



# **2022 - 2025** DEPARTMENT BUSINESS PLAN

Economic  
Development and  
Tourism

Date of last revision  
**APRIL 2022**



**STRATHCONA**  
COUNTY

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

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The Economic Development and Tourism department has a dedicated team of professionals who are passionate about enabling the success and growth of business and industry in Strathcona County.

Our primary objective is to increase prosperity and generate economic activity in Strathcona County for the betterment of residents and businesses alike. We do this through investment attraction, business retention & expansion, and tourism.

Through 2022 to 2025 we will continue our focus within the petrochemical sector. We will also seek new opportunities to diversify our economy in key growth sectors including agricultural processing, food manufacturing, distribution and logistics, office-based professional, and light/medium industrial business park developments.

Businesses in Strathcona County will continue to benefit from our team's support, including formal and informal business visitations, small business education through webinars and small business week, and one-on-one support services.

The tourism product development plan is being finalized in early 2022 and will bridge gaps in availability of market ready tourism products, as identified in the 2020 Tourism Strategy. Focus areas include cultural, nature-based, culinary and agri-tourism.

We support a positive work environment through opportunities for learning and growth. Our team benchmarks our projects by participating in peer-based award programs. We continue to leverage strategic partnerships creating opportunities for sustainable growth. The department enjoys excellent working partnerships with the Sherwood Park and District Chamber of Commerce, Strathcona Industrial Association, and Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association to name a few. Our Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee provides additional insight on the business and development goals to the department, while encouraging implementation of creative solutions to identified challenges at the speed of business.

Sean McRitchie, B.Mgt, CMML

Director, Economic Development and Tourism

# PLANNING FOUNDATION

## STRATHCONA COUNTY VISION

### Living in Strathcona County

Strathcona County, located in the heart of Alberta, is an energetic and thriving community. A leader in North America's petroleum industry and a champion for advancing diverse agricultural business, we use our energy to power our new tomorrow.

We are a specialized municipality and work cooperatively with our urban and rural residents to govern as a single municipality. Proud of our distinct governance model, we promote and demonstrate our achievements.

We are a welcoming place to live and attract people of all ages, cultures and walks of life to join us. Families thrive in our dynamic, caring and safe community.

We strive to be a model of ecological integrity, protecting our environment and preserving our agricultural heritage.

Investment in infrastructure, quality services, cultural and recreational programs, and facilities is a priority and sets us apart.



#### Goal 1

Build strong communities to support the diverse needs of residents



#### Goal 5

Foster collaboration through regional, community and governmental partnerships



#### Goal 2

Manage, invest and plan for sustainable municipal infrastructure



#### Goal 6

Provide facilities and services that are available and accessible to residents



#### Goal 3

Cultivate economic diversification, within the petro-chemical industry and beyond, through a business-friendly environment



#### Goal 7

Provide opportunities for public engagement and communication



#### Goal 4

Ensure effective stewardship of water, land, air and energy resources



#### Goal 8

Foster an environment for safe communities



#### Goal 9

Continuously improving the way we work, as one organization, in an agile and sustainable manner

## CORPORATE MISSION

We are committed to working collaboratively, efficiently and effectively to provide quality service delivery to citizens, business, and industry alike.

## CORPORATE VALUES

Our values help to form our organizational identity and define our culture.

<b>Integrity</b>	We demonstrate ethical standards and behaviours We display honest behaviour at all times We do what we say we will do
<b>Respect</b>	We treat others with care and dignity We pay attention to each other We welcome a variety and diversity of ideas
<b>Safety</b>	We consistently demonstrate safe work practices We build an environment of openness and trust We make it safe for each other to voice opinions or concerns
<b>Fairness</b>	We consider how our actions might affect others We treat everyone impartially and equitably We are willing to share the reasoning behind our thinking and decisions
<b>Cooperation</b>	We support, assist and learn from each other We give credit to others for their contributions We compromise when needed to achieve common goals

## DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT

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Economic Development and Tourism's mission is to generate economic activity and enable the success and growth of business and industry in Strathcona County. Through business and investment attraction, business retention and expansion, and entrepreneurial support; we support a strong, diversified and resilient economy, contributing to advancing quality of life and place.

## DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

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Economic Development and Tourism's professionals operate collaboratively to enable a business climate that is conducive to business success. This is achieved through relationship-building, leadership, knowledge exchange, referrals, education, research, coaching and assistance.

The team encourages business and employment growth in the community and the region. We focus our efforts to support a strong and balanced economy while adapting to ever-changing customer needs and environments.



The department is set on the foundation of three key areas in economic development. The investment attraction branch encourages new business investment into Strathcona County by targeting sectors that are well positioned for growth and diversification. The business retention and expansion branch supports existing businesses to ensure their continued success. Tourism builds the visitor economy and contributes to the success of the hospitality sector.

The strategic documents that the department is guided by include Council's Strategic Plan, Corporate Business Plan, Municipal Development Plan, Retail Market Study, Foreign Direct Investment Strategy, Industry Targeting and Attraction Plan, Tourism Strategy and Implementation Plan, and Tourism Product Development Plan.

The department works closely with regional stakeholders including Edmonton Global, Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association, Strathcona Industrial Association, the Sherwood Park and District Chamber of Commerce, Business Development Bank of Canada, Economic Developers of Alberta, Economic Developers of Canada, International Economic Development Council, International Council of Shopping Centers, Travel Alberta, Go East, Tourism Industry Association of Alberta, the Alberta government ministry of Jobs, Economy and Innovation and other stakeholders including the federal government.

# DEPARTMENT CORE BUSINESS FUNCTIONS AND PROGRAMS (SUMMARY OF OPERATIONAL PLANS)

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## ECONOMIC GROWTH

Encouraging investment in Strathcona County results in economic growth and diversification, which helps to build a top community in which to live and work. The team provides current and potential investors with concierge support, data for investment searches, and tools to make business decisions. Services include opportunity assessments, site selection, mapping, facilitating permit processing, and providing other detailed information to make business decisions. Attracting investment is key to economic growth, and the team markets and promotes Strathcona County's business-friendly reputation and competitive advantages. The Priority Based Budget programs under the Economic Growth core function are:

- Industrial Attraction
- Commercial Attraction
- Development Attraction

## 2022 – 2025 FORECAST

The EDT team attracts the petrochemical sector and new business and diversification opportunities. Significant resources will support development within the Strathcona Industrial and Heartland heavy industrial areas where new and existing investors are exploring production of renewable biofuels, blue hydrogen, carbon capture and storage, plastics, specialty chemicals, derivatives, and storage and transportation infrastructure. The department assists with government regulatory streamlining, advocacy for new transportation and utilities infrastructure, attention to permitting processes, development of meaningful incentives, and one-on-one investor support.

Strathcona County has decades of experience and expertise to support strategic investment in an ideal location. Marketing and promotion to key growth sectors will increase awareness of Strathcona County's competitive advantages. The team develops business cases, sector profiles, and key relationships while identifying and addressing existing gaps and barriers to development. The team will focus on commercial attraction, filling vacancies for new retail and office developments; and will assist the development community with infill, greenfield developments and approved future growth projects.

## DIVERSIFICATION AND INNOVATION

Diversification increases resiliency to economic change and unexpected environmental influences, such as those experienced with the COVID-19 pandemic. Diversification creates new jobs in new sectors which builds a balanced and resilient economy.

Working with industry experts and stakeholders, we have identified key growth sectors: agriculture processing, food manufacturing, distribution and logistics, office-based professional, and light and medium industrial business park developments.

The Priority Based Budget programs under the Diversification and Innovation core function are:

- Sector Development
- Business Mentorship

### 2022 – 2025 FORECAST

We will continue to improve overall investment readiness for key growth sectors. Strategic partnerships, including within our regional stakeholders and local business networks, will be deepened. We will enhance and develop investment attraction tools; and implement promotional campaigns, sector specific industry connector events, and educational opportunities for business.

The department will continue to streamline regulatory environment and permitting processes, seek opportunities to expand land use bylaws to align with the market, adopt effective incentive policies, promote foreign direct investment, and support business retention and expansion.

An ongoing commitment to professional development allows the team to become leading experts in our key growth sectors and to continuously improve and maintain client service best practices.

