

Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy

TOWN OF BLACK DIAMOND - TOWN OF TURNER VALLEY

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Cover Images: Municipal Website - Town of Black Diamond, Town of Turner Valley

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Executive Summary

Black Diamond and Turner Valley have a long history of cooperation. The two municipalities have worked collaboratively on a variety of areas of shared interest and have demonstrated their commitment to continuing this cooperation through a Friendship Agreement. The Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy is a further step in this direction. This strategic partnership between Black Diamond and Turner Valley demonstrates the joint commitment to support the growth of local businesses and provide the framework and for the two communities to move an economic development agenda forward in a coordinated manner and pursue prosperity and economic growth for the region.

Supported by the Intermunicipal Economic Development Committee, economic development in Black Diamond and Turner Valley is well positioned to go to the next level. The Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy is designed to leverage and build on this foundation of community promotion and community development that both towns have committed to despite the limited resources available to date. The Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy lays out five strategic goals that are critical to elevating economic development to forefront of both municipalities. These goals include:

- Build Economic Development Capacity
- Foster a Friendly-Environment for New Development and Existing Businesses
- Support Business Retention and Expansion Entrepreneurship
- Target Community-Based Economic Development
- Make Black Diamond and Turner Valley a Destination

Building the economic development capacity refers to a commitment to the financial and human resources necessary to effectively execute the strategy and to implement the various initiatives and actions through to completion. Successful economic development efforts require leaders, partnerships and support from the entire community. An Economic Development Officer can be a champion for Black Diamond and Turner Valley and a conduit for accessing business support programming and marketing and promotional support for the two communities.

Fostering a business and development-friendly environment is essential to attracting developer interest, enabling local development and retaining and supporting existing businesses as they grow. Building a friendly environment for development is more than just a slogan and declaring the community open for business must be supported by the processes, communication and tools that enable make doing business in Black Diamond and Turner Valley as easy as possible.

With strong local ownership and a primarily small business base, business retention and expansion support assists in identifying companies facing challenges or with potential to grow locally. By engaging with business owners on an ongoing basis, business retention and expansion efforts create an ongoing feedback loop to help assess whether the Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy is being effectively implemented. Working with existing businesses and supporting the growth of new business through entrepreneurship are a key pillar in most economic development strategies.

The strategy also looks to enhance the overall attractiveness of the community as a place to live, locate a business or visit. Through initiatives designed to further improve the downtowns and bring the community together, the strategy outlines how targeted investments can help fill vacancies and renew



vibrancy along main streets, gateways and strategic locations. By capitalizing on investments in the downtown, businesses can also contribute to an enhanced tourism offering that appeals to residents and visitors to Black Diamond and Turner Valley.

The strategic goals within the Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy are comprised of objectives and actions that outline how the communities can achieve these goals and build a prosperous and sustainable rural economy.



1. Introduction

The Town of Black Diamond and the Town of Turner Valley have a long history of cooperation and have long understood the value of partnering on projects of strategic importance. With just three kilometres separating the two municipalities and a population base that shares many of the available amenities and services, transportation network and recreation opportunities, the future of both towns have always been closely intertwined. The towns also share many natural features such as the Sheep River, proximity to Kananaskis County and being surrounded by Foothills County. With so many factors connecting Black Diamond and Turner Valley, it is evident that the towns have much to gain by working cooperatively on areas of mutual importance.

A strategic partnership between Black Diamond and Turner Valley was formalized in a Friendship Agreement - adopted by both councils in 2012. The Friendship Agreement outlines how the two towns would work collaboratively on areas of municipal administration, project implementation and joint services across the municipal service areas. This spirit of cooperation is also evident in the numerous joint planning initiatives undertaken by both towns over the past number of years including the Joint Growth Strategy (2016) and the Amalgamation Feasibility Study (2017).

In economic development, both communities have always maintained a positive relationship and routinely work together to plan and implement joint marketing strategies such as Cool Little Towns, event planning, and business development training sessions. However, with limited resources, a small business base and disparate policy and planning processes, the ability of the towns to effectively market and ready themselves for investment is challenging.

Through the development of an Intermunicipal Economic Development Committee and the commissioning of an Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy Project, Black Diamond and Turner Valley have formalized their mutual desire to work together to achieve the vision of increased prosperity for both communities and the region. The Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy provides a framework and recommendations for the two communities to move forward in a coordinated manner. With an invigorated committee of staff, volunteers and Council representation, economic development efforts in Black Diamond and Turner Valley is better positioned to capitalize on the many opportunities ahead, build on past efforts and the leverage the strong relationship both communities share.

1.1 Objectives and Outcomes

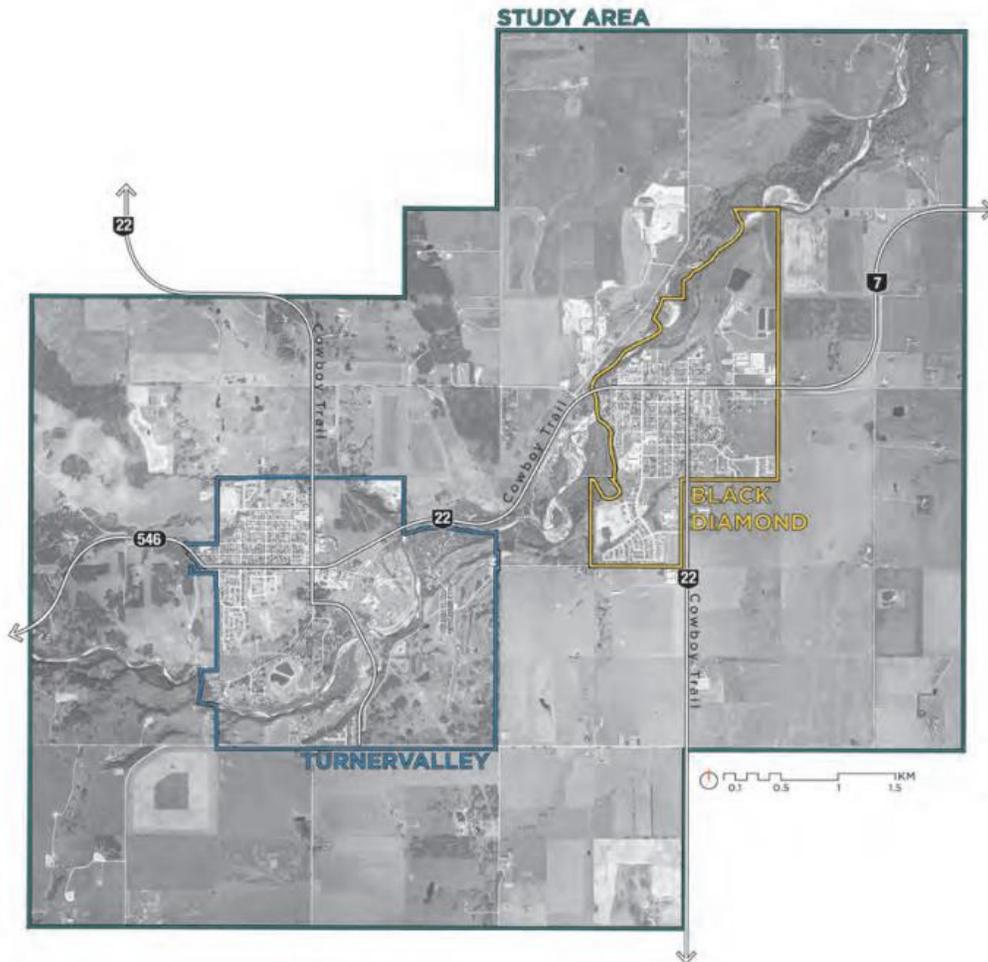
In addition to the Friendship Agreement and service delivery agreements, Black Diamond and Turner Valley's municipal councils have both expressed a desire to pursue continued cooperation and shared services where possible. Turner Valley and Black Diamond Councils have put continued focus on regional collaboration and the desire to continue to improve regional relationships front and centre of their strategic priorities. It is with this backdrop that the Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy was undertaken. While Black Diamond and Turner Valley have distinctive characteristics and local assets, the objective of the Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy is to look at how to position the towns' combined strengths and opportunities rather than continuing to look at their economic futures separately. This includes consolidating existing economic development efforts, effectively leverage community assets, retaining and growing local businesses and building long-term value to attract new commercial investment.



1.2 Aligning our Economic Development Efforts

The Joint Growth Strategy which provides the overall vision for the growth of both communities identified that both Black Diamond and Turner Valley would continue to experience population growth as a result of the continued growth of the city of Calgary. Population growth within the city of Calgary as well as the high growth rates in many of Calgary's surrounding suburban communities including Airdrie, Cochrane, Chestermere and Okotoks is projected to continue through 2045 at an average rate of 1.4%. Rising house prices in both Calgary and the suburban communities will continue to push residents further away from the city as they look for more affordable housing options and a community that provides an alternative lifestyle for their families. The Southwest Ring Road out of Calgary will make Black Diamond and Turner Valley more attractive over the longer term by providing a more direct commuting route for both people and goods.

Figure 1: Map of Black Diamond and Turner Valley, Foothills County



Source: 2016 Joint Growth Strategy.



