review by Municipal Affairs of the Government of Alberta. While the findings indicated there was no need for an additional municipal inspection, it is important to consider that the review was brought forward by citizens operating on misinformation circulating via the rumour mill. The review concluded that while the majority of the claims within the petition were unfounded, the scrutiny further contributed to the perception that Council has overlooked key governing processes. Fact versus fiction can be addressed through more transparency and effective internal and external communications. This unfortunate waste of money also indicates that some residents are more likely to listen to rumour than to review the Council minutes which are public documents and get the facts.

Shut down the rumour mill with facts – Adjusting communication processes to include more types of messaging in various media for different audiences will quell the gossip. There is an art to communicating sensitive and often confusing governing procedures, processes and projects. Finding ways to reach the intended audience takes strategic consideration. Not all demographics within the Town (or M.D.) use the same media or information sources. Too much travels via gossip and it was said more than once that "rumours are more plentiful than the wind in Pincher Creek". False rumours have negatively affected some business operations and/or individuals in the community. Anything that can be done to stop this will help the community become more attractive to investment.

- » The term 'economic development' means different things to different people. There appears to be a big gap in understanding by residents of the role of economic development and how it benefits the town. For example, the 50 new businesses in 2021 that were

tracked, itemized and reported on in a clear, systematic way by the Economic Development Officer (EDO) were still challenged by some residents as false data. There were three instances when the Consultants were told by interviewees that the businesses either did not exist (they do) or were not new commercial developments, but rather home-based businesses and therefore not valid (they are). The visuals created for communication purposes by the Town included the names and the types of businesses, so the existence of the businesses was easily provable. It is false that home-based businesses are not of value to the community. Home-based businesses do have considerable impact in employing residents, contributing to the supply chain and providing taxable revenues.

- » Communicating more about the value of home-based businesses would be wise and continuing to provide facts about economic development can only help to ensure understanding of the role of the EDO and therefore support for the process of economic development.

Succession Process of administration is an issue. Leadership development and succession planning for Town staff is uncertain. The final process which needs consideration within the Town to provide stability and consistency of service to the community the impending issue of succession planning within the aging workforce of the Town administration.

Succession of senior leadership in Administration in the immediate future is important. Leadership development and succession planning for Town staff is uncertain. The final process which needs consideration within the Town to assist business and provide stability, as well as consistency of service to the community, is that of leadership succession. To address impending issues of succession given the average age of the workforce of the Town administration, look for ways for the existing staff to share some of their extensive knowledge and experience.

Restructuring the Economic Development Portfolio. Council has set economic development as a 'key area for action', in their 2018-2022 Strategic Plan. To make this the priority identified by Council, and to achieve the recommendations within this Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS),

additional time, energy and resources must be designated to the task. Currently, the Economic Development Officer has three very busy portfolios – economic development, events, and town communications. Each of these is important, but together they are too time consuming for one person whose focus should be to ensure that the strategy pieces come together.







Recommendations to deal with process challenges

GOAL #1: RETAIN AND EXPAND BUSINESSES IN THE COMMUNITY

1. Develop a Business Concierge service – coordinate a one-window approach within the Town administration that builds relationships with businesses from the first interaction. Strategize on ways to reduce complex application processes or reduce wait times.
2. Create an authentic pro-business culture at Town office. Engage all staff in an economic development session on the importance of increasing business within the Town and how the departments could link to economic development activities.
3. Have the Economic Development Officer act as the Town liaison/project manager/quarter back for the businesses requiring assistance.
4. Restructure the economic development position and department; include considering as needed, non- payroll contractors for communications and events.
5. Foster a pro-business environment by reducing the red tape around each process of interacting with the Town. Provide staff with authority, accountability, encouragement and BUDGET to find innovative ways to improve processes and support businesses.
6. Budget for more external communication processes to reach different audiences to provide facts, build awareness and stop the rumours.
7. Develop a succession plan and leadership development/mentorship program that will minimize the serious loss of knowledge and experience of the senior staff retiring in the next year. Find ways to keep retiring employees engaged as mentors and add knowledge resources to bolster the inevitable gaps.

Solutions – Action(s): Champion: primarily Town Administration and Council

1.1 Develop a Business Concierge system, appoint the Economic Development Officer/ Office as the quarterback/liaison. There is a need and opportunity to develop a 'Business Concierge' system to augment and improve the experience of businesses with the Town. Starting with the first contact by a business with the Town (which is often at the front desk) on any matter, they should be referred to the Economic Development Officer (EDO). Whether to purchase a business license or inquire about a permit or even to get information, each and every business should first be referred to the EDO. The EDO can determine what resources, and/or staff the business should be referred to within the Town, whether as an internal or external resource.

1.1.1 Create a business-friendly culture at the Town Office.

All staff have an opportunity to develop and strengthen a positive business climate. Find ways to streamline development processes, regulations, communication processes, etc. Engage ORSSC or another planning firm that can complete the much needed review sooner to set up timelines and provide proactive direction on the LUB and ultimately the MDP. Engage developers, realtors and investors in a discussion around amendments.

1.1.2 Actively work to cut the red tape. Look for ways to streamline processes and remove red-tape. Consider quarterly round table sessions where staff can discuss ways to improve internal Town processes, spur innovation and build awareness that the Town is indeed open for business.

1.1.3 Create a one-window development application processes with the EDO. Host sessions for entrepreneur, business owners and investors on 'how to file a successful business permit', or prepare a business case for zoning changes, etc.' Ensure that the Town zoning is clear on where businesses can locate and options for multi-purpose development.

1.1.4 Develop an internal and external communication plan. As mentioned previously, there is an opportunity

to meet with other departments and brainstorm on how to become more business-friendly, link to economic development and support businesses. Externally, facts and information trump gossip/rumours. Some of the communication processes are easy to resolve. For example, the Town buying space in the local paper to announce new businesses or feature current businesses could also include what economic development is, how it works, etc. Other topics are more complex and not as easy to communicate clearly – tax differences/mill rates, etc. But providing factual information to stop rumours and better informed residents will be the key to getting the community onside with change. Don't leave it until it is an issue, there is a very fine line between transparency and confidentiality. Address the rumours before it deters more business investment.

- » Create a monthly checklist of what Council and Administration is working on, why and for what outcomes. Provide a report card (of sorts) which is actively promoted and updated. Search out different options to communicate topics that may be complex. E.g., visual illustrations - infographics on communicating challenging financial figures such as 'Where your taxes are spent', or rate of return outcomes of the shared grant writer and the programs Council has brought forward with grant money. Council minutes and Administration reports are all readily available but in our just-in-time (JIT) society, not read. Convert key points to visuals to show that Council and Administration have worked hard and accomplished a number of very positive outcomes. The community largely is unaware of the progress – especially regarding economic development.

1.2 Leadership development and succession planning

1.2.1 Strive for continuing organizational excellence through leadership development and include succession planning. Minimize the serious loss of knowledge and experience of senior staff retiring in the next year. Implement options to develop a senior staff succession plan for those looking to retire in the next few years. Develop a continuing mentorship program beyond retirement and add consultant resources for younger and/or new staff. To keep business development momentum,

and not lose vital institutional experience and knowledge, there needs to be a concentrated effort in succession planning with a focus on hiring practices that capture the business development employment trends. There is a need to build a clear path for economic development to occur, aligned with development rather than under the existing structure through the development department. Building for the future needs of the town will mean that economic development as a process should lead the development process.

1.2.2 Restructure the economic development department.

With future consideration of expanding the economic development role to include more activities around business retention, expansion and investment attraction, there is need to restructure and re-allocate resources. Action committees reporting to the EDO can be one great way to bring expertise needed to a particular task or project such as working on workforce attraction and housing (that links to economic development and FCSS). While now is not the time to hire more employees (due to the pandemic and budget), consideration of the communications and events being handled by a contractor and reporting to the EDO would be an effective solution. The communication portfolio would also eventually expand to include more internal and external messaging around workforce retention, expansion, training opportunities, etc. now and investment attraction marketing in the future as outlined in the CEDS action plan. There are key senior Administration retiring. Review ways to link the new hire experience to CEDS goals.

1.2.3 Council should revisit the governance vs. operations

parameters. Council provides the vision and direction for Administration, but it is the staff who must be ultimately be held accountable and have the authority to make informed decisions that are pro-business. Increase the opportunity for councillor training sessions and workshops to refresh the code of conduct with business case examples for clarity. Examples were provided in the "Do you want to be a Councillor?" session hosted by the Chamber of Commerce on April 15, 2021. This session included a number of ethical parameters that have value for Council to revisit. Alternatively, Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) has a number of resources to assist

in clearly defining roles, responsibilities and code of conduct. Note that existing staff tend to have more than one portfolio so, in order for the CEDS to be implemented, more resources are needed to extend capacity.

Challenge: Data gaps affect decision-making and service delivery.

Develop programs and create solutions related to economic development. Note that this is a Canadian not just a Pincher Creek challenge but it is fixable. There is a need to establish a culture of data-driven decision-making to ensure that policies, regulations, programming and ultimately budget are well informed by creating a systematic approach to capturing the right data, analyzing it correctly and disseminating it as information. More primary data, especially good quality data about the community's businesses and population demographics are essential for Council, institutions and organizations to accurately forecast, plan, prioritize and fund community activities. An example of a good working relationship is that of the Town with the Chamber of Commerce, partnering to gather relevant, current data such as was garnered through the BRSP program.

Currently, the Town relies heavily on secondary data (data compiled for another purpose) to formulate policies and programs. Pincher Creek's population demographic data gathered by Statistics Canada and reported on the Alberta's Economic Dashboard is not often useful as it is grouped into the larger region. Statistics Canada last reported data collected in 2016. The existing, secondary data sources includes aggregated information which often blends the Town and M.D. populations and businesses, and in some cases regional information gets merged into data which includes all municipalities from Crowsnest Pass to the City of Lethbridge. For example, within the data sets there is an assumption that the postal code indicates the location of a business therefore an M.D. business with a Town postal code will be reported as a Town business. The same challenge also extends to the tracking of tourism spending, agriculture net revenues, skills or labour shortages. In the absence of quality secondary data collection, there is a need to increase the types of primary data collected (from first-hand sources and collected for a specific reason). Primary data is best for assessment to clearly define business and community needs. There is also a gap in the

capacity to analyze the data. It was interesting to note that out of four different community documents: the Recreation Master Plan (2021), the Social Needs Assessment(2020), the Community Health Assessment (2020) and the Alberta Government's Economic Dashboard, each had slightly different numbers. While each report indicated a declining and aging population in Pincher Creek, a data point overlooked was the increase in the number of youth (0 to 15 years of age) albeit small. This change will be covered more in the workforce development goal and residential growth plan, within this document.

Data gaps. The power of primary data – use existing tools to harness more information. Presently, the Town's business licenses are not coded to align with provincial and federal business categories such as the North American Industrial Classification Codes (NAICS). The 'Diamond' software that the Town uses is cumbersome and limited in capacity to run/filter business reports. For example, the ability to align business categories/types to new investment/taxation potential, etc., can provide valuable insight into new investment growth categories in relation to tax revenue potential.

- » The Town's business license form does not ask enough non-confidential questions and therefore it is very limited in identifying the products and services a business provides, number of full-time & part-time employees, succession issues , business expansion plans, specialty certification such as LEED, ISO qualifications, etc. The more 'public' information detail the Town has about a business, the more opportunities there are to support the business, cross market and do regional business to business (B2B) matchmaking. The interactive business license directory map is a good tool for those searching for business products and services.
- » Business licenses (and whatever other Town paper forms) can/should be electronic, executable forms that the businesses can fill out online. Make it easy for business.
- » The interactive business license directory map is a good tool for those searching for business products and services.
- » An example of the value of primary data can be seen from business interviews and surveys completed in April 2020 and May 2021. The findings indicted the types of

challenges businesses were encountering, not only related to the pandemic, but also standard operational challenges. As a result, the Town and the Pincher Creek & District Chamber of Commerce developed and implemented the Business Recovery Support Program (BRSP) which supported businesses in recovery (the BRSP will be expanded on more in the following pages).

Recommendations to get better information to make informed decisions.

1. Develop a data strategy. Increase the collection of primary data to provide a solid base of information for analysis to ensure that decisions are accurately informed.
2. Revamp the business licenses to capture relevant information about the businesses.
3. Incorporate the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) categorization within the business licensing process.
4. Explore the option of a bridge program to link to the existing Diamond software, create a workaround, or invest in a new system to track NAICS.
5. Conduct a formal business outreach program, track business interviews in a confidential CRM, follow-up on red (closures, exiting the community, etc.) and green flags (expanding, new certification, products, etc.).

Solutions – Action(s): Champion Town Administration

1.3 Develop a data strategy.

1.3.1 Increase internal capacity to gather local data.

Leverage data as a strategic asset to ‘plan’ the community and programs. Data-driven economic development projects will help the community better understand what is happening on a local level as well as provide intel for Council and Administration.

1.3.2 Business licenses can be a much better source of primary data.

Adjust the business licenses to collect better information about the businesses’ products, services, labour force, skills gaps, etc. of each firm. Incorporate relevant questioning into the first point of contact with the Town such as when applying for a business license. The first point of contact

with a business should be to learn and collect information on a business’s products, services, labour force, skills gaps, etc. Incorporate additional questions into the business license form. All forms should be electronic, online, easily accessed, secure and executable. Reduce time and the paper trail.

(See Appendix B: An example of a more comprehensive business license.)

1.3.3 Incorporate the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) in business license coding to align with the provincial and federal government business category data collection.

By collecting additional information on the primary and tertiary products and services offered by a business, the Town will have a solid base of information for a clear picture of business shifts, trends and a link to forecasting for workforce, etc. Link the various departments to the NAICS system (planning, permitting, tax department, etc.) Specific NAICS coded sectors will also provide valuable information for projecting industry growth and/or shrinking business categories.

Challenge: Baby boomer business owners set to retire without replacement – potential closure of businesses, loss of taxes, jobs, products and services.

It is important to recognize the ‘lifetime value’ of existing businesses. This value is represented by the incremental impact of a business in a community: the staff they employ; the taxes they pay; the services or products they offer; the other businesses they do business with; the relationships they build with customers; and the social projects, events and activities they donate to and participate in within the community. Job creation as a result becomes a key benchmark for a community’s sustainability. The objective of a strategy to retain and expand business is to nurture business growth and long-term business resilience.

The Economic Developer’s Association of Canada (EDAC), reports that an estimated 70 to 80% of all business growth comes from businesses already located within a community. Therefore, the foundational economic development strategy is one of dedicating time, resources and budget to providing programs for existing businesses to grow their businesses or transition them to new buyers if they are planning to retire.



Pincher Creek's economic prosperity relies heavily on micro, small and medium-sized businesses. Many of these businesses have weathered the boom and bust cycles of the oil and gas sector, one (or more) economic downturns, and the recent economic impact of the pandemic. A strategy focused on business retention and expansion nurtures small business growth and an entrepreneurial ecosystem for start-ups and business expansion.

Actively supporting a small business and entrepreneurial ecosystem will go far in adding new products, services and job opportunities to the region. The majority of businesses in Pincher Creek and region are small businesses (under five employees). Community leaders recognized that small business is the backbone of the economy and that these businesses needed assistance to survive the pandemic. While the Business Recovery Support Program (BRSP) was developed as a short-term solution to helping businesses through COVID, there will be need to increase options to support businesses to become more resilient. Not if but when another disaster strikes, businesses that have worked through a business mentorship or coaching program will have more options available prior to and during the next disaster. The second round of the shop local, or the #PCLoveLocal campaign is underway and a good example of building awareness of Business to Business (B2B) and Business to Consumer (B2C) shopping options.

Baby boomer business owners set to retire. Pincher Creek has a slightly higher than average median age (41.3^{xiii} years and over), with the provincial average at 37.8 years. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the average age at retirement is 63. While it is not clear how many business owners will be looking to retire in the next five to ten years, it is important to collect primary data about 'boomerpreneurs' looking to retire and then put in place mechanisms to ensure the business does not simply close doors and exit the region. On average, it takes five to seven years to sell a business.^{xiv} There is, therefore, an urgent need in Pincher Creek to strategically plan for succession of the businesses within the region. This effort should include the Town, M.D., the Chamber of Commerce and community leaders.



Recommendations

GOAL #1: RETAIN & EXPAND BUSINESSES IN THE COMMUNITY

1. Review the Business Recovery Support Program (BRSP). Consider timing on when to advance to Phase 3, to the small business and entrepreneur ecosystem program.
2. Encourage small business and entrepreneurial ecosystem. Designate time and budget to entrepreneur-led economic development activities to offer businesses life-stage training, mentoring, and sector specific programs to build a resilient business community.
3. Conduct a structured business outreach program to gather local business intel to develop programs for business retention and expansion.
4. Provide succession planning opportunities for business owners to sell or transition their businesses to ensure that products and services continue to be available in the community.

Solutions – Action(s): Champion - Primarily the Economic Development Department + Chamber of Commerce, SASCI, etc.

1.4 Review the Business Recovery Support Program (2021) Outcomes to Move to Phase 3 - the Entrepreneur Ecosystem. In the short-term, dedicate funds to continuing the BRSP program with a designated manager. As the province is now entering the fourth wave of the pandemic, with the manager's guidance determine how and when is the best time to 'triage' businesses and entrepreneurs, and connect them to the right resources and programs to build future business resilience.

The **third phase of the BRSP** program is to transition to small business and entrepreneurial ecosystem to support small business and entrepreneurship development to 'grow' local businesses. Use data from surveys and interviews to determine which actions the Town or Chamber can manage. By helping local businesses survive, thrive and grow, the business climate improves and becomes more attractive to institutional, industrial and commercial development. This

benefit also extends to existing business owners who are looking to sell their business or transition it to employees or family members. Shifting to Phase 3 under the Nurturing a Small Business Entrepreneurial Ecosystem is detailed under Goal 2.

See Appendix C to review the BRSP program overview and outcomes.

1.5 Conduct a structured business outreach program. In general, there is very little data available anywhere on small, rural businesses. This limits the ability to identify which business categories need assistance or could be supported in growth.

1.5.1 A formalized business visitation program (BVP) and/ outreach program. A BVP could include information gathered first-hand from business owners/operators via interviews, surveys, focus groups, training sessions etc. Throughout the year, progressively add content to a customer relationship management (CRM) system (ensure it is a confidential in-house program and process) providing the economic development department with both qualitative and quantitative information. This will allow for a focus on opportunities and challenges to analyze and move forward into policy and programming.

Coordinate a set number of business visits each month. Interviews can/should include business challenges, opportunities, products/ services, red flags (closures, exiting the community, etc.) and green flags (expanding, new certification, products, etc.). Collect data on growing entrepreneur needs, opportunities for innovation, and gaps. For example, it was through the business focus groups and interviews that workforce and housing shortages were identified as a key challenge for the businesses, not just in the town, but in the M.D. as well. The BRSP via the Chamber of Commerce and Town partnership, the Women in Business program, etc. are examples of the Town establishing a relationship with the businesses and having an opportunity to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. Report general findings back to the community on a regular basis.

* The Chamber of Commerce is active and very engaged with the business community. They are an excellent asset that should be acknowledged and supported.

With their base of volunteers, this business support organization is a valuable resource in the community.

1.5.2 Increase awareness of succession planning/transitioning options for business owners. Leverage partnerships and programs to link those who are thinking of retiring or selling their business to potential business buyers. Utilize programs such as the Community Future's 'Succession Matching' or the equivalent for agri-businesses 'the Holistic Management Canada' programs that were hosted in Pincher Creek for ten weeks in March 2021. Both programs provide businesses with the tools to sell to a new investor versus closing their doors and leaving a large gap in the local economy. Businesses are provided with an expert who outlines how to prepare to sell, transition or market a business on an international database and all free of charge. There is an opportunity to increase marketing and communications messaging around the Community Futures [Successionmatching.com](https://successionmatching.com) (SXNM) and/or Holistic Management program to build awareness of the options available for business buyers and sellers. There are other similar programs available through universities and colleges to further support succession planning.

Challenge: Lack of Downtown Vitality – the high number of vacancies on main street limits new investment attraction opportunities

Main street vibrancy has a direct connection to the vitality of the entire community. Having a vibrant, interesting downtown is a community asset. Alternatively, having vacancies in the

downtown creates a 'black hole' which can lead to more vacancies. Limited foot traffic equals limited commerce, which limits tax revenue and the ability to attract commercial investment. Visitors like to shop where locals shop, eat and entertain. In most communities, "80% of all non-lodging tourism spending takes place in the downtown."

Pincher Creek's downtown corridor is stuck in the past. It has specific challenges around aging, outdated, single-level buildings, and it has suffered with retail vacancies for a number of years. While the community has seen a jump of 50 new businesses in 2021, the downtown core is largely being overlooked due to the type of space and the lease options available. The loss of the heritage hotel due to a fire in 2020 further contributes to the black hole in downtown. A key economic strategy for the town to become more 'community investment ready (CIR)' and attract new investment and business to the community is to complete a comprehensive downtown revitalization plan.

Downtown vacancies – the downtown core is a black hole in the community. Vacancies limit new investment and ultimately foot traffic, consumer spending, etc. However, there are no incentives to encourage building owners or developers to revitalize their buildings. In many cases, it would be less expensive to build new rather than to renovate some of the structures. The risk falls on the building owner alone and the risks are unknown making change an unattractive alternative for some. The economic development challenge is to assist in making change both possible and profitable. A healthy, thriving, downtown business community then provides a reason for more families to move to Pincher Creek, and for youth to stay within the region or return home.

BUSINESS CASE



Helping 'Boompreneurs' retire - Succession Planning. Alberta SouthWest REDA, and seven Community Futures are providing a Succession Planning and Matching Program between September 2020 to April 2021 to ensure business owners receive access to the resources and services required in transferring or selling a business. Community Futures Wild Rose has partnered with seven Community Futures offices to provide entrepreneurs and businesses with access to training and resources to begin planning for the transition and succession plans for your business.

<https://successionmatching.com/>

- » The downtown's infrastructure 'bones' of utilities, including high-speed broadband, and basic infrastructure are good and don't require additional capital dollars. The existing infrastructure may be attractive to developers who see the value of increasing residents in the downtown who then shop in the stores and use the restaurants. Increasing the density downtown by building upwards could provide new revenue streams for the town to use for developing or servicing other neighbourhoods. Although it can be a challenge for councils to gain community support on building up versus out, there is value in communicating the rationale on why it is important. For example, up allows for a greater number of commercial uses within a mixed-use development and will make the task of reaching the goal of rebalancing the current tax base to 75% residential and 25% non-residential easier, while at the same time, controlling increases to the mill rate.
- » An 'Investment Incentive by-law' was developed and presented to Council in Feb. 2021 for a first reading. However, that process seems to be stalled and the bylaw has not moved forward as of June 2021. This bylaw is one of several actions needed to help resolve the downtown issues and attract new investment.
- » There are no attractive pathway connectors encouraging foot traffic from the downtown corridor to the creek running through the community or to the walking trails. There are no public washrooms available. Years ago, a report was completed by the University of Calgary, Department of Environmental Design, that provided concepts for developing the alley behind main street and the pathway system. Consider more options such as this.

Entrepreneurs are bypassing the downtown for other locations due to the high number of vacancies. While there are many commercial spaces for lease or sale in the downtown core, entrepreneurs are opting for other locations or for greenfield development instead. This issue has existed for many years in Pincher Creek. As a result residents (and travelers) often opt to shop elsewhere.

There is opportunity to make the downtown a destination for both residential and commercial purposes. Now is the time to reimagine Pincher Creek's downtown corridor. COVID has altered how residents gather, interact and engage with their

community. New, successful developments are incorporating more diverse streetscape offerings. It is critical to have more than just retail space, but to also include more multi-use, multi-story buildings that provide goods and services to residents and visitors. Downtown must incorporate recreation, arts, culture and green spaces to create a welcoming environment. New spaces are needed that can accommodate a variety of uses, purposes and events. While some conversations during the research phase about the downtown included the idea of marketing a 'themed' concept for the downtown, it is more important to create an authentic, architectural design that recognizes the Town's history and prioritizes more opportunities for new product and service development. This is part of the path to differentiating Pincher Creek from other communities.

Investors look for pre-established policies and plans for future development – the Town's foundational documents are dated.

The existing documents are out of date and restrictive when it comes to accessory dwelling units (ADU) such as tiny homes, carriage houses, etc. that could be used to offset the housing shortage. The existing bylaws limit ADU housing options which is unfortunate as 80% of dwellings in Pincher Creek are single-family dwellings. Similar to the business retention and expansion goal, the MDP and LUB should include policies which are flexible to encourage innovation and are not restrictive in nature. Having a pre-approved Area Structure Plans (ASP) shortens development delays and outlines potential development and land-use options which are important to investors.

There are limited products and services available in the community.

To attract more visitors to spend money and to increase the opportunity to expand Pincher Creek's market reach as a service and amenity hub in the region, there is the need to provide more diverse products and services in town. To fill the downtown core and attract new investment and businesses to the community, a key strategy is fostering economic development through entrepreneurship development. 'Growing' more local businesses and providing more local products and services will in turn provide more and diverse types of jobs.

- » Adopting an entrepreneur-led economic development culture is cost effective. Supporting entrepreneurs with

mentorship programs, expert advisors and resources to become more resilient ensures a long-term sustainable business community. This opens up more opportunities to attract new investment and new residents. By extending the BRSP program of business mentors and support resources in the short-term, and in the long-term moving this program to a more robust small business and entrepreneur development program will enhance success. This would include continuing to support resources such as business advisors, mentors, alternative options for financing and connecting businesses to the programs available for support.


Grow business opportunities from within before investment attraction.

The community should help existing businesses first before investing in community marketing programs to attract new businesses. Help entrepreneurs overcome business barriers to build a resilient business ecosystem. To continue on the theme of developing an entrepreneur ecosystem time, resources and strategy must be developed which address business needs, whether it be financing, access to skilled workforce or awareness of what resources are available.

- » One of the biggest challenges/barriers facing small to medium-sized businesses is access to financing. Small businesses frequently don't have enough cash on hand, 'cash flow kills companies', JPMorgan-Chase reports the average small business has only 27-days of cash to operate.^{xvi} When small businesses don't have a capital reserve they often use personal credit cards, borrow from friends and family, or even put a second mortgage on their own homes to finance the business. The barriers to accessing financing are further complicated by the shrinking number of small community lenders where the loans manager has a personal relationship with a business owner and is therefore more likely to accept higher risk loans. Additionally, there has been an increase in service-based businesses that have no or limited business assets to borrow against, and small businesses frequently blend personal and business finances, or show limited revenue to reduce tax payments. Lenders want to see revenue, but they also want to be guaranteed with collateral. Often, the personal guarantees asked of a small business are not reasonable and prevent a firm from expanding. Finally, similar to the increase in

service-based companies, there is an increase in owner-operator businesses with no employees but who hire sub-contractors. This segment is frequently overlooked by government and lending institutions. This became more evident when government funded pandemic grants and loans overlooked this segment who largely did not qualify for any support programs.

- » Entrepreneurs and small businesses often have challenges in launching their businesses. Working with both traditional and non-traditional funding organizations to improve entrepreneur's knowledge around the financial side of business through the BRSP process, and later providing a more formalized training and mentoring program is a starting point. Another is to look at public-private partnerships to provide more flexible, innovative, alternative funding solutions, which have the goal of building long-term resiliency of local businesses. It is not if, but when another pandemic, or disaster occurs that such a program would support future sustainability of businesses.
- » Sometimes the very act of helping a local business can attract new businesses which may come to an area to be part of the value chain.



ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES/BARRIERS FACING SMALL TO MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESSES IS ACCESS TO FINANCING.