## BUSINESS SUPPORT

The vibrancy of our region is strongly connected to the success of the businesses here in our community today. Business Retention and Expansion enables local business success and accelerates economic growth. A strong successful business community supports strong infrastructure and service excellence, which in turn attracts further investment.

Our business outreach includes one-on-one consultations and visitations. We enable market readiness through market research and supply chain mapping, export

development, workforce development, the visitor economy and destination development. Education support includes in person and virtual seminars. Business supports include the Digital Economy Program in partnership with the University of Alberta, and community events that benefit business.

Strathcona County's vision for tourism is to be known as a place where visitors can come to enjoy compelling nature-based offerings, authentic agritourism activities, and immersive cultural experiences, along with other opportunities like sports tourism, and festivals and events.

The department collaborates on sector growth with various business sector organizations including tourism.

The Priority Based Budget programs under the Business Support core function are:

- Small Business Seminars
- Business Owners One-on-One Support
- Business Expansion Services
- Business Retention Services
- Community Events

## 2022 – 2025 FORECAST

COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on our business community, presenting opportunities for some, and negative impacts for others. Efforts are geared toward developing programming relevant to the current situation. The department recently undertook a triage program for business retention and expansion that included phone surveys and follow-up interviews. Those interviews will continue into the first half of 2022 and will help inform future business retention and expansion programming efforts.

Business seminar topics will include Small Business Week, local procurement, tourism, marketing and social media. We remain responsive to business and safety needs and will introduce hybrid seminars in 2022 – both in person and virtual.

Appointments and walk-in clients will be welcomed again in 2022, to discuss starting a business, marketing, real estate, data provision including demographics, mapping and more. Virtual meetings continue to be an option.

EDT is finalizing a tourism product development plan as the next step of the 2020 Tourism Strategy and implementation plan. The plan will outline individual and collaborative opportunities for Strathcona County, businesses and organizations, to spur tourism in our community. We are increasing tourism event support by



facilitating Ravenwood and the Highland Games inquiries. Our celebration of local cuisine, Savour Strathcona, is being planned for 2022 with efforts to attract a broader visitor base. Various tourism initiatives are being explored and implemented to further the goals of the tourism strategy.

## READINESS (RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATION)

A key component of being able to see gains in an economy is readiness. The department strives to provide current quality market research to the business community. We provide useful information such as information on future industrial land strategies, demographic information, custom maps and consumer expenditure data, business gap and sector analysis among other information pertinent for business strategy. We also provide business and development outreach by presenting appropriate information to the local community and the broader region about successes and opportunities in our community. Utilizing maps, data and spatial analysis we provide a wide range of useful information to those who are considering business investment. The Priority Based Budget programs under the Readiness core function are:

- Market Research

### 2022 – 2025 FORECAST

Having key marketing data and research available to support industry decisions is fundamental to the services of EDT. An example of research is ensuring we work with regional partners to understand our labour force competitiveness in the region. Team members understand and communicate to industry the implications, risk and opportunities of specific topics and their impacts at the local level.

A retail market analysis will likely be completed in late 2023 or early 2024. This will be timely when the Cambrian Crossing and Bremner lands are closer to being developed. The analysis will help to inform what retail is desirable and feasible for the new commercially zoned areas.

Ongoing training of staff related to Geographic Information System (GIS), data gathering, and analysis is critical for our success. The data collected and then interpreted is used for presentations to commercial and industrial brokerages. Attendance at key conferences and realtor association events will be fundamental in maintaining and developing relationships with the real estate and development community.

Communication efforts focus on the value proposition of Strathcona County to prospective investors. Given the extenuating circumstances of the pandemic and businesses negatively impacted, the communication of positive success stories has become an imperative role for EDT. It instills community pride and provides the morale boost necessary to keep entrepreneurs and business owners motivated and incentivized to think of innovative ways to pivot their business.

## READINESS (BUSINESS LOCATION INVENTORIES)

The timing of finding a suitable location for a business is very important to business investors. This requires the culmination of property and building availability, proper zoning and the necessary insights regarding these properties to be able to take advantage of the opportunities as they arise. To be successful at taking opportunities to fruition, the County must be competitive with other marketplaces.