Continued population growth of the Calgary region is a base assumption made by surrounding communities and a joint economic development strategy for Black Diamond and Turner Valley recognizes this eventuality. However, it is essential to plan for sustainable growth and prosperity of these two communities as economic centres in their own right and not just as bedroom communities for the larger, more urban centres around them. As Calgary's urban population grows, surrounding communities will attract workers and residents looking for either housing options in more affordable markets or a lifestyle and quality of life that can't be found within the city. While this organic population growth is anticipated, planning documents project it as occurring over the long-term. In the shorter term, the towns of Black Diamond and Turner Valley have identified a desire to be the architects of their own prosperity and economic development agenda as evidenced by the strategic priorities, established at the outset of the term of Council.

In focusing on a shared vision of economic development and a shared strategic action plan, Black Diamond and Turner Valley have identified the business and industry sectors, community attributes and areas of economic strength to be promoted and leveraged. Consideration has also been given to any related challenges that might impede further development and investment. The Municipal Development Plan, the Joint Growth Strategy and the respective priorities of both Councils make it clear that an Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy is a logical next step in fostering a unified and attractive business and development climate. This approach will ensure the communities are supportive of existing businesses and new investment opportunities that foster the creation of local jobs and contribute to their long-term sustainability.

The establishment of the Intermunicipal Economic Development Committee and the enthusiasm and commitment of the membership will provide an ongoing source of feedback and input into the strategy development and most importantly, in supporting staff and Councils through implementation.



2. Strategic Planning Process

2.1 Developing the Strategy

Economic development strategic planning is the process of defining where a community or region wants to go and creating a road map for how to get there. Good economic development planning seeks to enhance competitiveness – that is the ability of a city or region to compete with other cities or regions for investment, talent, and market share. In the case of Black Diamond and Turner Valley, the process has been framed by previous planning economic development efforts undertaken by both towns.

Figure 2 outlines how the Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy was developed to reflect the history of collaboration, current context, economic trends and input from the community.

Figure 2: Strategy Development Process



The starting point for the Black Diamond – Turner Valley Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy was a comprehensive background review. The background review looked at all relevant plans, studies and research reports commissioned by the towns of Black Diamond and Turner Valley, both individually



and jointly. The background review looked at the history of joint planning from the 2002 Intermunicipal Economic Development Plan through to the 2017 Amalgamation Feasibility Study and priorities of the current terms of both respective Councils. The economic base analysis is the evidence-based evaluation of the relevant economic, demographic and socio-economic data available for both communities informed by those sectors and market trends that are emerging but may not be readily captured in available data.

Phase 2 involved extensive consultation with the community through a variety of channels. Interviews were completed with key stakeholders that revealed common themes as it relates to the local business climate, which was further informed by an online business survey which garnered over 130 responses. Three in-community workshops were hosted in August 2019. Attended by over 47 people representing the IEDC, business owners, resident and community partners, these workshops provided a hands-on opportunity to ground-truth the research results and offered additional insight into the key findings. The Engagement Results Report found in the appendix offers an overview of the emerging themes and what the community had to say regarding an economic vision for the communities and related action planning.

The information generated through the background review, economic analysis and consultation process was further refined through a SOARR Assessment framework which looks to action strengths and opportunities keeping in mind the aspirations of the community, the risks involved and how the Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy can be effectively measured. The SOARR process is further explored within the IED Strategy and available in its entirety within the appendix.

2.2 Situational Analysis

The situational analysis explores the context for economic growth and development in Black Diamond and Turner Valley. The situational analysis is made up of the economic base analysis which looks at the available economic, demographic and socio-economic data available in order to identify trends and relevant information that has implications for the Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy. The situational analysis also consists of the background document review, which looks at the relevant plans, studies and reports that provide context and direction on the current policy framework.

The economic base analysis relied on data from the following sources:

- Statistics Canada, Census Profile, 2016
- Statistics Canada, Census Profile, 2011
- Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011
- Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, December 2018
- Alberta Treasury Board and Finance
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), 2019

The complete situational analysis, including economic base analysis and document review, are found within the appendix. What follows are some of the key findings and economic considerations that were uncovered.



Impact of the Growth of Calgary and Okotoks

The continued growth of the City of Calgary will impact the region and communities within its area of influence. As Calgary's urban population continues to grow (5% annual growth rate 2006 to 2016), surrounding communities will be impacted by the influx of workers and residents looking for alternative housing and lifestyle options. Black Diamond and Turner Valley's (Black Diamond - Turner Valley) population has increased from 3,923 people in 2006 to 5,620 people in 2017, corresponding to a growth rate of 43% (net increase of 1,697 people) or an average annual growth rate of approximately 3.3%. Although housing costs in Calgary have slumped in recent years, the cost relative to living in Black Diamond and Turner Valley or communities like Okotoks or Airdrie is still somewhat higher, making these communities attractive to purchasers. The predominant housing type in Black Diamond-Turner Valley is single detached houses which represent 79% of all dwelling types. With the prevalence of single-family homes and the lower relative costs compared to Calgary, Black Diamond - Turner Valley will remain an attractive location of choice for first time home buyers and young families. However, the high proportion of single-detached houses means there is less market choice for young professionals, families or those looking to downsize or retire in the community.

Black Diamond - Turner Valley has also been impacted by the rapid growth of Okotoks over the past decade (4.8% annual average growth rate). Rapid growth and urbanization in Okotoks have turned the small town into an increasingly urban and commercial hub for the surrounding communities. Okotoks commercial growth will continue to pose challenges for local businesses in Black Diamond - Turner Valley.

Impact of Oil, Gas and Natural Resources

Black Diamond and Turner Valley have a history of oil and gas development. The Turner Valley Gas Plant was founded as Western Canada's first commercial oilfield and processing plant after the discovery of the resource in 1914. The Turner Valley Gas Plant remained a large contributor to Western Canada's supply of energy until 1985. Black Diamond also largely benefitted from the oil and gas boom and became a population centre for workers and their families working in the industry. In addition to the oil and gas history, Black Diamond also has a rich mining history through the extensive coal deposits that fueled the early economy of the town.

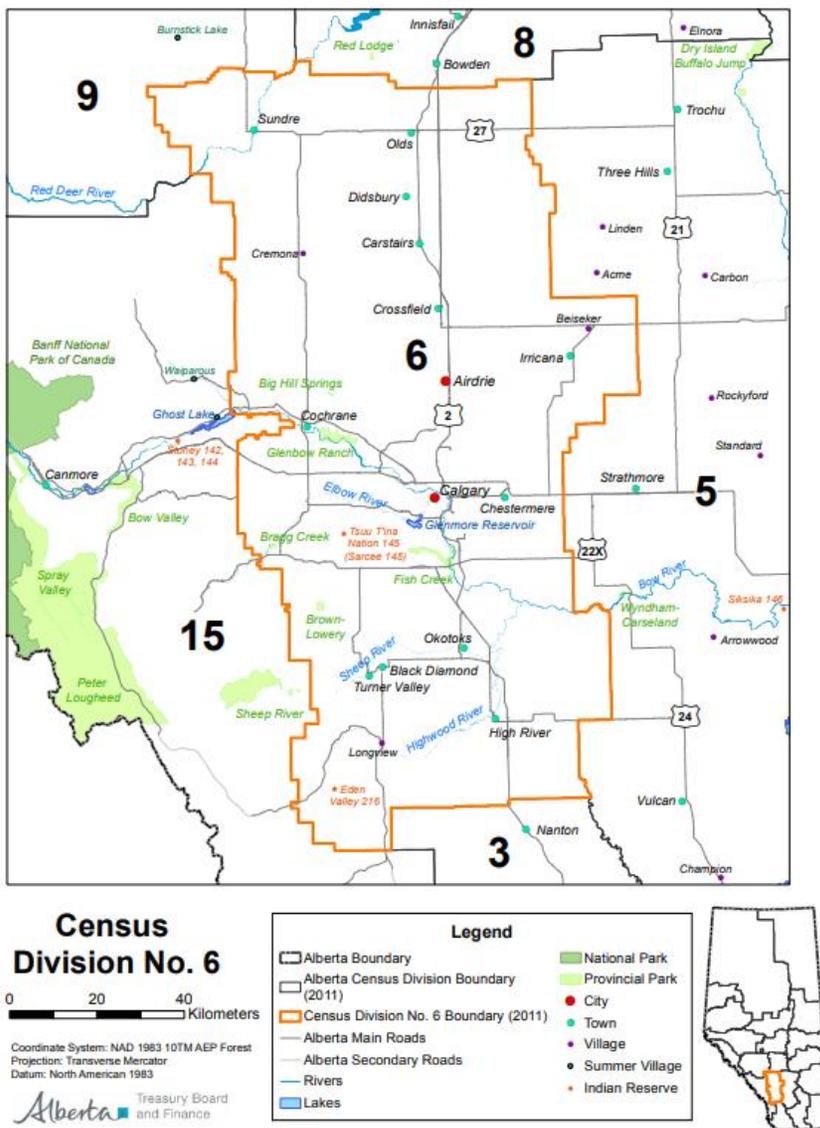
Oil and gas remain key industries for the provincial economy although the decommissioning of the Turner Valley Gas Plant and drop in oil prices have reduced the direct economic impact of these sectors on the towns. Mining, Quarrying and Oil and Gas Extraction employed 160 people in 2016, up from 105 in 2011, representing the largest percentage increase in the labour force (5.9%) after Construction and Retail Trade. Despite the lack of businesses operating in the sector located within Black Diamond and Turner Valley, the sector continues to provide significant employment to residents commuting to other locations for work. Black Diamond and Turner Valley's strategic planning documents and Council priorities indicate the desire to protect and promote the legacy of oil and gas despite the reduced impact as an economic driver. Both towns have expressed a desire to continue to acknowledge the impact of the industry and the heritage and history within the towns through future tourism and economic development opportunities.