SOMETIMES THE VERY ACT OF HELPING A LOCAL BUSINESS CAN ATTRACT NEW BUSINESSES



Recommendations



GOAL #2: ATTRACT NEW INVESTMENT & BUSINESSES TO THE COMMUNITY

1. Develop a 21st century 'Downtown Revitalization and Vibrancy plan' which is authentically designed and incorporates more multi-use options to live-work-play and stay in the downtown corridor and community neighbourhoods.
2. Incentivize development and investment. Share the risk with developers and business owners to spur new investment and commercial development.
3. Have land and development plans such as an Area Structure Plan approved and in place to allow for more investment and economic development. Incorporate and encourage more 'placemaking' and authentic, architectural and brand themes into all community amenities such as downtown redevelopment, recreational trail systems and way-finding.
4. Develop a small business and entrepreneurial ecosystem which encourages new business starts and business investment spurring an increase in more diverse products and services to attract residents, newcomers to the community and visitors.
5. With the support of SASCI/the Foundation, establish a local Community Investment Market Place to provide different types of funding/financing options for entrepreneurs.

Solutions – Action(s): Champion – Council, Town Administration, and Team-up with Partners

2.1 Develop a 21st Century Town Centre. Create a simple, straightforward, modern, downtown revitalization and vibrancy plan that leverages Pincher Creek's unique assets and western heritage. A vibrant downtown will increase investment in downtown properties, attract new business, reduce consumer spending leakage and increase tax revenues. Prioritize a downtown, community engagement session in 2021 and link the process to the workforce development and housing initiatives set out in the following sections of this CEDS.

2.1.1 Develop a downtown corridor revitalization plan.

Select a consultant that has the experience and talent to create an authentic downtown vision. Choose a firm with experience in placemaking revitalization plans for small, rural communities. Placemaking inspires the community to reimagine spaces and places in a new way to combine creativity with sustainability and what 'fits' into a community. The vision for the plan should be experiential and identify the community's uniqueness through story, authentic design and brand. The design is to make the downtown a destination and encourage new businesses. Develop more options for living or staying in the downtown with wide, walkable (rollable – for people using assistive devices) sidewalks, and an aesthetically appealing core where people want to walk – shop – eat – stay and play will result. The plan should incorporate multi-use development options; have a balance between historic preservation as well as incorporate outdoor seating and green spaces that can be used for a variety of purposes and events.

» *Who pays for the plan?* Initially, the Town. Downtown revitalization is a core economic development strategy to foster business development while revitalizing old infrastructure. Some communities are fortunate to have a public private partnership (P3) that financially supports this kind of project, however, most often it is led by a municipality. During the drafting of this report, the Town applied for the Canada Community Revitalization Fund, which could provide up to \$500,000 for capital infrastructure and planning if the application is successful.

» While the authentic design starts downtown, it should then be extended to other neighbourhoods, development themes and businesses in the town and region. Authentic design for a community includes more than just one section of an area – and ties in other key assets. Consider a design that celebrates Pincher Creek's agriculture, ranching and western heritage, along with a health and wellness lifestyle and the natural beauty of the region. 'Agrihoods' is emerging as authentic design which takes placemaking to a whole new level. The agrihood models, like the farm-to-table living, are becoming mainstream. Pincher Creek could

tie together concepts like farm-to-fork opportunities for local farmers and ranchers, local shopping initiatives, culinary experiences for tourists, arts and culture, community gardens and co-housing communities (such as the Rotary Club's Apple Tree Project for repurposing the former Sobeys' building), but that includes all of the downtown, connections to pathways, the river, etc. The concept can also extend to the M.D.s' farms and ranches in the area, greenhouses, ranching, camping and tours, BnB's, and/or culinary experiences. All of which would expand experiential tourism opportunities.

- » In 2007, Pincher Creek commissioned a tourism study that was completed by Rodger Brooks, Destination Development Inc. The study has many ideas and concepts (within the 300-page document) which still may have merit.
- » Connect to the river. The Recreation Master Plan supports the development of a trail system throughout the community, connecting the trails to the downtown, adding picnic spots and growing spaces along the trails. The concept of agri-hoods is also emerging as a trend in proactive environmental practices, blending agriculture, environmentally sound practices, and placemaking into residential and commercial neighbourhoods. This could be a unique and viable option for consideration. Several business case examples are listed below.
- » Research options to support other community initiated projects that support placemaking and community development. E.g., The Pincher Creek Rotary Club, a local not-for-profit organization has taken on the ambitious concept of repurposing the vacant Sobeys' building to invigorate the downtown with a community garden, theater and flexible community space. The club has accessed Lethbridge Community Foundation funds to develop architectural drawings of the space first presented to the community in Jan. 2020. The 31,600 sq. ft. building concept was to include co-housing, a winter garden and gathering spaces. The original concept was scaled back due to the high project costs (\$31M) and a new business financial plan 'Appletree Project: Local Investing Road Map', was developed in May 2021. The big change was the removal of the 24-co-housing units. Currently (July 2021), the owner

of the building is not engaged in the process, but their engagement and commitment to this process is key.

Appendix E includes an example of a proposal for one approach to a downtown revitalization process and some of the steps involved.

2.1.2 Building up rather than out. The underground infrastructure and services are in place and paid for in the core. When planning downtown or new neighbourhoods, consider building up vs. out which is one of the best ways to increase tax revenue without increasing community capital investment. Consider ways to apply real cost numbers to the increased number of doors for living or staying downtown, as well commercial and social options. Work with developers and investors as it relates to optimal locations for future retail and commercial development.

- » When considering an authentic design of the downtown during a community engagement process, address space utilization, densification and include a retail gap analysis that looks at current and potential increases to the regional trade area. Start with the business owners willing to work with the Town. Supporting private development parallel to Town services could also inject tax revenues from new businesses in relation to the authentic design. This is also favourable from the perspective of an investor or developer as the Town strives to have different levels of tax revenue.

2.2.1 Incentivize development and new investment. Address the outdated LUB and MDP with short-term solutions until the documents are updated (a long, long process). Work with developers, building and business owners to look for ways to be more flexible around new business expansions, and new developments. Work now with the businesses and/or building owners interested in participating. Downtown revitalization is a long-term process; it will take years to develop the critical mass for attracting more investment and commercial activity. What can the Town offer right now in terms of incentives to be attractive to owners and/or developers?

- » With the assistance of an interim contractor/consultant find ways to streamline the foundational plans now, or make a new hire. The more money invested by businesses the higher the taxable revenue becomes

for the Town. As property taxes are the main source of revenue, community-based research and review is needed on what type of commercial or industrial development provides the most positive fiscal impact and allows for more multi-use, multi-purposed development that incorporates live-work-stay-play options. The LUB and MDP need to have enough flexibility to encourage innovative design and multi-use purposes. Establish pre-approved development frameworks such as such as Area Structure Plan (ASP), update the MDP and LUB to include less red tape (speed up rezoning and permitting processes) and allow for more innovative development options.

Appendix D is the Pincher Creek Business Investment Incentive

2.3 Develop a small business and entrepreneurial ecosystem. A key strategy to foster economic development is by encouraging and supporting entrepreneurship. An entrepreneurial ecosystem is an extension of the BRSP program – long-term. Focus on expanding networks and connections of entrepreneur support programs. Partner to leverage opportunities to accelerate start-ups and growth-oriented companies that can expand. Partner to connect entrepreneurs to the right resources.

2.3.1 To nurture an entrepreneurial ecosystem. It is important to provide a supportive environment that builds on the culture of entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity.

- » Using the existing ‘Business Recovery (BRSP)’ model, leverage people, partnerships and possibilities to connect entrepreneurs to the right resources at the right time. For example, partnering with regional business networks such as Tec-connect, the Regional Innovation Network of Southern Alberta (RINSA), Economic Development Lethbridge (EDL) and various academic institutions can provide Pincher Creek with a number of entrepreneur-centric networks and resources for start-ups and scale-up businesses programs that can support local entrepreneurs and accelerate business growth.
- » Continue to build the networks of service providers, mentors, advisors etc. that supported businesses through the BRSP program. Link to successful entrepreneur programs. Prioritize programs that link to emerging sectors and to build capacity in health and wellness, technology, agriculture and tourism.

- » Resources that EDL has just launched are programs. One is called ‘SMARTstart’, a business mentorship program and another is Creative Destruction Lab (CDL) a program for post-pandemic recovery leveraging technology. Both are focused on Small to Medium Size Enterprises (SME’s) and have had good success in supporting businesses. Potentially these programs could be extended to the Pincher Creek region with a goal of using technology innovation to address the economic recovery challenges created by the pandemic.

2.4 Establish a ‘Community Investment Marketplace’ – Local Investors, Local Business, Local Solutions.

Public -private partnerships can be organized to pool funding and human capital resources to support a small business and/or the entrepreneurial ecosystem for both business and social enterprises within the community. Entrepreneurial ecosystem ‘hubs’ are proving to be very successful when there is dedicated time, resources and budget to provide funding options, mentors, advisors and academic programing, especially with consideration of recovery from the pandemic and in building long-term business resilience. Business support programs can include funding consortiums as a means to access scarce capital in rural areas where projects may be smaller, more local in scope and/or returns on the capital are expected to take longer to accumulate. More can be done to bring together local, wealthy investors interested in the continuity of the community with younger entrepreneurs who just need access to capital to succeed.

2.4.1 Review options for partnership with SASCI to discuss/ consider options for linking to the new Community Foundation.

An investment market place could be very attractive to local investors wanting to support local business in a one-time gesture (as a donation to a foundation that manages the relending of capital), or as a long-term investment opportunity for the lender. This option could be attractive to those who have neither the means nor ability to attract the usual financial resources but have a solid idea and plan. A regional business development and investment consortium funding model may well be the only way for certain local projects to be financed or for businesses to thrive and compete with larger players, especially in the

retail and tourism investment sector. This concept is not new, emerging as a business resilience tool. An investment co-operative was first proposed in 2014 with the 'Bringing Investment Home' project. Research completed at that time is reflective of current trends – Pincher Creek is entrepreneurial. The time has come to find a champion to lead the process.

- » The local investors/funders could connect philanthropists, government, and traditional finance institutions looking to partner on local small business projects or other private sources of capital, such as venture-capital investors. Similar to the BRSP, there would be a pool of 'advisors' which could include other business owners, mentors, and/or professional advisors who come alongside the business to provide advice, connect the business to customers, partners, employees, or to act as board members or volunteer executives. Funds loaned should be partially or fully paid back or replaced by additional funding streams. Examples of investment consortiums can be further researched through the Alberta Community Cooperative Association <https://www.acca.coop/>. The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation is an example of such a program. <https://www.kauffman.org/>.
- » Leverage the newly granted fund development position sponsored by Southwest Alberta Sustainable Community Initiative (SASCI), the 'yet to be officially named' Pincher Creek Community Foundation (July 2021) to link local endowment funds to support community projects and charities. As a managed charity, it can support income-earning endowment funds to support local charities and at a later date, be a catalyst to an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Appendix J includes the "Business Development Investment Pool Concept" presented to the Alberta SouthWest REDA in 2014.

2.5 Host an economic development, real estate, investor forum. Once there has been progress on 'reducing the red tape and business concierge actions', host an investment think-tank type event that showcases current and future opportunities in Pincher Creek.

2.5.1 Host an economic development, real estate, investor forum. This would be an event that stimulates

conversations between builders, developers, investors and businesses. Participants might not have worked together before but bringing them together may spur future interaction.

- » Engage a facilitator with experience in real estate investment, housing, developer forums, etc.
- » Consider engaging Alberta Real Estate Foundation (AREF) for funding support and/or to provide speaker options.
- » Have Town staff, planning, permitting, etc. attend to share development concepts, progress, etc. Invite panelists to present on innovative ways to develop and invigorate the community. Tie in housing, authentically designed neighbourhoods, unique multi-purpose commercial and residential spaces with recreation and green spaces in which to gather.



Challenge: Workforce shortages are looming – Declining workforce pool and mismatch of jobseeker skills for the jobs available.

Pincher Creek faces the economic reality that many rural communities face in Canada, an aging population and low replacement rate. A decline in employment rates in the community has occurred over the last 15 years. According to Statistics Canada, employment rates are the measurement of people available to work, in comparison to the ratio of the employed working population (15+ years of age). Pincher Creek has had on average a decline of 1% each year from 2011 to 2016^{xvii}. The outcome is the community has a very limited labour pool and in some cases the job seeker skills do not match the jobs available. This negative economic condition has reached a critical stage and will impede community sustainability and investment opportunities.

To support existing businesses, and become investment ready for new businesses, the barrier around workforce shortages must also address:

- Housing options are very limited making it exceptionally hard for the community to retain and attract employees, residents and newcomers;
- Need for attraction and retention of newcomers and immigrants as both employees and as entrepreneurs with social programs and a welcoming culture;
- Training is necessary to address the skills gap; and
- A residential growth plan is needed to attract newcomers (young families seeking a rural community) and providing employment opportunities for youth to return home.

There is a critical shortage of employees right now. Over 65% of the businesses interviewed suggested that lack of skilled workforce, and lack of housing options for new employees was impeding their ability to retain and attract staff. In order to retain existing businesses and attract new investment to diversify the economy, there must be a concentrated effort to address the workforce issue with the focus on being a welcoming and inclusive community. Businesses need employees to operate, thrive and grow. Employees need amenities and other things considered essential and/or important to them (E.g. housing,

transportation, quality of life factors, etc.). Residents and employees need to feel safe, respected and accepted in the community. Increasing the residential population in the community opens up opportunities for new businesses to meet residents' needs.

- » The workforce shortages will hinder business expansion plans and new business investment. For Pincher Creek to attract new investment and development, it must retain and attract employees. Finally, to market the community to attract new investors or employees, the Town has to become more Community Investment Ready (CIR).

There are sector-specific challenges to overcome in the very business categories that the region has an opportunity to leverage in order to diversify the economy. The industries in question are:

- **Healthcare:** An aging society is creating a higher demand for healthcare service providers. There are critical shortages of providers in Pincher Creek right across the spectrum from nurses, to health care aids, to housekeeping, emergency medical technicians and paramedics.
- **Accommodations:** food and beverages (tourism): businesses reported difficulty recruiting workers for restaurants and accommodations. While the region has the potential to expand tourism opportunities, existing businesses are reporting an inability to fill summertime positions in 2020 and 2021 despite record levels of unemployment due to the pandemic. Positions such as servers, cooks, food counter attendees, housekeepers, etc. are needed.
- **Retail:** businesses expressed a difficulty in recruiting and keeping workers in retail both for positions that have specific on the job training or for entry level positions that require on the job training. Primarily those such as cashiers, retail sales persons, etc.
- **Agriculture:** there is little local interest in farm work and foreign workers are opting to stay home. At a national level, 71% of farm employers reported labour shortages in April of 2020.^{xviii} This figure holds true for agriculture and food processing in southwest Alberta, confirmed during the Energize Agriculture Transformation (EAT)^{xix} project in 2020. Positions difficult to fill and most often mentioned were

heavy equipment operators, farm workers, labourers, etc.

These industries are already struggling to retain and attract labour force. This leads to severe operational challenges such as an inability to meet production targets and/or maintain quality service. Revenue losses (and loss of credibility/clientele) are inevitable unless the shortages are addressed.

The workforce shortage is affecting businesses in the entire region. In some cases, businesses are operating at 60% to 70% capacity due to the shortages. This issue extends to institutions such as the hospital, childcare centres, non-profit organizations and the volunteer sector. When looking at workforce shortages it is important to look at the entire region and work with both public and private organizations to come together to resolve or lessen this pressing challenge.

Lack of housing options is a barrier to employee retention and attraction. A grim chicken and egg scenario exists in the Town. The workforce shortage and skills gap is further compounded by the limited (or non-existent) housing across the housing continuum. Both the Community Health Needs Assessment and the Social Needs Assessment (sponsored by the FCSS) identified poor living conditions, inadequate and insufficient housing as a critical problem in the region.^{xv} The Consultants heard from some employees that they were living in homes that would/should be condemned, but they did not report the housing issues as they would then be left homeless if the house were condemned. It was also noted

it in both Assessments that the Town of Pincher Creek, the M.D. and Piikani have a lower than provincial average income level. This may signal a need for more social programs to support residents and those programs could be extended to newcomers who may be coming for entry level positions.

- » The housing need ranges from subsidized units to affordable, entry-level homes to all configurations of market-based housing. This is not a new challenge. Pincher Creek completed a Housing Needs Assessment in 2010, again in 2016 and recently paid for an update in 2018. The studies looked at the affordability (housing costs); adequacy (quality and safety); suitability (overcrowding); accessibility (for persons with mobility challenges); and availability (options and choice). Pincher Creek and M.D. homes are older than the provincial average (38+ vs 28+ years) and are in greater need of repair than the provincial average.
- » A Core Needs Assessment estimates there are 40 renters in need of housing (2018).^{xvi} From interviews conducted during the consultant’s research it appears this number is much higher now (as reported by business owners and institutions looking for housing for their staff). There is an obvious and pressing need. This need was also identified in the Health and the Social Needs Assessment which also identified housing shortages as a big barrier to residents and businesses.

Figure 10: Example of the types of housing on a housing continuum



- » Lack of housing negatively affects not just business owners but also public organizations such as the hospital, schools and law enforcement. Seniors transitioning to supportive care, youth looking to return home, etc. have difficulty finding a place to live that meets their needs. Yet, there is a history of both single and multi-family developments being rejected as a result of opposition community advocacy groups or Council’s lack of appetite to get into the development space.
- » Housing need configurations are changing and more than just subsidized housing is needed. For example, just this spring (2021) a private housing organization with over 70-units in the community considered adjusting their housing unit configuration from one to two-bedroom units in hopes of filling their vacancies. However, this is still under the umbrella of subsidized housing with a very specific criteria for eligible tenants/owners.
- » Are key pre-committed/approved housing projects stalled by government? Note that the Consultants received

a number of mixed answers to this question. In one example, a 20-unit complex on which the Town, Province and Federal governments were to partner has been held-up for over three years. When project coordinators contacted the Alberta Seniors and Housing department (the funding body) there was no answer given as to when this application will move forward.^{xxii} In another example, an affordable housing six-plex is Town sponsored. It is unclear why this development has not moved forward. As the old RCMP building is located by the site and set to be demolished, there is the potential to expand the number of units and to incorporate the multi-use concept to support a downtown ‘neighbourhood’ concept.

- » Develop processes which can fast track short and long-term housing options. Have focus groups determine what type of accessory dwelling units could ‘fit’ within the community. Expand options for both attached and detached ADU’s, tiny homes, secondary suits, etc.



BUSINESS CASE

B.C. Housing Research

Completed by Smart Cities Research Services “Accessory Dwelling Units: Case Studies and Best Practices from B.C. Communities” includes qualitative and quantitative findings on ways to incorporate more types of ADU into small to medium-sized B.C. communities, the pros and cons of development, policies, zoning considerations for planning, permitting and the public consultation processes. The visual below provides options for housing found in the report.

Figure 11: Options for accessory dwelling units secondary suites and tiny homes – B.C. Housing



SECONDARY SUITE

in or linked to a detached home



GARDEN SUITE

a.k.a. coach or carriage house, in the yard of a detached home



TINY HOME

(possibly on wheels), as small as 10m² in the yard of a detached home.



GARAGE/LANE SUITE

in, by or above a garage



SECONDARY SUITE

in or linked to a duplex or town house

Source: B.C. Housing^{xxiii}

There is presently no concentrated or coordinated effort to offset the aging population or fill vacant labour positions.

There are a few public and private organizations with a workforce training mandate, but none with a mandate to increase the number of immigrants and newcomers to the community. Newcomers and immigrants contribute to the social, cultural and economic vibrancy and long-term stability of the community. They are a source of a diverse set of skills, talent and capacity needed by businesses. Newcomers and immigrants can offset the demographic shift caused by declining birth rates and the aging population in Pincher Creek and Alberta.

- » The Pincher Creek LGA has a much higher number of First Nations people compared to Alberta (17.2% vs. 2.8% AB)^{xxiv}. The AHS Local Geographical Area (LGA) region which includes the Town of Pincher Creek, Municipal District (M.D.) of Pincher Creek (Hamlets of Beaver Mines, Lowland Heights, Lundbreck, Pincher Station, and Twin Butte), Village of Cowley, and Piikani Nation. However, this particular demographic requires special cultural and service needs (training, transportation, childcare, etc.) to be actively supported in the community. The CHNA identified racism and social exclusion as a challenge in the region.

Immigrants tend to be entrepreneurial and as a result are more likely to be self-employed given the opportunity. Statistics Canada reports that 17.5% of immigrants aged 18 to 69 are self-employed compared to 14.4% of the Canadian-born population.^{xxv}

Mental and physical wellbeing is a growing concern in the region. Collaborate and actively invest in social capital to strengthen the community. Link employee retention, expansion and attraction programs to social programs within the region. Affordable housing, mental health and physical health issues, addictions, poverty, unemployment and racism were all identified as key issues in both the Social Needs Assessment (SNA 2021) and the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA 2020). A particularly concerning number identified in the CHNA is the high dependency ratio. The region (the Town, M.D., Village of Cowley and Piikani First Nation) have a dependency ratio of 68 compared to the provincial average of 60.9 in Alberta (2016). That translates to a dependency need for support services and fewer people that can financially contribute to social outcomes. The study suggests that 20%

more of the population need services than are contributing to the cost of them.

There continues to be an out-migration of youth and young people who are not returning home.

This trend contributes to the median-age of the town being 41^{xxvi} years versus the province at 37.8 years of age. The immigrants that have arrived in Pincher Creek are approximately 6.8% of the population and the majority (35.4%) are in the 25 to 44 age category.^{xxvii}

- » A statement often heard in Pincher Creek is that people would like there to be opportunities for their children to live and raise a family in town. In order to gain residential growth there must be options for keeping and attracting the youth back 'home' after attending university or college. (For the purposes of this report we will consider 'youth' to be those between the ages of 15 and 30.) Building a strong connection to home requires a political and business investment in youth now before they leave the community. When considering future residential growth potential, this segment of the community links to recreation programs, education opportunities and the ability to 'grow your own' entrepreneurs. If these don't exist, then people will not want to raise their kids in Pincher Creek. However, even with great programs for youth, there must also be the resources to attract them back to the community and jobs for them when they come. While youth out-migration is often viewed as a transition stage for personal growth, education and more urban opportunities, it can also be a source of financial hardship and mental health distress. This is especially true if they cannot return to a home and job near those they love.

- » During the pandemic thus far, according to Statistics Canada, 48% of post-secondary students have experienced a loss of employment or were temporarily laid off in 2020.^{xxviii} Eventually these students will be looking for good jobs and they won't necessarily be thinking that city living is what they want. The high number of recreation and tourism attractions in the region signals an opportunity to attract workforce and professional talent into the region to enjoy an enhanced quality of life. This high quality of life attracts young families that appreciate the opportunity to live an enriched and meaningful life within a small town atmosphere with a number of amenities not offered elsewhere in the region.

Recommendations



GOAL #3: DEVELOP A REGIONAL WORKFORCE INITIATIVE

1. Champion or team-up in a coordinated regional workforce initiative that brings together expert workforce resources for specific projects in workforce training and skills development.
2. Position Pincher Creek to become the most attractive housing location for young families in the region by ensuring a variety of housing options. Appoint a Workforce Housing Action Team. Engage an expert to develop a Housing Action Plan. Liaise with the existing Housing Management Body (HMB), and ensure the focus is on all types of housing. The research is complete, Pincher Creek needs an actionable “who, what, where, when and how” plan to provide more housing options ASAP.
3. Develop a ‘Rural Welcoming Community Program’ - become known as a Welcoming Community. Work with subject matter experts on immigration and indigenous relations to enhance the efforts to retain and attract newcomers and build the capacity to support their smooth integration into the community. Create pathways to be more inclusionary and accepting of the Indigenous population.
4. Create a ‘Residential Growth Strategy’ with a focus on how to reduce youth migration out of the region. Increase opportunities for youth to return home with a variety of tactics based on job opportunities and housing. Consider lifestyle trends and integrate immigrants and newcomers into the community with the objective of having more young families. Include action items which strive to address the social, mental, and physical well-being of the existing and future population.
5. Become a training centre. In addition to existing training organizations, anchor education systems in the community to stop the out-migration and increase educational opportunities. Promote Pincher Creek as a community of choice for newcomers both as employees and as new business owners/entrepreneurs.

Appendix I includes an example of a Workforce Housing and Rural Immigration Welcoming Communities Action Plan Proposal, which includes steps from community engagement to resource allocation.



Solutions – Action(s): Champion – Initially the EDO.

3.1 Champion a Regional Workforce Initiative.

Organize or become an active participant in a coordinated regional workforce initiative. Engage public and private companies, organizations and institutions to strategically increase workforce projects, training, incentives and industry specific job attraction. Create a regional committee that links workforce & housing to economic development strategies.

- » Partner and develop relationships to jointly meet workforce needs: housing, transportation, education, etc. within the region. Other communities such as Crowsnest Pass and Waterton also face a critical workforce and housing shortage. It is a regional challenge, so collaborating with regional municipalities, businesses and education institutions to identify workforce shortages to provide skills training and eliminate gaps experienced by industry will aid businesses substantially. Start the process by engaging workforce development training organizations to

Figure 12: What workforce needs



Source: InnoVisions & Associates

3.1.1 Host a round-table workforce, fact finding discussion.

- » Initially, starting with the Town as lead, seek regional partners and find a partner to take over and lead the initiative. Team-up with government and workforce organizations.
- » Increase and improve the assets that are key to workforce. Meet workforce needs to attract more business and new investment.

explore partnerships. Regional organizations such as Community Futures or the Alberta SouthWest REDA have a network of contacts that they have worked with and potentially could mobilize resources to discuss existing and future workforce needs.

- » Increase and improve the assets that are key to workforce. Meet workforce needs to attract more business and new investment.
- » Partner and develop relationships to jointly meet

workforce needs: housing, transportation, education, etc., within the region. E.g. other communities such as Crowsnest Pass and Waterton also face a critical workforce and housing shortage. It is a regional challenge, so collaborating with regional municipalities, businesses and education institutions to identify workforce shortages to provide skills training to fill gaps experienced by industry will aid businesses substantially. Start the process by engaging workforce development training organizations to explore partnerships. Regional organizations such as Community Futures or the Alberta SouthWest REDA have a network of contacts that they have worked with and potentially could mobilize resources to discuss existing and future workforce needs.

3.2 Appoint a Workforce Housing Action Team.

3.2.1 Appoint a Workforce Housing Action Team.

- » The team will work with an expert advisor to develop a 'Housing Action Plan' to encourage more options for different forms of housing for employees and their families. The research is already completed, Pincher Creek needs a 'who, what, where, when and how' plan to provide more housing options as-soon-as possible. The Action Team will work to promote pre-development residential options and change NIMBY attitudes in the community. They will link to the redevelopment of downtown to include more market value (not subsidized) residences and thereby create more economic opportunity for street level businesses. Note – this Action Team is a project-based committee, which will liaise with other local housing management bodies (HMBs), the Pincher Creek Foundation and the Housing Committee. However the focus will be to support more market-value housing. The Action Team may also be involved in round table discussion and suggestions for changes to the Town bylaws to allow for removal of red tape restrictions on development; reduction of application wait times/barriers and streamlining of rezoning processes. The focus on a pre-construction phase of housing to reduce barriers will aid the town in becoming investment ready for developers and investors to provide the much-needed housing supply.



BUSINESS CASE

Emerging workforce development resources.

In June 2021, the firm, Successionmatching (SXNM) a company already offering programs in the region, partnered with SKILLD JOBS to work at breaking down employment barriers and match employers with job seekers. SKILLD JOBS works with domestic and international employees, including a network from the Philippines (Pincher Creek enjoys a large group of Filipino residents). <https://skilldjobs.com/>. The new partnership will roll out programs across Canada in 2021.

