

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM STRATEGIC WORK PROGRAM

DRAFT 2024

NOW TOPIC/ <i>Question & Outcomes</i>	OPTIONS & Action
<p>1. BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION STRATEGIES</p> <p><i>How do we retain and support local businesses? How do we make business retention and expansion contact with existing industry to understand and address local challenges? How do we improve communication with the business community?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase business community engagement. • Next steps on business licence options or other. • Business Networking groups (i.e. Downtown, Business Support Network, and Industry Networking). • Supports for Entrepreneurs through partnership with Community Futures Yellowhead East. • Identify red tape areas and work with key players for solutions. • Strengthen partnerships with Chamber of Commerce. • Marketing supports for businesses. • Increase communication and regular updates with business, realtors, and community. • Business training supports (i.e. Google) 	<p><u>OPTIONS</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IN-HOUSE 2. CONSULTANT 3. COMBINATION <p><u>ACTION</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meet with Whitecourt & District Chamber of Commerce and identify opportunities for partnership that support the business community – Jan 2024 2. Submit grant funding application for Business Support Network – Jan 2024 3. Develop business and industry visits/outreach schedule – Feb 2024. 4. Market Whitecourt Launch Program – Feb 2024 5. Meet with Community Futures Yellowhead East to identify partnerships/initiatives that support entrepreneur and business retention efforts – Feb 2024 6. Explore grant programs for increased funding to expand Whitecourt Launch Program - March 2024 7. Business Licence Program: Identify next steps – May 2024 8. Create action items based on Retail/Service Gap Analysis Project – Jun 2024 9. Schedule regular meetings with local commercial realtors – Jul 2024 10. Implement Shop Local Business Campaign leading up to Small Business Week – Aug 2024 11. Organize Career & Education Expo partnership – Oct 2024 12. Track business feedback and red tape concerns for review and solution-based discussions – Nov 2024
<p>2. INVESTMENT READINESS AND ATTRACTION ACROSS KEY SECTORS</p> <p><i>How do we establish a combined approach to enhance investment readiness? How do we encourage investment across key sectors? How do we actively pursue targeted investment relevant to Whitecourt to support new opportunities? How can we support an entrepreneurial environment?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively promote Whitecourt’s competitiveness. • Encourage and support growth in retail, commercial, industrial and residential zones. • Site visits/sales pitches. • Identify land development opportunities in and around Whitecourt. • Promotion and marketing opportunities. • Identify red tape from investors and developers and explore potential solutions. 	<p><u>OPTIONS</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IN-HOUSE 2. CONSULTANT 3. COMBINATION <p><u>ACTION</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop regional visits relevant to Whitecourt; review with management. Schedule annual meetings/site visits. – Jan 2024 2. Update investment marketing documents and profiles – Feb 2024 3. Launch targeted marketing campaign and profiling through Invest Alberta – Mar 2024 4. Explore economic development influencer opportunities to promote the community to new residents, business, and investors – Aug 2024 5. Explore option from business case development based on gap analysis to promote to potential investors and entrepreneurs – Nov 2024

CODES: BOLD CAPITALS = NOW Priorities; CAPITALS = NEXT Priorities; *Italics* = Advocacy; Regular Title Case = Operational Strategies; Completed tasks = Blue