Workforce Concentrated in Retail, Health, Construction and Trades

Compared to Calgary, the rest of Census Division 6 (Figure 3) and the Province as a whole, Black Diamond - Turner Valley has a higher proportion of the population with a secondary school diploma or equivalent or less (49%). A comparatively high proportion of the population with trades and apprenticeship certificates (9%) indicate that the population may perform occupations related to skilled trades including welding, construction and carpentry. In comparison, the percentage of Calgary's population with a bachelor's degree or higher level of education is close to three times more than Black Diamond - Turner Valley. Architecture; engineering; and related technologies make up the highest proportion of major fields of study for the local workforce (28%) followed by health and related fields (18%).

Figure 3: Map of Alberta Census Division No. 6



Source: Alberta Treasury Board and Finance



Black Diamond - Turner Valley had a labour force population of 2,695 people according to the most recent Census. The labour force is largely concentrated in construction (415 people or 15.4% of the total labour force), health care and social assistance (335 people or 12.4% of the total labour force) and retail trade (300 people or 11% of the total labour force). From 2011 to 2016, retail trade showed the largest growth in terms of the net increase in the labour force from 145 persons to 300 or 107%. The construction sector, with an LQ of 1.69, can be considered a competitive sector of strength for Black Diamond - Turner Valley, not surprising given the communities' proximity to Calgary and Okotoks. This sector also accounts for the majority of Black Diamond - Turner Valley's labour force (15.4% of the total labour force). The health care and social assistance sector of Black Diamond - Turner Valley shows a labour force concentration slightly above average compared to the province with an LQ of 1.15. Although retail makes up a large proportion of the workforce its labour force concentration is on par with the province with an LQ of 1.01.

2.2.1 Other Key Considerations

Urban/Rural Character

Preserving the character of the two towns featured prominently in planning documents as well as Council priorities. While growth and the development of additional industry and employment opportunities are encouraged, careful consideration is recommended to ensure the towns grow in the right way. The various plans and priorities outline a desire to continue to have the small-town feel and charm that comes from a rural lifestyle while also developing amenities that support the attraction and retention of young families.

Destination Tourism

Tourism is highlighted throughout the various strategic plans and related documents as a source of economic potential for Black Diamond and Turner Valley. The strategic location of the communities along the Cowboy Trail, the presence of the Sheep River and proximity to Kananaskis Country are all features that attract visitors to the two communities. Tourism also plays a large role in the regional economy. However, it is generally acknowledged that the impact of the tourist traveller on the local economy has not been well supported or fully realized to date.

Collaboration /Amalgamation

Regional collaboration between the Town of Black Diamond, Town of Turner Valley and Foothills County (formerly MD Foothills) is encouraged throughout the documents reviewed. This collaboration ranges from mutual planning frameworks to discussions of amalgamation between the Towns of Black Diamond and Turner Valley. The geographic and servicing constraints of both towns lend itself to a joint vision for growth as opposed to individual visions that may not be complementary or well supported financially. The presence of shared natural features such as the Sheep River, transportation corridors as well as the proximity of the towns are cited as reasons for further collaboration and eventual amalgamation. The desire to develop additional employment land envisions the annexation of lands from the County to support future growth and development.

2.2.2 Commercial Gap Analysis

A population-oriented commercial gap analysis was conducted for the towns of Black Diamond – Turner Valley and included comparisons to the town of Okotoks and city of Calgary. The gap analysis looks to



compare the theoretical number of population-oriented businesses that the community can be expected to support against the actual amount of businesses in the same category. The purpose of the gap analysis is to determine if there are enough businesses relative to the size of the population. If businesses are under-supplied, it may signal an opportunity for new business growth in that subsector. If they are over-supplied, it may suggest a competitive advantage for the communities, or it may expose a risk for the local economy.

It should be noted that the analysis is not a comprehensive assessment of commercial needs, but rather an benchmark that should be combined with other considerations such as local knowledge, an inventory of existing and available commercial locations, proximity to other major commercial centres or potential threats such as online competition. The purpose of the tool is to identify opportunities for further investigation. The commercial gap analysis must be viewed in the context of the other findings within the Black Diamond – Turner Valley Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy.

The commercial gap analysis was determined using the 2017 population estimates provided by Statistics Canada and Alberta Treasury Board and Finance and the 2018 business counts provided by the Canadian Business Counts. The gaps are labelled as Capacity (+/-), and calculated using the following formula:

Capacity (+/-) = Actual Number of Businesses – Theoretical Capacity of Businesses

The number of businesses in a community is determined using the 2018 Canadian Business Counts dataset with further input from the Black Diamond – Turner Valley. The theoretical capacity of businesses for a community is calculated using the total population to obtain per capita estimates of the number of businesses in each four-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) subsector that can be supported by the local and commuter population. The population is determined using the Statistics Canada and Alberta Treasury Board and Finance estimates for 2017.

By using the above calculation, negative values represent an under-representation of businesses in the sector, relative to what the population can theoretically support. A positive value means that the sector has an over-representation. Gaps are tracked on a one-to-one basis, meaning that a category with a score of +/- 1 represents a gap or surplus of one business for the sector.

Since the commercial gap analysis utilizes the number of businesses in a sector, there are some limitations to this analysis. Limitations to the gap analysis include the size and scope of the business establishments, the presence of operations that are not specifically classified or proximity to businesses in nearby communities. The commercial gap analysis provides the theoretical per-capita capacity but must take local factors into consideration.

Key Findings

The key gap analysis findings for Black Diamond – Turner Valley are discussed below. Figure 4 outlines the sectors that are registered gaps for Black Diamond – Turner Valley.

- Approximately 12 industry sub-sectors registered gaps in Black Diamond – Turner Valley. The sectors that showed the most gaps in terms of business counts were legal services, offices of dentists, offices of physicians, offices of real estate agents and brokers and automobile dealers.
- According to the data and validation, Black Diamond – Turner Valley has two (2) legal services businesses. There is a possibility to support five (5) more businesses in this sub-sector.
- Okotoks also shows a gap in sectors including offices of physicians, legal services and automobile dealers.



Based on the gap analysis, there may be a need for commercial offices to service finance, real estate and health services; around legal, real estate agents and offices of health practitioners.

Figure 4 also outlines the different audiences of population-oriented businesses. Destination-oriented businesses rely on patrons from broader geography, comparison-oriented businesses have clients that are interested in comparing similar products or services and convenience-oriented businesses rely on people that are generally located in close proximity or passing by.

Figure 4: Top Gap Sectors, Black Diamond – Turner Valley

NAICS	Industry Groups	Actual # of Businesses in BLACK DIAMOND - TURNER VALLEY	Capacity (+/-) BLACK DIAMOND - TURNER VALLEY	Capacity (+/-) Okotoks	Capacity (+/-) Calgary	Audience Type
5411	Legal services	2	-5	-16	900	Comparison
6212	Offices of dentists	1	-3	1	194	Convenience
6211	Offices of physicians (not including chiropractors or doctors of Chinese medicine)	12	-2	-21	677	Convenience
5312	Offices of real estate agents and brokers ¹	8	-2	11	660	Comparison
4411	Automobile dealers	0	-2	-1	-34	Destination
4461	Health and personal care stores	4	-1	7	-40	Convenience
4511	Sporting goods, hobby and musical instrument stores	1	-1	8	5	Destination / Comparison
7111	Performing arts companies	0	-1	5	65	Destination
4431	Electronics and appliance stores	0	-1	3	12	Comparison
4482	Shoe stores	0	-1	-2	9	Comparison
5242	Agencies, brokerages and related activities	4	-1	0	142	Comparison
4441	Building material and supplies dealers	1	-1	6	-115	Comparison
4471	Gasoline stations	3	0	3	-240	Convenience
4422	Home furnishings stores	1	0	4	16	Comparison
8123	Dry cleaning and laundry services	1	0	-1	27	Convenience
7212	RV parks and recreational camps	2	1	-1	-132	Destination

¹ This industry group comprises establishments primarily engaged in selling insurance or providing services related to insurance.



NAICS	Industry Groups	Actual # of Businesses in BLACK DIAMOND - TURNER VALLEY	Capacity (+/-) BLACK DIAMOND - TURNER VALLEY	Capacity (+/-) Okotoks	Capacity (+/-) Calgary	Audience Type
4412	Other motor vehicle dealers	2	1	2	-76	Destination
4481	Clothing stores	6	3	0	-58	Comparison
4483	Jewellery, luggage and leather goods stores	5	4	1	14	Comparison
7224	Drinking places (alcoholic beverages)	6	5	-3	-26	Comparison

Source: Statistics Canada and Alberta Treasury Board and Finance, 2017 & Canadian Business Counts, 2018. Data adapted by MDB Insight with Town of Black Diamond, Town of Turner Valley and rounded to whole numbers.

