

DRAFT

Kicking Horse County

– Community Economic Development Strategic Priorities -

Golden Area Initiatives (GAI), the local Community Economic Development office for Kicking Horse Country is currently working with the community to develop action-oriented priorities that our community organizations, institutions and individuals can work together on achieving, in order to bring us closer to becoming the kind of community we've said we'd like to be. This 'Strategy' is intended to encompass the potential strategies and actions that can be undertaken by the community as a whole and not restricted to items that fall under the framework or resource structure of GAI. The majority of the Strategic Priorities and Potential Action Items identified herein, will require the collaboration and partnership of many community stake-holders others require the consent and support of decision-making bodies in order for action to be taken.

Overall, this process and the tools of community engagement we've used to date will help us answer the question:

"What priority areas or issues should our community work on, in order to strengthen our local economy?"

Other goals for this process include:

1. Engage with people who we don't always have the chance to hear from,
2. Use creative tools and resources to make it easier for community members to participate,
3. Use a balance of statistical information and local knowledge in setting priorities and building a strategy, and
4. Learn from, and build on best-practices from other communities in developing and implementing the strategy.

THE PROCESS

What we've done so far:

- 'The Future's Game' - This activity led the participants from Golden and Area A through a series of choices in a scenario planning model. The use of the scenario models were intended to cause thoughtful deliberation over a planned future; a future that was not out of our hands but rather within our power to shape and create.
- Document and prior planning review - A review of many of the planning documents that have guided the communities development to date, was completed with the following questions in mind: What were the priorities then?; What has been achieved?; What didn't get done and why?; and, What is left to do to help us achieve our communities vision?
 - This was especially important to us because this community has been very involved in conversations in the past that have established direction and vision for a variety of purposes, like the Town of Golden OCP for example, and we did not want to ask people to repeat this work again. By starting with the work that has already been done, we are able to confirm the communities vision established in the past, and move forward by determining priorities for work that will help us achieve this.
- Data gathering and analysis - Data was gathered in order to allow us to have a look at and understand what has been happening in our local economy over the past several years. Data was sourced from statistical agencies like Census Canada and BC Stats, etc.
 - Any person who has used statistics in a rural community will tell you that:
 - 1 there's limited information available and,
 - 2 the information that is available isn't always as reliable as we might like it to be.
 - With the above in mind, we did a series of community engagement activities (including this one!) to try to harness the local knowledge and observations that we, as residents, can contribute to paint a more accurate picture of what our local economy looks like. This outreach has included community surveys, interviews, an online dialogue and prioritization session and now, bringing the Draft CED Priorities that emerged from these processes collectively to the community for an additional round of feedback and input.

What is left to do:

- We'll be circulating the Draft Priorities document to all community members who have contributed to date in order to receive their feedback and input over the next week (until November 21st at 4:00pm). The feedback and input will be reviewed and used to help us create the final Kicking Horse Country CED Strategy.

- Launch the Strategy – GAI will be hosting a small community gathering to celebrate the launch of the completed strategy and discuss the next steps of how to bring together community stakeholders and resources to achieve the goals that have been determined by our community.
- The last portion of this process will involve bringing people together. No successful project, especially it seems, in a small or rural community, happens in isolation. Our goal is to bring together people, organizations and institutions that have energy and ideas, financial and/or human resources, or a stake in seeing through the implementation of the final strategy. This will be achieved through a face-to-face meeting or meetings that will help us coordinate ourselves around who can do what, how and when with the goal of creating an implementation strategy that we can follow, and measure our success by.

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FRAMING THE STRATEGY

This project was initiated with an evening of community participants drawn from Golden and Area A participating in the Future's Game. This activity led the participants through a series of choices in a scenario planning model. The use of the scenario models were intended to cause thoughtful deliberation over a planned future; a future that was not out of our hands but rather within our power to shape and create. A similar activity was undertaken by the Columbia Basin Trust in October, 2010. Both sessions indicated a desire for a sustainable regional system. This sustainable system includes economic, environmental, social and cultural components. It considers planning, collaboration and stewardship.