Another example is the 'Start where you live' 2021 Placement Site by Lead for America. <https://www.lead4america.org/placementsites>

These types of initiative links directly to other actions within the CEDS around the topics of immigration, welcoming communities, entrepreneurial investment, succession planning, etc.



BUSINESS CASE

Langdon, Alberta.

New build commercial and residential development with small, heritage-themed building facades. There are a dozen storefronts on the east side of the development and high-end residential homes on the west side of the development. The business tenants range from vets to accounting services, restaurants, coffee bistros and business centres. The visual on the following page, on the left illustrates the east facing commercial property (two levels) and on the right/back of the development (west facing) are large condos with underground parking.

<https://www.langdonchamber.ca>



Figure 13: An example of a multi-use commercial and housing development (Langdon, Alberta – 2020)



Source: InnoVisions & Associates

See Appendix H which includes detail on the objectives of the Economic Development volunteer Action Teams – the Workforce Housing Action Team and the Workforce Attraction Action Team.

3.3 Develop a Rural Immigration Initiative – Become a Welcoming Community.

3.3.1 Link this strategy to the ‘Housing Action Plan’. The objective is to become a more ‘welcoming community’ and enhance capacity to support newcomers, immigrants and refugees. A welcoming community includes services and programs to create positive social outcomes as well as economic returns on capital investments. Also described as ‘impact investing and social finance’ the focus is on inclusionary programs to support those in need, mentally, physically and financially. The Social Needs Assessment done in 2020 identified how ethnic diversity can have a positive effect on the vibrancy of the community.^{xxix}

- » Rural and remote communities are often not the first choice of immigrants and newcomers due to fewer services and amenities vs. a larger metropolitan centre. Immigrants, newcomers and refugees have unique challenges and need support in preparing for life in a new community. There is need to address the gaps and barriers for newcomers. Coordinate with a wide-range of professionals, academic institutions, community-based organizations and service providers to look at the provision of settlement services, housing needs, healthcare, transportation, etc. To ensure a

long term commitment to the community, integrate the newcomers and immigrants when they arrive with a welcoming, supportive environment.

- » Pincher Creek is one of seven communities selected as for a Welcoming Communities pilot granted in July 2021 by Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA). Leverage the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS) program to begin to create conditions that support newcomers, immigrants and refugees integrating into a community. Note: The EDO is working with CCIS beginning in August 2021 as part of the AUMA pilot.
 - » Utilize existing programs to augment integration resources. E.g., The Centre for Newcomers <https://www.centrefornewcomers.ca/> and the Business Link’s Services for New Albertans both have a variety of support resources for employees or immigrant entrepreneurs. <https://businesslink.ca/what-we-do/immigrant-entrepreneur-program/>
- » To become a more welcoming community there has to be the inclusion and effort to work more closely with the Piikani First Nation. Piikani has over 2,500 residents that often use Pincher Creek as their main retail and community base. Issues with past racial tensions were reported by both residents and businesses. The Social Needs and Health Assessment(s) identified cultural education as one solution for moving forward. The reality is Piikani residents need more employment and entrepreneur opportunities.

This will be a very sensitive topic for development, not only to overcome past stigmas, but also with consideration of the resurfacing of the trauma inflicted by the finding of unmarked graves around residential schools. It will be difficult but important to find a way to move forward together. Connecting to the Piikani Employment Services and/or other service providers is a starting point to work together collaboratively.

Presently, there are few workforce training and health project partnerships with the town's Indigenous neighbours. Workforce program development and implementation must consider the unique learning styles and cultural needs of the Indigenous population. The Business Link provides a number of Indigenous skills development and entrepreneur programs. Their representative (August 2021) is from southern Alberta and familiar with the social and economic challenges and opportunities the Indigenous population is facing. <https://businesslink.ca/>.

3.4 Link to business investment options for newcomers, immigrants and Indigenous entrepreneurs.

3.4.1 Partner to coordinate options for business attraction and investment opportunities for immigrants, newcomers and Indigenous entrepreneurs.

- » Leverage provincial and federal programs to increase new business opportunities for newcomers, immigrants and refugees. Immigrants account for 33% of all business owners with paid staff, and 25% of workers in our health sector are immigrants.^{xxx}
- » The provincial and federal governments recognize that immigrants are essential to Canada's economic recovery by providing labour to many business sectors. Both have introduced new programs to encourage immigrants to try the 'Canadian experience' as an investor, entrepreneur or employee.
- » The Government of Alberta launched the new Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program (AINP) to encourage international students to invest in an existing business venture or open a new business and settle in Alberta. Two of the four 'streams' are the Alberta Opportunity Stream and an Express Entry Stream. They are currently accepting Expressions of Interest. Additional streams linking to self-employment and agriculture are posted online but still being finalized. In March 2021, the federal government department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada expanded the permanent residency pool for registered immigrant candidates. Recent changes to the national Immigration Levels Plan 2021-2023 recognize the labour challenges facing businesses and the high-importance of immigrant labour especially in the food, beverage and hospitality, and agriculture sectors.
- » Connect to new international investors once more community investment ready (CIR). Look for matching-making of businesses to investment opportunities. For example, Successionmatching.com (SXNM) is a national organization that coordinates buyers and sellers on their web-based platform. Throughout 2020-2021, they are offering professional consulting services to seven Community Futures in southern Alberta including the Community Futures Alberta Southwest and the Alberta



BUSINESS CASE

Pilot Indigenous Projects and Partnerships.

Invite those who run successful programs that tie to entrepreneur development and a social program. Find a new path forward that is a pilot that first supports the Indigenous partners. E.g., First Nation Market Housing Fund provides training, advice and coaching on how to develop housing programs and build entrepreneurial opportunities. Under the Capacity Development Program, they work on the planning, developing and operationalizing of the program.

Their website is <https://www.fnmhf.ca/english/elements/development.html>

See Appendix I. Example of a Workforce Housing and Welcoming Communities Action Plan that links housing, workforce attraction (through immigration) and how to become a more welcoming and inclusive community.

SouthWest Regional Economic Development Alliance. Clients/businesses owners/investors can sign up for free during the length of this program. SXNM has a portfolio of buyers and sellers from around the world with new opportunities to attract immigrant and refugees looking to relocate in Alberta.

- » Learn from other immigration attraction programs. The Town of Claresholm's Rural & Northern Immigration pilot is said to be highly successful. The program matches employees, employers and entrepreneurs to opportunities in the community. This is a pilot launched by the federal government in which Claresholm was the smallest rural community to be selected. Advocate for a similar program to be offered by the provincial or federal government, engage Claresholm to learn key 'do's and don'ts' gained during the pilot.
- » Enroll in programs that link immigration, education and workforce development. Explore those already available and those that are looking for pilot opportunities. For example, SXNM is working with an international company, SKILLD JOBS, to bring foreign workers to Canada. <https://skilldjobs.com/>. While the process has not been finalized, it appears that it could link to the Filipino community, Pincher Creek's largest cultural group (61% of all immigrants in the community^{xxxii}) a group already established 'and welcome' in Pincher Creek.

3.5 Create a Residential Growth Strategy with a focus on increasing opportunities for youth to return home and attracting young families based on job opportunities and lifestyle trends. Ensure it integrates immigrants and newcomers

into the community. A number of the economic and social development recommendations stated within this document, and subsequently the action plans, tie to the outcome of increased residential growth. The residential growth strategy should include components that link to job and skills training (employment opportunities, entrepreneurial programs, and health and wellness programs for residents physical and mental health needs.)

Small business and entrepreneur activities provide more and better jobs or self-employment. Offering different types of housing (for nurses and doctors in the teaching hospital, or for immigrants and newcomers, or for young families looking for good education and recreation opportunities) provides a competitive advantage to bring people to Pincher Creek. Developing a more vibrant downtown with investment opportunities to provide a new and more diverse offering of products and services in the region (new jobs, new products and services) will sustain a thriving community.

3.5.1 Appoint a Workforce Attraction Action Team. Return to rural. Give youth and young people a reason to want to return home. Pincher Creek (like many rural communities) is losing their future prime-age workforce when the youth leave and don't return home. According to the authors of the book *Hollowing out the Middle*^{xxxiii} there are four different groups of youth. One group is the 'stayers', those who do not leave the community for college and may take over the family business. This group is said to be to be less educated, less wealthy, less open to other cultures or immigrants. The 'achievers' are college-bound youth who are either academically or sometimes



BUSINESS CASE

The Town of Claresholm's Rural & Northern Immigration Pilot Program.

Involves up to 20-people and their families to become permanent residents of the town. While it is largely an employment program for attracting newcomers to vacant jobs, it also supports residential growth, diversity and immigrant investment opportunities too. In the last 20 months, this program has had over 11,000 profiles created by either a local business looking for employees or a newcomer, immigrant or refugee looking for a job in Claresholm. Ideally, the province or a public-private partnership could extend such a program framework to other rural communities. <http://www.claresholm.ca/rural-northern-immigration-pilot>

athletically gifted who leave their community never to return. ‘Seekers’ are those looking to explore the world and keep on going. The ‘returners’ are those who come back as the world was not as welcoming as they had hoped, or they have a sense of duty or purpose back home unlike their classmates who left home for an urban setting or academic options. There are often challenges that come with moving away, with some groups affected more than others (e.g. housing insecurity, cost-of-housing burdens, social identity, job options after university etc.). These challenges might make some wish to go home but youth can’t return without options for jobs and housing.

While this is a vast oversimplification of what matters to youth, understanding what matters to each group is important. “Rural communities expend a disproportionate amount of effort, resources, and training on the very kids that aren’t likely to stay; and the ones who do stay often get little attention. It’s a point of pride to say you had a part in somebody’s success, of course, and it’s become an ingrained habit to send off promising young adults to make something of themselves.”^{xxviii} Awareness of each ‘group’ is important as it can affect how welcoming the community is or the options for housing or jobs that are important to returners. Coming home needs to be celebrated as a successful life choice.

- » Connect with the youth, engage them in start-up business concepts. Continue to support STEM programs for youth in the school division. Source additional programs that link to elementary and high school to promote entrepreneur programs (e.g. such as the Pincher Creek Lemonade Day Program, or the Building Futures Program) and business mentoring opportunities.
- » Attract young families to the community. Post COVID-19, quality of life trends include more individuals and families seeking to relocate to smaller centres to enjoy a work-life balance. While Pincher Creek does not have the concentration of products, services, amenities and nightlife to be attractive to the majority of singles and millennial knowledge workers, the community does have unique education, healthcare and childcare opportunities, great broadband services and attractive outdoor, sport and recreations amenities and events to

be attractive to young families. The childcare centres and various programs in the community meet family obligations that are important to business owners and employees. These are critical factors for young families to consider when relocating.

- » Develop a marketing plan to attract workforce and residents to Pincher Creek. Focus on the target audiences. Reach immigrants and newcomers through the Rural Immigration Initiative and investors through the Small Business and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem. Link marketing messages to key markets to attract workforce and young families based on the community’s assets.
- » Position the community as a health and wellness hub, focus on ‘quality-of-life’ advantages for the young families. Amenities, recreation facilities, outdoor recreation all get factored into the equation now, especially for the remote worker who works from home.

Appendix H includes details on a Workforce Action Team.

3.6 Become a training centre in the region. Anchor education systems in the community to increase human capital and drive/diversify employment options, earnings and economic growth. Promote Pincher Creek as a community of choice for newcomers both as employees and as new business owners/entrepreneurs. Locally, Training Inc. and CLAC training provide government programs and industry-specific courses for the community and region. There are underutilized facilities such as the Heritage Inn Conference Centre that could be used for training and conferences.



BUSINESS CASE

Return to Rural Project

Is a rural development initiative focused on engaging, attracting and retaining youth that services the communities of Special Areas and the M.D. of Acadia, Alberta. Their strategy: Leverage the internet, social media and advances in communication technology to connect, engage and align young people with the abundant opportunities now available in rural Alberta’s Special Area.

3.6.1 Leverage academic partnerships for training and job skills upgrading.

- » Partner with both traditional and non-traditional education options with private trade schools, public colleges, universities and organizations with a training/workforce development mandate to expand capacity in Pincher Creek’s unique assets – the teaching hospital (health and wellness), small business and as a regional service centre (services and retail), innovation and technology. In addition to local training organizations, partnerships with organizations such as the Chiu School of Business, Bow Valley College, AgNET through Lethbridge College, SAIT and Olds College are just a few examples of programs that already exist where potentially more courses could be offered virtually or at a satellite campus in Pincher Creek.
- » Align with healthcare professional retention and attraction activities to advocate and/or support to potentially have more health care professional training specific to rural nursing. This activity is covered in greater detail within Goal 4, under the Health and Wellness Hub concept.
- » Partnerships with academia, industry and government will contribute to building a long-term sustainable small business and entrepreneurial ecosystem as well as upskill and retrain the workforce.
- » Don’t re-invent the wheel. Continue to support the Regional Innovation Network of Southern Alberta (RINSA), Tec-connect and Women Entrepreneurs-in-STEM (WESTEM), etc. partnerships. Expand programming in agriculture, tourism product development and technology. For example, ULethbridge just launched a series of agriculture workshops for the next six months with content relevant to regional ranchers and farmers, and that highlights the number of university-led research projects. <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/research/agri-food-summer-series>
- » Consider hosting a workforce attraction forum, organized either by National Occupational Codes (NOCS) or by cultural segments. E.g. the ‘friend-talk-with-a friend’ concept amongst the immigrant, newcomers and/or Indigenous populations in Pincher Creek region, or as a community job fair. Market into larger metropolitan centres and/or cultural groups.
- » Consider a sub-committee (to the Chamber of Commerce) or an existing ag. organization (e.g. the Pincher Creek Watershed Group) with new focus or mandate to increase farmers, ranchers and agri-businesses. Create awareness of opportunities in agribusiness, culinary tourism, ranch staycations, etc. The committee could also look at alternative funding to support more local innovation events and identify market trends.
- » Capacity building – training to increase owners’ and operators’ capacity within their business to expand market share, sell online, research new customers, and provide their products.
- » Health, wellness, tourism, and retail are all sectors that need to increase products and services but also in seasonal capacity outside of the May to September months.
- » Leverage private companies offering training. Partner to expand events around marketing the community for employment opportunities and livability. Host community tours for specific occupations like doctors, nurses, realtors, developers etc.
- » As a teaching hospital, explore options to attract more long-term employees and residents.
- » Partner with Piikani to support Indigenous programs and training opportunities.



BUSINESS CASE

Showcasing Drumheller as a “Top Travel Nursing Destination”.

Drumheller, AB, hosted a Nurses Forum that included community tours, community information sessions and job opportunity discussion with local practitioners. Work to ‘become’ a training centre attraction and promote the outdoor recreation opportunities for young families. Select Medical Connections writes blogs on top nursing destinations. <https://selectmedconnections.com/top-travel-nursing-destinations-alberta/>

Challenge: the economic reality versus the need to diversify the economy.

Diversify the economy!” This is a phrase frequently heard both in the past and in the current political climate, especially in oil and gas dependent Alberta. How to do this, however, remains an elusive strategy. Rural communities with small populations, low incomes and remote geographic locations are often dependent upon the taxes and jobs generated by primary commodities. This is largely the case with Pincher Creek, stemming from decades of natural gas, mining, logging and agriculture (farming and ranching) as the core economic engines. Currently, natural gas and agriculture are the primary tax generators.

Community stakeholder engagement for this Community Economic Development Strategy indicated that diversification strategies could/should include the following: tourism; agriculture -value-add products and services; recreation – events; and green energy (wind, solar and alternative). When pressed for specifics (What kind of tourism? What kind of events? What kind of value-added services?) the majority of stakeholders were unable to provide more than general statements and few examples of what they meant. For example, there seems to be a perception that more tourists will come to Pincher Creek if there is a local attraction – like a wind observation tower, or more retail downtown, etc. However, there are no market forces, which would indicate adequate economies of scale or even investment to truly sustain and grow the business revenue, taxation and jobs opportunities forecasted by the hopeful stakeholders. Just a few attractions or businesses added to the community, would not be enough to diversify the economy or replace oil, gas and agriculture at this time. In fact, there is a very real risk that something like a wind observation tower could become both a financial and insurance risk for the town if not supported by non-governmental funds.

Within the community, the rumours often override the facts. One such incredibly wrong rumour was that Town Council turned down a permit application from Costco. Costco did not in fact apply for a permit in the community. Research indicates that of Costco’s 100 centres in Canada, the majority are surrounded by communities with a trade population of 500,000 plus. So not only did Costco not apply for a permit, it is not likely that

Pincher Creek and area was ever even considered by Costco. Residents and businesses must understand how false information negatively affects the community’s growth and must seek to stop this. (Recommendations on how to address this are covered within Goal #1, how to improve internal processes and two-way communication in the community.)

For the community to capitalize on its’ assets, and to bridge the social issues and silos, the concept of rural hubs is viewed as a solution for starting the long-term goal of diversification. The Consultants have analyzed systems that link to healthcare; provision of more business and social products and services; and logistics in relation to the movement of people, goods and services (by road, train and air). Each of the hubs would provide opportunities to diversify and expand industry, businesses and jobs. The hubs provide substantial undiscovered potential in a number of sectors such as healthcare, and in Pincher Creek’s regional need to support residents for housing, workforce, education and amenities.

Pincher Creek’s current ‘core’ economic engines are no longer the major employers or tax revenue generators.

As outlined in the economic engines section of this report, on a macro-economic level Pincher Creek’s main tax revenue generators/employers are facing uncertainty in their own market places, which will undoubtedly affect the town and its’ sustainability. Major employers in the region in oil and gas, agriculture, food processing and forestry are downsizing, selling or closing operations permanently

There are always more projects than resources. To leverage community assets the framework for analysis is:

- man-made assets (facilities, infrastructure, etc.);
- natural assets (the mountain setting, water, soil, heat units, wind, etc.);
- institutions and government services (municipal, academic, childcare, schools, and hospital);
- land and buildings (greenfield, real estate, commercial options, etc.);
- people (the diverse demographic mix);
- location (access to roads, rails, runways, proximity in the region); and
- community spirit (the community passion, volunteers, events, etc.).

Health and Wellness Hub

One of the key assets in the region is the Pincher Creek Health Centre (the hospital) which is a teaching hospital. It has a strong base of seven physicians and a rotating base of interns, physicians and specialists. There is the capacity to expand services for the region and expand the ‘Continuum of Care’, but there are barriers to recognize and to strategically work around or remove.

Note – the suggestions within this section are dependent upon the support, direction and guidance of the town’s very proactive medical professionals. The municipality cannot lead this but can actively advocate and lobby for removal of barriers and the extension of health and wellness businesses in the community.

Challenges in rural healthcare: restrictive AHS policies are preventing healthcare innovation, critical shortages of experienced nursing staff, and bottlenecks in patient transportation options must be addressed in order to leverage the hospital as a key asset.

- » **AHS policies and facility operational regulations are exceptionally restrictive and inhibit innovation in health care.** These barriers are affecting the utilization of the OR rooms; not providing options to add public and private services that are in high demand or backlogged in the province; nor provide the hospital or the clinic operating within the hospital with other revenue generating options through ancillary services.
- » **The restrictive policies deter ancillary services from operating inside the hospital walls.** Regardless of whether one is an entrepreneurial medical practitioner, a local GP, or even a coffee barista that wants to start a coffee shop in the hospital, the answer most often received from AHS is NO – no to any revenue generating concept or service delivery innovation as the Health Authority has the first and final say. For example, in the past, the Associate Clinic doctors have reviewed options to bring in additional services around bone density studies^{xxxiv} that could draw patients to Pincher Creek for care from around the province. However, the hospital lease agreements do not allow it. While the current government calls for more privatization of services, services that feed into public care, present systems within AHS are a barrier. There

have been a variety of options discussed or researched to increase the utilization of the hospital and OR rooms by other specialist surgeons thereby increasing options for both public and private health and wellness services that the hospital could offer.

- » **The Pincher Creek hospital’s OR rooms are underutilized yet ‘privileging’ blocks expanding regional healthcare services.** While there is a critical patient backlog due to shortages of OR space in urban centres, Pincher Creek’s two OR rooms are under-utilized (14-days -under 50% per month).^{xxxv}
- » Presently, the hospital can welcome some rotating specialists and surgeons but it is limited due to restrictive AHS processes. ‘Privileging’ is the legal authorization by AHS for a doctor to provide medical services or treatments within a specific facility or health authority. Applications for physicians to practice in Pincher Creek have been turned down by AHS.
- » **There is a critical shortage of experienced nurses with capacity to work in a rural hospital.** The Pincher Creek hospital along with many in the province is facing staffing shortages, especially in experienced, rural nurses. Rural hospital nurses are generalists. They require training and/or experience in all disciplines within the hospital. Each work day can be different; they may work in the emergency room, in paediatrics, or with a post-operative patient. Whereas in larger urban centres, nurses will have one or two areas of expertise and will work on specific units that are separate. The shortage of skilled/trained nurses crosses over into training costs and time out of the community. Each discipline within a hospital requires a training module/certification to be completed. These costs are out of the pockets of rural nurses. For example, a maternity module is five days of training with the costs of accommodation and childcare borne by the nurse if the nurse does not travel home daily. In a large city, this training cost is free to the health care worker.
- » The staffing shortage is further compounded by the hospital’s high utilization factor. On average, the hospital has a higher number of patients than designated beds and operates at over 100% expected capacity (based on health region population census each year prior to COVID).

- » As a very busy hospital with seven physicians and two anesthesiologists, Pincher Creek is often the destination for OR surgery services and ambulatory care in the region, even taking in cases from the larger facilities such as Lethbridge. Pincher Creek completes over 100+ births per year. Staff shortages and AHS barriers to visiting surgeons or specialist care make this challenging to manage.^{xxxvi} If this challenge is resolved there is the potential to expand patient care and services.
- » **Over 60% of patient transfers are non-emergency transfers yet they occur using ambulances.** Using ambulances for non-emergency transfers is taking emergency vehicles out of the region, is exceptionally costly, and taking much needed medical ‘personnel out of emergency rooms to be medical ‘taxi-drivers.’ If the patient is doing a standard test (e.g., CT scan) in Lethbridge, this will take the ambulance out of the community for the entire day. There are only four ambulances in the community and they are already doing the majority of responses and transfers in the region. This could leave the community without ambulance coverage as the hospital does three to four ambulance transfers per day.

While the issue of moving ambulance services back into AHS jurisdiction is a hotly disputed topic, the reality is the present system is taking ambulances out of the community, is an exceptionally costly line on hospital operating budgets and is an ineffective use of specialized equipment versus a non-ambulatory transfer (NAT) vehicle. Crowsnest Pass and Piikani ambulances transfer patients to Pincher Creek to transfer to larger centres. The cost of using ambulances for non-emergency transfers is \$2.00 per km vs. the much less expensive .50 per kg for a NAT unit. It is estimated there are 1000 - 1200 transfers in the region per year yet the financial cost of those transfers using an ambulance are not publically available.

There is another reason to be concerned about the use of ambulances for a non-ambulatory transfer. Many large firms, especially those with potential for sudden work force injury, are required by their insurance to locate where ambulance service is always available. Not having this assured capacity makes Pincher Creek not as attractive to larger employers as a site for industry.

- » The average wait time for an ambulance is about 45 minutes. The Pincher Creek Emergency Commission purchased a NAT vehicle; however, it is reported to be used more often outside of the Pincher Creek LGA. To address long-wait times the M.D. of Willow Creek purchased ambulances, but AHS will not let them respond to medical incidents as they are operated by EMTs versus paramedics. It is also noted that there is a critical shortage of EMTs and paramedics. Taking them out of the hospital to be ‘a medical transportation taxi’ is not the highest and best use of a medical professional’s time.
- » Both medical and non-medical transportation creates a challenge for the mental and physical well-being of residents in the region.
- » Transportation of patients to/from the Piikani Reserve is also stretching resources. The Peigan Ambulance service operates on reserve and will transport a patient to the Pincher Creek Hospital, but may or may not be available after hours. If a patient is discharged when the service is not available or operating, and if the local RCMP are not available, and/or if the Pincher Creek cab is not available, the patient has no option but to find their own way home – which at times could include walking in extreme weather conditions. Reports of holding patients longer in the hospital until a ride is secured indicates yet another costly problem in the system.
- » Lack of transportation causing increased isolation and mobility issues is a contributing factor to physical health issues related to obesity, chronic disease, cancer and other health complications; substance abuse and addictions – social and untreated mental health issues.^{xxviii}

Mental health and addictions are a pressing problem in the region. The Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) and Social Needs Assessment (SNA) both clearly state the types of challenges and barriers relating to physical and mental health in the region. The following is a high-level snapshot of key social issues that must be addressed within the health hub concept. The CHNA identified that the three most common reasons for emergency visits to the Pincher Creek Hospital are: acute respiratory impairment; mental health and behaviour disorders due to psychoactive substance abuse; and diseases of the middle ear.^{xxxvi}

Compared to Alberta, Pincher Creek residents have double the number of acute, upper-respiratory infections (5171 vs. 2777.5 in the rest of AB per 100,000 populations).^{xxxviii} This is a statistic that is concerning but could indicate a potential growth in the area of medical research and treatment of respiratory illnesses for the province.

The AHS Local Geographical Area (LGA) for Pincher Creek and region has a much higher proportion of First Nation's people (17.2% vs. 2.8% AB [2018]). This fact is important to consider, engage and work with to support health and wellness programming, housing, education and support resources.^{xxxix}

The CHNA also identified common barriers in the medical and mental health sectors that affect residents, immigrants, newcomers and Indigenous neighbours. The top issues are "anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation" as the most commonly stated issues from focus groups and key informant interviews.^{xl} Substance abuse was also stated as a major challenge. The most common and concerning drug substances used within the region are methamphetamine's, opioids and alcohol. There is no detox and/or treatment centre in the region and there are long wait times for residential treatment on a provincial level. The combination of mental health and addictions challenges is putting an exceptionally heavy load onto the Pincher Creek hospital, the healthcare system and the staff.

The CHNA identified that access to mental health can take from two to four weeks, and services have become even more difficult to receive during COVID. The following barriers exist for the whole region and not just Pincher Creek:

- » Long wait times for mental health;
- » Lack of supports for people with FASD;
- » Difficult and lengthy processes for parents to access programs for children with disabilities;
- » Lack of affordable dental care and specialized vision care support systems; and
- » Discrimination and lack of intercultural communication processes.

The town can address the social economic issues to capitalize on emerging opportunities and create a service centre hub. For the town to position as a service and amenity hub, and increase the flow of goods and services of people and information in the region, Pincher Creek must work with

its' neighbours. The region must address the social and economic development challenges detailed in the previous sections of this report: the shrinking labour pool and skills gaps; lack of housing; a stagnant and aging population; and business owners looking to retire in the next five to ten years.

» **The perception in the region is that tourism and innovative agriculture are keys to future sustainability.**

This would be a valid point if either could draw, collect and generate consistent tax revenue and/or visitors in the region. At this stage, there are few tourism operators especially in the shoulder season or throughout winter months. There must be a concentrated effort to strategically grow economic opportunities in tourism, value-added agriculture, transportation, etc. Each opportunity requires investment and policy reform to incentivize adjustment to develop or diversify. There needs to be government or organizational support to build the business opportunities within the sector, and a supply of appropriate resources to nurture the development of the sector.

- » **The airport is underutilized.** The functioning airport is a key asset, unique in its runway length and potential for increased aeronautical and non-aeronautical use, but there is not yet a business case that shows how it could be leveraged for attracting business, residents and/or revenue. The existing M.D. bylaw states that the airport can only be used only for aeronautical purposes. An airport business case study will be completed in the fall of 2021 and should provide direction on the best options for the Town, M.D. and regional partners to consider (if viable.)