2.3 Business and Community Consultation

Consultation with residents, businesses, staff, Council, the community and the IEDC were critical to identifying the key issues impacting the future of economic development in Black Diamond and Turner Valley and informing the SOARR Assessment. The consultation process included confidential interviews with key stakeholders with a broad knowledge and understanding of economic development issues. In addition to the interviews, an online business survey was developed and hosted on the Town of Turner Valley and the Town of Black Diamond’s municipal websites. A series of three community workshops helped to inform what was heard and several additional ‘deep-dive’ interviews with key stakeholders explored specific opportunity areas. A summary of the engagement process can be found in the Engagement Results Report with full results also available within the appendix.

2.3.1 Advanced Reconnaissance Interviews

To gain community input and secure support for the Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy, one on one interviews were held during July and August of 2019 with IEDC members, staff from both towns, business owners, community partners and other key stakeholders. A total of 12 one on one interviews were conducted to reveal areas of strength, challenges and other relevant information about the economic development activities and business climate in Black Diamond - Turner Valley. Results from the interviews can be found in the appendix while the emergent responses to the key questions are provided below.

What is your general impression of Black Diamond and Turner Valley’s economy?

- Opinions ranged from stagnant to stable with some optimism about recent commercial developments in Black Diamond
- Positioned for residential growth
- Tourism town without cohesive tourism effort
- Uncoordinated business community



What do you see as being strengths for Black Diamond and Turner Valley's economy?

- Location – proximity to Calgary, natural beauty and proximity to stunning landscapes
- Unique character/charm of towns
- Strong music scene and network of local artisans
- Outdoor recreation (trail network) that provides a high quality of life

What are some of the biggest challenges for Black Diamond and Turner Valley's economy and what needs to happen to help address them?

- The negative perception of doing business in the Town has spread outward
- Not enough outward promotion of the towns
- Outdated zoning that is not flexible
- Perception of excessive red tape
- How to grow without losing the charm

What role do you see for the Town's of Black Diamond and Turner Valley in helping to create a stronger economy?

- Develop and fund incentives to increase business investment
- Update zoning and streamline planning /building processes where possible
- Provide opportunities for new/start-up business acceleration
- Ensure appropriate levels of service

When you think about other communities outside of the Black Diamond and Turner Valley, are there any that stand out to you as success stories for having a strong economy?

- High River – strong community events, rebuilt with the community in mind
- Bragg Creek – embraced the idea of gateway to Kananaskis and developed destinations
- Fernie BC – Funky main street, pedestrian-friendly
- Okotoks – Growth and development has funded recreation and other assets for families

Are there one or two key priorities that need to be reflected in the Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy?

- Business retention and expansion – enable current businesses to stay and grow
- Modern and flexible zoning to accommodate new types of development
- Coordination among the business community (hours of operation, cross-promotion)
- Enhanced marketing and promotion
- Remove roadblocks, real and perceived to development
- Leverage and enhance unique aspects of the Towns



2.3.2 Online Business Survey

The online business survey was critical to understanding the level of satisfaction of existing businesses. The survey was open from July 2019 to August 2019 and collected 130 responses. The survey was designed with both open and close-ended questions to gain insight into the current performance and overall health of the local business community. A summary of the intelligence gained from the business community is presented below with a full breakdown of responses found in the appendix.

Characteristics of Businesses Responding

The majority of survey respondents were self-employed businesses (60%), followed by 38% local owned and operated, and only 2% externally owned and operated. The majority of respondents were in other services (except public administration), followed by retail trade, construction and professional, scientific and technical services. Other services include businesses engaged in repair and maintenance, personal services (i.e. Hair care and esthetic services) and those performing work within private households (i.e. gardeners, caretakers, nannies). Businesses were generally serving the local market (45%) followed by the regional market (37%).

Many of the businesses were well-established with many operating for more than 10 years (37%). Black Diamond - Turner Valley is also favourable to new business as approximately 32% have been operating between 1 to 5 years, and 9% of businesses are operating for less than a year. The majority of established businesses (operating for 10 years or more) are in professional, scientific and technical services, accommodation and food services and construction. Including the owner, the majority of businesses employ between 1 to 5 full-time employees.

Reason for Choosing Black Diamond and Turner Valley

A large proportion of respondents live in Black Diamond/Turner Valley and thus have located their business here (approximately 31 responses). Other highly rated responses for why they were located here include affordability, location, natural beauty, small-town feel and family-oriented lifestyle. Approximately 16 responses related to business-friendly considerations – responses included 'Better chance to improve my business', 'Opportunity to take over an existing small business' and 'Succession of existing business'. Another key consideration was the proximity to large markets, including Calgary and Okotoks and the market potential of Black Diamond - Turner Valley were also identified as reasons to locate in the area.

Business Satisfaction and Outlook

Overall, respondents are satisfied with Black Diamond - Turner Valley as a place to own and operate a business. Approximately 27% are 'satisfied' while 45% are 'somewhat satisfied' leading to the overall satisfaction of 72%. Although respondents show satisfaction with owning/operating a business in the area, only 3% of businesses identify that the economy of Black Diamond and Turner Valley is 'healthy'. Approximately 37% respondents feel the economy is 'somewhat healthy' while 33% feel it is 'somewhat unhealthy'. However, this could be more to do with the state of the provincial economy.

Approximately 42% of respondents identify that the over the past few years, Black Diamond and Turner Valley's economy has 'gotten worse' while 34% indicate that it remained the same. Only 16% indicated that Black Diamond - Turner Valley's economy has 'gotten better'.

Majority of respondents are 'somewhat optimistic' about the area's economy over the next three to five



years; 47% compared to 23% who are 'somewhat pessimistic'. Approximately 62 (56%) respondents are optimistic versus 37 (33%) respondents who indicated pessimism.

Business, Resident and Visitor Attraction

Survey respondents expressed skepticism about the ability to attract other businesses to the area. The majority of respondents disagree with the statement that Black Diamond - Turner Valley has a lot to offer for new businesses (55%). There was also a widespread feeling that there are not a lot of local job opportunities with 80% disagreeing with this statement. With regards to attracting residents and visitors, a majority of respondents agreed that Black Diamond - Turner Valley has a lot to offer for new families (77%). A majority of respondents also agreed that Black Diamond - Turner Valley has a lot to offer for visitors (77%).

Challenges associated with Black Diamond and Turner Valley's economy

A major challenge identified by respondent relates to lack of support for businesses. This includes barriers to business attraction, operation and growth. Businesses also indicated a lack of support or incentives for new businesses. Respondents feel that the area is unable to attract high-tech workers/industries/businesses. The lack of space and/or land for commercial and industrial development is also indicated as a challenge.

The lack of support from the Towns was also identified as a challenge for development. Comments include 'Town office/regulators', 'regulatory burden - municipal mostly then federal' and 'red tape'. Businesses also cited information gaps and a lack of clarity on planning and building processes as a challenge.

Another challenge identified by respondents includes perceived high tax rates affecting the towns' economic viability. More than 26 respondents indicate high taxes as a challenge.

The lack of place-making based efforts is also identified as a challenge for the economy – comments include 'Turner Valley's downtown core is barren', 'the lack of brand' and 'beautifying and updating town entrances and shopping district. Turner Valley and Black Diamond's websites were also highlighted as limiting based on the lack of information and organization of economic development and business development resources. The information on both towns websites was primarily text, lacked visual appeal and did not provide key investment/business attraction information effectively.

Other concerns included the proximity to large urban centres. While there is potential to leverage this advantage, respondents identified 'poor advertising strategies' and a 'lack of foot traffic' as affecting business and economic growth. The lack of retail and commercial operations and the presence of big-box retailers in Okotoks also present challenges as there is a growing perception that consumers only choice is to leave the community to meet their commercial needs.

Strengths or assets associated with Black Diamond and Turner Valley's economy

Some of the key strengths identified by respondents include the natural landscape, affordability and community spirit of the area. Respondents highlight the 'natural beauty', and 'small-town feel' as a strength several times. The location of the towns, natural resource base, mountains (Foothills) Friendship Trail, Cowboy Trail and Kananaskis and farms and ranches are identified as assets.

Respondents also identified community spirit as a strength – the towns are identified as being a supportive environment for families, providing a wealth of lifestyle assets (services, educational and



recreational opportunities). Specific assets mentioned include restaurants, breweries, medical services and Turner Valley School. The proximity of the area to large urban markets, including Calgary and Okotoks for business services, are also identified as a strength.

The growing creative economy was also identified as a strength. The presence of ‘Cultural / Arts / Boutique Business’, ‘new breweries’ and ‘world-class artists and artisans in the region’ are some of the comments provided. Specific assets mentioned include the Eau Claire Distillery.

While respondents described the state of downtown Turner Valley as lacking and a challenge, the Black Diamond downtown was identified as a strength in part because of the inventory of heritage buildings. Respondents believe the area has the potential to grow with the low cost of land, availability of space, growing nature of unique businesses and business owners that support each other factors that should be more effectively leveraged. The potential for Tourism (destination development) is also identified as a strength by a few respondents.

Vision for the Economy

When asked to identify a long term vision for the communities, there were a variety of responses. Some of the more prevalent factors that were mentioned are featured in the word cloud below.



