

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

STRATEGIC WORK PROGRAM

DRAFT 2025

NOW TOPIC/ Question & Outcomes	OPTIONS & Action
<p>1. FOSTER BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION <i>How do we assist with keeping business in the community and help them grow? How do we establish consistent outreach to businesses to understand their needs and challenges?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular Communication with businesses through surveys, meetings, and newsletters etc. • Support Services/Partnerships/Resources • Networking Opportunities • Actively engage/listen and address concerns • Support Workforce Development • Market Research • Real Estate Development • Develop programs or partnerships that support startups and growing businesses through mentorship, resources, and networking • Promotion of Local Product • Collaboration with Economic Development Agencies • Implement Downtown Vitalization 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. Establish outreach plan to understand business needs and challenges – Jan 2025 2. Market Whitecourt Launch Program – Feb 2025 3. Meet with CFYE to identify options that support entrepreneur/business retention efforts – Mar 2025 4. Identify partnerships and implement a resource based forum for businesses - April 2025 5. Schedule regular meetings with local commercial realtors – June 2025 6. Year 3 Designation of Rural Renewal Program – July 2025 7. Organize marketing campaigns to promote local goods and services – July 2025 8. Host Summer Street Fest in Downtown – Aug 2025 9. Partner with businesses on collaborative initiatives that support business retention – Sept 2025 10. Host Small Business Week training and appreciation event – Oct 2025 11. Organize Career & Education Expo partnership – Nov 2025 12. Identify and promote available commercial real estate opportunities that can accommodate expanding businesses – Dec 2025+ 13. Create action items based on BR&E Project – Dec 2025+
<p>2. INCREASE INVESTMENT READINESS AND BUSINESS ATTRACTION <i>How do we ensure we have the competitive positioning, and necessary information to engage with potential investors? How do we target specific industries that align with the community's strengths and available resources to effectively creating niche markets? How do we encourage investment?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research/Identify Capacity • Marketing and promotion of assets • Relationship Building/Networking • Business Attraction Strategies • Business-Friendly or Pro Business Climate • Streamlining regulations and permitting processes to ease the establishment of new businesses • Engagement/workshops with Chamber of Commerce. 	<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. Implement RFI template changes – Jan 2025 2. Assess website and implement changes to investment data and mapping based on site selector insights – Feb 2025 3. Update investment marketing documents and profiles – Mar 2025 4. Launch targeted marketing campaign and profiling through Invest Alberta – Apr 2025 5. Schedule regional site visits relevant to Whitecourt; annual meetings – May 2025 6. Facilitate a collaborative meeting with Chamber Board Members and Planning Team for updates, resources, and reviews – Jun 2025

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

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and support growth in retail, commercial, industrial and residential zones. • Site visits/sales pitches. • Identify red tape and explore potential solutions. • Collaboration with Chamber • Targeted marketing campaigns 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Create action plan based on the SCOP findings – Nov 2025 8. Finalize business cases (2-3) and promote for new business opportunities – Dec 2025+ 9. Work with local, regional, and federal economic development organizations to leverage new business growth and diversification opportunities – Dec 2025+
<p>3. EXPAND ON TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p><i>How do we support and foster relationships with tourism operators? How do we collaboratively assist with growing the tourism sector? How do increase tourism opportunities?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify tourism current and potential tourism operators • Funding to support tourism operators • Partnerships with Woodlands County on potential development opportunities • Promote Cultural and Historical Sites • Organize Events and Festivals • Invest in tourism operator training/ workshops and collaborative networking events • Collaboration with Travel Alberta • Market experience businesses to include in tourism strategy • Encourage tourists to explore more • Self – Guided Tours 	<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. Meet with Travel Alberta to follow up on Northern Rockies TDZ and next steps – Jan 2025 2. Promote Tourism Grant Programs through website, social media and site visits – Feb 2025 3. Meet with Chamber Tourism Committee and identify synergies/opportunities – Mar 2025 4. Increase communication with organizations and operators through scheduled site visits; identify potential partnerships – Apr 2025 5. Facilitate tourism operator networking event with restaurants, operators, and hoteliers to identify opportunities for collaboration – June 2025 6. Provide support through annual grants as per 2025 budget – Oct 2025 7. Explore partnerships with Woodlands County and the province on tourism development options – Dec 2025+
<p>4. ENHANCE TOURISM MARKETING AND PROMOTION</p> <p><i>How can we focus our marketing efforts and utilize opportunities to better promote Whitecourt Tourism? How do we use marketing tools to increase overnight stays and bring awareness to tourism opportunities in Whitecourt?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing campaigns • Identify target markets • Utilize digital marketing • Leverage social media and online advertising to reach a broader audience • Enhance awareness for tourism opportunities in Whitecourt • Enhance information availability • Create engaging content and story telling • Highlight unique cultural assets and historical landmarks 	<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. Develop annual Whitecourt Tourism Visitor Guide – Jan 2025 2. Participate in Trailblazers Snowmobile Rally by hosting a checkpoint/welcome – Feb 2025 3. Identify target markets and create/implement tourism marketing strategy – Apr 2025 4. Explore opportunities through the Travel Alberta Cooperative Marketing program with regional partners to market tourism assets – May 2025 5. Create self-guided tours and/or itineraries for ready-made experiences and events – June 2025 6. Host micro-influencer(s) in the community for profiling Whitecourt and marketing as a tourism hotspot – July 2025 7. Work with operators and hoteliers to support stay and play package development – Dec 2025

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ADVOCACY / PARTNERSHIPS	OPTIONS & Action
<p><i>Advocacies are items typically addressed by Mayor and/or Council. How can the Economic Development 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. • Support post-secondary options • Health Professionals attraction and Retention Committee (H-PARC) 	<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 post-secondary options and collaboration with school divisions on identified synergies. 2. Support health care recruitment and increased health care services. 3. Enhanced connectivity and broadband development 4. Work with Woodlands County and the Province on project-based partnerships for tourism development.

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