The creation of this sustainable regional system calls into question the kind of **LEADERSHIP EFFORT** required to harness area's unique assets in order to achieve economic, social, environmental and cultural growth and sustainability. This is coupled with the idea of **HAVING THE RIGHT PEOPLE AT THE TABLE** to get things done. The types of actions or tasks that emerge from an economic development strategy often require a range of stakeholders to ensure effective implementation. These stakeholders in turn must have the knowledge, networks and position within the broader community to bring other individuals and organizations to the table to accomplish the task at hand, or to have their message heard. With regional leadership, strong partnerships projects and initiatives can then be **APPROPRIATELY RESOURCED** to achieve a desired goal.

Competing as low-cost producer of land and labour is a race to the bottom in economic development and not effective in building a sustainable local or regional economy. Regions around the world have recognized the need to **HARNESS THEIR COMMUNITY'S ASSETS** (people, places, businesses and natural environment) to **BUILD A VALUE CHAIN** of diverse activities from their core strengths.

The strategy presented here follows this direction in designing a future that is within our ability to shape and change. While the process resulted in many options being presented, an effective strategy needs to be realistic and focus on those action and initiatives that are the most important and have the most likelihood of achieving a desired, positive outcome. Three questions were used as filters in determining the contents of the strategy:

- *Are we filling a gap?*
- *Are we seizing on our competitive advantages?*
- *Are we dealing with an identified issue or opportunity?*

Priority One: Regional Coordination

Regional Coordination is a governance framework that allows for efficient service delivery but also seeks to engage the residents, community organizations and agencies in a community more profoundly around knowledge mobilization, and policy development & implementation. Regional coordination works to promote social, cultural, economic and environmental integration. A strong, coordinated region will be well-positioned in the future to move plans and policies forward, and create or uphold an enabling environment for community economic development activity.

Goal One: Generate and communicate accurate and useful regional information and research for all community economic development stakeholders

The region is home to numerous local and regional community agencies providing a wide range of services to the region's residents. Many of these are conducting their own community consultation to determine the type and level of services required by the region and delivering services based on the results of this research. Residents have expressed sentiments of being over surveyed, and having the same questions asked all the time; not understanding the value or purpose of the research being conducted; and, have noted the vast range of methodologies utilized in the collection process, raising questions about the statistical validity of the information gathered.

Possible Actions

- Convene regional stakeholders to generate a comprehensive list of regional informational assets and gaps.
- Pool research and data collection funding to leverage with outside funding opportunities in undertaking the comprehensive survey.
- Engage experts to inform data collection methods and analysis – including recommending frequency of collection.
- Share and disseminate survey results to all regional stakeholders.
- Conduct a comprehensive, region-wide citizen's survey to generate accurate and useful regional information that serves the goals and objectives of multiple stakeholders

Goal Two: Develop a Regional Land-Use Framework

The Town of Golden serves as the central urban zone in the area. The rural area, Electoral Area A of the Columbia Shuswap Regional District, currently has no official community planning process in place. Throughout the community consultation and historical literature review, the theme of concern over current land-use management practices emerged through conversation that surrounded backcountry access for recreation, quality of life, aesthetics, natural resource management, etc.

Possible Actions

- Engage in a community-wide dialogue with rural residents regarding community planning and land-use management in Area A of the CSRD.
- Provide educational information regarding the benefits and challenges of land-use planning and management in the rural BC context.
- Develop a mechanism to fully understand how current land-use management practices impact the community economic development potential of CSRD Area A.
- Determine the scope and options for land-use management that will help rural residents achieve their goals for land-use management of the rural area.
 - Opportunities that emerged throughout the community engagement activities in this planning process that are, or could, be impacted by land-use management practices and enforcement include:
 - Renewable energy
 - Food production and processing
 - Recreational opportunities

Priority Two: Workforce Development

According to the International Economic Development Council, a region's workforce is one of the most important components of a successful local economy. Workforce is a primary concern for businesses when looking to re/locate in any area. Available statistics demonstrate several areas in which Golden has strengths or weaknesses compared to the provincial average. For example, Golden has a proportionately high number of workers in the skilled trades as well as a proportionately high number of workers holding whose highest level of education is a High School Diploma. As global, regional and local economies continue to evolve, the question arises regarding the mobility of our workforce in terms of their ability to apply their developed skills (formal or informal) in emerging industries; and the diversity of businesses that would find the available workforce profile attractive enabling the community to attract new industries or attract investment to diversify or grow existing industries.