Attitudes, Perceptions and Sales

Respondents indicated that over the past 12 months, attitudes about doing business in this region has become more negative; 32% compared to 24% positive. 48% of respondents feel that attitudes are the same and has not changed. This is comparable to the majority of respondents indicating that Black Diamond and Turner Valley’s economy has ‘gotten worse’ over the past few years. As noted previously, this may be attributed at least in part to the performance of provincial economy.

36% of businesses indicated that compared to the last fiscal year business revenues have decreased, while 36% indicated no change in revenue. 21% indicated an increase in revenue. Approximately 35% of respondents expect business revenues will be higher in the next fiscal year while 37% expect no change in revenue. 15% expect that business revenues will be lower in the next fiscal year.

Approximately 65% of business expect to maintain operations in the region in the foreseeable future. Approximately 16% expect to expand operations while 7% plan to close, 4% plan to downsize and 7% plan to sell. Approximately 60% indicate that their business does not have a succession plan compared to 40% who have one. Succession planning with local businesses is relevant for economic development programming as respondents suggested it as a reason to operate a business in the area.



2.3.3 In-Community Workshops

A series of three in-community workshops were conducted in August 2019. These included two sessions open to the public (one in Black Diamond, one in Turner Valley) and a small group discussion with the IEDC. Sessions were advertised through the local papers and through the municipal websites and social media channels. A total of 47 participants were involved over the two days.

The in-community sessions provided an opportunity for participants to hear highlights from the economic analysis as well as some of the initial themes that emerged from the interviews. Participants were asked to engage in discussions about their vision of economic development success, what steps need to be taken to achieve the vision, what existing strengths could be better leveraged and what are the factors are getting in the way of economic growth.

What does a successful Black Diamond-Turner Valley look like? What is our vision for the community? In 5 years? In 10 years?

- Destination towns with unique commercial offerings
- A growing population who value connection to nature and charm
- Full and bustling main streets that are hubs of activity
- Towns boast a variety of accommodation types for visitors
- Trails and outdoor recreation opportunities that entice families

How do we get there? What steps do we need to take to achieve this vision? What can we build on?

- Encourage downtown/main street investment through the use of incentives
- Ensure community buy-in and community awareness of what is currently here
- Continue to align development policies/processes to assist with the amalgamation
- Ensure businesses and development applications receive a high level of customer service
- Invest in amenities for young families and seniors to age in place

What are the limiting factors for economic development and growth? What's getting in the way?

- Lack of awareness among businesses and community about what is here
- The perception that there is not a business-friendly climate
- Restrictive planning and zoning policies that are not adaptive to a variety of uses
- Lack of diverse housing options for new residents and to support entrepreneurs and professionals



3. SOARR Assessment

A SOARR Assessment provides a framework through which what we heard, what we learned, and what we want to achieve with the Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy is translated into strategic actions and an effective implementation plan. The complete SOARR Assessment can be found in the appendix. A summary of each component of the SOARR is outlined below.

Figure 5: SOARR Methodology



Source: MDB Insight, 2019.



3.1 Strengths

Black Diamond and Turner Valley have several strengths that were identified through the consultation process and economic analysis. While many of the strengths were informed by the community, there were also a number of strengths that may have previously been unknown or even seen as weaknesses but were borne out when contrasted with other municipalities or the province.

Steady Population Growth: The population within Black Diamond-Turner Valley has grown at an average annual rate of 3.3% from 2006 through 2017. Contrasted with a 5.0% average annual growth rate in Calgary, 4.8% in Okotoks and only 2.4% in the Census Division 6 (with Calgary and Black Diamond - Turner Valley removed). This average annual growth rate seemed to run contrary to much of the narrative throughout the community that there had been no recent growth. With steady average annual growth, there is an opportunity to shape how that growth is accommodated through the Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy.

Historical Assets: The history of oil, gas and mining within the communities is well documented. Although not reflected in current business counts or employment numbers, these industries have had a huge impact on the historical development of both towns. Although sometimes described as a potential liability, the Turner Valley Gas Plant is both a National and Provincial Historic Site and a source of local tourism. As the site of Western Canada's first commercial oilfield and processing plant, the site has strong appeal to those interested in the history of Alberta's oil and gas sector. Managed by Alberta Culture, there is also a dedicated volunteer organization which contributes to the site and helps to provide a one of a kind experiences, despite some ambivalence from the local community.

High Quality of Life: The quality of life experience in Black Diamond-Turner Valley was consistently referenced by residents, businesses and community stakeholders. Stakeholders referred to the small-town feeling that those who have roots in the community have cherished and which motivated those coming from larger centres such as Calgary and Okotoks. The local education institutions are a source of tremendous pride and residents expressed their appreciation for the strong and engaged PTA which provides parents with the opportunity to engage with the school in a more meaningful way than at a larger urban school. The presence of the Oilfields General Hospital was also a strong contributor to the high quality of life and provides a level of healthcare and services that are not often found in a community the size of Black Diamond and Turner Valley.

Emerging Arts, Culture and Artisan Community: In addition to the role they play in increasing the quality of life, arts and culture also plays a role in community and economic development. The presence of local artisans in Black Diamond and Turner Valley was highlighted through the consultation process as a source of pride for local residents. Retail offerings such as galleries, a distillery, brewery and other forms of craftsmanship found in Western Canadian communities (i.e. blacksmithing) have contributed to a cultural resurgence within the towns. Black Diamond and Turner Valley are also increasingly hosting musicians and artists from outside the region looking to perform in smaller, more intimate venues.

Locational Advantages: The proximity of Black Diamond and Turner Valley to Calgary was a distinct advantage for local businesses. Access to Calgary's market was highlighted by businesses located in the communities as a strength. Transportation access via Highways 7, 22 and 2A all provide access and movement of goods and people into commercial and industrial and employment centres in Calgary and Okotoks. Black Diamond-Turner Valley's location along the Cowboy Trail and proximity to the Kananaskis are also key strengths for the region as a gateway to the Rockies.



3.2 Opportunities

There is a tremendous amount of momentum for economic development in Black Diamond and Turner Valley through the formation of the IEDC, the strategic priorities of both Councils and the commissioning of the Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy. It is essential that Black Diamond and Turner Valley take advantage of the available opportunities to position, and in some cases, re-position the communities.

Tourism Potential: Black Diamond and Turner Valley have several unique tourism assets that include the Turner Valley Gas Plant, the Sheep River trail system and several annual events supported by staff in both towns. These locally organized events include the Diamond Valley Parade (est. 2,000 attendees), Canada Day Music Fest (est. 4,000 attendees), *September* Fest (est. 200 attendees) and Light Up Black Diamond (est. 500 attendees). Black Diamond-Turner Valley also plays host to several regional motorcycle and cycling events that mainly draw participants from Calgary and the surrounding urban areas including MEC Century Rides. These well organized and coordinated cycle tours bring hundreds of riders through both communities during the riding season. There are also several unique businesses such as the Chuckwagon, Bluerock Gallery, Hard Knox Brewery and Eau Claire Distillery among others which serve as tourist destinations for day-trippers from Calgary and area or for those heading on to the Kananaskis. There is a tremendous opportunity to leverage the individual efforts of these businesses and organizations in a more coordinated way to provide a greater draw and create tourism experiences that attract visitors.

Enhanced Local Spending: A greater understanding of the retail and commercial products and services available within the towns could help prevent some of the leakage of spending to nearby centres. The rapid growth of Okotoks commercial offerings has led many residents to believe that it is their best option for retail and commercial services. However, many participants in the engagement process suggest that residents may be unaware of businesses/services in Turner Valley due to the lack of promotion and as a result, do not frequent the stores. Concerns were raised about the consistency of store hours in both communities and that businesses may be deterring return customers due to their lack of regular hours. More effective promotion of local businesses may keep more spending local and increase referrals among the business community.

Connections to Calgary: The planned Southwest Ring Road has the potential to improve road connections to and from Calgary. The Ring Road will provide more direct access for goods and people to and from Calgary's growing south end. Increased connectivity to Calgary will facilitate a greater flow of tourist traffic as well as make commuting from Turner Valley and Black Diamond to parts of Calgary more convenient. Completion of the Southwest Ring Road will make both communities more attractive for development once completed and will fundamentally change the way in which the communities are viewed. Population growth in Calgary will continue to drive growth in the surrounding communities, and improved transportation access could shift developers' attention to Black Diamond and Turner Valley.

3.3 Aspirations

Through the consultation process, the community expressed their desires for the preferred future state of Black Diamond – Turner Valley. These aspirations were not only how they envisioned how the economy would grow and develop but also how the community would continue to maintain a high quality of life for residents. These aspirations were also linked to the priorities of both respective



Councils and the visions from previous municipal and regional planning efforts. The vision that emerged was of a unified community that was supportive of businesses and provided local employment opportunities. This supportive business environment may also include shared spaces for new start-up and opportunities for home-based businesses to grow.

Supportive Business Environment: Municipal governments can create a positive environment for local business and developers. This factor was a key element emerging from the of the consultation process. A more supportive business climate is not simply eliminating current regulations or making changes to the regulatory framework but can also include a way in which the towns interact with business. Input from existing businesses and developers suggest interaction with the towns can be a challenging particularly as it relates to planning approval and the permitting process. Enhanced communications, clearer timelines and streamlined development approvals processes can help to mitigate and improve this perception.

