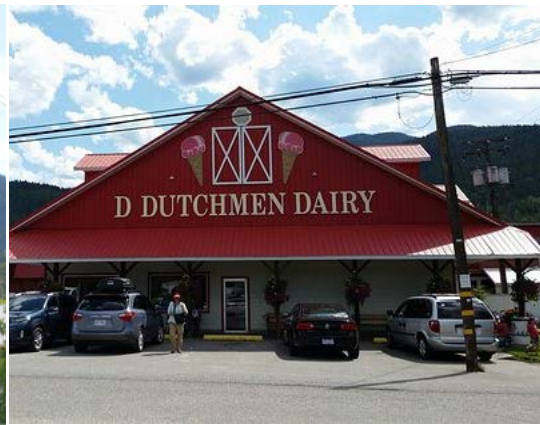


Shuswap Economic Development Strategy

Executive Summary

Prepared for the Columbia Shuswap Regional District and Shuswap Economic Development

January 2018



Project Description

Shuswap Economic Development's (SED) work plan identified the development of an economic development strategy as a priority. The geographic areas for the strategy include the communities of Sicamous, Columbia Shuswap Regional District's (CSRD) Area C (South Shuswap), Area D (Deep Creek, Salmon Valley, Falkland), Area E (Malakwa, Swansea Point) and Area F (North Shuswap). SED has worked to develop a Shuswap Tourism Development Plan, Marketing Strategy and the Shuswap Agriculture Strategy. The completion of an economic development strategy will help to pull the documents together, identify other opportunities for the Shuswap region and provide a roadmap for delivery.

The areas included in this plan are poised to move forward with a more focused economic development program. The area is in an enviable position, located strategically virtually midway between major population centres in Alberta through to Metro Vancouver as well as a central hub close to major interior cities of Kamloops, Vernon and Kelowna. This rural area has numerous avenues to grow its tourism product and further develop agriculture opportunities.

Important issues such as a lack of commercial/industrial lands for some of the areas, the perception that the area is tourism only focused versus economic development, the absence of outside perception as a place to do business, limited broadband and low population density need to be recognized and addressed. Geographically, the communities are all close to many great markets – Salmon Arm, Kamloops, Vernon and Kelowna – but also must compete with those same markets for talent, investment and retail shopping.

Another challenge is that SED does not have the economic development resources or capacity necessary to deliver a more comprehensive economic development program. Before anything can happen, the CSRD will need to ensure its continued support of economic development by expanding the capacity within SED. Tourism has been the prime focus mainly because of the region's natural beauty, visitor attractions and business infrastructure and investment, while economic development has not had the same focus, in part due to the lack above of capacity and resources. SED needs to ensure it has all the baseline information and foundational tools for delivering an improved economic development program.

Strategy Direction

The development of the Economic Development Strategy comes at a pivotal point in time for the CSRD and the SED. While the area has had a strong economic development program the knowledge of the incredible successes is better known externally rather than locally. The tourism program that forms part of the SED is recognized as one of the best regional functions in BC. To maintain the strength of a reputable organization, the SED will have to adopt economic development strategies and actions that are flexible, innovative and sustainable. With an economy that has been anchored long-term in agriculture, forestry and tourism, the threshold for change is here to create new opportunities and to strengthen what you already have.

The overall desired objective of this Strategy is to build a strong, sustainable economic development program for the SED.

Shuswap Economic Development has engaged the region in an exercise which has led to the development of this Strategy. This Strategy provides the required tools to help the Region develop its local employment base, increase residents, expand agriculture, support existing and new businesses, expand film production, support the tourism industry and more.

Building on Strengths and Addressing Challenges

Throughout the project's public consultation people often said the Shuswap is truly a unique place to live and to visit. The area offers natural beauty, a vibrant tourism industry, educated citizens and a high quality of life within easy access of major markets, airport(s), as well as a world-class university.

The strategic planning process highlighted the Shuswap's unique position and opportunities and identified challenges to achieving economic development goals. These challenges may not appear new to some Shuswap residents, but this strategic planning process validated many challenges and put them within the context of economic development. Shuswap's future economic viability and quality of life needs:

- A diverse, resilient, year-round economy that helps local businesses expand, attracts new business investment, and provides services for residents and visitors
- A business environment that supports a continually evolving economy and increases the Shuswap's competitiveness for high-paying jobs that attract younger workers and their families
- Proactive and collaborative advancement of specific projects that will catalyze economic development, such as a priority project identified in the Economic Development Strategy

Context for Strategy Direction

It is recognized at a general level that this economic development strategy must help to increase awareness of the SED, engage more residents and businesses, and to initiate new economic development initiatives for the region. It is important to keep in mind while doing any strategy that important considerations arising out of current economic development programs and economic conditions must be considered. These conditions cannot be ignored, nor can new focused initiatives work to undermine them in any way. Rather, new initiatives must lever these to achieve the success that a new economic development strategy demands. The programs and conditions to be considered follow.