Recommendations

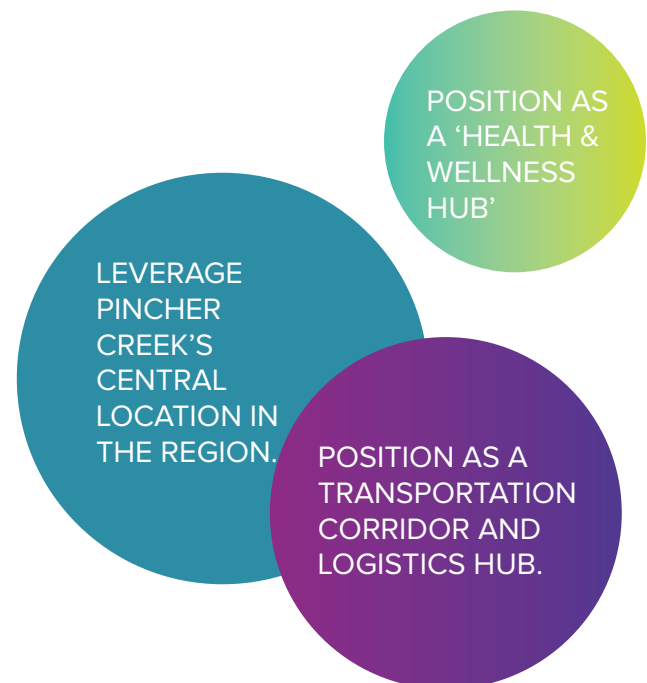


GOAL #4: LEVERAGE KEY COMMUNITY ASSETS FOR A DIVERSIFIED ECONOMY

1. Develop the rural health concept. Strive to build capacity to supply more products and services by providing more health & wellness options; more essential services; more regional movement of goods and services; and more support for agriculture and tourism development.
 - a) **Position as a 'health and wellness hub'.** Leverage Pincher Creek's teaching hospital and ancillary support services to attract more health and wellness operators.
 - b) **Leverage Pincher Creek's central location in the region.** Position as a 'service and amenity hub by increasing and improving key essential services and community assets to meet regional needs (e.g., housing, skilled workforce, quality health, education, amenities and facilities).
 - c) **Position as a transportation corridor and logistics hub.** Increase partnerships and project-based activities to promote an increase in the flow of goods and services via roads, rails and runways that feed into the community. Confirm a business case that could leverage the airport to move more products, people, services and investment in the region.
2. Increase and improve community assets that are key to future sustainability and prosperity, and will attract different demographic markets as a result of development of the above mentioned sectors.
3. Link to tourism bodies (e.g., the new DMO [South Canadian Rockies Tourism Association] and/or other tourism organizations). Work and plan collectively and strategically to expand the number and capacity of revenue producing visitor experiences. Work with tourism operators to access affluent tourist markets.
4. Assist in supporting the dissemination of information about new market opportunities in agriculture. Identify and support a champion that encourages local farmers and ranchers to access innovative programs and projects. Recognize that there is a shift taking place in agriculture to new needs in the market for pea proteins and novel (to the area) crops. Pay attention to the aging farmers and ranchers and work with organizations to help them transition their businesses to new owners to keep those farms and ranches prosperous and in the community.

Solutions – Action(s): Champions to be confirmed by the town (collectively).

This Pincher Creek CEDS is largely based on 'rural development hubs'. Hubs are an approach to doing rural economic development differently. Rural communities vary by economic base, demographics and geography. Rural communities often have fewer resources; less capacity and they often lag urban centres in economic, social and health opportunities. However, rural communities when inspired are innovative, entrepreneurial and have such underdeveloped potential. Hubs are collaborative, interactive, partnerships that focus on leveraging and sharing assets in and outside of a community's geographic base. An integral part of hubs includes economic development through the lens of the business community, and the inclusion of social development (housing, workforce, education, childcare), health (access to health and wellness services, mental health), environmental conditions (environmental planning and sustainability) and quality of life (recreation and personal growth). Hubs are coordinated partnerships and programs to leverage assets that are key to current and future economic sustainability.



4.1 Develop the 'rural hub' concept. Connect with people, partnerships and projects. Focus on leveraging community assets to diversify the economy. Prioritize activities around: health and wellness; the flow of goods and services (the centralized location and airport); agriculture innovation; and tourism development.

Distinctive competitive advantages that Pincher Creek could have over the majority of other comparative communities are:

- As health and wellness hub;
- As a business, service and amenity hub for the region and beyond; and
- As a logistics and transportation corridor and hub.

Figure 14: Pincher Creek Rural Hub



Note: Each 'hub' will have different partners. E.g. the 'Health and Wellness Hub' would be championed by the medical, health and wellness professionals while Council would advocate for change, and partners would 'team-up' to expand opportunities for ancillary businesses in health and wellness.

4.1 Create a Health and Wellness Hub.

4.1.1 Establish a Health & Wellness Advocacy Action Team

- » With the guidance and support of the local medical and health community, team up to establish a Health and Wellness Advocacy Action Team will strive to advocate, champion and team-up (ACT) with other organizations to strategize ways to retain and attract more health and wellness businesses and recruit more practitioners and specialists. Rural hospitals are important in the Alberta healthcare landscape. Rural hospitals in Alberta are underutilized, yet are such a valuable asset.

While the local medical practitioners are best to address these barriers, the solution could include more than just Alberta Health or Health Canada. The agenda of community sustainability, health and wellness is also of importance to other ministries such as Jobs, Economy and Innovation, Indigenous Relations, and the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction, etc. All need to be included in a coordinated effort to approach the age-old challenge of regulatory barriers. Note: this team would not be driven by the economic development office, but rather would be a community brain trust of visionary champions who are/will approach health provision differently and are supported by the economic development office.

The following section includes concepts that could be explored or further discussed by the Health & Wellness Advocacy Action Team (HWAAT). This is not meant to be directed by the EDO. Core activities could include but not be limited to:

- » To be all inclusive, explore options of how to build a community that cares. Determining how to position as a hub, a 'Corridor for the Continuum of Care' and collaborating with businesses, community organizations and governments to develop plans for each of the areas

where additional service gaps or opportunities exist. Potentially these could be in 'categories' to ensure the right people are around the table, and active and able champions are identified.

Through a business and economic development lens - examples for HWAAT brain trust discussion, advocacy and lobbying collectively could include:

4.1.2 Address staffing shortages. E.g., critical shortage of experienced nurses. The present system of training, recruiting and retaining **rural** nurses needs innovative strategies and AHS has to be part of the solution or get out of the way. Is there a way to incentivize or pay for additional training for nurses to live-work-stay in Pincher Creek?

- Incentivize experienced nurses, EMTs and paramedics to live, work, stay and play in rural Alberta. Consider what Ontario does for the rural doctors where a portion of their training is paid for.
- Is there a way to target a specific demographic of rural nurses from the southern zone, those that already live in the region and prepare them for transitioning into the community?
- Money saved – money earned? Is there the ability to use funds for nursing, EMT or paramedic incentives to be taken out of a 'different pool or operational budget line item when the Pincher Creek hospital saves money or earns revenue' and move it to training for the local training incentive budget? Revenue generation that the Pincher Creek Hospital can use to acquire additional equipment and services or incentivize staff? These may include – innovative funding models. E.g., funds saved from non-ambulance transfers and/or income generated from the Pincher Creek Emergency Commission billing for the use of regional NAT vehicles? Or additional funds for training



BUSINESS CASE

Health Force Ontario Northern and Rural Recruitment and Retention (FRRR) Initiative.

Is a program to encourage medical practitioners to open a business in northern, rural communities. The grant offers between \$80,000 and \$117,600 over a four-year period to each eligible physician that establishes a practice.

<https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/northernhealth/nrrr.aspx>

Indigenous nurse-practitioners leveraging the NAPI funding via Alberta Native Friendship Centre Association (ANFCA)?

4.1.3 Advocate for a regionally supportive funding model. E.g., Associate Medical Clinic is currently testing a funding pilot where the funds (billed to AHS) follow the patient when they are transferred for additional care. The Associate Clinic pilot is an expansion of primary care, and helps a local region capture lost revenue for before- and after-care. A very sensitive topic in the medical world, building equalization for before and after care is an ongoing issue. If this pilot is successful, potentially it could lead the way for other regions to follow, and provide an opportunity to claw back revenue by using the underutilized OR rooms.



BUSINESS CASE

New funding models.

The Pincher Creek Associate Clinic is conducting a billing pilot that allows the revenue generated from the patient to follow the patient to their care provider. The Blended Capitation Model takes the present fee-for-service from the Physician Services Budget (PSB) of the primary care network (PCN) where the revenue is paid to a health region and shifts it to the before and after-care providers.

- a) Aggressively explore ways to reduce non-emergency patient transfers utilizing ambulances. Saving costs by not using the ambulance for non-medical transfers, or leasing out the Pincher Creek Emergency Service Commission (EMSC) non-ambulatory transfer (NAT) unit and leasing it out to others in the region? This unit was purchased locally by the Windy Slopes Health Foundation and regional partners from Crowsnest Pass and Fort Macleod, however the unit is operated out of the region more than in and it is unclear why. It is presently managed by AHS Ambulance.
- b) Revenue generation - fee-for-service billing with revenue

to be retained at a local level such as the one Mayfair Diagnostics in Calgary presently uses? Is there a way to expand on medical tourism from out of province, or out of country patients willing to pay fees for service? While there are substantial political barriers via AHS on this topic, there are substantial backlogs in all services that rural hospitals could resolve if allowed. The Town owns a bus that is fully operational that potentially could be used for transfer of non-emergency patients.

- c) Virtual Health fee-for-service – medical and mental health options? Expand on the MedRoad telehealth concept (through the University of Alberta) that began in January 2021 in Pincher Creek through the University of Alberta, Precision Health. The pilot is remotely connecting 30 Pincher Creek patients to healthcare professionals using data sharing, intellectual algorithms, etc.^{xli} Could this concept be extended to include other services such as mental health and addictions?

4.1.4 Via local practitioners, and through the economic development lens, determine if more services can be provided locally

- a) Add more specialized services to be provided locally that are in high demand? Leverage the COVID backlogs. Are there ways to allow more surgeons and specialists use of the hospital or provide ancillary businesses in Town (e.g., dental surgeons, cosmetic surgery, mental health providers) or on the basis of using the CT Scanner for revenue?
- b) Host a round table to discuss short-term and long-term activities to increase both public and private health and wellness businesses in Pincher Creek.
- c) Promote and market the community as a health and wellness hub where everyone is aware and will actively advocate for more medical, health and wellness services (e.g., lobby the government to increase the utilization of rural hospitals to address healthcare back logs).
- d) Identify more health and wellness workforce retention activities that could link to the Economic Development Workforce Housing and Workforce Attraction Action Teams. Partner with the Pincher Creek Health Professional's Attraction & Retention Committee to strategize on ways to attract and retain more health

practitioners (e.g. medical technical, EMT, doctors, dental and mental health professionals).

- e) Medical tourism – for domestic and international patients. As tourism grows in the area consider that affluent markets seek medical and cosmetic type treatments that align well with fee-for-service medical treatments in dermatology and physiotherapy among others. Tie this into the development of tourism in the region.
- f) Expand support services for mental health and addictions. Partner on a regional concept that also includes Pincher Creek's Indigenous neighbours.
- » Is there a business case for additional addictions programs and/or a facility in the region?
 - » Connect the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) champion to mental health, wellness innovation and small and medium-enterprises (SME) programs to be brought into the region. E.g., the Headstrong program is already linked to the Business Recovery Support Program (BRSP), can it be expanded? The Headstrong link can be found here <https://www.headstrongprogram.com/>



BUSINESS CASE

Thumbs Up Foundation (TUF).

TUF partnered with Airdrie Mental Health Task Force to reform how addictions treatment and mental health services are delivered. The Harmonized Health model provides support to individuals with addictions and mental health issues by providing a wide range of services and engagement with traditional and non-traditional partners. <https://thethumbsupfoundation.com>

4.2 Create a Business, Services and Amenity Hub

4.2.1 Leverage Pincher Creek's central location in the region.

Position as a 'service and amenity hub by increasing and improving key essential services and community assets to meet regional need specifically focused on provision of housing, healthcare, education, retail and workforce.

- » **Focus on ways to become the region's one-stop location for products and services.** Pincher Creek's geographic location in the region, with a trade population of over 32,000+ within a 50 km trading area, is an asset. There is a strong base of amenities: diverse school options; good health services; managed childcare facilities; indoor and outdoor recreational facilities and events; and a retail and hospitality base to service locals and encourage more local shopping. Increase and improve essential services and community assets that will support existing businesses through more business-to-business (B2B) interaction and more business-to-consumer (B2C) commerce for residents. Attract immigrants, newcomers and young families to the community because of this asset.

4.2.2 Encourage more B2C & B2B local purchasing. Leverage the Town's large retail catchment area to encourage more B2C and B2B spending.

- » Programs such as #LoveLocalPC, trade shows and reverse trades shows. A reverse trade show is an in-person or virtual event where the business is the information provider ('located in the booth') and the potential suppliers learn what type of services they need, certification requirements/tickets, volumes and/or how to do business with them. The business within the booth could also be municipal government, schools, hospitals, focusing on services they can outsource to business, etc.
- » Support an entrepreneurial ecosystem, starting with students in elementary school, etc. by including teachers in the discussion of how to make students aware of the importance of businesses in the community and the tax revenue and local jobs they provide.
- » Increase awareness of how businesses can 'support local' too by using regional businesses located in and around Pincher Creek. E.g., expanding the engagement of the Alberta SouthWest Regional Business directory to increase B2B and B2C interaction within the region. <https://www.albertasouthwest.com/about/our-projects/current-projects/regional-business-license-program/>
- » Develop a promotional piece that expounds on why a company should do business in Pincher Creek. The benefits of doing business, include testimonials online, etc.

- » Increase the messaging via social media, Town and Chamber websites, etc. by featuring local businesses both for their successes as well as their challenges.

4.2.3 ‘Business does better in Pincher Creek’ marketing plan. Develop a marketing campaign to position Pincher Creek as the place to do business.

- » Designate space to new business announcements, businesses receiving awards, expanding, etc. Include customer testimonials or ‘why they started a business in Pincher Creek’.
- » Support the small business and entrepreneurial ecosystem by ‘growing’ more local businesses and providing more local products and services, which will in turn provide more and diverse types of jobs. Provide programs or resources to support business owners, including ‘dreamers’ at the concept stage, to entrepreneurs in the start-up stage and owner/operators looking to become more resilient or looking to expand. A healthy, thriving business community then provides a reason for more youth to stay within the region and creates an opportunity for youth and young families to return to Pincher Creek.
- » Tie activities to the CEDS goals: Retain & Expand Businesses in the Community and also Attract New Investment & Businesses into the Community with the focus on development and an entrepreneurial and small business ecosystem.

4.3 Expand into a Transportation Corridor and Logistics Hub.

The Town is a geographic hub as it is the intersection of three major arterial roads, a rail line and an airport which therefore provides direct trade routes in all directions. The rural hub concept focuses on connectivity to move people, products, services and information within the region and to other markets. A transportation corridor and logistics hub focuses on local, national and international markets. At a local level, it links the various municipal jurisdictions connecting to Pincher Creek through the hospital, school division, products, services, businesses and residents, etc., and connects goods and services to market via the town’s proximity to larger metropolitan centres, transportation corridors, sea ports and air services. While all are valuable for the flow of goods and services, it is the airport that is unique in terms of capital assets that are underutilized. The town should leverage this to become a centre for regional logistics.

4.3.1 Become a centre for regional logistics. As a service and amenity centre, provide products and services for businesses and transportation to build around:

- » Short-term – as a hub, look for ways to continue to collaborate as a region. Collaboration cuts through political boundaries and economic sectors. Advocate for improving regional assets in transportation and logistics (e.g., continue to lobby for the Hwy. 3 twinning). This assumes a well-developed downtown corridor, and building capacity as a service centre that encourages regional consumers and travelling visitors to not just stop but stay in Pincher Creek. If this is not completed, the twinning could in fact have a negative affect with traffic flowing by. Consider: Is there the ability to reopen Pincher Station as a stopping point for goods or people? Is there a way to streamline trucking to/from the U.S.? Free and Secure Trade (FAST) certification does not yet exist in Canada, but there is a new pre-inspection facility in Lethbridge that could move this certification forward. The Town should continue to support physical infrastructure for continued commercial and residential growth.
- » The flow of people within the region, and to/from the region, is important to business and residents alike. A community-wide survey completed by FCSS in 2018 indicated that the residents would support a community passenger bus in addition to the local handi-bus service. The Town purchased a 14-passenger bus in 2018 using the Government’s Green Transit Incentives Program (TRIP) however, due to low ridership the local busing program was discontinued in 2019. There is the potential to move more people around the region (when there is more public acceptance of riding a local bus), when the population numbers increase and more newcomers come to the community. In the meantime, could this asset solve the issues of ambulatory transport or be used as a tourism bus?

4.3.2 Complete the Airport Business Case. Actively explore how to capitalize on the airport which is an underutilized resource at this stage.

- » Long-term: explore a business case for the airport. The local airport could become a key transport link to energy, tourism and agriculture projects in the region. Explore both aeronautical and non-aeronautical use of the land,

the hangers, the extra-long and well-maintained runway, and proximity to the Calgary and Lethbridge airports for short haul flights. Consider: Is there the potential to expand the firefighting Air Tanker Base stationed there? Are there options for short-term revenue generation? Two concepts that are unique, medical tourism for domestic and international tourists and a mechanics base. A local pilot indicated a need for an airport mechanic base for small airlines and private planes. A service many airlines and pilots have to go out of province to acquire.

- » Take the long-view that the airport is a multi-decade project (not multi-year) which lends to community economic development. No investment should be made in upgrades or development until a business case illustrates sustainability of the investment and project.
- » Advocate for Pincher's airport to become known as an Alberta aviation and transportation asset. The Department of Jobs, Innovation and Economy (JIE) is in the process of completing an Aviation, Aerospace and Logistics Strategy. They are looking to inventory asset that can be supported through cluster or corridor development.

4.4 Increase and Improve Community Assets.

Continue to develop assets that are key to future sustainability and prosperity. Attract different demographic markets as a result of development of the assets around health and wellness, as a service centre and as a transportation corridor and logistics hub.

- » The town is close to many beautiful natural assets: provincial parks; mountains; lakes; and many man-made parks, trails and accommodations that support recreation, build a base for tourism and promote health and wellness.

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- » The town is close to many beautiful natural assets: provincial parks; mountains; lakes; and many man-made parks, trails and accommodations that support recreation, build a base for tourism and promote health and wellness.

4.4.2 Work to increase market-ready tourism products and services.

- » In Sept. 2019, the Consultants completed a tourism inventory for the Town of Pincher Creek and the M.D. The 'Tourism Asset Inventory' included a snapshot of the following categories: accommodations, annual events, tourism attractions, food and beverage establishments and facilities (infrastructure). While there is ample accommodation in the form of hotel, motel, cabins and B&B's in the region, there are limited food and beverage establishments.
- » Many of the tourism businesses only operate late spring to late fall. Castle Mountain operates throughout the year and could be leveraged as a regional attraction. This would require development options and an environmental review and approval from the province.

See appendix F Pincher Creek Tourism Asset Inventory for additional details on the number and type of tourism products and services.

- » Long-term. Work with tourism organizations to expand the visitor experience 'package' of goods that attracts and keeps travelers in the region for more than a day or two. Examples could include:
 - a. Outdoor recreation, culinary circle tours, agri-tourism, guided fishing and hunting experiences, events, festivals, cultural experiences, were all discussed with stakeholders as having the potential to bring visitors/travellers into the area. However, at this stage this sector does not have the capacity to attract and keep visitors for more than a day or two.
 - b. Medical tourism – there is growing interest in supporting medical tourism within Canada to reduce wait times and backlog volumes. Medical tourism can include patients traveling within the province to receive medical care; or inbound patients from other provinces or countries to receive medical care. The Pincher Creek hospital and healthcare system could position the community as a health and wellness destination if the challenges mentioned in the previous section are addressed.
 - c. Consider: Is there the ability to link an 'Academic Medical Centre of Innovation' to the training centre activities outlined in Goal 1 of this document? Pincher

Creek's teaching hospital could welcome more R&D projects aligned with the medical sector and/or provide training or certification for traveling students, surgeons or health and wellness practitioners.



BUSINESS CASE

The demand for medical tourism is growing.

"Domestic medical tourism of patients traveling outside their community to receive care was reported at 2% of all inpatient hospitalizations in Canada." The Deloitte study also stated "69% of Canadians are willing to travel out of their local area to undergo a medical test, procedure, or treatment if their doctor recommends it." While this study is dated, the case for medical tourism will be further explored by patients looking for medical options due to COVID healthcare backlogs.^{xxli} ~ Deloitte Centre for Health Solutions.

d. Recreation as an economic driver. The Pincher Creek Regional Recreation Master Plan (2021), analyzed the trends that affect the delivery of recreation, parks and cultural services. The study noted that there has been an increase in provision and participation in less structured and drop-in activities. While sports team memberships are decreasing in popularity, outdoor-based activities are increasing.^{xxlii} Similar to the arguments for a downtown revitalization and vibrancy project, there should be an increased emphasis on placemaking (spaces created where people can gather), and recognition of the importance of culture and authentic design including recreation when revitalizing the downtown corridor.

e. Link to tourism bodies to collectively and strategically expand the number and capacity of profitable visitor experiences. Focus on tourism operators to access tourist markets that will bring revenue to the community. Through the lens of community and economic development – tourism (or visitor experiences) as a business segment:

- » Partner with the newly formed South Canadian Rockies Tourism Association (DMO) to identify projects and programs to leverage and support a visitor experience and entrepreneur ecosystem.
- » Through partnership, determine how to offer more tourism operator training and program support to build capacity for operators to expand their product and service offering.
- » Strive for ways to connect with the different tourism bodies to participate in relevant projects and programs. For example, the Foothills Tourism Association to the north has 13 communities partnering on market studies and marketing projects; the Building a Successful, Tourism Investment, Opportunity Network (BASTION) project through Alberta SouthWest Regional Economic Development Alliance is looking at tourism business investment opportunities; Travel Alberta's ATIS program, Crown of the Continent circle tours through Montana, Indigenous tourism projects, etc.
- » Partner on regional marketing endeavours that support Pincher Creek as a 'service centre destination' for regional attractions such as Castle Mountain, Castle Parks, Waterton, Crowsnest Pass, etc. Consider options for marketing to the film industry.

4.4.3 Assist in supporting ag organizations in encouraging innovation.

- » Assist in supporting ag organizations in the dissemination of information about new market opportunities.
- » Assist in supporting agripreneur initiatives.
- » Assist in the dissemination of information about new market opportunities in agriculture.
- » Connect to the existing ag organizations to increase awareness of programs, projects and innovative opportunities.



BUSINESS CASE

Sports Training Programs

A beginner or elite ski program could be a catalyst to more athletes looking for training opportunities. Castle Mountain saw over 100,000 skiers in 2021. The combination of the Livingstone Ski Academy (LSA) welcoming domestic and international students; the Pass Powderkeg Ski Area (in Crowsnest Pass) and Castle Mountain Ski Resort as capital assets could be leveraged to develop more seasonal and shoulder season programming for beginners and elite athletes. A new business case for targeted ski programming is the Beaver Creek expansion in Vail, Colorado.

<https://www.skimag.com/news/this-colorado-ski-area-expansion-is-aimed-at-beginners-and-new-skiers/>



5.0 GETTING IT DONE – THE CEDS ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

For Pincher Creek, the overarching economic development goal is to bring together the people, partnerships and possibilities to become the foremost services and amenities hub for southwest Alberta by 2026. The reasons to do this are to meet the community’s goals of:

- Attract more families to reside in Pincher Creek;
- Create options for Pincher Creek youth to stay and raise their families;
- Provide more good jobs, housing and education options;
- Encourage more diverse businesses to set up in the area; and
- Increase the number of visitors who will spend their money in and around the town.

Based on opportunity identification, and an assessment of the Town and Region’s assets and champions, four core economic development goals have been selected by virtue of having the

highest potential to support existing business while preparing for new investment within the Town.

Figure 15: CEDS community core goals



The following table is the abridged list of core activities.