Revitalized Main Streets: The main streets of Black Diamond and Turner Valley were envisioned as vibrant places offering unique products and services as well as opportunities for the community to gather. While Black Diamond’s main street has seen considerably more development than Turner Valley, both main streets had properties or vacant lots that could benefit from repair, redevelopment or investment. In addition to enhanced commercial offerings, there was a desire to animate the public spaces between and beside businesses. This animation could be achieved with public art installations, murals depicting the town’s heritage, infrastructure for events such as a bandshell in Millennium Park and increased recreation opportunities for children and youth.

Maintain the Rural Charm/Lifestyle: A vision of enhanced growth for the communities was followed with a desire to maintain the rural charm and lifestyle that Black Diamond and Turner Valley enjoy. Despite rapid growth in Okotoks and other communities in proximity to Calgary, there was a consensus that growth on that scale was not desired. Stakeholders emphasized the quality of life and appeal of the small town that had either brought them to Black Diamond – Turner Valley or had kept them and their families there. Population growth for the sake of population growth was not envisioned, but the consultation brought out the notion that employment opportunities, enhanced local commercial offerings and community development would allow the towns to grow together as complete communities that both respect their industrial past but also provide opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs in the modern economy.

3.4 Risks

There a potential risk with not acting on the economic opportunities in Black Diamond and Turner Valley. These risks are both external in the form of larger market forces and internal in terms of support for business investment. While external risks may be hard to predict or plan for, internal risks are those that the municipalities can control and mitigate.

Oil Prices Continue to Slump: While not central to the economic future of Black Diamond – Turner Valley, the performance of the oil and gas sector has had a tremendous impact on Calgary and the economy of Alberta. The continued success or decline of the sector impacts the larger region and employment growth in the City of Calgary, which in turn influences Black Diamond and Turner Valley. Continued struggles within the sector have the potential to impact overall economic conditions and reduce discretionary spending of residents and tourist visiting the area.



Young Families and Seniors Look Elsewhere: Stakeholders emphasized the closeness of the community and access to healthcare and education as major contributors to the high quality of life enjoyed by residents, although there was some concern over the ability to retain young families and seniors within the communities. With commercial and retail activity taking place in Okotoks and the variety of recreation opportunities available there, stakeholders expressed concern about young families spending more and more time travelling to Okotoks and the potential for them to consider relocation. The ageing demographic or those looking to retire or downsize in Black Diamond – Turner Valley is also challenged with limited options for apartments and condominiums.

Negative Perception Spreads: The current land use policy framework has been highlighted by businesses and developers as restrictive and reactionary, rather than responsive and adaptive. The perception that the towns were hard to deal with was a common theme throughout the consultation process. Consultation with the development, realtor and business community suggests that this perception is not limited to the town but is also becoming known within the larger region and into Calgary. Developers expressed that the development community was small and interconnected with negative perceptions spreading quickly. The sentiment that the towns are not open for business has the potential to stifle future development as developers and investors direct their attention elsewhere.

Economic Development Efforts are Unfocused: Black Diamond and Turner Valley have undertaken economic development initiatives before, but they have lacked the sustained effort and energy required to make a real difference. Black Diamond previously had an economic development strategy and a dedicated economic development position. Without such position within either town, many of the previous successes, including the Cool Little Towns initiative or the Community Enhancement Loan program have waned because the organizations lacked the capacity to continue to sustain them. Without the necessary resources and staff commitment, implementation of the Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy may face the same result.

3.5 Results

In order to effectively implement the Economic Development Strategy, there must be a consideration for measures that will identify success. While there was a high level of overall business satisfaction in Black Diamond – Turner Valley there was a noticeable lack of awareness of what supports are available to businesses. Low uptake on programs, services and business loans offered by Community Futures Highwood suggests there is potential to leverage this regional organization more effectively through promotion and partnership. Measuring businesses satisfaction, their awareness of support services and the utilization of rural business programming can help understand whether the supportive business environment has been achieved.



4. Strategic Goals

Based on the research, the SOARR Assessment and consultation with the business community and stakeholders, a series of strategic goals were developed. The strategic goals are a result of the refining and answering the questions, ‘where do we want to go’ and ‘how do we get there?’ These strategic goals identify what the communities must do to achieve their vision and act as milestones along the way. Informed by the situational analysis and the consultation with the community, the strategic goals are the building blocks that make up the Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy.

1. Build Economic Development Capacity
2. Foster a Friendly-Environment for New Development and Existing Businesses
3. Support Business Retention and Expansion Entrepreneurship
4. Target Community-Based Economic Development
5. Make Black Diamond and Turner Valley a Destination

The strategic goals within the Action Plan are comprised of objectives and actions that outline how the communities can achieve the goals and contribute to the overall vision.

The strategic goals are outlined in detail below and are complemented with case studies and supportive research that highlight the opportunity and the impact for Black Diamond and Turner Valley’s economic growth.

Strategic Goal # 1: Build Economic Development Capacity

An important aspect of ensuring that Black Diamond and Turner Valley are prepared to implement the strategy is to ensure that the necessary foundation is in place, both internally and externally. Economic Development as an activity and a profession is broad, multifaceted and a hands-on endeavour. To see the most success and return on investment for both communities, economic development requires that the various organizations and stakeholders in a community all work together and leverage their individual and collective knowledge and strengths as well as understand their roles and responsibilities.

Successful economic development efforts also require a commitment to the financial and human resources necessary to effectively execute the strategy and to implement the various initiatives and actions through to completion. Economic development is about relationships and benefits greatly from local champions and regular and ongoing engagement with local industry, support organizations and community partners. A key element to success is in identifying gaps and ensuring that action is taken to address capacity and resource constraints. The strategic priority, “Build Economic Development Capacity”, and its associated recommendations have been included to assist Black Diamond and Turner Valley to support the implementation of the strategic plan effectively.

While Black Diamond and Turner Valley are at the early stages of building the economic development capacity, required to make a meaningful change in the economic future of the towns, there are many examples of small communities in Alberta and the surrounding areas of Calgary that have made



tremendous progress in their economic development efforts. Economic development leadership can take a variety of forms, whether it be an Economic Development Officer (EDO) position within the municipal organization or an outside resource, contracted to deliver the service (e.g. tourism services). Regardless of the structure, the critical feature is the same, a dedicated economic development representative.

City of Medicine Hat Economic Development

The City of Medicine Hat looked at their own economic development capacity in 2015 and determined that a more focused approach and increased capacity was needed in order to kick-start economic development and actively attract new business and investment. Invest Medicine Hat was contracted in 2015 to promote Medicine Hat to businesses and investors. The original two-year contract was renewed in 2017 because of the success achieved. Through a partnership and collaborative efforts, Invest Medicine Hat was able to bring developers/investors to the City and then act as an intermediary and liaison during the development process. Through their efforts, Invest Medicine Hat was able to bring Folium Biosciences a hemp oil and CBD wholesaler to the community. Invest Medicine Hat was also instrumental in bringing Aurora Cannabis to Medicine Hat thanks to their outreach and support throughout the process.

Vulcan County Economic Development

Vulcan County in Alberta also serves as an example of how increasing the economic development capacity of a municipality can successfully create business development and opportunities for growth. With a population of only 3,984 residents, the County has an economic development profile and reputation that belies their small size. The County hired their first economic development officer in May of 2018. Focused on diversifying the local economy as well as business development and investment attraction, the addition of the position to the County has been met with great enthusiasm. One of the key features of a dedicated EDO position is not only the capacity that they add to the organization but also their ability to tap the capacity and resources from regional partners such as Community Futures, provincial funding opportunities and other support organizations. The EDO can effectively provide advocacy and build partnerships to better take advantage of economic development opportunities that may otherwise go untapped.

Strategic Goal # 2: Foster a Friendly-Environment for New Development and Existing Businesses

As Calgary and Okotoks continue to grow as urban centres and population density increases, rural municipalities in the Calgary region become more attractive to residents and newcomers and families looking for an alternative lifestyle. Whether they be locally employed, commuters or entrepreneurs, a supportive business environment can be a strong factor for resident attraction.

As Calgary and Okotoks continue to grow, businesses and developers may also be looking for an alternative to higher prices and land development costs or increased competition within the marketplace. An inventory of available serviced land with a focus on investor readiness would ensure that relevant information is ready when developers come calling. Fostering a business and development-friendly environment is essential to attracting developer interest in Black Diamond and Turner Valley and enabling local developers who may own key pieces of employment land. Building a



friendly environment for development is more than just a slogan. Declaring the community open for business may create interest within the development community and get them in the door, but their experience once arrived is equally important to ensure timely development.

The consultation process suggested that Black Diamond and Turner Valley were difficult places to undertake development. This perception, regardless of whether it is accurate, has the potential to undermine the towns' desire to attract new businesses and investment. Given the competition for investment attraction that exists outside of Calgary development and business-friendly messaging needs to be followed up with actions and regular engagement with the business community to identify and alleviate perceived challenges with the development approvals process. While there are a variety of first steps that could be undertaken, modernizing the towns' land use by-law and municipal development plans is essential.