This is partially accomplished by working with development, real estate, and regulatory officials to ensure we have a balanced supply of properties to meet the market demand and remain competitive within a variety of sectors.

- Business and Development Outreach

### 2022 – 2025 FORECAST

Enhancing products that are web and GIS-based for our business clients and giving them the tools to succeed is vital. Projects such as the business directory, property locator tool, business and investment intelligence tool, use of the Customer Relationship Management Software, website, broker visitation program and presentations to outside groups and service clubs will continue and will be enhanced. Such high-level reviews of the retail market study and industrial land study will be updated when deemed appropriate and in collaboration with other departments.

## DEPARTMENT SUPPORT ROLES (ANNUAL CAPITAL INITIATIVES)

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The list below includes initiatives that this department will be supporting during the 2022 – 2025 Business Plan timeline. Lead departments are responsible for providing clear plans to support departments. These plans are to advise support departments on particulars of the support required and timing.

- Information Technology Corporate Infrastructure Replacement Program – Municipal  
Lead: Information Technology Services
- Annual Facility Capital Lifecycle Program  
Lead: Facility Services

## TOURISM DEVELOPMENT (INIT 204)

The implementation of the Strathcona County Tourism Strategy with its 79 action items over 4 main themes, requires additional funding in order to leverage its full potential positive impact on our economy and serves as an opportunity to further diversification efforts. When the original business case for the Tourism Strategy was developed, \$25K was requested to support its implementation. Now having the robust plan approved by Council on September 8th, 2020, and the Product Development Plan ready to move forward, it has become apparent that the 79 initiatives included will require a greater funding amount.

Furthering tourism development in Strathcona County is an integral opportunity for diversifying our economy. As an example, the tourism Industry in Alberta generates \$8.9 billion in direct visitor spending; supports 22,196 tourism businesses; sustains over 127,000 jobs; and generates billions in total tax revenue for municipalities, the province and the federal government (Pg. 33 of the Tourism Strategy).

### **Linkage to corporate business plan organizational excellence goal and result(s):**

Goal 3: Cultivate economic diversification with the petrochemical industry and beyond, through a business-friendly environment

### **Department role:**

Lead: Economic Development and Tourism

### **Timeframe:**

Start time: T1 2022

End time: T1 2032

## DEPARTMENT SUPPORT ROLES (IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES)

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The list below includes initiatives that this department will be supporting during the 2022 – 2025 Business Plan timeline. Lead departments are responsible for providing clear plans to support departments. These plans are to advise support departments on particulars of the support required and timing.

- Occupational Health and Safety/Disability Management Technology Project  
Lead: Human Resources
- Succession Planning Strategy  
Lead: Human Resources
- New Occupational Health and Safety Legislation Implementation  
Lead: Human Resources
- Corporate Inclusion and Diversity Training  
Lead: Human Resources and Family and Community Services
- Digital Workplace Program  
Lead: Information Technology Services
- Electronic Procurement System Update  
Lead: Financial and Strategic Services
- Business Expense Policy Review and Update  
Lead: Financial and Strategic Services
- Strathcona County Business Transformation (SCBT) Project  
Lead: Financial and Strategic Services
- Service Definitions Project  
Lead: Financial and Strategic Services
- Enterprise Risk Management Program  
Lead: Financial and Strategic Services
- Fleet Emissions Review and Reductions Program  
Lead: Fleet Services

- Corporate Geographic Information System (GIS) Program Update  
Lead: Information Technology Services
- Occupational Health and Safety/Disability Management Technology Project  
Lead: Human Resources
- Succession Planning Strategy  
Lead: Human Resources

## DEPARTMENT SUPPORT ROLES (STRATEGIC INITIATIVES)

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The list below includes initiatives that this department will be supporting during the 2022 – 2025 Business Plan timeline. Lead departments are responsible for providing clear plans to support departments. These plans are to advise support departments on particulars of the support required and timing.

- Event and Sport Tourism Initiatives – 2023 Special Olympics Alberta Winter Games  
Lead: Recreation, Parks and Culture
- Multi-Purpose Agricultural Facility Development  
Lead: Recreation, Parks and Culture
- River Valley Alliance Pedestrian Footbridge  
Lead: Human Resources
- Community Broadband  
Lead: Information Technology Services