Table 6: CEDS goals and action plan: summary

 <p>CEDS GOAL #1 RETAIN AND EXPAND BUSINESSES IN THE COMMUNITY</p>	 <p>CEDS GOAL #2 ATTRACT NEW INVESTMENT & BUSINESSES TO THE COMMUNITY</p>	 <p>CEDS GOAL #3 DEVELOP A REGIONAL WORKFORCE</p>	 <p>CEDS GOAL #4 LEVERAGE EXISTING KEY ASSETS FOR A DIVERSIFIED ECONOMY</p>
<p>1.1 Develop a Business Concierge System</p> <p>1.1.1 Create a business-friendly culture at the Town Office</p> <p>1.1.2 Actively work to cut the red tape</p> <p>1.1.3 Develop an internal/external marketing plan</p> <p>1.2 A Leadership Development and Succession Planning Process</p> <p>1.2.1 Strive for continuing organizational excellence through leadership development and include succession planning</p> <p>1.2.2 Restructure the economic development department</p> <p>1.3 Develop a Data Strategy</p> <p>1.3.1 Increase local capacity to collect more local data</p> <p>1.3.2 Business licenses can be a source of primary data</p> <p>1.3.3 Incorporate NAICS codes</p> <p>1.4 Review the BRSP (2021) Outcomes to Move to Phase Three - an Entrepreneur Ecosystem</p> <p>1.4.1 Review the emergency Business Recovery Support Program (BRSP) to determine how to move to Phase Three</p> <p>1.5 Conduct a Structured Business Outreach Program</p> <p>1.5.1 Set up a business visitation/ outreach Program</p> <p>1.5.2 Increase awareness of succession planning/ transitioning options for business owners</p>	<p>2.1 Develop a 21st Century Town Centre</p> <p>2.1.1 Develop a downtown corridor revitalization plan</p> <p>2.1.2 Build-up rather than out</p> <p>2.2 Incentivize New Development and Investment</p> <p>2.2.1 Support an 'Investment Incentive Bylaw' to encourage development</p> <p>2.3 Develop a Small Business and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem</p> <p>2.3.1 Nurture an entrepreneurial ecosystem</p> <p>2.4 Establish a 'Community Investment Marketplace' - Local Investors, Local Business, Local Solutions</p> <p>2.4.1 Partner to develop a Community Market Place</p> <p>2.5 Host an Economic Development, Real Estate, Investor Forum</p> <p>2.5.1 Host an economic development, real estate, investor forum to spur innovation</p>	<p>3.1 Champion a Regional Workforce Initiative</p> <p>3.1.1 Host a round-table workforce fact-finding discussion.</p> <p>3.2 Appoint a Workforce Housing Action Team</p> <p>3.2.1 Appoint a Workforce Housing Action Team</p> <p>3.3 Develop a Rural Immigration Initiative - Become a 'Welcoming Community'</p> <p>3.3.1 Link this strategy to the 'Housing Action Plan'</p> <p>3.4 Link to Business Investment Options for Newcomers, Immigrants and Indigenous Entrepreneurs</p> <p>3.4.1 Partner to coordinate options for immigrant, newcomer and Indigenous entrepreneurs.</p> <p>3.5 Create a Residential Growth Strategy</p> <p>3.5.1 Appoint a Workforce Attraction Action Team.</p> <p>3.6 Become a Training Centre in the Region</p> <p>3.6.1 Leverage academic partnerships for training and jobs skills upgrading</p>	<p>4.1 Create a Health and Wellness Hub</p> <p>4.1.1 Establish a Health & Wellness Advocacy Action Team. Determine when and who will act to Advocate; Champion or Team-up (ACT)</p> <p>4.1.2 Address staffing shortages</p> <p>4.1.3 Advocate for a regionally supportive funding model</p> <p>4.1.4 Via local practitioners, and through the economic development lens, determine if more services can be provided locally?</p> <p>4.2 Create a Business, Services and Amenity Hub</p> <p>4.2.1 Encourage more B2B and B2C spending</p> <p>4.2.2 Business does better in Pincher Creek marketing plan</p> <p>4.3 Expand into Transportation Corridor and Logistics Hub</p> <p>4.3.1 Become a centre for regional logistics</p> <p>4.3.2 Complete the airport utilization business case</p> <p>4.4 Increase and Improve Community Assets</p> <p>4.4.1 Increase and improve community assets.</p> <p>4.4.2 Work to increase market-ready tourism products and services.</p> <p>4.4.3 Assist in supporting ag organizations in encouraging innovation</p>

Table 7: CEDS outcomes that meet the community goals

CEDS GOAL	OUTCOMES THAT MEET THE COMMUNITY GOALS
 <p>CEDS GOAL #1</p> <p>RETAIN AND EXPAND BUSINESSES IN THE COMMUNITY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become known as a business friendly community • Have streamlined, effective processes for business permitting, licensing and development • Beautification and vibrancy are increased in Pincher Creek • With entrepreneurship programs starting in the schools and extending to the entire region • Having a conduit for entrepreneurs to connect to resources • With a range of local training opportunities to grow more local talent/workforce • Increase opportunities to start and scale up business • Increased employment opportunities for young adults to return home to work • While creating partnerships that foster community spirit and entrepreneurship • And current residents understand and support the success of their existing businesses. • Including a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem that builds capacity in tourism sectors as a priority
 <p>CEDS GOAL #2</p> <p>ATTRACT NEW INVESTMENT & BUSINESSES TO THE COMMUNITY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A thriving, profitable and growing business centre in Alberta • Beautification and development of Pincher Creek’s downtown corridor and community neighbourhoods • The Town becomes known as an advocate for business support and development innovation • New businesses bring more job opportunities and more economic stability to the region • New job opportunities attract newcomers and encourage the return of young adults raised in Pincher Creek and young families • Critical mass of B2B is achieved with value chain development in conjunction with existing firms • Become a business and residential hub supporting a high standard of living for residents
 <p>CEDS GOAL #3</p> <p>DEVELOP A REGIONAL WORKFORCE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services become available that readily help businesses retain and attract workforce • More workforce • Longevity and resilience of businesses is increased by job creation and retention of employees • Programs are created to actively attract immigrants and newcomers • Pincher Creek is viewed as a Welcoming Community for newcomers and immigrants • Jobs exist for the children of current residents to stay in Pincher Creek • More options for local and international immigrant, newcomers and Indigenous entrepreneurs and/or business investors • Housing options within vibrant neighbourhoods are developed to attract new residents to live and work in the area • Post-secondary training and education is offered in the community

CEDS GOAL

OUTCOMES THAT MEET THE COMMUNITY GOALS



CEDS GOAL #4
**LEVERAGE
 EXISTING KEY
 ASSETS FOR A
 DIVERSIFIED
 ECONOMY**

- Community capitalizes on Pincher Creek's three unique assets: the teaching hospital; location as a service centre hub and the creation of a transportation corridor and logistics hub potentially using the airport: potentially using the airport:
 - 1) The Health and Wellness Hub
 - » Better health services
 - » More health oriented businesses
 - » More and diverse job opportunities
 - » Medical tourism
 - 2) The Service Centre and Amenities Hub
 - » More and diverse businesses
 - » Redevelop the downtown corridor
 - » More options for housing
 - » More residents
 - » Different demographic markets are attracted to the region as a result of public space development
 - » A pride of place keeps residents and businesses while attracting new ones
 - » Increased quality of life for all residents
 - 3) The Creation of a Transportation Corridor and Logistics Hub
 - » More market access for all
 - » Service growth of logistics firms
 - » Connectivity potential using the airport
 - 4) A More Diverse Economy
 - » An increased range of community products, services and assets
 - » Increased capacity of more market-ready tourism products
 - » More B2B firms connecting
 - » More reasons to set up a firm in Pincher Creek
 - » Assist in supporting the disseminating of information about new market opportunities in agriculture

6.0 ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

To capitalize on the opportunities and offset the challenges, the Town of Pincher Creek's Council and Administration have the capacity and resources to **ACT: Advocate, Champion and Team Up**. It is important for everyone to know what they can do and when and how to do it. Council and Administration should continue to recognize the difference between governance (leadership, strategic vision and direction, policy formulation, etc.) versus operations (the actual strategy and tactics created for development and implementation of Council's directives) in how and when they choose to ACT.

Advocate, Champion, and Team Up (ACT)

The following content provides a number of different projects that will inherently support business, diversify the business mix in the Town, and support the entire trade region.

Advocate: In the role of advocate, the Town can leverage their collective voice and resources for various projects. As advocates they can be more effective, expand participation, draw new investment, reach new partners, access provincial and/or federal dollars, etc. For example:

- **First Advocate.** Ask the community for help. Find your Champions, bring on your Partners, create your Action Teams. Host a community-wide, round-table to present the CEDS strategy and get the volunteers you need.
- **Advocate for business.** There is opportunity to support businesses in solving the challenges they face. Information gathered from primary business interviews will often present issues that impact businesses' profitability, affect their ability to expand or to even stay in operation.
 - » **Continue support for businesses post COVID.** Financially support the Business Recovery Support (BRSP) program and the long-term Small Business and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem part of the resiliency program. Focus on activities to support businesses in workforce, housing and training needs.
 - » **Become pro-business ambassadors.** Business is caught in an economy where the price of oil has led to layoffs in Alberta, small businesses are struggling to stay afloat after COVID.

- » **Host a round table forum on investment opportunities.** Have realtors, developers, bankers and builders discuss innovative options for more housing and options for the downtown corridor revitalization. Explore public-private partnership (P3) options.
- **Advocate for change in healthcare regulations that stifle innovation.**

Champion: In the role of 'champion' the Town will lead with strategic direction and provide resources (people, time and budget) to implement projects or processes.

- **Champion infrastructure for business development.** Champion projects that create the conditions for business to invest in the region. More multi-use, multi-purpose building options; shovel ready land; refined, effective bylaw, and reduction of red tape and wait times for development will incentivize developers. Become more community investment ready.
- **Champion a downtown corridor revitalization. Create a plan that incorporates vibrant placemaking and live-work-stay-play options.**
- **Champion a 'Regional Workforce Initiative'.** Critical workforce shortages and skills gaps are affecting businesses. Include more options for workforce housing and learn how to become a 'welcoming community' for newcomers and immigrants.
- **Champion a 'Community Investment Marketplace', where local investors can invest in local businesses, organizations or individual projects.** There is keen interest from locals to invest in personal passions and/or businesses within the region. There is financial and knowledge wealth available to make such investments. Be the conduit.
- **Champion more B2B, B2C regional buyer and supplier networks. Start with the reverse trade show tradeshow.** There are over 450~ businesses in the Town alone. Together with the M.D., there is the ability to increase awareness, interaction and spending between regional consumers and the businesses themselves.
 - » Develop and implement programs to increase more business to business (B2B) and business to consumer (B2C) transactions in the region. Have a regional

business directory that lists products and services.

- » There are close to 32,000 consumers in the trade region and over 500 businesses (Town and M.D.), create more awareness and interaction between regional consumers.

Team Up: Town can collaborate with other organizations' projects and processes. There are always more projects than resources. While Administration is working hard to accomplish the current projects set by Council, there is a need to build capacity for other organizations to support economic development projects. Especially get involved with those that support business retention and new investment, or lessen challenges such as businesses' access to employees, profitability and/or markets.

- **Speak with regional organizations about their existing or planned projects.** Any organization, whether it is a volunteer group or paid professional social supports, works for the betterment of the community. There is potential for partnership, if not directly with the Town, then at least with each other.
- **Team-up and support organizations that are caught in bureaucracy** that impacts their budget and/or service delivery. The Pincher Creek hospital has the capacity to add services IF the staffing shortages are resolved. Located in Alberta Health Services (AHS) South Zone, the hospital is the 2nd busiest in the region, however, it does have two OR's that are underutilized. Through the Health and Wellness Action Team determine if there are opportunities for service provision and revenue generation that could stay local.
 - » Explore how the Town could support the hospital, and/or expand involvement in their endeavours to attract and retain more skilled healthcare workers, and lobby the provincial government to provide access to satellite training facilities and/or incentivize nurses training within the region. Connect volunteers with a passion for education to increase political pull and ensure that the community supports the goal.
- **Collaborate on regional tourism projects and initiatives.**
 - » Clearly define the purpose and roles of regional organizations and institutions. Understand who is working on what and how the outcome will benefit the

Pincher Creek Region. Recognize and support regional partnership roles. Support the new DMO's initiatives, regional marketing campaigns and training programs to 'grow' more tourism operators and expand tourism visitor experiences.

- » **Seek collaboration in funding.** Capitalize on the new provincial and federal programs that support priorities outlined within the CEDS such as: infrastructure (downtown revitalization); development; aviation and transportation; housing; jobs and skill development; and Indigenous projects.

Appendix G: Oversight for Council Appointed Committees provides direction on how to engage community and champions.

The following are the 30 recommendations found within the body of the main document.

GOAL #1: RETAIN & EXPAND BUSINESSES IN THE COMMUNITY

1. Develop a Business Concierge service – coordinate a one-window approach within the Town administration that builds relationships with businesses from the first interaction. Strategize on ways to reduce complex application processes or reduce wait times. Don't make the businesses run around to various departments to get their needs met.
2. Create an authentic pro-business culture at Town office. Engage all staff in an economic development session on the importance of increasing business within the Town and how the departments could link to economic development activities.
3. Have the Economic Development Officer act as the Town liaison/project manager/quarter back for the businesses requiring assistance.
4. Restructure the economic development position and department; include considering as needed, non- payroll contractors for communications and events.
5. Foster a pro-business environment by reducing the red tape around each process of interacting with the Town. Provide staff with authority, accountability, encouragement and BUDGET to find innovative ways to improve processes and support businesses.
6. Budget for more external communication processes to

reach different audiences to provide facts, build awareness and stop the rumours.

7. Develop a succession plan and leadership development/mentorship program that will minimize the serious loss of knowledge and experience of the senior staff retiring in the next year. Find ways to keep retiring employees engaged as mentors and add knowledge resources to bolster the inevitable gaps.
8. Develop a data strategy. Increase the collection of primary data to provide a solid base of information for analysis to ensure that decisions are accurately informed.
9. Revamp the business licenses to capture relevant information about the businesses.
10. Incorporate the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) categorization within the business licensing process.
11. Explore the option of a bridge program to link to the existing Diamond software, create a workaround, or invest in a new system to track NAICS.
12. Conduct a formal business outreach program, track business interviews in a confidential CRM, follow-up on red (closures, exiting the community, etc.) and green flags (expanding, new certification, products, etc.).
13. Review the Business Recovery Support Program (BRSP). Consider timing on when to advance to Phase 3, to the small business and entrepreneur ecosystem program.
14. Encourage small business and entrepreneurial ecosystem. Designate time and budget to entrepreneur-led economic development activities to offer businesses life-stage training, mentoring, and sector specific programs to build a resilient business community.
15. Conduct a structured business outreach program to gather local business intel to develop programs for business retention and expansion.
16. Provide succession planning opportunities for business owners to sell or transition their businesses to ensure that products and services continue to be available in the community.



GOAL #2: ATTRACT NEW INVESTMENT & BUSINESSES TO THE COMMUNITY

17. Develop a 21st century 'Downtown Revitalization and Vibrancy plan' which is authentically designed and incorporates more multi-use options to live-work-play and stay in the downtown corridor and community neighbourhoods.
18. Incentivize development and investment. Share the risk with developers and business owners to spur new investment and commercial development.
19. Have land and development plans such as an Area Structure Plan approved and in place to allow for more investment and economic development. Incorporate and encourage more 'placemaking' and authentic, architectural and brand themes into all community amenities such as downtown redevelopment, recreational trail systems and way-finding.
20. Develop a small business and entrepreneurial ecosystem which encourages new business starts and business investment spurring an increase in more diverse products and services to attract residents, newcomers to the community and visitors.
21. Establish a local Community Investment Market Place to provide different types of funding/financing options for entrepreneurs.
24. Develop a 'Rural Immigration Welcoming Community Program' - become known as a Welcoming Community. Work with subject matter experts on immigration and indigenous relations to enhance the efforts to retain and attract newcomers and build the capacity to support their smooth integration into the community. Create pathways to be more inclusionary and accepting of the Indigenous population.
25. Create a 'Residential Growth Strategy' with a focus on how to reduce youth migration out of the region. Increase opportunities for youth to return home with a variety of tactics based on job opportunities and housing. Consider lifestyle trends and integrate immigrants and newcomers into the community with the objective of having more young families. Include action items which strive to address the social, mental, and physical well-being of the existing and future population.
26. Become a training centre. In addition to existing training organizations, anchor education systems in the community to stop the out-migration and increase educational opportunities. Promote Pincher Creek as a community of choice for newcomers both as employees and as new business owners/entrepreneurs.

GOAL #3: DEVELOP A REGIONAL WORKFORCE INITIATIVE

22. Champion or team-up in a coordinated regional workforce initiative that brings together expert workforce resources for specific projects in workforce training and skills development.
23. Position Pincher Creek to become the most attractive housing location for young families in the region by ensuring a variety of housing options. Appoint a Workforce Housing Action Team. Engage an expert to develop a Housing Action Plan. Liaise with the existing Housing Management Body (HMB), and ensure the focus is on all types of housing. The research is complete, Pincher Creek needs an actionable "who, what, where, when and how" plan to provide more housing options ASAP.

GOAL #4: LEVERAGE KEY COMMUNITY ASSETS FOR A DIVERSIFIED ECONOMY

27. Develop the rural hub concept. Strive to build capacity to supply more products and services by providing more health & wellness options; more essential services; more regional movement of goods and services; and more support for agriculture and tourism development.
 - a) **Position as a 'health and wellness hub'.** Leverage Pincher Creek's teaching hospital and ancillary support services to attract more health and wellness practitioners and businesses.
 - b) **Leverage Pincher Creek's central location in the region.** Position as a 'service and amenity hub by increasing and improving key essential services and community assets to meet regional needs (e.g., housing, skilled workforce, quality health, education, amenities and facilities).
 - c) **Position as a transportation corridor and logistics hub.**

Increase partnerships and project-based activities to promote an increase in the flow of goods and services via roads, rails and runways that feed into the community. Confirm a business case that could leverage the airport to move more products, people, services and investment in the region.

28. Increase and improve community assets that are key to future sustainability and prosperity, and will attract different demographic markets as a result of development of the above mentioned sectors.
29. Link to tourism bodies (e.g., the new DMO [South Canadian Rockies Tourism Association] and/or other tourism organizations). Work and plan collectively and strategically to expand the number and capacity of revenue producing visitor experiences. Work with tourism operators to access affluent tourist markets.
30. Assist in supporting the dissemination of information about new market opportunities in agriculture. Identify and support a champion that encourages local farmers and ranchers to access innovation programs and projects. Recognize that there is a shift taking place in agriculture to new needs in the market for pea proteins and novel (to the area) crops. Pay attention to the aging farmers and ranchers and work with organizations to help them transition their businesses to new owners to keep those farms and ranches prosperous and in the community.

“The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails.”

~ WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD

7.0 CONCLUSION

This Pincher Creek Community Economic Development Strategy (2021-2026) provides goals and a path to reach them. It provides a strong impetus for action to generate economic investment and growth.

To capitalize on the region’s rich opportunities will require all those involved to not only reframe the problems but also the solutions. This CEDS recognizes it is not the sole responsibility of the Town (Council and Administration) to enact this strategy. It needs the ‘town’, working through partnerships and with champions, to build capacity, devote resources, time, energy and budget to overcome the existing challenges and capitalize on opportunities.

Pincher Creek has a lot of work ahead. The town must quickly begin the many projects that will lead to success in economic development. Here is the priority list:

1. Ask the community for help. Find your *Champions*, bring on your *Partners*, create your *Action Teams*. Host a community-wide, round-table to present the CEDS strategy and get the volunteers you need.
2. Start the downtown revitalization community engagement sessions and retail analysis ASAP.
3. Champion the Workforce Housing Action Team and get the committee up and running.
4. Work with a third-party resource to develop a workforce housing and ‘Welcoming Communities’ action plan.
5. Pass the Investment Incentive Bylaw.
6. Streamline processes to reduce red tape issues for business.
7. Develop a staff succession plan and leadership development/mentorship program that will minimize the serious loss of knowledge and experience of the senior staff retiring in the next year. Find ways to keep retiring employees engaged as mentors and add knowledge resources to bolster the inevitable gaps.

Good luck!





8.0 APPENDICES

Appendix A: ‘What we Heard’ Situation Analysis SOARR (2020 – 2021)

The objective of the economic development strategy is to attract new businesses to Pincher Creek and to assist existing businesses to thrive. A key objective of the business stakeholder engagement was to determine the best way to

share with non-local individuals and entrepreneurs what living life and doing business in Pincher Creek feels like. Building on Pincher Creek’s strengths, and leveraging the Town’s key amenities (also called assets or attributes) capitalizes on opportunities. Below is a summary of what was said by those engaged in the process:

Table 8: Strengths identified (SOARR) – ‘What we Heard’

Strengths	
Full service teaching Hospital – diverse range of medical services and practitioners	Empty buildings available in downtown on a wide, walkable main street
Recreation – Hundreds of events and assets from recreational opportunities to planned events	Location – along Hwy 3, proximity to the US & BC (border crossings & sea ports); proximity to city centres; Castle (the ski hill & Provincial Park)
Long term residents offering stability to region	Broadband – fast internet
Business Recovery Support Program (BRSP) and #LoveLocalPC have increased shopping, local awareness and consumer demand	Childcare facilities (some subsidized)
Land available for development	Affordable housing
Capacity in town infrastructure for growth	Accommodations – hotel beds available
Sunlight – heat units per year (high intensity)	Wind
Tourism – agri-tourism, eco-tourism, Indigenous tourism, and historic tourism	Good educational opportunities and unique schools with sports focused markets, international students and language programs
Entrepreneurial spirit	Airport with a long, well maintained runway and local pilots who use it as well as government services
Diverse businesses – 500 within the region, some with international reach	Neighbouring First Nation provides new cultural experience opportunities for residents and travellers

Source: InnoVisions & Associates, extracted from business participants focus groups, surveys and over 50 interviews conducted between Oct. 2019 and July 2021.

From the identified strengths come the opportunities that might be supported by the community. Below is what the stakeholders suggested:

Table 9: Opportunities identified (SOARR) – ‘What we Heard’ (2020 – 2021)

Opportunities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching Hospital – diverse range of medical services and practitioners that could expand into other medical services businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in residents – Outdoor Lifestyle attractive to millennial's and those wanting 'out' of the cities – wide-open spaces, great place to raise a family
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreation – Development of Castle mountain and the highway 3 corridor has potential to spur spin off opportunities for new businesses Maintain Town recreation facilities to increase residents' quality of living and attract visitors develop a sharing economy with things like a tool lending library 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Location allows for a service centre for other communities– along Hwy 3, proximity to the US & BC (border crossings & sea ports); proximity to city centres; Castle (the ski hill & Provincial Park)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redevelopment of Downtown as a visitor and resident friendly space to foster new businesses and at-tract new residents/workforce Increase pool of rental homes Attract a bakery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broadband – fast internet makes it possible to be employed by a firm based elsewhere but worker lives in Pincher Creek •Attract social media firms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Recovery Support Program (BRSP) and #LoveLocalPC have increased shopping, local awareness and consumer demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childcare facilities (some subsidized) provide an incentive for young families to come
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land available for development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable housing by entrepreneurs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity in town infrastructure for growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodations – hotel beds available
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sunlight – heat units per year (high intensity) beneficial for green house development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wind and windmills in the region could become a world leading expert center
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism – agri-tourism, eco-tourism, Indigenous tourism, film, and historic tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-secondary partnerships could keep more young adults in the area and provide workforce education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technology focused business coaching programs for entrepreneurs in community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing international awareness of the benefits of SW Alberta as a place to purchase a business or start one
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diverse businesses – 500 within the region, some with international market reach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighbouring First Nation provides new cultural experience opportunities for residents and travellers

Table 10: Aspirations identified (SOARR) – ‘What we Heard’

Once the opportunities were identified then the Aspirations were suggested and considered by the group that would benefit from any actions taken.

Aspirations Summarized	Actions Suggested by Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs website • Coordination with other communities and the M.D. • Coordination with the region on tourism attraction • Provision of new housing options • Tech based cluster attraction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International schooling partnerships • Post-secondary partnerships for training • Support for start ups • Pop up stores to improve goods and services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the businesses existing and to come 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of Town red tape on development • Ready to go subdivision plans • Workforce attraction promotions • Tax incentives • Reduction of costs of doing business



Table 11: Results identified (SOARR) – ‘What we Heard’

Aspirations Summarized	Actions Suggested by Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract new residents to the area to keep the community growing and thriving by improving the quality of life and housing accessibility • Provide good educational and employment opportunities for young adults of existing families so they remain in the community to raise their own families • Make Pincher Creek the best place in Alberta for businesses to find success by: • Attracting and retaining workforce • Building capacity to add more products and services • Filling main street • More resilient businesses that are sustainable long-term 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce – challenges attracting and retaining staff and/or staff with the right skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empty businesses downtown reduces foot traffic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High taxes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wind – ‘Without the wind we could be another Canmore’
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cell service issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inefficient processes – lack of collaboration between development, permitting, development and economic development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not welcoming to newcomers, immigrants and First Nations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication – residents/businesses unaware of Town projects, myths vs. facts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Everybody is over 60”, myths vs. facts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of regional ‘products’ to create a tourism pack-age, yet many think tourism is the magic bullet for economic growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited collaboration with First Nations neighbours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited products and services to support different tourism markets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No tourism industry strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Hospital – issues keeping and attracting practitioners, issues with ambulance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifestyle – no nightlife
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empty buildings downtown on a wide, walkable main street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadband – spotty in places
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little Land available for development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too much ambiguity around zoning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity in town infrastructure for growth but face Nimby challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodations – poor selection of options across the housing continuum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism – agri-tourism, eco-tourism, Indigenous tourism, and historic tourism need a coordinated effort with other communities that are not yet organized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must leave community for post-secondary education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big gossip problem – “no one is safe” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax base is shrinking

Table 12: Risks identified (SOARR) – ‘What we Heard’

Aspirations Summarized	Actions Suggested by Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce – challenges attracting and retaining staff and/or staff with the right skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empty businesses downtown reduces foot traffic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High taxes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wind – “Without the wind we could be another Canmore”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cell service issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inefficient processes – lack of collaboration between development, permitting, development and economic development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not welcoming to newcomers, immigrants and First Nations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication – residents/businesses unaware of Town projects, myths vs. facts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Everybody is over 60”, myths vs. facts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of regional ‘products’ to create a tourism package, yet many think tourism is the magic bullet for economic growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited collaboration with First Nations neighbours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited products and services to support different tourism markets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No tourism industry strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Hospital – issues keeping and attracting practitioners, issues with ambulance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifestyle – no nightlife
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empty buildings downtown on a wide, walkable main street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadband – spotty in places
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little Land available for development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too much ambiguity around zoning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity in town infrastructure for growth but face Nimby challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodations – poor selection of options across the housing continuum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism – agri-tourism, eco-tourism, Indigenous tourism, and historic tourism need a coordinated effort with other communities that are not yet organized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must leave community for post-secondary education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big gossip problem – “no one is safe” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax base is shrinking

Appendix B: Example of Comprehensive Business Licenses

Business licence application

Business information

Business name *

Operating name Commonly/publicly used name your business operates as (if different from above)

Business address *

Business phone *

Business fax

Mailing address * Address only - do not include city, province or postal code in this box

City * **Province/State ***

Postal code *

Website **Business email ***

Please list the products and services your business offers *

This information helps to code your business according to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and is how your business is categorized in the Business Directory.

[NAICS](#)

How many employees does your business employ?

- Include only employees over 15 years of age
- Count owner-operators as employees

Full-time employees * 30 hours or more per week **Part-time employees *** Less than 30 hours per week and/or seasonal employees

Contact preferences and business directory

Display business in the free Airdrie business directory
Listing includes business name, address, phone number, website and category.

Subscribe to the City of Airdrie's business email list
Receive updates on business events, information and opportunities. You can unsubscribe at any time.

Other permits and pre-requisites

If you do not have these permits or requirements at this time, you may proceed with your application. A Business Licensing Officer will contact you within two (2) business days.

Alberta Health Inspection Number ¹ **Alberta Motor Vehicle Industry Council (AMVIC) Number**

Tenancy Permit number

Provincial License Number

¹ The Food Establishment Permit or copy of your Health Inspection form issued by Alberta Health Services, Environmental Health must be submitted with your application form. Contact Alberta Health Services should you require more information.

Agreement

Name * **Email ***

Date

Verify * I have reviewed and verified that all of the information on this form is correct. I understand that once submitted, I will not be able to make changes until the license has been approved.

Signature * I acknowledge that [by displaying/typing my name above], I am signing this application, and I agree to be bound as if I had endorsed this document with my own handwritten signature. I understand that checking this box forms an agreement with the City of Airdrie.

Home-based Permit License

The first ¾ of the permit is identical to the commercial/retail permit

Figure 16: Example of a home-based business permit

Home Based Permit Questions

A Home Based Permit is required for some home-based businesses. You may be contacted for more information.

Do any of these apply to your business (check all that apply)

- Having Clients/suppliers/others visiting the home for business purposes
- Employing people in the home
- Receiving deliveries in the home
- More than 6 children in the home (daycare)

Agreement

Name *

Email *

Date

Verify * I have reviewed and verified that all of the information on this form is correct. I understand that once submitted, I will not be able to make changes until the license has been approved.

Signature * I acknowledge that [by displaying/typing my name above], I am signing this application, and I agree to be bound as if I had endorsed this document with my own handwritten signature. I understand that checking this box forms an agreement with the City of Airdrie.

Source: City of Airdrie, Licensing Department, 2021



Appendix C: CEDS Pivots to Business Recovery Support Program

Pincher Creek Community Economic Development Strategy

Pivots to the Business Recovery Support Program (BRSP)

The Town of Pincher Creek engaged the consulting firm InnoVisions & Associates in September 2019 to develop a Community Economic Development Strategy. A number of business round tables and community engagement sessions had been completed when COVID-19 landed in Alberta in March 2020. One of the key goals for the Consultants' strategy was to develop a business retention and attraction plan that was timely and relevant.

When COVID-19 struck, InnoVisions recommended that their focus should immediately pivot from working on the long-term strategic plan to instead help businesses during the pandemic. This resulted in the development of the Business Recovery Support Program (BRSP).

The Town, in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, funded an approach that offered resources to businesses for survival and future resiliency.

Figure 17: Three phases of the Business Recovery Support Program



NOTE: This program is about creating resiliency in the existing businesses in the region. It is an attempt to avoid a prolonged recovery period and position businesses to survive the COVID-19 Pandemic so people can get back to work as quickly as possible once the pandemic is over. The Ask and Expert and Business Voucher Program is intended to provide access to critical advisors and business service professionals to provide businesses with advice and clear information on programs and services to help them remain resilient through this pandemic.