Town of High River Land Use and Business Licence Bylaw

High River Alberta provides an example of a community that took a proactive approach to economic development in order to stimulate all forms of investment. Following devastating floods, the town faced high vacancy rates, especially within the downtown core as businesses were either not able to recover from the flood damage or chose to move elsewhere. The process to streamline the Land Use Bylaw was conducted with the goal of becoming more permissive rather than prescriptive. Through their consultation process, the town adopted a 'people-first' approach which emphasized both citizen engagement in the process as well as implementing and encouraging pedestrian traffic and sustainability.

The result of High River's re-evaluation of their Land Use Bylaw was the reduction of 41 existing land use districts to 6. The consolidation exercise provided enhanced flexibility in permitted uses removed some parking and related requirements and reduced the processing and approval process for many uses, including the development of secondary suites. High River's streamlined Land Use Bylaw has positioned the community as a leader in investment-friendliness and earned the municipality an APPI planning award in 2018. In addition to the Land Use Bylaw, High River has also initiated a streamlined business licence bylaw which combines storefront and home occupation categories as well as an enhanced youth business licence category which offers free licencing to entrepreneurs aged 25 years and under. Black Diamond and Turner Valley can adopt a similar initiative to create a business-friendly environment and enable business investment and entrepreneurs to innovate and create local employment opportunities.

Strategic Goal # 3: Support Business Retention and Expansion and Entrepreneurship

A cornerstone of any economic development strategy is the active support of local businesses whether they are looking to expand their operations, require assistance with development approvals or need marketing assistance. While the absorption of land and buildings by new businesses are obvious outward signs of growth, the majority of new employment comes from existing businesses. In response to the online business survey, 98% of respondents were either locally self-employed or were locally owned and operated businesses.

Strong local ownership suggests the need for Black Diamond and Turner Valley to establish a formal Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program. This type of program involves a regular schedule of



meetings organized with businesses owners and the towns economic development representatives. Usually following a prescribed list of questions, the BR&E assists in identifying companies that will benefit from support to expand their operations and identify any challenges faced by local firms, providing an opportunity for the towns to intervene and assist in the resolution of any problems. A BR&E program is also an opportunity to rally the volunteer community and actively engage in the community's economic development efforts.

If done effectively, a BR&E program can be a catalyst for local investment. By engaging with business owners on an ongoing basis, a BR&E can also be used to track improvements in the business climate over time.

Entrepreneurship is a strong force for business and economic growth. The recent investments in fibre infrastructure within the communities can be an attraction factor for both new businesses and entrepreneurs. Marketing and promoting the high-quality broadband service can also be attractive for businesses looking to relocate out of the Calgary area. Cultivating entrepreneurship, particularly among youth, by linking them with Community Futures Highwood or by enabling entrepreneurial activities in downtown locations can help to re-invigorate the main street.

Strategic Goal # 4: Target Community-Based Economic Development

Municipalities are leveraging lifestyle trends that have seen the increased popularity of small towns close to large centres with young families and early retirees, the growing number of immigrants and new Canadians that are settling outside of the major urban centres, and the steady growth in entrepreneurs that have chosen to work remotely or from shared office space thus allowing them to work anywhere. Given Telus' investment in the next generation fibre optic network to Black Diamond and Turner Valley, the communities are well-positioned to attract businesses and business owners that require access to larger markets like Calgary but want the lifestyle that is afforded them and their employees in smaller communities. This includes creative professionals, destination retail, and other small business operators.

The key to effective community-based economic development is to know what your community can offer these markets and then promote it through a wide array of social media and traditional marketing platforms. Communicating the opportunities that Black Diamond and Turner Valley affords these businesses and individuals requires effective promotion, backed up by local initiatives that support the lifestyle and locational attributes they are after.

Community-based economic development involves building local capacity for the implementation of initiatives through the active involvement of residents, businesses, support organizations and volunteer networks. In order to capitalize on perceived economic development opportunities, community members must become active participants and ambassadors for Black Diamond and Turner Valley. Through community economic development, stakeholders are transformed from observers to participants in shaping the economic future. Through the consultation process, it became apparent that there was an information gap in both communities. Business owners in both communities suggested they did not have an appreciation for the product and service offerings available in their own town, let alone the other. Information sharing and collaborative marketing between the communities is essential to ensuring the development of a strong community profile for Black Diamond and Turner Valley.



Olds Institute for Community and Regional Development

[The Olds Institute for Community and Regional Development](#) is a model for community economic development within Alberta. Formed in 2001, the Institute's founding members included the Olds Agricultural Society, the Olds & District Chamber of Commerce, Olds College and the Town of Olds. The Institute was formed on the basis that rather than simply wondering what was possible if the community pulled together, there should be an organization dedicated to enabling volunteers and the community to make things happen. The Olds Institute developed a mission statement which was "We are the Small and Medium Size Business Capital of Rural Alberta". The basis for decision making was the philosophy that economic development should be driven by the community.

The Olds Institute has evolved far beyond what was initially envisioned as a place for ideas into a movement. Whether it be producing videos and other marketing initiatives, shop local promotion or social media campaigns, the Olds Institute is a leader in community mobilization. The [Everything Olds website](#) is a one-stop-shop for everything that a business or resident would want to know about what the community has to offer. Community news, event information and testimonials are just a few of the ways the site brings together the community and enables them to participate. Initiatives such as the Olds Institute is one example of how a community can be mobilized to support its own economic development potential. For Black Diamond and Turner Valley to support and implement the Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy, it will take more than just the efforts of staff and Council. Community economic development can be leveraged to enhance the towns own economic development efforts and most importantly, ensure the community remains engaged in shaping them.

Strategic Goal #5: Make Black Diamond and Turner Valley a Destination

Improving awareness of the assets, experiences and business opportunities that your community has to offer to visitors and investors is a key element of effective economic development. The emergence of the Foothills Tourism Association is a major step forward for expanding and sustaining tourism programming and investment attraction in the region. Black Diamond and Turner Valley can increase the impact of the new organization by supporting and collaborating with the Association in the promoting and development of tourism product.

A necessity in this endeavour is a clear understanding of the regional value proposition, who the target audiences are, and how they plan to reach them. It is also about understanding the communities' differentiation points and what comparative advantages exist that support increased visitor traffic and investment opportunities.

Tourism plays an important role in the overall economy and the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC) estimates that over \$102 billion in economic activity is generated by the tourism sector across the country annually. The TIAC also estimated that over 1.8 million jobs are supported through tourism and tourism-related activities. Travel was also cited as the industry with the largest proportion of its workforce, consisting of youth at 31%. In Alberta, the visitor economy was estimated at \$8.5 billion in 2018, which constituted a 5% growth from the previous year.

The contributions of tourism to the Canadian and Alberta economies is not just limited to the urban centres and major attractions. Rural tourism is becoming increasingly popular among domestic and international travellers who are looking for authentic experiences that are off the beaten path.



Combined with other emerging trends such as the slow food movement, geo-tourism, agritourism, and heritage tourism, many rural communities are positioning themselves to take advantage of these emerging consumer trends. The arts and culture scene that is emerging in Black Diamond and Turner Valley could be leveraged in this fashion. Destination retail is also a strong feature of the towns that should be more effectively leveraged. The oil and gas and mining heritage of both towns are also relevant when looking to create a unique tourist destination.



5. Action Plan

The Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy is underpinned by five strategic priorities. These priorities are intended to anchor and qualify all strategic initiatives and ensuing actions on the part of the municipalities over the next five years. The priorities support the overarching vision for as well as the desired outcomes of the strategic planning process.

It should be noted that the list of actions is a starting point based on community input and research at a point in time. It is by no means an exhaustive or comprehensive list of all the potential actions for the two communities. New actions will emerge and will need to be assessed against the priorities of the Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy particularly with the on-boarding of an economic development officer. Identified potential leads and partners are based upon both the willingness and capacity of the organization to undertake the recommended actions. The recently re-established Diamond Valley Chamber of Commerce could be a strong potential partner for various aspects of the implementation of the strategy. A strong business association, whether the Chamber or another body is an essential partner in implementing the action plan. The IEDC is identified as a partner and lead throughout the action plan but could take a greater leadership role working in conjunction with a dedicated Economic Development Officer in the absence of a Chamber of Commerce.

- Actions – The direction the municipalities, its partners, and its stakeholders will undertake to address the essential issues or opportunities that should be addressed over the length of the Strategy.
- Timing – The timeframe for implementing the Action Plan.
- Priority timings are either Immediate (I = 0-18 months), Short-term (S = 2-3 years), or Long-term (L = 5 years or beyond).
- Lead and Partners – The identification of select leads and internal/external partners that can support economic development objectives.