Goal One: Build connections between education, training and local employment opportunities.

While the three major industries in Golden and Area (Transportation, Forestry and Tourism) are relatively stable in the global context, a great deal of concern was captured in surveys, interviews and reviews of historical planning documents as to the potential impact on local employment if any of these major industry should experience decline. Community consultation also identified concerns regarding the availability of employment opportunities in the community generally, while other labour force information and local employment data indicated that there were current or expected labour shortages in particular industries. Understanding the dynamics and characteristics of the community's workforce profile and current and potential employer workforce needs is valuable asset in supporting existing industry and encouraging future economic stability and growth.

Possible Actions:

- Develop a workforce development program connecting employers and workers, in order to develop a stronger understanding of the existing skill base in the community and current employment opportunities available and what skills, knowledge and credentials required to access these opportunities. This program should:
 - Identify emerging industries and occupations and collect detailed information regarding business needs, training requirements, labour force growth projections, skills requirements and ability to accommodate coop and apprenticeship placements.
 - Define the career opportunities available in Golden and the skills, credentials and requirements to enter these opportunities.
 - Provides support to employers and workers in accessing opportunities to meet the needs identified herein.
- Develop an online listing of information on-line and distance training programs or learning centres in the cultural and knowledge-based sectors. Target this information towards residents interested in exploring new careers and enhancing their technical and entrepreneurial skills.
- Monitor and disseminate research on the changing nature of occupations in rural and global economies, with a focus on creative and knowledge-based industries, and communicate the potential opportunities to the local workforce.

Goal Two: Develop programs for youth to create connections between education, training and local employment opportunities.

Connecting youth to employment and community initiatives was identified as a high priority by the community. The economic base analysis for Golden indicated that, like in many rural BC communities, many youth are leaving the community at the age when they would typically enter either the workforce &/or post-secondary education. One competitive advantage the community has is that the lifestyle offerings of Golden seem to be enticing some Golden-raised Youth to return to the community and also attracting youth raised outside of the community who have migrated here seasonally and permanently.

Possible Actions:

- Engage with youth to ensure that adequate and effective employment and social supports are in place for existing youth in the community.
- Connect youth to creative industry or knowledge-based career and training opportunities.
 - Develop learning and training spaces and opportunities to encourage youth to engage in creative and knowledge-based industries and entrepreneurial activity.
- Connect secondary schools, college students and employers to explore cooperative education, mentorship and internship placement opportunities.
- Develop programs aimed at engaging children in learning about, and being exposed to, local careers.
- Offer targeted entrepreneurial skill development training for local youth.

Priority Three: Small Business Development and Support

In 2010, there were approximately 391,700 small businesses operating in British Columbia, accounting for 98 per cent of all businesses in the province. Micro-businesses, those with fewer than five employees, comprised about 82 per cent of small businesses. In addition, Business Indicators showed that 57% of all private sector jobs in British Columbia are in small businesses. Overall, approximately 30% of British Columbia's Gross Domestic Product was generated by small business in 2010, well above the national average of 27%¹. However, in Golden the 11 largest employers employ approximately 1,000 of 2,660 employed people in Golden & Area A.

A major theme emerging from the community engagement process was that small business is viewed as the 'backbone' of Golden's economy. Given the impact small businesses have on the provincial and national economy, supporting existing and encouraging the development of new small businesses provides Golden with the opportunity to diversify local economic and employment bases.

Goal One: Address unique needs and opportunities for local small business owners.