THIS PROGRAM IS NOT INTENDED TO BE A FINANCIAL BAILOUT OF BUSINESSES.

Keys to Success of the Business Recovery Support Program

1) Relevant and practical

Phase 1: Business Recovery Needs Voucher Program that:

- » Is geared to rural, remote businesses; from retail stores, personal services, to ranches in the region;
- » Gathers local, primary data, and conducts interviews and surveys to determine what level of service/support is needed for the region's unique businesses;
- » Is managed by a designated local manager to match-make business needs with a local business expert/advisor or Regional programs;
- » Aids in paying for the needed experts/advisors to the business to work one-on-one. A credit of up to \$500(Phase 1) is available to the participating business to engage a business advisor;
- » Many of the business experts have opted to donate their services; and
- » #LoveLocalPC marketing campaign generated over \$500,000 in local business revenue in a just a few weeks- (Nov 27, 2020 to Jan 3, 2021).

2) Effective and efficient Processes developed

Phase 1: Engage with an Expert. Business Needs Assessment – Initial match for next best action for the business to take to recover or become sustainability. Up to \$500.

Phase 2: Engage with an Expert. Business Advisory Support – continued from Phase 1. Up to \$1,000.

Phase 3: Bridging to resiliency. Building a long-term, resilient small business and entrepreneurial ecosystem.

3) P3 Funding using both public and private funds. Supporting organizations included: The Pincher Creek Chamber of Commerce; the Town of Pincher Creek; AlbertaSW Regional Economic Development Alliance; and many private funders such as Southwest Alberta Sustainable Community Initiative (SASCI); Pieridae Energy; ENEL; Pincher Creek Co-Op; Vitae; Castle Mountain Resort; and Mammoet.

4) The Community and Regional Economic Support (CARES-Province of Alberta) funding was used as the base funding. The Business Support Specialist who coordinates the program is a part-time contract role, is a member of the community, is approachable, has a Regional Economic Development background, is a small business owner and professional coach. The program is embedded in the Pincher Creek and District Chamber of Commerce.

5) Collaboration occurred in the truest sense from theory to application. The BRSP program was adapted from other best practices (Grande Prairie and Canmore) to fit a small rural community. It was immediate in addressing the need – rolling out relatively quickly after COVID hit with the first business onboarded the first week of July 2020. Time was taken to develop a strategy on how to deliver the program with such a limited budget, resources and people. The program leveraged local and regional service providers and business advisors as well as regional advisors from the Tec-connect Entrepreneur Program (Economic Development Lethbridge), and Building Business Resiliency Free Business Coaching (Community Futures), and the Business Link. Through an onboarding process that utilizes reflective inquiry with the aim to clarify what the next best steps are for a particular business, businesses are then referred to one or more of the available resources. A key intention is to shift owners from working in their businesses to working on their businesses, taking a more strategic and intentional approach.

6) Integration

The BRSP includes four different components that meet the needs of each business.

- » The first component is that each business had access to various business experts, then community engagement which included the #LoveLocalPC campaign which generated over \$500,000 in local business revenue in a few weeks;

- » Secondly, the BRSP has also assembled an Ambassador team with community leaders who participate in quarterly updates, and work to build awareness of the program;
- » Thirdly, all communications go out through the Town and Chamber newsletter and then into social media; and
- » Finally, there are webinars and tools provided on topics such as the various Provincial and Federal support programs, pivoting retail businesses to online models, and other relevant topics including tax responsibilities associated with various support programs.

7) Quantitative results to date

1. Over thirty businesses from the Town and M.D. of Pincher Creek are actively participating;
2. They have been matched to over 50 advisors, coaches or service providers; and
3. One of the most common pieces of feedback is the appreciation from the business owners to have a neutral party or person to speak to about their business whose sole purpose is to help them and connect them to resources available.

8) Feedback from participants in the program

On a weekly basis the program manager has been receiving excellent feedback from appreciative business owners.

Thank-you Bob!

Thank you for connecting me with these great opportunities and thank you for the great advice this morning.

That was a very timely call and I truly appreciate it. Completely shifted my mindset and got me right back on track!

Have a great day!!

Hi Bob,

We are so thankful for this program. XXXXXX is setting us up with an awesome logo. XXXXXX is such a great resource for us, both in business and life.

Continued..

Thank you so much for this opportunity, we have been so happy with everything!

“Good morning!

I just finished my initial call with (confidential) and want to share what a positive experience it was and to thank you both for connecting us.

The hours on webinars and consultations over the past few months has been time consuming and I've seldom felt an understanding on the other end.

This is the first time I've been connected with someone with experience in my field and an understanding of the particular challenges of doing it in a small market.

We have an action plan and will be chatting again next week.

Thank you both for finding a great mentor match for me!”

“I have a couple of Consultants that I used to work with who are acting as advisors and are quite positive about the direction I am taking. I emailed about the extra coaching sessions and would really like to move forward with that. I am just waiting to hear back about it.

I also connected with the group in Lethbridge and they put my in touch with another programmer who works in the gaming field. We are going to touch base every other week or so, which is good because it holds me accountable.

I am incredibly thankful for all that the Pincher Chamber has done!”

10) BRSP Program Links and Media

http://www.pinchercreek.ca/business/business_recovery.php

https://www.pinchercreekecho.com/news/town-hears-update-on-status-of-business-support-economic-development-strategy-2?fbclid=IwAR2xm0603VZZ3USMqPPZ11_m2cZE9K3adBhrl9jid0t_gsVMmadoc3OdQil

https://globalnews.ca/news/7586949/pincher-creek-shop-local-holiday-campaign/?fbclid=IwAR376aYT-gAWTqpEGRe00VPUIlwHsqD__arqtxQklszCcWgnIV5Gw9bM6Oo

9) Creates Long-term community business resiliency

Phase 3. Bridging to a Resilient Ecosystem. Data from Phase 1 and 2 of the BRSP program will provide the details to make decisions to build programming for Phase 3: Bridging to a Resilient Ecosystem – Made in Pincher Creek. Additional areas needed will be developed through partnerships to support business growth and development. E.g., entrepreneur development, upskills training, workforce attraction, tourism, etc.

Appendix D: Pincher Creek Business Investment Incentive

Pincher Creek

Business Investment Incentive, Bylaw No. 1629-21

A BYLAW OF THE TOWN OF PINCHER CREEK IN THE PROVINCE OF ALBERTA, TO ESTABLISH TAX INCENTIVES FOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

WHEREAS the Town of Pincher Creek acknowledges the importance of business development in the Town for the general benefit of the Town, including goods, services, employment and taxes;

AND WHEREAS the Town wishes to support the growth of already existing businesses and also attract more businesses to support the growth and prosperity of the Town;

AND WHEREAS pursuant to Section 364.2 of the Municipal Government Act, RSA 2000, c M-26, Council may pass a tax incentives bylaw to encourage development and revitalization of non-residential properties for the general benefit of the Town;

AND WHEREAS the Town of Pincher Creek is responsible for carrying out measures that will develop and maintain a viable community pursuant to Section 3(c) of the Municipal Government Act, which includes measures to improve the long-term economic outlook for the Town;

NOW THEREFORE, the Council of the Town of Pincher Creek, in the Province of Alberta, duly assembled, enacts as follows:

1. Short Title

1.1 This Bylaw may be referred to as the "Tax Incentives Bylaw".

2. Definitions

2.1 In this Bylaw, unless the context otherwise requires:

- a) "Act" means the Municipal Government Act, RSA 2000, c M-26, as amended from time to time;
- b) "Administration" means the administrative and operational arm of the Town comprised of the various departments and business units and including all employees who operate under the leadership and supervision of the CAO;
- c) "Applicant" means a person who applies for an Exemption;
- d) "Assessed Person" means an assessed person as that term is defined under Section 284(1) of the Act;
- e) "Business" means commerce for purposes of the production, storage, buying or selling of goods and services;
- f) "Chief Administrative Officer" or "CAO" means the chief administrative officer as appointed by Council, including the CAO's delegate;
- h) "Complete Application" means an application submitted pursuant to this Tax Incentives Bylaw that includes the Application Fee (if any) and the application requirements for non-residential tax incentives and the application form for non-residential tax incentives as set out in Appendices "A" and "B"
- i) "Council" means all the Councillors of the Town including the Chief Elected Official for the Town;
- g) "Exemption" means an exemption from taxation for Non-residential Property as provided for in Part 10, Division 2 of the Act. For purposes of clarity, the exemption from taxation applies only to taxes imposed by the Town under Part 10, Division 2 of the Act and not any Provincial requisitions;
- h) "Expansion" means development that adds to an existing Structure to increase the Structure's physical space for purposes of facilitating the Business within that Structure, or to replace an existing Structure for purposes of facilitating the Business within that Structure;
- i) "New Construction" means the construction of a new Structure for the purpose of establishing a Business within that Structure;
- j) "Non-residential Property" means non-residential as defined in the Act in respect of property;
- k) "Qualifying Property" means a Structure that is the subject of the New Construction or an Expansion;
- l) "Structure" means a structure as that term is defined in s 284(1)(u) of the Act that is Non-residential Property;
- m) "Tax Incentive Agreement" means a written agreement setting out the terms and conditions for an Exemption for the Qualifying Property; and
- n) "Town" means the Town of Pincher Creek in the Province of Alberta.

3. Purpose

3.1 The purpose of this Tax Incentives Bylaw is to allow tax

incentives for Exemptions from taxation under Part 10, Division 2 of the Act for Qualifying Properties in the Town that meet the requirements of this Tax Incentives Bylaw.

3.2 Tax incentives under this Tax Incentives Bylaw will not be granted in respect of the land portion of Non-residential property taxes imposed on land under Part 10, Division 2 of the Act.

4. Criteria for an Exemption

4.1 In order to apply for an Exemption from the Town portion of the property tax (not including land portion), an Applicant must meet the following criteria:

4.1.1 the Applicant must be the Assessed Person for the Qualifying Property that is the subject of the application;

4.1.2 the applicant may apply for an exemption for structural improvements to a property made by a tenant of the property;

4.1.3 the Applicant must have no outstanding monies owing to the Town.

4.2 In order to qualify for an Exemption, the Qualifying Property must meet the following criteria:

4.2.1 the Qualifying Property must be located within the geographical boundaries of the Town;

4.2.2 the development of the Qualifying Property must qualify as New Construction or an Expansion;

4.2.3 All required Town development approvals with respect to the development of the Qualifying Property must have been issued;

4.2.4 Eligibility for a Tax Incentive pursuant to this Bylaw requires the following criteria:

4.2.4.1 Notarized statement from a third-party construction firm indicating that the costs presented by the applicant are true, and that all costs submitted are those only for constructing or expanding the structure of the building.

4.2.4.2 In the case where a property owner elects to use his/her own labour, then a letter from a third-party accounting firm is required verifying the costs submitted and ensuring that all costs are true, and those that are submitted are only those for constructing or expanding the building.

4.2.4.3 A building/ development permit has been obtained and executed by the Town of Pincher Creek.

4.2.4.4 All construction inspections are completed and a permit for occupancy has been granted by the Town.

4.2.4.5 A minimum of \$5,000 invested in new construction or expansion

4.2.5 The Applicant must submit a Complete Application in accordance with the terms of this Bylaw.

4.2.6 With respect to a Qualifying Property, only one agreement with a three year period is allowed.

5. Application for an Exemption

5.1 Applicants must submit a Complete Application to the CAO. The CAO shall respond to the application within 30 working days from the time of submission.

5.2 Applications may be submitted at any time and, if approved, the tax exemption applies for 36 months from the date the structure is approved for occupancy. If the date of approval should fall outside the Town tax fiscal year then the exemption will be adjusted to apply for 36 contiguous months and the first month shall be the first month of the next Town tax fiscal year.

5.3 Complete Applications may be considered and approved in accordance with the requirements of this Tax Incentives Bylaw before construction on the Qualifying Property is complete, however, the Exemption will not apply until all construction on the Qualifying Property is complete and the development is inspected and approved for occupancy.

5.4 Notwithstanding the Complete Application requirements set out in this Bylaw, the CAO may require any additional information that, in the discretion of the CAO, is necessary to complete the application.

5.5 The CAO will advise Applicants in writing if their application is accepted for consideration. Applications accepted for consideration shall become the property of the Town and may not be returned.

5.6 The CAO has the discretion to reject applications that are incomplete and will provide a written description of the reasons for rejection within 30 business days of the application.

5.7 Applicants whose applications are returned as incomplete may resubmit an application at any time.

5.8 The CAO will advise Applicants within 30 business days in writing with reasons if their application is rejected.

6.0 Consideration of Applications

6.1 Administration shall review the Complete Application to determine if it meets the criteria and requirements for an Exemption and provide a written report with recommendations to Council within 30 business days of the application.

6.2 Council shall review the Complete Application and Administration's report and may:

6.2.1 pass a resolution directing Administration to enter into a Tax Incentive Agreement; or

6.2.2 pass a resolution refusing the Complete Application.

6.3 A resolution directing Administration to enter into a Tax Incentive Agreement must include:

6.3.1 the 36 months to which the Exemption applies; and

6.3.2 the dollar value of the Exemption for the Qualifying Property for each of the fiscal tax years affected whether based upon the costs of New Construction or the costs of an Expansion.

6.3.3 In the first 36 months identified in the Tax Incentive Agreement, the Qualifying Property shall receive a 100% Exemption on the mill rate imposed by the Town for the Town's portion of the property tax for the qualifying amount.

6.3.4 Notwithstanding that the exemption may be granted during a municipal tax fiscal year, the 36 months of exemption from the municipal portion of the tax shall commence in the first month of the next Town tax fiscal year.

6.4 Administration shall provide written notice of a refusal by Council to an Applicant within 14 business days which must include the resolution passed under section 6.2.2.

7.0 Tax Incentive Agreement

7.1 Where Council has passed a resolution approving an Exemption, Administration shall draft a Tax Incentive Agreement in accordance with the resolution of Council.

7.2 A Tax Incentive Agreement must outline:

7.2.1 the taxation years to which the Exemption applies, which

must not include any taxation year earlier than the taxation year in which the Exemption is granted;

7.2.2 the extent of the Exemption for each taxation year to which the Exemption applies;

7.2.3 a deadline for submission of proof that the Qualifying Property has been approved for occupancy;

7.2.4 any criteria in Section 4 which formed the basis of granting the Exemption and the taxation year or years to which the criteria applies all of which are deemed to be a condition or conditions of the Tax Incentive Agreement the breach of which will result in the cancellation of the Exemption for the taxation year or years to which the criteria applies;

7.5 In the event of a cancellation pursuant to section 8.1 of this Bylaw, any monies owed to the Town shall be immediately paid by the Applicant; and

7.6 any other conditions Administration deems necessary and the taxation year(s) to which the condition applies.

7.7 Tax Incentive Agreements shall be executed by the chief elected official (or their delegate) and the CAO within 30 business days of approval of the Exemption by Council.

7.8 A Tax Incentive Agreement shall be honored notwithstanding this bylaw being amended or repealed subsequent to entering into such agreement.

7.9 Notwithstanding that the market value of a property could increase, decrease or remain the same, no applicant will be allowed to use the municipal incentive tax rebate to reduce the tax bill to below zero. Any calculated negative amounts will not be carried forward.

8.1 Cancellation of Tax Incentive Agreements

8.2 If at any time after an Exemption is granted, Administration determines that the Applicant or their application:

8.1.1. did not meet, or ceased to meet, any of the material applicable criteria in Section 4 which formed the basis of granting the Exemption;

8.1.2. Tax arrears are owing with respect to the Qualifying Property; or

8.1.3. that there was a breach of any material condition of the Tax Incentive Agreement; then

Administration shall make a recommendation to Council and

Council may, by resolution, cancel the Exemption for the taxation year or years in which the criterion was not met or to which the condition applies.

8.3 A resolution passed by Council pursuant to section 8.1 must include reasons and identify the taxation year or years to which the cancellation applies.

8.4 Administration shall provide written notice of a cancellation to an Applicant which must include the resolution passed under section 8.1.

9.1 Review of Decision

9.2 Where an application has been rejected by Administration on the basis that it is incomplete, Applicants may resubmit to Administration a revised application at any time;

9.3 Applicants may apply to Council within 30 business days of receiving a Tax Incentive Agreement to review the Tax Incentive Agreement on the limited issue of whether the Tax Incentive Agreement follows the direction of Council. Council may revise the Tax Incentive Agreement or provide direction to Administration to revise the Tax Incentive Agreement in accordance with Council's initial resolution.

9.4 Applicants may apply to Council within 30 business days of receiving a notice of cancellation to review the cancellation and Council may uphold or revoke the cancellation.

9.5 Applications for judicial review of a decision pursuant to this Tax Incentives Bylaw must be filed with the Court of Queen's Bench and served not more than sixty (60) days after the date the decisions is received by the Applicant.

10.0 Review of Bylaw

10.1 This bylaw shall be reviewed by Council in a public Council meeting at least every second year from the date of passing of the bylaw for the purpose of assessing whether to amend or repeal the bylaw.

11.0 Severability

11.1 If any portion of this Bylaw is declared invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, then the invalid portion must be severed, and the remainder of this Bylaw is deemed valid.

12.0 Effective Date

12.1 This Bylaw shall come into force and take effect when it is approved after third reading.

READ a First time this ___day of _____,2021.

READ a Second time this ___day _____, 2021.

READ a Third time this ___day of _____,2021.

SIGNED AND PASSED this ____ day of _____. ,2021.

Don Anderberg, MAYOR

Laurie Wilgosh, CHIEF ADMINSTRATIVE OFFICER

Table 13: Pincher Creek ‘Investment Incentive’ tax implications

Pincher Creek Tax By Law Assessment						
Capital Spend		\$ 100,000				
Municipal Mil Rate		1.17%				
Year	Value	Muni Tax	Rebate	Net Tax	Cash Flow	
	0%					
1	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	100%	\$ -	\$ (1,170)	
2	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	100%	\$ -	\$ (1,170)	
3	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	100%	\$ -	\$ (1,170)	
4	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	0%	\$ 1,170	\$ 1,170	
5	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	0%	\$ 1,170	\$ 1,170	
6	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	0%	\$ 1,170	\$ 1,170	
7	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	0%	\$ 1,170	\$ 1,170	
8	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	0%	\$ 1,170	\$ 1,170	
9	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	0%	\$ 1,170	\$ 1,170	
10	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	0%	\$ 1,170	\$ 1,170	
11	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	0%	\$ 1,170	\$ 1,170	
12	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	0%	\$ 1,170	\$ 1,170	
13	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	0%	\$ 1,170	\$ 1,170	
14	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	0%	\$ 1,170	\$ 1,170	
15	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	0%	\$ 1,170	\$ 1,170	
16	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	0%	\$ 1,170	\$ 1,170	
17	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	0%	\$ 1,170	\$ 1,170	
18	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	0%	\$ 1,170	\$ 1,170	
19	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	0%	\$ 1,170	\$ 1,170	
20	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,170	0%	\$ 1,170	\$ 1,170	
		PV (present value)		0%	\$16,380	
		IRR (Internal Rate of Return)			26%	
		Owner Gross Savings	\$	3,510		
		App Fee				
		Legal Fees	\$	-		
		Other	\$	-		
		Owner Gross Savings	\$	3,510		

Appendix E: Example of a Downtown Revitalization Review Proposal



SCOPE OF SERVICES WORK PLAN

As part of an Economic Development Strategy, the following work plan could be undertaken to retool and redefine the future prospects of the downtown for residents (full time and temporary), visitors, investors and entrepreneurs. There have been many studies recently completed, but this particular exercise would connect-the-dots of the previous studies since “businesses” often rally around social needs, health needs, housing needs, recreational assets etc.

1.0 Downtown Business Mix Market Analysis

- Participate in a virtual Kickoff Workshop with the Project Team and Client.
- Host a virtual focus group of café chat style meetings with identified local Downtown retailers or business owners to identify issues and solutions.
- Prepare a community virtual “visioning workshop” using tools such as Social Pinpoint and presenting representative case study imagery for discussion.
- Prepare a Downtown Retail Health Assessment that examines the current business mix, quality of spaces, storefronts, hours of operation and other essential business parameters.
- Document the current full-time residential trade area and visitors that would support retail in the Downtown and document the specific trade area demographic composition.
- Prepare a Downtown-specific unit-by-unit inventory in tabular and visual form of the existing streetfront retail and service mix comprising merchandise category type as well as local, regional or international brand relationships.
- Prepare a listing and visual representation of underutilized sites, vacancies and potential adaptive re-use buildings that are compatible with a vision for a revitalized Downtown area – “vacant-to-vibrant”
- Estimate amount of retail sales being garnered in the Downtown on a category-by-category basis based on a sensitized retail sales productivity estimates for retail businesses.
- Forecast retail demand over the next 10 years, reflecting growth outside the Downtown and the directions of a potential revitalized Downtown. Demand is not solely based on new floorspace, but also the implications and benefits that could accrue to local businesses if the overall market share were to increase over time through marketing, customer service, mix, and streetscaping and placemaking efforts.
- Document the economic benefits for the downtown business mix in terms of sales productivities, and market capture of resident and visitor spending as a way of setting key performance targets.
- Create a master profile of the total resident (full and part-time) and visitor spending as a precursor to identifying voids and opportunities for retail in the Downtown. Spending data by residents for Trade would include 20 specific merchandise categories/store types (some may have more applicability in Pincher Creek’s downtown than others):
 - Grocery & Specialty Foods
 - Pharmacy
 - Alcohol & Tobacco
 - Personal Services
 - Clothing & Footwear
 - Jewelry & Accessories
 - Health & Beauty
 - House & Home Decor
 - Home & Personal Electronics
 - Home Improvement & Gardening
 - Books & Multi-Media
 - Toys & Hobbies
 - Sporting Goods & Recreation
 - Arts & Entertainment
 - Fitness & Leisure
 - Full Service Restaurants
 - Limited Service F&B
 - Auto Parts & Accessories
 - Auto/Motorsports/RV Dealerships
 - Auto Fuel
 - Medical Services & Health Care

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people driven design.

Source: Fowler Bauld & Mitchell (FBM) proposal – dated May 3, 2021



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 - Toys & Hobbies
 - Sporting Goods & Recreation
 - Arts & Entertainment
 - Fitness & Leisure
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 - Limited Service F&B
 - Auto Parts & Accessories
 - Auto/Motorsports/RV Dealerships
 - Auto Fuel
 - Medical Services & Health Care

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2.0 Trends Analysis

- Assess current and future trends and shifting characteristics of the retail market to anticipate differences in consumer behaviour and draw possible retail implications in Downtown Pincher Creek and surrounding MD.
- Profile case study examples of communities that have pursued “theming” as part of their strategy and document the pros/cons of these initiatives to document their applicability for the Pincher Creek context.
- Provide a specific COVID-19 Trends Analysis overview to document impacts, best practices and lessons learned from small to mid-size communities and the road to recovery.
- Provide a tabular comparison matrix of retail inventory and sales performance to other comparably sized communities.
- **OPTIONAL:** Leveraging our extensive membership within the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) as well as other retail organizations to document retail and commercial trends a with a view to how they are relevant and impactful to a rural type market such as Pincher Creek and its downtown. This process could involve:
 - Hosting a community entrepreneurial bootcamp
 - Hosting an introductory leasing seminar with guest broker from Calgary to discuss site selection and leasing tactics.
 - Working with community to be an active participant at ICSC’s conference deal-making event in Whistler (March 2022) to showcase the community to commercial and residential developers and investors, with a view to looking beyond simply retail. This would include preparing draft marketing content for display at Cities of Canada Pavilion.
 - Introduce community leadership to prospective regional retail tenant representatives, brokers and developers to highlight the community opportunity for live-work-shop-stay-play investment.

3.0 Positioning Strategy & Action Plan

- Through the use of programs like Social Pinpoint provide an on-line forum for community residents and businesses to share their wants and needs through user-friendly mapping and survey exercises.
- Create a targeted positioning strategy to enable best leasing practices for tenant and business attraction, focusing on those that fit the vision for Pincher Creek’s downtown, which will factor not just retail, but live/work, health & wellness, recreation and other pillars as identified in previous studies.
- Prepare a matrix of representative retailer/business typologies that could be targeted either through outreach or other entrepreneurial bootcamps or proactive city measures.
- Create a visual summary using diagrams and supporting narrative to show the positioning of various areas of the downtown identifying characteristics such as target consumers, target retail category types, optimal sizes.
- Include all tables, maps and supporting narrative in a supporting Downtown Market Analysis Appendix.
- Prepare a matrix of actionable streetscape and marketing interventions that could benefit downtown businesses and attract residents for a live-work-shop-stay-play experience.
- Develop an overall Downtown Action Plan Matrix for strategies to pursue outlining immediate, near and longer term strategies to bolster attraction and retention program as part of the communities overall picture.

Core Deliverables

- Summary Report comprising supporting narrative, images, charts and diagrams.
- Participate in a virtual Council Downtown Visioning Workshop
- Participate in virtual Café meet-and-greet with local stakeholders and businesses.
- Prepare a Community Survey
- Participate in final Council Presentation at completion

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Appendix E: Example of a Downtown Revitalization Review Proposal



Fee range & Timing

Based on the market context of Pincher and the work plan articulated herein, the estimated professional fee pricing options could be as follows:

Tasks	Fee	Timing
Tasks 1, 2 & 3 incl. Optional	\$25,000 plus GST	8-10 weeks with periodic allocation time for optional tasks
Tasks 1, 2 & 3 excl. Optional	\$20,000 plus GST	8 – 10 weeks
Tasks 1 & 3 only	\$15,000 plus GST	6 - 8 weeks

Other refinements could be considered to the work plan and corresponding fee, if and as deemed appropriate by the client.

Exclusions:

These fee estimates do not include expenses. In the event a kickoff workshop and on-the ground fieldwork were required, in-person fieldwork or meetings would be billed at per diem rates and expenses would be additional.

ICSC membership (public sector \$100/yr) and conference registration costs are not included. These costs would be incurred by the community, or issued as a reimbursable expense if coordinated through FBM.

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Appendix F: Pincher Creek Tourism Asset Inventory

2019 PINCHER CREEK



TOURISM ASSET INVENTORY

The Tourism Inventory is Comprised of Five Categories

1. ACCOMMODATIONS

3. TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

5. BUILT INFRASTRUCTURE

2. ANNUAL EVENTS

4. FOOD AND BEVERAGE



1a. ACCOMMODATIONS (HOTELS & MOTELS)

HOTELS/MOTELS
10
OF ROOMS
401 ~

EST. GUEST CAPACITY
640-660 ~ PEOPLE



1b. ACCOMMODATIONS (B&BS, CABINS & RETREAT FACILITIES)

10 B&B'S
OF ROOMS
50 ~

EST. GUEST CAPACITY
125 - 135 ~ PEOPLE



1c. ACCOMMODATIONS B&BS, CABINS & RETREAT FACILITIES

ONLINE LISTINGS
57 ~
OF ROOMS
150 - 160 ~

EST. GUEST CAPACITY
350 - 370 ~ PEOPLE



1d. CAMPING & RV SITES (OVERNIGHT & RV SITES)

OVERNIGHT CAMPGROUNDS & RV SITES
20 ~

OF SITES
623 ~



2. EVENTS - ANNUAL EVENTS

30 ~ ANNUAL EVENTS
165 - 200 ~ TOTAL EVENTS



3. TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

8 ~ KEY TOURIST ATTRACTIONS



4. FOOD & BEVERAGE ESTABLISHMENTS

FOOD & BEVERAGE ESTABLISHMENTS
25 ~

SEATING CAPACITY
850 - 870 ~

LIQUOR LICENSE
15 ~



5. FACILITIES – INFRASTRUCTURE

37 ~ BUILT INFRASTRUCTURE

NOTE:

- 1) Rooms are described in the following manner: Standard single room means 1 bed for 1 person regardless of bed size; standard double room means 1 room for 2 persons regardless of bed size; standard twin room means 2-beds for 2 persons and those beds might be twin, double or queen size beds; and a family suite may contain a double, queen or king bed with a pull-out couch generally for three or more people.
- 2) Guest occupancy capacity is estimated. It was noted some hotels/motels have 'family rooms' with twin or double rooms available with a double pull-out couch therefore the range can vary.
- 3) Estimated annual occupancy is the total number of possible guests. The numbers have been extracted from primary interviews conducted September 2019.