Strategic Priority 1: Build Economic Development Capacity

#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
1.1: Dedicate Resources Toward Implementing the Strategy						
1.1.1	<p>Hire a dedicated staff person responsible for economic development services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Economic Development Officer (EDO) is an essential point of contact and driver in implementing the Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy The EDO would coordinate multi-stakeholder efforts and act as an internal and external liaison to municipal departments 	Town of Black Diamond – Town of Turner Valley	N/A			
1.1.2	<p>Provide staff support to the Intermunicipal Economic Development Committee (IEDC) and engage groups involved with economic and community development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify business and community groups with an economic development mandate Bring together business and community groups to introduce the Intermunicipal Economic Development Strategy and identify areas of mutual interest including resident attraction, festivals and events, business support and tourism 	Economic Development Officer; Community Services Manager	Diamond Valley Chamber of Commerce; Community Futures Highwood; Foothills Tourism; Special Events Coordinator; Community groups			
1.1.3	<p>Ensure Black Diamond – Turner Valley are taking advantage of the resources available within the region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain an inventory of economic development, tourism and community development grants available through the provincial government and community foundations Promote available programming/grants to local businesses and entrepreneurs 	Economic Development Officer	IEDC; Community Futures Highwood; Diamond Valley Chamber of Commerce			



#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure regular business development/support programming in Black Diamond – Turner Valley Showcase businesses outside of Black Diamond – Turner Valley that have secured funding / support from Community Futures Highwood 					
1.1.4	<p>Make economic development and tourism a dedicated line item within the annual budget deliberations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiate between programming, marketing & communications, promotional activities and sponsorship allocations 	CAOs; Planning Manager; Community Services Manager	Municipal Councils; CAOs, Planning Manager; Community Services Manager			
1.2: Provide Support to Economic Development Partners						
1.2.1	<p>Investigate opportunities to partner with the Community Futures Highwood to deliver business support services within the community (e.g. business counseling, business plan development, financial management workshops) at satellite locations (e.g. Cochrane's www.smartstartyourbusiness.ca)</p>	Economic Development Officer	Community Futures Highwood: Special Events Coordinator			
1.2.2	<p>Engage with the Diamond Valley Chamber of Commerce to address the needs of the business community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with the Chamber to develop networking events on an ongoing basis (Business After 5, Lunch and Learns, workshops) <p>Partner with the Diamond Valley Chamber and Community Futures Highwood to offer a 'Win this Space' business plan competition to support entrepreneur development</p>	IEDC	Economic Development Officer; Diamond Valley Chamber of Commerce; Community Futures Highwood			
1.2.3	<p>Partner with tourism organizations to develop resources for enhanced tourism efforts</p>	Economic Development Officer	Foothills Tourism; Travel Alberta; Special Events			



#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support the creation of website content (e.g. business profiles, heritage storytelling) ▪ Develop asset inventories 		Coordinator; High Valley Chamber of Commerce			



Strategic Priority 2: Foster a Friendly-Environment for New Development and Existing Businesses

#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
2.1: Develop a Central Point of Contact for Development Inquiries						
2.1.1	Implement a tracking system for all development / investment activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document interactions with developers and businesses to ensure a central repository and institutional knowledge 	Economic Development Officer	Planning; Building			
2.1.2	Develop a standardized lead generation protocol for handling in-bound development inquiries across departments	Economic Development Officer	Community Services Manager; Special Events Coordinator			
2.1.3	Create an inventory of available land and buildings with information including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parcel or building size Private or municipal ownership Contact information Zoning and servicing information 	Planning	Economic Development Officer			
2.2: Streamline Development and Permit Processes						
2.2.1	Develop a pre-application protocol for new development inquiries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A pre-application meeting with building, planning, fire and economic development officials would identify all the relevant processes and procedures that development proponents would have to satisfy 	Building; Planning	Fire; Economic Development Officer			
2.2.2	Create standardized levels of service for responding to new development inquiries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the various stages of the development process (Land Use Re- 	Building; Planning	Economic Development Officer			



#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
	Designation, Development Permit and Building Permit have clear timelines and requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create user friendly development process flowcharts that identify the stages, requirements and timelines for new development projects 					
2.2.3	Conduct a comprehensive review of existing Land-Use Bylaws with the goal of adding flexibility and reducing overly prescriptive and outdated uses	Planning	IEDC; Development community			



Strategic Priority 3: Support Business Retention and Expansion and Entrepreneurship

#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
3.1: Build a Local Network Among Existing Businesses						
3.1.1	Develop a shared microsite dedicated to economic development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Microsite should highlight local economy, showcase retail, commercial and community services ▪ Promote the tourism and quality of life experiences ▪ Promote available business and investment assistance (e.g. business licensing) 	Economic Development Officer; Special Events Coordinator	IEDC			
3.1.2	Develop a shared community calendar with information on community events, promotions, tourism activities and support programming	Special Events Coordinator	Foothills Tourism; Community Futures Highwood; Diamond Valley Chamber of Commerce			
3.1.3	Organize opportunities for business owners to network and share information about their business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quarterly networking breakfasts rotating between venues in both communities with a featured speaker and roundtable updates 	Economic Development Officer; Special Events Coordinator	IEDC; Community Futures Highwood; Diamond Valley Chamber of Commerce			
3.1.4	Create and implement a Shop Local Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a 'Shop Local' marketing campaign including cooperative programming, consistent community marketing materials, cross-store and cross-community promotions (e.g. www.ThinkLocalMarket.com) 	Economic Development Officer; Special Events Coordinator	Diamond Valley Chamber of Commerce; IEDC; Community Futures Highwood			



#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide support to grassroots shop local initiatives including the Fall shop local initiative Establish a feature business program to highlight successful local businesses 					
3.2: Conduct a Business Retention and Expansion Program						
3.2.1	<p>Initiate a business retention and expansion program targeted at Black Diamond – Turner Valley’s key sectors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake regular business visitation surveys and inform local operators of business potential 	Economic Development Officer	IEDC; Diamond Valley Chamber of Commerce			
3.2.2	Develop and administer a bi-annual business survey to create an ongoing loop of feedback on economic development needs, challenges, and service delivery	Economic Development Officer	Diamond Valley Chamber of Commerce			
3.3: Promote and Encourage Entrepreneurship and Start Ups						
3.3.1	Investigate the development of a co-working/shared space in the downtowns to provide a space for home-based businesses and entrepreneurs to share resources and network	Economic Development Officer	Local Developer			
3.3.2	Investigate reduced fees for youth business licences	Legislative Services	Economic Development Officer			
3.4: Downtown and Main Street Revitalization						
3.4.1	<p>Develop incentives for downtown redevelopment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinstate the Community Enhancement Loan program for businesses through a partnership with Community Futures Highwood Develop a public art fund which supports murals or public art installations within the downtown 	Municipal Councils	Community Futures Highwood; IEDC			



Strategic Priority 4: Target Community-Based Economic Development

#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
4.1: Bring the Community Together						
4.1.1	Organize a community showcase <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bring together sports teams, businesses, volunteer organizations and social clubs to network and share their mandates and achievements ▪ Provide a platform for the Diamond Valley Chamber to relaunch ▪ Consolidate the Black Diamond and Turner Valley Business Directories and launch as a searchable database 	Special Events Coordinator	IEDC; Diamond Valley Chamber of Commerce; Foothills Tourism; Community Futures Highwood; Local Service Clubs			
4.1.2	Liaise with the Olds Institute for Community and Regional Development to uncover best practices and mentorship for grassroots community development	Economic Development Officer	Special Events Coordinator; Community Services Manager			
4.2: Identify and Promote the Community Assets						
4.2.1	Conduct an asset mapping exercise of arts, culture and tourism assets guided by new definitions of cultural resources	Economic Development Officer	Foothills Tourism; Special Events Coordinator			
4.2.2	Promote strength of community services including schools and healthcare in all community profile and investment materials	Economic Development Officer	IEDC; Community Services Manager			
4.2.3	Leverage Cycle and Trail Network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advocate for cycling friendly policies in the Municipal Development Plan ▪ Encourage public works to consider cycling friendly infrastructure in their planning 	Planning Economic Development Officer	Public Works			



Strategic Priority 5: Make Black Diamond and Turner Valley a Destination

#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
5.1: Capitalize on Thru Traffic and Neighbouring Events						
5.1.1	Conduct a traffic study to understand traffic volumes on key arterial roads through the communities	Public Works	Planning			
5.1.2	Create a reciprocal information sharing protocol with neighbouring communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish reciprocal social media relationship/followers 	Special Events Coordinator; Economic Development Officer	Regional marketing organizations; Foothills Tourism			
5.2: Engage and Support Foothills Tourism						
5.2.1	Provide support to Foothills Tourism in their destination marketing initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investigate increased signage along Cowboy Trail 	Special Events Coordinator; Economic Development Officer	IEDC; Alberta Ministry of Transportation; Foothills Tourism			
5.2.2	Advocate for a toolkit for businesses that identifies how they can be tourism ready	Special Events Coordinator; Economic Development Officer	Foothills Tourism			
5.3: Implement the Initial Marketing Plan						
5.3.1	Dedicate resources towards the development of initial marketing materials	Municipal Councils; CAO	Special Events Coordinator; Economic Development Officer			
5.3.2	Conduct a marketing and branding strategy with a communications plan to reposition Black Diamond and Turner Valley	Economic Development Officer	Special Events Coordinator			



#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
5.4: Capitalize on the Investments in Fibre Optic Network						
5.4.1	Promote the benefits of broadband to businesses and the community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure businesses are aware of enhanced capabilities for e-commerce ▪ Target small-scale tech firms looking for lifestyle locations outside of Calgary ▪ Educate seniors on the importance of cyber security 	Municipal Councils; Economic Development Officer	IEDC; Community Futures Highwood			