The Golden Area has unique needs and competitive advantages that impact small business development. As the Golden is the only urban centre in the area, there is an opportunity to further develop the retail and commercial offerings of the community. In addition, a number of small businesses tend to grow from existing businesses indicating that the community should look to traditional strengths as well as gaps in local goods/service delivery in identifying new business opportunities.

Possible Actions:

- Develop and maintain a vibrant downtown retail environment.
- Encourage the development of local transportation systems connecting commercial areas.
- Create local buying incentive programs and assess opportunities for import substitution.
- Identify potential business opportunities that capitalize on local renewable resources and waste products.
 - Explore secondary business opportunities using by-products of existing businesses and industries.
- Ensure and coordinate the availability and adequacy of small business support programs in the area.
 - Support local businesses in accessing federal, provincial and regional economic development and planning tools, initiatives and programs available to small business.

¹ 2011 B.C Business Indicators. http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/bus_stat/busind/sm_bus/sbp2011.pdf

Goal Two: Attract and develop knowledge- based small businesses

The Golden Area, through natural amenities and recreational opportunities, attracts highly educated, creative class people. Data captured by Statistics Canada suggests that Golden doesn't fall too far behind the province of British Columbia in the concentration of creative businesses as a total of all businesses. This signals that there are businesses in all areas of the creative value chain that are contributing to the creative cultural economy in Golden. While creative businesses only represent a small share of all businesses in Golden and Area A there is potential for growth. These businesses are knowledge-intensive and may be dependent on talent attraction and retention and industry targeted local training opportunities for future and sustained growth.

The Broadband infrastructure that has been developed in the downtown core (fibre) and rural areas (wireless) provides as significant competitive advantage for our community in supporting and attracting knowledge-based and creative industry businesses. "Broadband offers every community the opportunity to move from the periphery to the center in economic terms...It enables small companies to be global exporters – including the export of skills and knowledge which were never before transportable across time zones or national borders²."

Possible Actions:

- Ensure access to high-quality and reliable broadband infrastructure in order to encourage and facilitate home based occupations and businesses and satellite operations for larger technological savvy companies throughout the region (geography permitting).
- Market and demonstrate the value and potential of the technological infrastructure in the community to local residents & business owners and potential migrants & investors.
- Develop educational programs to support existing businesses & organizations in utilizing the existing technological infrastructure available in the community.
- Develop small business support programs specifically geared to the needs of small business in knowledge-based and creative industries supporting a culture of innovation.

² <https://www.intelligentcommunity.org>

Priority Four: Appropriate Housing and Social Services

All age groups contribute to the social, cultural and economic fabric of a community. Retaining all age cohorts contributes to developing a more complete community that supports community economic development goals. A complete community offers residents places to live, work, shop and play at all stages of life³. In achieving a complete community, carefully examining the availability of diverse types of housing and social services is critical.

Goal One: Identify actions that will allow seniors to ‘age in place’

The economic base assessment conducted for this report revealed that while the Golden Area exhibits the same pattern as the province in the rapid growth of those aged 55-64, it shows no demographic growth in those over the age of 65. This information leads us to believe that seniors are choosing not to retire in Golden. The community consultation conducted for this report and others (including the Old Town Works Yard Housing Feasibility Study and the Kicking Horse Country Housing Needs Assessment) and the historical literature review revealed a strong and demonstrated desire to explore and address both appropriate housing and health services in order to enable seniors to stay in the community.

Possible Actions:

- Develop a mechanism to enable us to better understand the why residents are departing prior to reaching the age of 65.
- Prioritize housing needs for aging residents and retirees & explore creative solutions for meeting these needs.
- Ensure that the needs of seniors are considered in all aspects of the development of the community including: recreational infrastructure, cultural amenities and programming, zoning, educational offerings and social program development and delivery for children and youth (e.g. multi-generational learning opportunities).
- Create opportunities for remote health care delivery.
- Identify, where possible, business and/or social enterprise opportunities & solutions that can support the community in achieving this goal.