Appendix G: Oversight for Council Appointed Committees

Success of the Board, or lack thereof, tends to be a reflection of governance.

Many Boards struggle to understand their role and accountability. Part of the reason for this is that the Boards are usually comprised of volunteers with great intention but no understanding of the difference between advising and directing. Another part of the problem is a Board or Committee has been set up without a clearly defined purpose, but rather has broadly stated Terms of Reference that leave the interpretation up to the volunteer. Another challenge is that sometimes the willing volunteer does not have the capacity to see beyond his/her own business' needs and/or his/her own personal wishes about the development of the community.

The very use of the word 'board' leads the volunteers to believe that they are in charge and can set the stage for difficult interactions between volunteers and paid staff. Ultimately, elected officials who have chosen the CAO of the administrative staff as their one and only employee hold all accountability. The CAO is the only employee that reports to the elected officials directly. Every other paid employee is accountable, within the administrative structure, to the CAO. But most often the Board is outside the administrative structure and so the lack of accountability often becomes an issue and Board members end up going outside the scope of the Board, at times challenging the paid staff, usually, over initiatives and priorities set out in Council's strategic plan.

These governance issues tend to lead to confusion and delusion. There is often confusion about what needs doing and by whom, and there is also delusion about what can be accomplished and by whom.

Characteristics of Unsuccessful Boards:

- Have been in existence for more than a year but have accomplished little;
- Have had the same chairperson in place for extended periods of time;
- Have no diversity of people or ideology on the Board;
- Have no understanding of the need for confidentiality

when dealing with businesses;

- Don't understand conflict of interest, members use their involvement as a means to increase their own business or family interests;
- Are used by either elected officials or administration as a way to indirectly communicate with each other;
- Consider themselves experts and so don't seek best practice from elsewhere;
- Set their own mandate and goals; and
- Think that a broadly stated goal is the solution to fixing a problem or diversifying the economy. E.g., tourism is the broadly stated solution to diversifying the economy but specifically there are few tourism operators in the south (yet with capacity) and in general, there is very little data available on the different tourism markets that are more than day-trippers, spending, where they are coming from, etc.

Characteristics of Successful Boards and/or Action Committees:

- 1) They are most effective when project based. That is, they are put in place for a particular purpose. That purpose may be to assist in the development of a strategic plan; to act as volunteers and resources on a plan already in progress; and/or to open doors not available by other means to the paid staff.
- 2) There is a written mandate for the committee. The mandate comes from the goals set by elected officials and in coordination with the work of the administration. At the end of the process it is the administration that will answer to the elected officials as to how well they have utilized the committee to meet the goals. Having a written mandate keeps the committee focused on the project.
- 3) Committee members are invited to join based on their capacity to understand the project and influence the outcome. Individuals do not self-select but rather are sought for their expertise or connections.
- 4) Committee selection takes into account diversity of community members, expertise, gender, age and skill levels. A variety of voices need to be heard for the best outcomes.

Community 'buy in' comes when the community is well represented.

- 5) There are expected outcomes and deliverables built into the process. Everyone knows what success looks like and works together with the administration and the elected officials to achieve it. A work plan is determined with milestones and the milestones are monitored for completion.
- 6) Committees exist for a limited time. When the project is done the committee ceases to exist. If another project comes along a new Committee is convened potentially with new members. And, like all effective working groups, they discuss the issues only when together at a time and place chosen in advance; with all members provided notice of the meeting and present; and with inclusion of all opinions at the table. Only then does a vote take place that binds all members to action.
- 7) Committees as a group constantly seek wider input from the community on ideas and recommendations. New members are welcomed as their expertise is needed. Members are removed from the Committee when their expertise is no longer needed. None of this process is about personalities but rather about the needs of the project and everyone knows from the beginning that their involvement will be time-limited. The need for new blood is determined by the paid staff who are the only ones accountable for the project.
- 8) Committees use third parties in seeking information to ensure confidentiality in dealing with businesses for activities such as surveys or business visitations. Businesses won't discuss their competitive advantages or problems with people that they are likely to meet at the local coffee shop. They are more likely to speak to an outside expert with no reason to reveal their secrets except as cumulative data. The only time it makes sense to use local people to interview local business is when there is nothing confidential about the questions. Committee members also keep confidential anything and everything that they hear at a Committee meeting. The only people who speak for the community are the elected official at the top or the CAO. (A confidentiality agreement is a good idea.)
- 9) Members of the Committee and/or their family members don't directly benefit from the completion of the project any more than any other community member. This seems

obvious but it is our experience that some Committees have been spearheaded by individuals who are in a conflict of interest. Sometimes these individuals push a project through and sometimes they stop it in its tracks because it poses competition to their own interests. Sometimes they propose work be done by themselves or their family members for remuneration as part of the project. This should not be allowed.

- 10) And most importantly, the successful Committee works with the paid staff in an advisory capacity. They make suggestions, not commandments. They do not direct as they have no accountability. They have no power to hire or fire but rather they can make recommendations to the administration. If they are unhappy about the direction or the personnel, they are encouraged to speak up at a meeting and not in the coffee shop.

Appendix H: Economic Development – Action Team (A Teams)

Building on the content covered within Appendix G: ‘Council Appointed Committees – Guidance for Success’, it is important for the Action Teams to know what is within the scope of their project and is outside of the scope. The following is a guideline for setting up the Economic Development Action Teams. Providing clear guidelines for volunteers’ work will support successful outcomes.



Purpose of the Action Team is to:

- Support long-term economic stability and growth in the area by working on projects related to economic development goals;
- Provide advice, direction, information and volunteer time to the Economic Development Officer (EDO) of the Town; and
- Assist in the creation, development and implementation of actions that meets the goals.

Structure of the Action Team

- The action team is project-based. It has a start date, defined goals, expected outcomes and an end-date, which is usually at the completion of the defined tasks.
- The Team works through the auspices of the Economic Development Officer (EDO) and reports to the EDO who in turn reports to Administration who reports to Council.
- The Team is recruited by the EDO based on needed experience for a particular project. The volunteer Team members might be chosen because they are a building owner, business manager, developer, builder, architect and/or have ability to contribute relevant expertise on the project (e.g., workforce, housing, action plans to implement a housing strategy, etc.).
- Term of the volunteer engagement as an Action Team Member is at the discretion of the EDO.

Power of the Action Team

- Economic Development goals are set by Council and a strategic plan is prepared to meet those goals by administration. This plan is called the Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDs). The EDO acts on behalf of the administration to enact the plan.
- Expert volunteers are invited to participate in helping to provide advice and meet the goals via the plan for the benefit of the community.
- Volunteers liaise with the EDO with regard to all activities. They do not report to or advise Council. The EDO reports to administration who reports to Council.

Meetings

- There will be Action Team meetings from time to time and volunteers will be invited to attend.
- The EDO will determine the schedule for the meetings.
- The meetings will have an agenda and minutes will be taken to ensure a record.
- Robert’s rules of order shall prevail at meetings of the Action Team.
- The EDO will chair all meetings unless he/she has designated a volunteer to do so.

Activities of the Action Teams

Action Team One - Workforce Housing

EDO planning goals:

- Work towards increasing the growth of the tax base of residential properties for the Town.
- Create vibrancy in the Town with multi-purpose (commercial/retail and housing mix) options for a tax-paying, non-subsidized sector of residential development.
- Prioritize how to house more hospitality industry workers, health care workers, immigrants, newcomers, families, part-time and full-time residents in the Town of Pincher Creek.
- Encourage more innovative housing options (all types of housing) throughout the Town.
- Optimize opportunities to integrate housing options into the downtown core initiative, repurpose underutilized buildings and guide the creation of multi-use, multi-purpose buildings for live, work, play, stay development.
- Working with outside experts and/or a ‘Housing Consultant’ in advisory capacity:

- » Develop a 'Housing for Workforce Action plan' from the existing Pincher Creek Housing Needs Assessments (note recommendations in the 2010, 2016 & 2018 Housing Needs documents).
- » Liaise with/to FCSS and community support organizations to incorporate housing options for newcomer and immigrants through the 'Welcoming Communities' integration process.
- » Support long-term economic stability and growth in the area by providing a plan with options for different forms of housing stock for workers and their families.

Action Team supports plan by creating events and encouraging community engagement:

- » Providing residents, business owners and investors with an adequate opportunity to participate in engagement sessions on the planning process for future housing development neighbourhoods.
- » Participating in the 'Downtown Corridor Revitalization and Vibrancy' community engagement sessions. Work towards the redevelopment of the main street corridor to include more living spaces that are live-work options to house market-value residences and thereby provide more economic opportunity for street level businesses.
- » Considering suggestions for changes to the Town bylaws to allow for removal of red tape restrictions on development-reducing application wait times/barriers and streamlining rezoning processes.
- » Focusing on the pre-construction phase of housing to reduce barriers (restrictive direct control bylaws, etc.) and becoming investment ready for developers and investors to provide a much-needed housing supply.
- » Promoting a pro-residential development attitude within the community.
- » Liaising with the existing Pincher Creek Community Housing Committee and the Pincher Creek Foundation to share information, project progress and support each other's mandate where relevant.
- » Hosting an Investor Showcase or Summit for development (realtors, investors, developers, bankers, etc.). Year 1 is a round table, Year 2 matching investment opportunities with developers.
- » Hosting an Economic Development, Real Estate, Investor

Forum for development opportunities for residential growth within the Town.

Action Team Two - Workforce Attraction

The workforce attraction team will first focus on activities to support workforce retention and expansion in hospitality, general labour and tourism, and liaison with the Health and Wellness Advocacy Action Team to support healthcare projects.

EDO planning goals:

- **Increase the potential for new business investment in the community by increasing the number of workers for general businesses:**

1. General Service Workers (hospitality, tourism, accommodations, construction etc.)
 - » Development of skills programs to upgrade current workforce.
 - » Creation of an attraction program.
 - » Support for the new DMO (South Canadian Rockies Tourism Association) to assist in creating a workforce for an expanding tourism sector.
 2. Other specific workforce retention and attraction programs as identified through additional research. For example:
 - » Training programs to support immigrant and newcomer integration into the community.
 - » Research options to partner with firms such as SXNM and SKILLD Jobs that match employers with international employees.
- Working with outside experts, a "Workforce Consultant" – consider ways to incorporate other communities into the Workforce Development Initiative.
 - » Working through a workforce agency or third party consultant: create, develop and implement a tactical plan that promotes, retains and expands the workforce to meet the current and growing needs of businesses and organizations for workers.
 - » Tie efforts for development of a regional workforce initiative to those of Crowsnest Pass, Waterton and the M.D.
 - » Connect with academic institutions and workforce training firms to customize local programs.

Action Team Supports Plan by:

- Providing advice, direction, information and volunteer time to the Economic Development Officer (EDO) of the Town regarding workforce attraction.
- Providing business owners, workforce development professionals, and public and private employment agencies with an adequate opportunity to participate in engagement sessions on the planning process.
- Developing a “Welcoming Communities” plan through Rural Development Network and/or an equivalent organization.
- Promoting and hosting ways to welcome new neighbours, immigrants and Indigenous neighbours with interaction for the benefit of the community.
 - » Link to the Welcoming Communities events.
- Hosting a reverse trade show, an event that highlights the job opportunities in the community.
 - » E.g., Host a Filipino Welcoming Night in Town.
 - » Include activities that support the Health and Wellness Advocacy team, the Pincher Creek Hospital and the Pincher Creek Health Professionals Attraction & Retention Committee.

Action Team Three – Health and Wellness Advocacy Action Team- ‘Brain Trust’

The purpose of this action team, made up of strategic thinkers, is to solve the problem of how to get the Health Care system involved in the community economic development of Pincher Creek by developing and enacting a strategy to lobby the government for change thereby making PC an attractive location for medical entrepreneurs and innovators.

- Increase the potential for new business investment in the community by increasing the number of healthcare and wellness workers for those businesses:
 1. Health care workers
 - » Doctors and nurses
 - » Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) and Paramedics
 - » Health and wellness practitioners (dental, specialized services, etc.)
 2. Health and wellness knowledge support workers
 - » Entrepreneurs for medical hub growth
 - » Technology support services

Action Team supports plan by working on:

- Providing advice, direction, information and volunteer time to the Economic Development Officer (EDO) of the Town regarding workforce attraction for medical specialties.
- Providing business owners, workforce development professionals, public and private employment agencies with an adequate opportunity to participate in engagement sessions on the planning for recruitment process.

Promoting and hosting ways to welcome potential medical workers. Note, as per the health and wellness action team champion’s lead in the community. Examples could include:

- » Hosting a reverse trade show. An event that highlights the job opportunities in the community.
- » Hosting a rural nurses Pincher Creek Community tour day.

Medical, Health and Wellness Advocacy

- Determine when, how and who will advocate, champion and team up (ACT)
 - » Research to answer questions about and create plans to:
 - » Participate in the regional Workforce Initiative
 - » Incentivize rural nursing/practitioner training
 - » More uptake on rural nurses relocating in Pincher – Nurses Day Tour
 - » CT Scanner utilization, option to keep any revenue?
 - » Advocacy on getting more utilization of the OR
 - » Opportunity for other specialists to use OR
 - » Advocacy on the EMT/Paramedics being out of community for non-emergency transfers. Can they spend more time in emerg?
 - » Working with Piikani Ambulance
 - » Non-emergency transfer (NAT) unit use versus ambulance
 - » NAT revenue generation with a Pincher Creek Emergency Commission
 - » Support health and wellness business attraction. E.g., dental surgery, life mark franchise options, etc.
 - » Medical tourism, how to work with or around AHS, public vs private services for out of province revenue generation

Appendix I: Example of a Workforce Housing and Welcoming Communities Action Plan Proposal

The Rural Development Network (RDN) Housing and Welcoming Communities Action Plan proposal.



Note: This proposal was received prior to being selected as one of seven in Alberta to receive funding from Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) to develop a “Community Readiness for Newcomer Integration” project. The project was awarded to the Calgary Catholic and Immigration Society (CCIS) in July, 2021. Potentially CCIS can develop parallel action steps to the RDN proposal.

The following three pages are excerpts from the full 26-page proposal.

APPROACH, METHODOLOGY AND PROJECT SCHEDULE

Scope and Methodology

Our process is collaborative and sufficiently open-ended to gather knowledge that translates into solutions which truly represent the Town’s needs and aspirations and those identified by various reports. The RDN will evaluate the need and provide recommendations that will work best for the Town using their extensive experience in performing analyses and outlining potential strategies. Additionally, through RDN’s experience in working remotely across Canada and with the Town of Pincher Creek in the past, the RDN is well equipped to handle the responsibilities associated with this project.

Through the completion of a detailed Action Plan, supported by Community Consultation, the RDN will highlight the steps the Town can take in order to improve the areas of housing, immigration, business / entrepreneur development, tourism and recreation. An initial “kick-off” meeting will take place where the RDN’s team and the Town’s representatives can meet, review the work program in detail, and establish communication parameters.

Please note that the items below, the Action Plan and Community Consultation will be done concurrently. Overall, the project timeline is roughly 30 weeks. Please also note that the proposed timelines include time for Town review and revisions.

Action Plan

The Action Plan will define clear steps that the Town can take in order to make improvements in various areas. Namely the areas of housing, immigration, business / entrepreneur development, tourism and recreation. The Action Plan will take the recommendations from various reports to develop these clear steps, and will be supported by the accompanying Community Consultation.

Action	Description	Proposed Timeline
Data Collection	A thorough review of all completed research documentation will first be conducted. This review will allow us to compile the various recommendations made and start preparing steps the Town can take to action those recommendations.	May 31st - June 11th
Develop the Housing Action Items	Through a review of the relevant documentation, action items to improve the region’s housing situation will be drafted. This will discuss the increasing cost of housing, the decreasing supply of housing, and how to ensure that housing development synergizes with tourism and economic development.	July 12th - Aug. 6th
Conduct a Rural Immigration Assessment	There is currently a lack of information available on immigrants currently residing in the community as well as immigration trends over time. The community should first gain a better understanding of what the demographics are and then begin to look at what is in place that will support settlement and integration in the community and where the gaps are.	July 12th - Aug. 13th

APPROACH, METHODOLOGY AND PROJECT SCHEDULE

Action	Description	Proposed Timeline
Develop the Immigration Action Items	<p>Through a review of the relevant documentation, including the completed Immigration Assessment, action items to improve the region's immigration situation will be drafted.</p> <p>This will address the ways to attract and retain immigrants to the Town, the services needed by immigrants in order to thrive, how to address stigma in the Town and how to ensure that immigration has the greatest positive impact for the community.</p>	Aug. 16th - Sept. 17th
Create alignment with Business & Entrepreneurship plan	<p>Working with the Town and/or a downtown development specialists/architect type-firm - the Action Plan will be aligned with the findings for improving the community's business and revitalizing the downtown core.</p> <p>This will allow the Town to improve their economic health and develop the Town's industries.</p>	Aug. 16th - Aug. 27th
Develop the Recreation Action Items	<p>Through a review of the relevant documentation, action items to improve the region's recreation situation will be drafted.</p> <p>This will include ways to strengthen the local recreation industry, how to ensure maximum economic and social benefit from recreation, as well as the creation of a tourism framework to allow collaboration between key stakeholders.</p>	Sept. 20th - Oct. 22nd
Finalize Action Plan	Compile all the completed materials into a single Action Plan for the region.	Oct. 25th - Nov. 26th

FEE TABLE

Fee Table

The table below separates the deliverables out by their related project task and outlines the time that will be allocated for the task and the associated fee.

Action Plan Tasks	Fee
Total	\$20,430
Community Consultation Tasks	Fee
Total	\$11,350
Meeting Management	\$1,703
Grand Total	\$33,483

Appendix J: Example of a Community Investment Co-op Concept

The challenge:

Key stakeholders, community leaders and economic development practitioners participating in the southwestern Alberta “Bringing Investment Home” business development project identified a key gap or challenge to business growth and new investment as the lack of access to capital – be it start-up, operating, human resources or investment capital.

The opportunity:

The Bringing Investment Home project Consultants, InnoVisions & Associates, proposed that the project partners, (Community Futures SW Alberta, Community Futures Crowsnest Pass and SW Alberta Regional Economic Development Alliance), set up several meetings to explore the potential of a regional business development organization and investment pool; a funding model that could provide entrepreneurs with access to start-up funds, customized and staged loans, and opportunities for regional investors to invest in businesses in their own backyard. Unlike many funding co-ops and investment clubs, it is recommended that the funding model include a component of business coaching, mentoring, and path finding to link entrepreneurs to business tools and resources that could support their business in future growth.

A Southwest Business Development Investment Consortium (Concept):

Access to capital is one of the driving needs of business. Sources of capital range across the spectrum from family and friend loans, to commercial lenders like banks to private venture capitalists (like those on Dragon’s Den) to public stock offerings on the major stock exchanges. Co-operative funding models, while not new, are coming into vogue again as a means to access scarce capital in rural areas where projects may be smaller, more local in scope and returns on the capital are expected to take longer to accumulate. One need only think of George Bailey, the protagonist in the holiday classic film “It’s a Wonderful Life”, who worked for the local building and loans operation to understand the idea of a co-operative funding model.

Those with capital to invest seek low risk with high return and they also try to maximize the benefit of tax advantages through means such as RRSPs. A huge industry of extremely sophisticated financiers and regulators exists to gather capital and disperse it directly, through stock offerings or via mutual funds, to the mutual advantage of the investor and the issuer. Sophistication does not mean, however, that it is risk free as various financial meltdowns prove. A running joke in the investment industry is “we take your money and our experience and make it our money and your experience.”

It is a truism that the less likely you are to need capital the more likely you are to be offered it. Conversely, when entrepreneurs need capital is when it is least likely to be available. A successful firm with good cash flows can access funds easily while start-ups and more risky ventures struggle to find equity investors or garner loans. The idea of a regional funding/financing model is a very attractive one to those who have neither the means nor ability to attract the usual financial resources. A regional business development and investment consortium funding model may well be the only way for certain local projects to be financed or for businesses to thrive and compete with larger players, especially in the retail sector.

Invest Southwest Investment Pool Concept

Figure 18: Investment pool concept visual

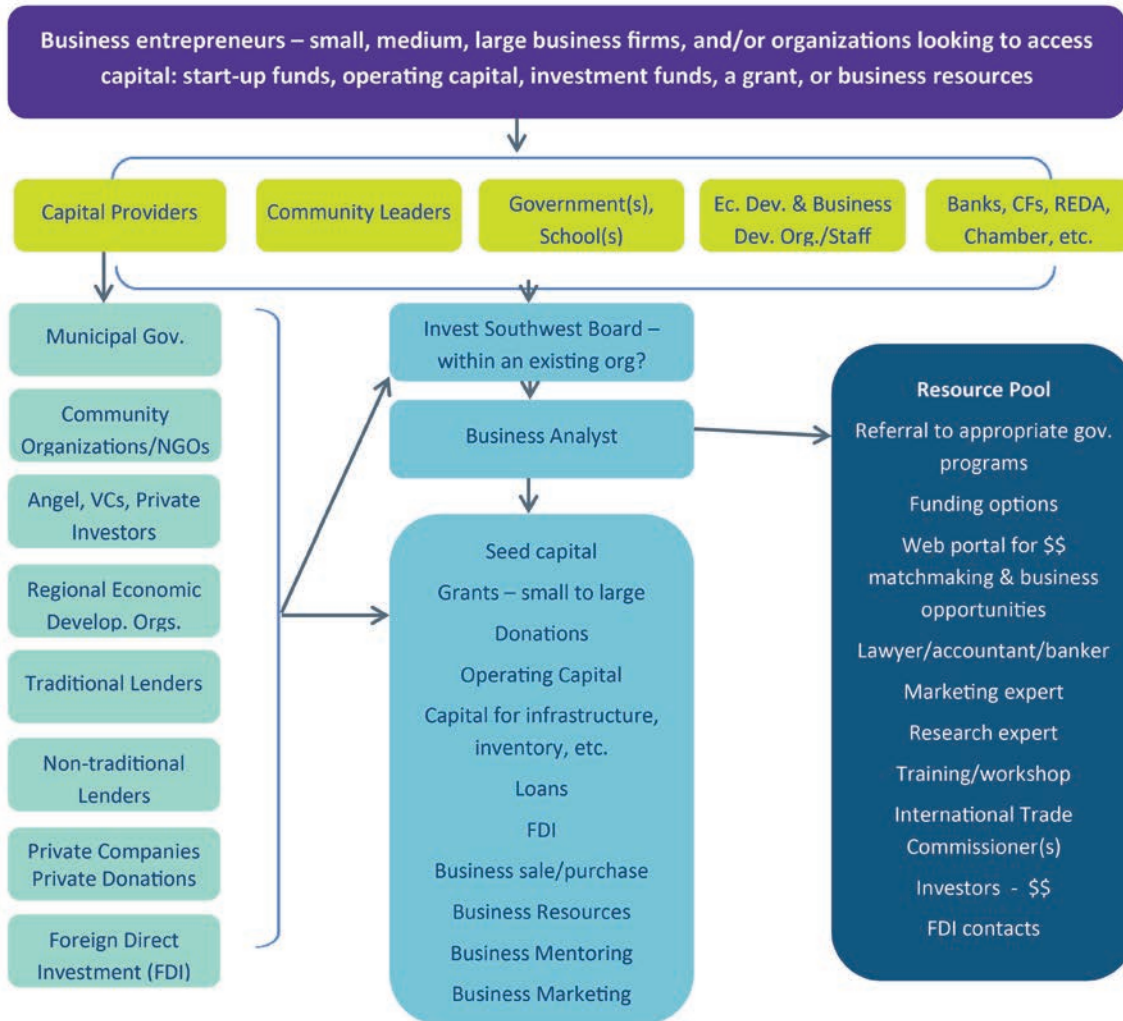


Table 14: Benefits of a regional investment consortium

Benefits of a Regional Investment Consortiums-um Model	Challenges of an Investment Model
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeps capital local or within a particular project Can remove barriers to business growth for entrepreneurs Allows the investor a hands on role or insider knowledge of the workings of the firm Can provide a means for revitalization of a community Has the opportunity to offer more than money: local knowledge, access to business acumen and sweat equity Good means to encourage entrepreneurship among youth Closer connection between lender and borrower can mean higher commitment to repay the loan Loans and/or investment can be as big or small as the opportunity presented Community buy in to the concept can mean guaranteed customers for the firm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Success depends on the ability to objectively analyze the merits of a project or firm Co-op vs. consortium. Co-ops carry a stigma of past failed organizations Not many co-ops/consortium's have skilled business analysts on staff and rely on local business savvy which may be more emotion driven than logic driven Oversight of the funds is left to volunteer board members who do not often have experience in governance or an understanding of managing access to capital or managing loan portfolios Huge opportunity for fast talking con artists to insert themselves into the process and distort the results

Mitigating the Risks

The risks of the consortium funding model can be mitigated if a banking institution with local knowledge becomes a key participant. Banks know how to assess risk and manage funds and a local lender with a better understanding of, and commitment to, the community is the most likely entity to mitigate the risks noted above. In addition, banks hold the capital of potential investors. They are in the perfect position to put together a local project with local investors. They have the ability to take the role of a merchant bank and act as deal makers and take a commensurate fee for the service.

Another way to mitigate the risk of an investment is to limit the size of the loan or investment. Starting and growing new businesses with smaller increments of capital is going to be less risky as well as more likely to result in economic growth. If combined with access to business acumen, both in analyzing the business proposal as well as through business coaching of the entrepreneur to maximize the opportunity, the risk will be further reduced. Access to business acumen has the added advantage of increasing community capacity for further investment.



Appendix K: Detailed Action Plan Working Sheets

Table 15: CEDS Action Plan Worksheets



CEDS GOAL #1: RETAIN AND ATTRACT NEW BUSINESS

Recommendations:

1. Create an authentic pro-business culture at Town office. Engage all staff in an economic development session on the importance of increasing business within the Town and how the departments could link to economic development activities.
2. Develop a Business Concierge service – coordinate a one-window approach within the Town administration that builds relationships with businesses from the first interaction. Strategize on ways to reduce complex application processes or reduce wait times.
3. Have the Economic Development Officer act as the Town liaison/project manager/quarter back for the businesses requiring assistance.
4. Restructure the economic development position and department; include considering as needed, non- payroll contractors for communications and events.
5. Foster a pro-business environment by reducing the red tape around each process of interacting with the Town. Provide staff with authority, accountability, encouragement and BUDGET to find innovative ways to improve processes and support businesses.
6. Budget for more external communication processes to reach different audiences to provide facts, build awareness and stop the rumours.
7. Develop a succession plan and leadership development/mentorship program that will minimize the serious loss of knowledge and experience of the senior staff retiring in the next year. Find ways to keep retiring employees engaged as mentors and add knowledge resources to bolster the inevitable gaps.
8. Develop a data strategy. Increase the collection of primary data to provide a solid base of information for analysis to ensure that decisions are accurately informed.
9. Revamp the business licenses to capture relevant information about the businesses.
10. Incorporate the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) categorization within the business licensing process.
11. Explore the option of a bridge program to link to the existing Diamond software, create a workaround, or invest in a new system to track NAICS.
12. Conduct a formal business outreach program, track business interviews in a confidential CRM, follow-up on red flags (closures, exiting the community, etc.) and green flags (expanding, new certification, products, etc.).
13. Review the Business Recovery Support Program (BRSP). Consider timing on when to advance to Phase 3, to the small business and entrepreneur ecosystem program.
14. Encourage small business and entrepreneurial ecosystem. Designate time and budget to entrepreneur-led economic development activities to offer businesses life-stage training, mentoring, and sector specific programs to build a resilient business community.
15. Conduct a structured business outreach program to gather local business intel to develop programs for business retention and expansion.
16. Provide succession planning opportunities for business owners to sell or transition their businesses to ensure that products and services continue to be available in the community.