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<p>3. ENHANCE WHITECOURT'S DOWNTOWN AND CREATE NEW ENERGY</p> <p><i>How do we support downtown development and revitalization efforts? How do we encourage an active and vibrant downtown? What concrete steps and actions can we create in the short term to promote vibrancy in the downtown based on collaboration and partnership?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate or collaborate on hosting small events to bring energy into the downtown core. • Encourage and promote downtown residential development. • Explore options with Whitecourt & District Chamber of Commerce on downtown initiatives. • Support downtown group with collaborative projects. • Explore grant funding to support projects. 	<p><u>OPTIONS</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IN-HOUSE 2. CONSULTANT 3. COMBINATION <p><u>ACTION</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify concrete steps and actions that can be implemented in the short term (2 year plan) to promote vibrancy in the downtown with Downtown Working Group – Jan 2024 2. Review action items and implementation plan for a vibrancy strategy with EDC for feedback – Feb 2024 3. Present Downtown Vibrancy Strategy to Council – Mar 2024 4. Enhance Summer Street Fest – Aug 2024 5. Implement achievable quick wins identified in the Vibrancy Strategy – 2024+ 6. Identify future resources and potential partnerships to support sustainability – 2024+
<p>4. TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORTS</p> <p><i>How do we support nonprofit organizations and tourism operators to enhance tourism opportunities locally? How do we foster relationships with tourism operators and share resources?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify tourism opportunities and current and potential operators. • Funding to support and enhance current tourism efforts. • Promote and market opportunities. • Increase tourism operators through grant programs. • Working with current operators and nonprofit organizations to identify challenges or expansion opportunities. • Increase festivals and events. • Partnerships with Woodlands County and the province on new potential tourism products or developments. • Share best tourism practice ideas and identify what tourism businesses needs to ensure both short-term and long-term success. • Culture & Events Centre support. 	<p><u>OPTIONS</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IN-HOUSE 2. CONSULTANT <p><u>ACTION</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote Tourism Grant Programs through website, social media and site visits – Jan 2024 2. Participate in the Whitecourt Trailblazers Snowmobile Rally by hosting a checkpoint – Feb 2024 3. Form a grant review subcommittee – March 2024 4. Review grant submissions and recommendation with Committee and forward to Council for consideration – Apr 2024 5. Meet with Farmers Market to discuss opportunities and partnerships to expand weekend markets along the street and to festival way – June 2024 6. Increase communication with organizations and operators through scheduled site visits; identify potential partnerships – Aug 2024 7. Provide support through annual grants as per 2024 budget – Oct 2024 8. Explore partnerships with Woodlands County and the province on tourism development options – Nov 2024 +

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<p>5. TOURISM MARKETING AND PROMOTION</p> <p><i>How can we focus our marketing efforts and utilize opportunities to better promote tourism in Whitecourt? How do we use marketing tools to highlight Whitecourt as a tourist attraction?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create content that targets different demographics. • Enhance awareness for tourism opportunities in Whitecourt. • Include a clear 'call to action' on websites and social channels. • Hotel advertising with in room guest books and hotel web sites. • Micro-influencers research. 	<p><u>OPTIONS</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IN-HOUSE 2. CONSULTANT <p><u>ACTION</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create Whitecourt Tourism detailed marketing strategy and social media campaign – Feb 2024 2. Develop annual Whitecourt Tourism Visitor Guide – Feb 2024 3. Explore opportunities through the Travel Alberta Cooperative Marketing program with regional partners – Mar 2024 4. Host micro-influencer(s) in the community for profiling Whitecourt and marketing as a tourism hotspot – August 2024 5. Create tourism itineraries to highlight ready-made experiences and events – Sept 2024 6. Work with operators and hoteliers to enhance Stay and Play Packages – Oct 2024 7. Upload tourism opportunities to Alberta Tourism Information System (ATIS) – Dec 2024
<p>ADVOCACY / PARTNERSHIPS</p>	<p>OPTIONS & Action</p>
<p><i>Advocacies are items typically addressed by Mayor and/or Council. How can the Whitecourt Tourism Committee engage in active advocacy?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build partnerships. • Support nonprofit organizations on expansion of facilities, events, and initiatives that support tourism in the area. • Networking. • Support for Culture & Events Centre development. 	<p><u>OPTIONS</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IN-HOUSE 2. CONSULTANT <p><u>ACTION</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support ATV Club trail development. 2. Support Mountain Bike Park development. 3. Work with Woodlands County and the Province on project-based partnerships for tourism development.

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