³ www.placestogrow.ca

Priority Five: Diverse Tourism Industry

Tourism is a rapidly growing industry in British Columbia. In fact, over the last decade, growth in the tourism industry has outpaced overall economic growth in BC⁴ despite a global recession. Tourism trend watchers are citing growth in the baby boomer population, growth in competing destinations and travellers and resident of emerging economies becoming travellers as trends that will shift the way in which visitors want to experience communities and tourism in general⁴.

Goal One: Develop and diversify the region's tourism products

Kicking Horse Country has become known as an extreme sports Mecca. The community has a competitive advantage in continuing to develop tourism products, services and infrastructure given our proximity to National Parks, geographic/natural assets, location on Hwy 1 and proximity to the Alberta border and Calgary. Community consultations indicated overall support for the idea of continuing to develop the tourism industry, but it was noted that there is an opportunity and desire to expand the tourism service and product offerings of the community to include more 'soft' adventure, sport, cultural, heritage and nature interpretation products and services.

Possible Actions:

- Develop community recreational amenities that serve both locals and visitors.
- Identify and pursue opportunities for education & learning based tourism and sports & cultural events based tourism.
- Support and promote the efforts of non-profit sporting groups in developing recreational infrastructure, programming and events.
- Encourage and support the development of business and social enterprise that focus on new tourism products and/or services.
- Acknowledge and leverage the work of existing cultural & environmental organizations as potential tourism assets and opportunities.

⁴ Province of BC – Ministry of Job, Tourism and Innovation – BC Tourism Strategy 2012 – 2016

Goal Two: Ensure the existence and efficacy of needed support infrastructure for the tourism Industry

All industries require infrastructure, whether it be physical, economic, regulatory or social in order to function. The tourism industry of course is no exception. In Kicking Horse Country, where a great deal of the existing tourism activities and promotions rely on our natural amenities in a complex geographic context, this is especially true.

Possible Actions:

- Develop and implement a formal and ongoing monitoring program that focuses on the needs and experiences of visitors and tourism stakeholders.
 - Understand the current state of and gaps in Golden and Area's tourism related infrastructure.
- Build effective transportation systems connecting community art, event and commerce spaces to tourist accommodations.
- Ensure that adequate and appropriate emergency services and access systems are available to meet backcountry and front country outdoor recreation needs.
- Develop a strategy to ensure that existing tourism infrastructure can be maintained.
- Utilize existing air travel infrastructure to its full potential.

Priority Six: Authentic and Vibrant Community

The notion that developing a strong sense of community, culture and place are indicators of great places to live and also great places to visit is now becoming more accepted as we see the development and success of entities like the Creative City Network of Canada⁵.

Places that attract people as visitors and residents can support core creative industries such as music, visual and performing arts, which can in turn support the development of creative industries in the region. Creating the opportunity for face to face interaction can enhance networking, engagement and innovation in communities⁵. Further, youth engagement and retention has been identified as a challenge for many rural communities and Golden is no exception. Throughout the community consultation, youth engagement and involvement in community emerged as a consistent theme.

Goal One: Expand Cultural Amenities and Activities

“Culture is a core dimension of vibrant and sustainable communities⁵.” The development of The Spirit Square and the Golden Civic Centre are examples of the community’s effort to develop public spaces that allow and encourage people to gather and celebrate. Community consultations revealed that residents would like to see ongoing and or increased support for the development of cultural activities and amenities oriented to a wide variety of residents in Kicking Horse Country.

Possible Actions:

- Convene community stakeholders to identify events or activities that capitalize on peak visitor periods or fill the gap of ‘shoulder seasons’ that are aligned with the communities brand ‘Authentic, Community Adventure’ and culture.
- Promote and encourage the consistent use of public space for events.
- Develop and implement community-based public art programs.
- Support and encourage the development of formal and informal learning opportunities for residents.
- Improve access to distance learning opportunities for residents.
- Identify areas where sports and recreation, fine arts, ethnic celebrations, education and community-based arts can intersect and encourage collaboration in combining events and activities.
- Encourage & support both professional and community-based art and cultural activities.
- Identify multiple entry points to allow youth to participate in all aspects of community development, and where possible, decision making.

⁵ www.creativecity.ca