Strategies	Tactics
<p>1.1 Develop a Business Concierge System</p> <p>Resources: Vision - Budget - Council - Implementation - Town Administration - TBC: Contract architect/planner Timeline: Fall, 2021</p>	<p>1.1.1 Create a business-friendly culture at the Town Office</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Host an internal session on how ec. dev. fits into all departments. <p>1.1.2 Actively work to cut the red tape. Create a one-window development application processes with the EDO.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Starting with the first phone call or interaction, have the EDO triage the business. » Develop online forms for business licenses, applications, etc. » Work with planning (or an outside planner) to find ways to update and streamline the LUB to include more flexible development options while waiting for the MDP revisions » Host a session on ‘how to file a permit, or rezone’, etc. <p>1.1.3 Develop an internal/external marketing plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Update internal staff on new projects. All staff is on ‘team’ business too. » Adopt more (and different ways) to communicate externally what changes are being made by Council and Administration. A positive report card. Infographics to explain what money is being spent where, etc.. Examples of ROI outcomes of process changes, etc. A positive report card. Examples of the ROI of etc.
<p>1.2 A Leadership Development and Succession Planning Process</p> <p>Resources: Town Administration Timeline: Fall, 2021</p>	<p>1.2.1 Strive for organizational excellence through leadership development and include succession planning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Consider skillsets that support community and economic development for future hires. E.g., social and economic development/FCSS <p>1.2.2 Restructure the economic development department.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Contract out events and communications.
<p>1.2 Develop a Data Strategy</p> <p>Resources: Town Administration, TBC: Chamber, Localintel Timeline: 2022</p>	<p>1.3.1 Increase internal capacity to gather local data. Leverage data as a strategic asset to ‘plan’ the community and programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Encourage data sources (LocalIntel) to revisit their catchment area/numbers for Pincher Creek » Continue to partner with the Chamber host business building events. <p>1.3.2 Business licenses can be a source of primary data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Put the licenses and wherever possible all paper Town forms online. <p>1.3.3 Incorporate the NAICS in business license coding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Review ‘bridging’ options for the existing Diamond software. If not applicable, purchase data from Environics.
<p>1.4 Review the BRSP (2021) Outcomes to Move to Phase Three</p> <p>Resources: Town Administration, TBC: Chamber, Localintel, SASCI, SXNM Timeline: 2021 - 2022</p>	<p>1.4.1 Review the emergency Business Recovery Support Program (BRSP) to determine how to move to Phase Three - the small business and entrepreneur ecosystem.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » In Sept./Oct. (pending the fourth wave). Determine how to move forward with the entrepreneur and small business ecosystem. Use data from surveys and interviews to determine what actions the Town or Chamber can manage » Determine when to transition to the entrepreneur and small business ecosystem (detailed with the BI&A) goal

Strategies	Tactics
<p>1.5 Conduct a Structured Business Outreach Program. Resources: Town Administration, TBC: Chamber, Localintel, SASCI, SXNM Timeline: 2022-2023</p>	<p>1.5.1 Set up a Business Visitation/Outreach program to gather local business intel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Coordinate a set number of business visits, and business features each month. » Continue to partner with the Chamber to collect relevant data, do ‘some’ volunteer outreach where it can’t breach confidentiality. <p>1.5.2 Increase awareness of succession planning/transitioning options for business owners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Increase marketing of the program to development more awareness and engagement.

Outcomes:

- Become known as a business friendly community
- Have streamlined, effective processes for business permitting, licensing and development
- Beautification and vibrancy are increased in Pincher Creek
- With entrepreneurship programs starting in the schools and extending to the entire region
- Having a conduit for entrepreneurs to connect to resources
- With a range of local training opportunities to grow more local talent/workforce
- Increase opportunities to start and scale up business
- Increased employment opportunities for young adults to return home to work
- While creating partnerships that foster community spirit and entrepreneurship
- And current residents understand and support the success of their existing businesses.
- Including a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem that builds capacity in tourism sectors as a priority

Budget Implications: As the various strategies and/or recommendations are not yet approved by Council, the Consultants did not confirm budget figures. Any figures presented are cost estimates only.

1.1 Business concierge:

- » Internal staff session on department integration. InnoVisions. No charge.
- » Innovative planner/investor/developer to review LUB. Hourly or a set amount or fee for service
- » Marketing pieces in the newspaper and social media, infographics, design costs, etc.

1.2 Leadership development – restructure ec. dev.

- » Contract out marketing and events positions

1.3. Data strategy

- » Bridge software between Diamond and NAICS codes conversion. EnviroNics?

1.4 Business outreach

- » Hospitality events, recognition pieces in the newspaper
- » Focus groups, host events, recognition pieces in the paper, etc.

Resource Assignment	Priority	When to Initiate
Advocate, Champion, Team Up	ACT	Resources/Support/Input
1.1 Sr. Administration	C	Recreation Planning X High – 1.1/1.2 Med. – 1.3/1.4 Q3 2021 Q4 2022-2023
1.2 Administration	C	Infrastructure Action Team Lo
1.3 Administration	C	Regional partner Academic partner
1.4 EDO	C	Other Partnerships _____ CofC; SASCI/Foundation



CEDS GOAL #2: ATTRACT NEW INVESTMENT & BUSINESSES TO THE COMMUNITY

Recommendations:

1. Develop a 21st century ‘Downtown Revitalization and Vibrancy plan’ which is authentically designed and incorporates more multi-use options to live-work-play and stay in the downtown corridor and community neighbourhoods.
2. Incentivize development and investment. Share the risk with developers and business owners to spur new investment and commercial development.
3. Have land and development plans such as an Area Structure Plan approved and in place to allow for more investment and economic development. Incorporate and encourage more ‘placemaking’ and authentic, architectural and brand themes into all community amenities such as downtown redevelopment, recreational trail systems and way- finding.
4. Develop a small business and entrepreneurial ecosystem which encourages new business starts and business investment spurring an increase in more diverse products and services to attract residents, newcomers to the community and visitors.
5. Establish a local Community Investment Market Place to provide different types of funding/financing options for entrepreneurs.

Strategies	Tactics
<p>2.1 Develop a 21st Century Town Centre.</p> <p>Resources: Vision – Budget is Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation - Town Administration - TBC: Contract architect/planner <p>Timeline: Fall 2021</p>	<p>2.1.1 Develop a downtown corridor revitalization plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Community engagement on the downtown corridor engagement. » Select a consultant that has the experience and talent to create an authentic downtown vision. » Incorporate multi-use development option. » Incorporate placemaking and authentic design. Have a balance between historic preservation as well as incorporate outdoor seating and green spaces. » Connect to the creek, explore better ways to utilize greenspaces » Consider direction provided by the Rec. Master Plan, enhance walking trails, the back alley development along the creek, etc. » Tie to other community initiatives (if applicable) like the Apple Tree project. <p>2.1.2 Build-up rather than out.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » When planning downtown or new neighbourhoods, consider building up vs. out which is one of the best ways to increase tax revenue. » Work with developers and investors as it relates to optimal locations for future retail and commercial development. » During a community engagement process, address space utilization, densification, more live-work-stay-play options » Tie to the Housing Action plan and communicate with Action Teams.
<p>2.2 Incentivize New Development and Investment</p> <p>Resources: Town Administration</p> <p>Interim, planning consultant/contractor or the new hire(s)</p> <p>Timeline: Fall, 2021</p>	<p>2.2.1 Support an ‘Investment Incentive Bylaw’ to encourage development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Address the outdated LUB and MDP with short-term solutions until the documents are updated. » With the temporary assistance of a contractor/consultant find ways to streamline the foundational plans now. » Establish pre-approved development frameworks such as such as Area Structure Plan (ASP).

Strategies	Tactics
<p>2.3 Develop a Small Business and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Resources: EDO, Chamber, Economic Development Lethbridge (EDL), AlbertaSW Timeline: 2021 - 2022</p>	<p>2.3.1 Nurture an entrepreneurial ecosystem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » It is important to provide a supportive environment that builds on the culture of entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity. » Using the existing 'Business Recovery (BRSP)' model, leverage people, partnerships and possibilities to connect entrepreneurs to the right resources at the right time. » Continue to build the networks of service providers, mentors, advisors etc. » Connect with programs such as SMARTstart and Creative Labs through EDL
<p>2.4 Establish a Community Investment Marketplace Resources: EDO, SASCI SXNM Timeline: 2021-2022</p>	<p>2.4.1 Partner to Develop a 'Community Investment Market Place' Local Investors, Local Business, Local Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Work with SASCI to explore links to the new foundation, consider ways to link local investors/funders philanthropists, government, and traditional finance institutions looking to partner on local small business projects. » Extend the project to include expert advisors, business mentors and resources to support new businesses and build community resiliency.
<p>2.5 Host an Economic Development, Real Estate, investor Forum. Resources: Town Administration, TBC: Chamber, AREF Timeline: 2022</p>	<p>2.5.1 Host an economic development, real estate, investor forum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » This would be an event that stimulates conversations between builders, developers, investors and businesses to spur development innovation. » Engage a facilitator with experience in real estate investment, housing, developer forums, etc. » Connect with the Alberta Real Estate Foundation (AREF) for support. » Have Town staff, planning, permitting, etc. attend to share development concepts, progress, etc » Tie in housing, authentically designed neighbourhoods, unique multi-purpose commercial and residential spaces with recreation and green spaces in which to gather.

Outcomes:

- Become known as a business friendly community
- With streamlined, effective processes for business permitting, licensing and development
- A thriving, profitable and growing business centre in Alberta
- Beautification and development of Pincher Creek's downtown corridor and community neighbourhoods
- The Town becomes known as an advocate for business support and development innovation
- New businesses bring more job opportunities and more economic stability to the region
- New job opportunities attract newcomers and encourage the return of young adults raised in Pincher Creek and young families
- Critical mass of B2B is achieved with value chain development in conjunction with existing firms
- Become a business and residential hub supporting a high standard of living for residents

Budget Implications: As the various strategies and/or recommendations are not yet approved by Council, the Consultants did not confirm budget figures. Any figures presented are cost estimates only.

2.1 Develop a 21st Century Town Centre

- » Downtown revitalization and gap analysis plan. Estimated \$25,000 - \$30,000
- » Community engagement session. Marketing pieces in the newspaper and social media, infographics, design costs, etc.

2.2 Incentivize new development and investment

- » Advisor/contractor/consultant to review bylaws and provide short-term solutions to increase the new investment option for developers. Hourly rate or a set fee.

2.3 Develop a small business and entrepreneur ecosystem

- » Regional partnerships, memberships, events similar to the BRSP model
- » Hosting two to three business events per year in partnership with the CofC

2.4 Community Investment Marketplace – Build a Resilient Community

- » Support SASCI/the new foundation. Seed money, events?
- » Entrepreneur and small business ecosystem
- » Training events

2.5 Host an economic develop, real estate, investor forum.

- » In partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce host an event. Costs could include speaker fees, venue, etc. Estimate - \$5,000
- » Marketing

Resource Assignment	Priority	When to Initiate
Advocate, Champion, Team Up	ACT	Resources/Support/Input
2.1 Council direction to Admin.	C	Recreation High – 2.1 Q3 Q4 2021
2.2 Council then	C	Planning X + Consultant - 2.2 Q2 - 2022
Administration	C	Infrastructure X - 2.5 Q2 2022-2023
2.3 EDO/CofC/EDL	C	Action Team Med. – 2.3 _____
2.4 EDO /SASCI	T	Regional partner X -2.4
2.5. EDO, Chamber, AREF	T	Academic partner Low
		Other Partnerships _____ CofC; SASCI/Foundation; AREF



CEDS GOAL #3: DEVELOP A WORKFORCE INITIATIVE

Recommendations:

1. Champion or team-up in a coordinated regional workforce initiative that brings together expert workforce resources for specific projects in workforce training and skills development.
2. Position Pincher Creek to become the most attractive housing location for young families in the region by ensuring a variety of housing options. Appoint a Workforce Housing Action Team. Engage an expert to develop a Housing Action Plan. Liaise with the existing Housing Management Body (HMB), and ensure the focus is on all types of housing. The research is complete, Pincher Creek needs an actionable “who, what, where, when and how” plan to provide more housing options ASAP.
3. Develop a ‘Rural Welcoming Community Program’ - become known as a Welcoming Community. Work with subject matter experts on immigration and indigenous relations to enhance the efforts to retain and attract newcomers and build the capacity to support their smooth integration into the community. Create pathways to be more inclusionary and accepting of the Indigenous population.
4. Create a ‘Residential Growth Strategy’ with a focus on how to reduce youth migration out of the region. Increase opportunities for youth to return home with a variety of tactics based on job opportunities and housing. Consider lifestyle trends and integrate immigrants and newcomers into the community with the objective of having more young families. Include action items which strive to address the social, mental, and physical well-being of the existing and future population.
5. Become a training centre. In addition to existing training organizations, anchor education systems in the community to stop the out-migration and increase educational opportunities. Promote Pincher Creek as a community of choice for newcomers both as employees and as new business owners/entrepreneurs.

Strategies	Tactics
<p>3.1 A Regional Workforce Initiative</p> <p>Resources: Vision – Budget – Council - Implementation – EDO or FCSS (initially) then a contract position to get it up and running. - TBC: Partners, Crowsnest Pass/Waterton/AlbertaSW SXNM and gov. workforce orgs. Timeline: Fall 2021</p>	<p>3.1.1 Host a round-table workforce fact finding discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Starting with the Town as the lead, seek regional partners and find a champion to take over leading the initiative. » Team-up with government and workforce organizations. » Reach out to Crowsnest Pass, Waterton and AlbertaSW, and potential partners.
<p>3.2 Workforce Housing Action Team</p> <p>Resources: EDO/CCIS/RDN Implementation. The Action Team of volunteers, workforce advisors, government Timeline: Fall 2021</p>	<p>3.2.1 Appoint a Workforce Housing Action Team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Work with an expert advisor to develop a ‘Housing Action’ plan from the previous housing needs assessments. » Liaise with the existing local housing management bodies (HMB’s) to ensure there is mandate to provide all options for housing. » This strategy ties to Goal 1 and 2 providing more live-work-play and stay options.
<p>3.3 Develop a Rural Immigration Initiative – Become a Welcoming Community</p> <p>Resources: EDO/CCIS/RDN (or equivalent organizations) Implementation: Contract position. The Workforce Housing Action Team Contract position. Timeline: 2021 - 2022</p>	<p>3.3.1 Link this strategy to the ‘Housing Action Plan’.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Implement the AUMA Welcoming Communities pilot through CCIS (begins fall 2021). » Research the ties to Utilize the Business Link and other immigrant/refugee resource programs to help with integration into the community. » Work collaboratively with Piikani Employment Services
<p>3.4 Link to business investment Options for Newcomers, immigrants and Indigenous Entrepreneurs.</p> <p>Resources: Town EDO/FCSS Implementation. Contractor. Workforce Housing Action Team; SXNM Timeline: 2021-2022</p>	<p>3.4.1 Partner to coordinate options for immigrant, newcomer and Indigenous entrepreneurs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Link this strategy to the small business and entrepreneurial activities » Link this strategy to the workforce development initiative. » Leverage the government’s new Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program » Include SXNM and their partnerships in discussions. » Engage the Business Link’s Indigenous strategist. » Align and/or partner with the Claresholm Rural and Northern Immigration Program.

Strategies	Tactics
<p>3.5 Create a Residential Growth Strategy Resources: Town EDO/FCSS Implementation. Workforce Housing Action Team; SXNM Timeline: 2022-2023</p>	<p>3.5.1 Appoint a Workforce Attraction Action Team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Return to rural marketing plan. » Give youth and young people a reason to want to return home. » Connect with the youth, engage them in start-up business concepts. » Attract young families to the community. » Develop a marketing plan to attract workforce and residents to Pincher Creek. » Position the community as a health and wellness hub, focus on 'quality-of-life' advantages for the young families.
<p>3.6 Become a Training Centre in the Region Resources: Town EDO/FCSS Implementation. Workforce Housing Action Team; SXNM. Training organizations, academic institutions Timeline: 2021-2022</p>	<p>3.6.1 Leverage academic partnerships for more local training and job skills upgrading options.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Partner with both traditional and non-traditional education options including the local and regional training organizations. » Align with healthcare professional retention and attraction activities to advocate and/or support to have more healthcare training options. » Host a workforce attraction forum, organized either by NOCS segments, or as a community job fair. Market into larger metropolitan centres. » Don't reinvent the wheel, link to the RINSA, WESTEM, ULethbridge, etc. » If there is capacity, work with the Chamber to have a sub-committee on becoming a training centre. » Collectively, discuss the option of hosting a workforce attraction forum that provides job seekers

Outcomes:

- Services become available that readily help businesses retain and attract workforce
- More workforce
- Longevity and resilience of businesses is increased by job creation and retention of employees
- Programs are created to actively attract immigrants and newcomers
- Pincher Creek is viewed as a Welcoming Community for newcomers and immigrants
- Jobs exist for the children of current residents to stay in Pincher Creek
- More options for local and international immigrants, newcomers and Indigenous entrepreneurs and/or business investors
- Housing options within vibrant neighbourhoods are developed to attract new residents to live and work in the area
- Post-secondary training and education is offered in the community

Budget Implications: As the various strategies and/or recommendations are not yet approved by Council, the Consultants did not confirm budget figures. Any figures presented are cost estimates only.

3.1 A regional workforce coordinator – contract position to liaise with the town and regional partners.

3.2 Workforce housing action team - volunteers

3.3 Rural Immigration Initiative – Become a Welcoming Community

- » Fee-for-service set out in the Housing Action Plan and combined with Welcoming Communities (draft proposal) \$10,000
- » CCIS - AUMA grant

3.5 Residential Growth Strategy

- » Links to the Workforce and Housing Action Team
- » Co-sponsor a health and wellness Pincher Creek showcase day for health practitioners (outlined in Goal #4)
- » Regional workforce attraction forum. Estimate \$5,000

3.6 Become a training centre

Resource Assignment		Priority	When to Initiate	
Advocate, Champion, Team Up	ACT	Resources/Support/Input		
3.1 Town (initially)	C	Recreation	High – 3.1/3.2	Q3 2021-2022-2023
3.2 EDO/Administration	C/T	Planning	Med. –	Q1 2022-2023-2024
3.3 Contract Position	T	Infrastructure	3.3/3.4/3.5	
3.4 Contractor	T	FCSS X		
3.5 Contractor	T	Action Team X	Low - /3.6	
3.6 Contractor and CofC	T	Regional partners X		
		Academic partner X		
		Other Partnerships _____		
		CofC; CCIS; RDN; training organizations		



CEDS GOAL #4: DIVERSIFY THE ECONOMY

Recommendations:

- Develop the rural health concept. Strive to build capacity to supply more products and services by providing more health & wellness options; more essential services; more regional movement of goods and services; and more support for agriculture and tourism development.
 - Position as a ‘health and wellness hub’. Leverage Pincher Creek’s teaching hospital and ancillary support services to attract more health and wellness operators.
 - Leverage Pincher Creek’s central location in the region. Position as a ‘service and amenity hub by increasing and improving key essential services and community assets to meet regional needs (e.g., housing, skilled workforce, quality health, education, amenities and facilities).
 - Position as a transportation corridor and logistics hub. Increase partnerships and project-based activities to promote an increase in the flow of goods and services via roads, rail and runways that feed into the community. Confirm a business case that could leverage the airport to move more products, people, services and investment in the region.
- Increase and improve community assets that are key to future sustainability and prosperity, and will attract different demographic markets as a result of development of the above mentioned sectors.
- Link to tourism bodies (e.g., the new DMO [South Canadian Rockies Tourism Association] and/or other tourism organizations). Work and plan collectively and strategically to expand the number and capacity of revenue producing visitor experiences. Work with tourism operators to access affluent tourist markets.
- Assist in supporting the dissemination of information about new market opportunities in agriculture. Identify and support a champion that encourages local farmers and ranchers to access innovation programs and projects. Recognize that there is a shift taking place in agriculture to new needs in the market for pea proteins and novel (to the area) crops. Pay attention to the aging farmers and ranchers and work with organizations to help them transition their businesses to new owners to keep those farms and ranches prosperous and in the community.

Strategies	Tactics
<p>4.1 Create a Health and Wellness Hub</p> <p>Resources: Council in an advocacy role</p> <p>Implementation – Health and Wellness Advocacy Action Team</p> <p>Timeline: Fall 2021</p>	<p>4.1.1 Establish a Health & Wellness Advocacy Action Team. Determine when and who will Advocate, Champion or Team-up (ACT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » With the guidance and support of the local medical and wellness community, team-up to establish a Health and Wellness Advocacy Action Team » Determine how to position as a hub, a ‘Corridor for the Continuum of Care’ » Through a business and economic development lens - examples for HWAAT brain trust discussion, advocacy and lobbying collectively could include. <p>4.1.2 Address staffing shortages.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Via the Action Team – explore ways to determine if there are ways to incentivize nurses to train and STAY in Pincher Creek. <p>4.1.3 Advocate for a regionally supportive funding model.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Explore non – emergency transfers for patients » Find way to develop businesses in the hospital » Fee for service-Virtual health care options <p>4.1.4 Via local practitioners, and through the economic development lens, determine if more services can be provided locally?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Add more specialized services » Host a round table » Market the community to attract health care professionals » Identify retention activities » Consider medical tourism » Expand mental health and addictions treatment
<p>4.2 Create a Business, Services and Amenity Hub</p> <p>Resources: Town Administration</p> <p>Timeline: 2021</p>	<p>4.2.1 Leverage Pincher Creek’s central location in the region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Focus on becoming a one-stop location <p>4.2.2 Encourage more B2C & B2B local purchasing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Continue shop local promotions » Support an entrepreneurial eco-system » Build connections between area businesses » Create a promotion for business attraction » Increase messaging to residents <p>4.2.3 Business does better in Pincher Creek’ marketing plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Promote testimonials of businesses » Grow local businesses with a concerted support effort » Tie the activities to the CEDS goals
<p>4.3 Expand into a Transportation Corridor and Logistics Hub..</p> <p>Timeline: 2022-2026</p>	<p>4.3.1 Become a centre for regional logistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Collaborate as a region » Rethink the community bus usage <p>4.3.2 Complete the Airport Business Case.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Wait for the consultant report » Take the long view » Talk to other potential industry users

Strategies	Tactics
<p>4.4 Increase and Improve Community Assets</p> <p>Resources: Town Chamber, the Community</p> <p>Timeline: 2021-2022</p>	<p>4.4.1 Increase and improve community assets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Get more community champions/volunteers to be aware of the vision and to help » Partner with educational institutions to develop young entrepreneurs » Mentor and develop them » Retain them in the community » Link to funding organizations <p>4.4.2 Work with the new DMO and other regional partners to develop regional attractions and promotions</p> <p>4.4.3 Assist in supporting ag organizations in encouraging innovation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Assist in supporting ag organizations in the dissemination of information about new market opportunities.

Outcomes:

- Community capitalizes on Pincher Creek's three unique assets: the teaching hospital; location as a service centre hub and the creation of a logistics hub potentially using the airport:
- 1) The Health and Wellness Hub
 - » Better health services
 - » More health oriented businesses
 - » More and diverse job opportunities
 - » Medical tourism
 - 2) The Service Centre and Amenities Hub
 - » More and diverse businesses
 - » Redevelop the downtown corridor
 - » More options for housing
 - » More residents
 - » Different demographic markets are attracted to the region as a result of public space development
 - » A pride of place keeps residents and businesses while attracting new ones
 - » Increased quality of life for all residents
 - 3) The Creation of a Transportation Corridor and Logistics Hub
 - » More market access for all
 - » Service growth of logistics firms
 - » Connectivity potential using the airport
 - 4) A More Diverse Economy
 - » An increased range of community products, services and assets
 - » Increased capacity of more market-ready tourism products
 - » More B2B firms connecting
 - » More reasons to set up a firm in Pincher Creek
 - » Assist in supporting the disseminating of information about new market opportunities in agriculture

Budget Implications: As the various strategies and/or recommendations are not yet approved by Council, the Consultants did not confirm budget figures. Any figures presented are cost estimates only.



Appendix L: Glossary

Glossary

AREF	Alberta Real Estate Foundation
AWE	Alberta Women Entrepreneurs
BI&A	Business Investment and Attraction
BR&E	Business Retention and Expansion
BRSP	Business Recovery Support Program (Town and M.D.)
B2B	Business-to-business sales
B2C	Business-to-consumer sales
B2G	Business-to-government sales
BVP	Business Visitation Program the same as Business Outreach Program
CEDS	Community Economic Development Strategy
CCIS	CCIS Alberta – Immigration Society
CF	Community Futures
CT	Computerized Tomography Imaging
CNHA	Community Needs Health Assessment
EAT	Energizing Agricultural Transformation project commissioned by Alberta SouthWest Regional Economic Development Alliance
EDA	Economic Developers of Alberta
EDAC	Economic Developers Association of Canada
EDO	Economic Development Office(r)
EMSC	Pincher Creek Emergency Service Commission
EDL	Economic Development Lethbridge
FCM	Federation of Canadian Municipalities
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
HBB/HBE	Home-Based Business/Home-Based Entrepreneur
HMB	Housing Management Bodies
ICSP	Integrated Community Sustainability Plan
IDP	Inter-Municipal Development Plan
IT	Information Technology
IMCF	Inter-municipal Collaborative Framework (Town and M.D.)
IEDC	International Economic Development Council
IRP	Import Replacement Program. E.g., B2C, B2B, ShopLocal

JA	Junior Achievement
JEI	Government of Alberta: Jobs, Economy and Innovation
JIT	Just-in-Time
LGA	AHS Health Zone - Local Geographical Area (LGA): Town of Pincher Creek, Municipal District (M.D.) of Pincher Creek (Hamlets of Beaver Mines, Lowland Heights, Lundbreck, Pincher Station, and Twin Butte), Village of Cowley, and Piikani Nation.
LUB	Land-Use Bylaw
MASH	Municipal, Academic, School Boards and Hospitals
MGA	Municipal Government Act
MDP	Municipal Development Plan
Market Segment	A group of people, businesses, or organizations sharing one or more 'characteristics.'
NAICS	North American Industrial Classification System
NAT	Non-ambulance transfer unit
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NOCS	National Occupation Classification
ORSCC	Oldman River Regional Services Commission
P3	Public and Private Partnership
REDA	Alberta SouthWest Regional Economic Development Alliance
RINSA	Regional Innovation Network of Southern Alberta
RDN	Rural Development Network
SASCI	Southwest Alberta Sustainable Community Initiative
SEIGN	Socio-Economic Impact Assessment for the Shell Waterton Complex
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SNA	Pincher Creek (and area) Social Needs Assessment
SOARR	Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Risks and Results similar to a SWOT
SCRTA	South Canadian Rockies Tourism Association
SXMN	Succession Matching.com - a business coaching business how to sell/transition/position for succession
WCP	Welcoming Communities Program – designed to help integrate immigrants, refugees and newcomers into a community
WESTEM	Women Entrepreneurs-in-STEM
WIB	Women in Business

Appendix L: References

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INNOVISIONS
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