- Though the primary sectors may be in decline, they still play an important role in the Shuswap. Agriculture cuts across several industries and new methods for developing within the sector and need to be addressed. This strategy, along with the Agriculture Sector Strategy, seeks to reinforce and build on the strengths of the sector through growth into new market segments for which there is substantial opportunity and capability.
- The resident labour force is educated and skilled, yet there is some who are forced to seek employment outside of the Region. Also, absentee land, business and residential owners make it difficult to sustain a local economy. Creating new opportunities for business growth and attraction, growing entrepreneurship and encouraging new permanent residents will create employment opportunities in the Shuswap.
- It is commonly accepted that a large portion of business growth and job creation is from within the existing business in any community. Therefore, there is a need for continued business retention and expansion efforts. In addition to regular business visits, other activities should be considered including:

- Maintenance of the existing business database and inclusion of local success stories, testimonials. Increase public awareness and regular communication of these successes to key stakeholders.
 - Continue to work closely and align activities with other organizations involved in economic development (i.e. Community Futures, Chambers of Commerce, Salmon Arm Economic Development Society and others).
 - Fully integrate supporting activities related to agriculture and tourism and film into the overall economic development program.
- There is lack of understanding about what economic development is and what it does for the Region. It will be important to move into a strong communication plan to educate and inform residents, key stakeholders and political bodies of economic development activities.

Goals and Key Focus Areas

Considering the preceding as the overall context for the economic development strategy for the SED Region, the following section details the eight goals focused on building a strong and successful economic development program for the region:

1. A Modern, Inclusive and Effective Economic Development Program
2. CSRD has a Best of Class Economic Development Toolbox
3. Be a Leader in Business Development and Support
4. Best of Class Marketing and Investment
5. A Strong and Vibrant Agriculture Sector
6. Shuswap is a Film Location of Choice
7. Support Community Specific Needs
8. Tourism

Each of the eight goals has specific strategies that work towards achieving the goals. Some of these strategies can be implemented immediately while others are longer term in nature. The Implementation Action Plan section of the Economic Development Strategy provides additional information regarding timelines.

1.0 A Modern, Inclusive and Effective Economic Development Program

The CSRD has achieved significant success in economic development and tourism over the years despite having limited capacity, both human and financial. In fact, in many ways, it is looked at as one of the best regional functions in British Columbia. However, that is not often recognized within the CSRD and member communities.

Developing a new structure and redeveloping some of the key foundational pieces needed for successful economic development will help to increase awareness and support for an expanded economic development program. More importantly, these changes and enhancements will better position the CSRD to achieve significant economic development success.

- 1.1 Restructure Existing Economic Development Structure
- 1.2 Board Training
- 1.3 Business Development Officer
- 1.4 Communication Plan
- 1.5 Economic Disaster Recovery Plan

2.0 CSRD Has a Best Of Class Economic Development Toolbox

As a leader in economic development, the SED must develop new and expand existing critical components of a leading economic development function. An effective and comprehensive economic development toolbox provides access to resources, documents and other information related to doing business and living in the Shuswap Economic Development Region. While existing materials exist these need to be updated to reflect the current information available and increased methods used to distribute this information to the global marketplace.

- 2.1 Enhanced Regional Profile with Individual Sub-Region Profiles
- 2.2 Expanded Website Presence
- 2.3 Promote the Shuswap Through Townfolio
- 2.4 Develop a Commercial and Industrial Land Inventory
- 2.5 Business Guides for Each Community Within CSRD
- 2.6 Complete a Review of Development Approval Process
- 2.7 Create a “Business First” Expediated Program

3.0 Be a Leader in Business Development and Support

To be a leader in Business Development and Support an economic development program must incorporate the needs of external businesses and those already invested and operating in the region. In today’s competitive environment providing a good business climate is crucial. Communities must promote business-friendly regulations and be flexible and quick to respond to business and entrepreneurial needs. Current trends in economic development dictate that a region that incorporates investment attraction, entrepreneurship and support to existing businesses will have greater success in supporting and encouraging economic sustainability.

In general, the CSRD has a reputation of having a very aggressive and supportive program of working with existing businesses and supporting new entrepreneurs. However, the SED can improve communication with existing businesses, data collection and management, and support existing programs to encourage new entrepreneurship. By working with others, and supporting existing and new programs, the SED will emerge as a region that is experiencing healthy job growth, diversity, and sustainable economic competitiveness.

- 3.1 Enhance BRE Program
- 3.2 Annual Business Walk
- 3.4 Seniorpreneurship
- 3.5 Marketing/Support Launch-a-Preneur
- 3.6 Encourage Pop-up Shops (Sicamous, Sorrento – all regions)

- 3.7 Regional Business Lunch and Learns
- 3.8 Voluntary Business Licencing Program

4.0 Increase the Awareness of the CSRD on it's Opportunities

The efforts of economic development organizations and local governments, combined with effective marketing programs, position regions for economic success. Marketing improves awareness, creates demand, and drives growth. As economic competition continues to intensify, efforts at creating coordinated regional economic development and marketing messages are increasingly important. It must be recognized that marketing is not just about placing ads or attending a trade show, it is also about networking, hosting and so much more.

While the SED has experienced success in its economic development efforts, and in particular as it relates to tourism, it could be far more effective by developing key messages for its targeted audiences, while promoting activities, events, programs and initiatives from throughout the region.

Many initiatives included in this strategy will help to develop the right resources for an effective marketing campaign. For example, an expanded BRE program will help to collect key information on what businesses feel are the biggest advantages of doing business in the region, and they can be used as testimonials. Some of this work needs to be done before an effective economic development campaign can be launched. Understanding the local business community and having their support is an important step in successful external marketing. Some of the most effective regions not only have a well-integrated economic development organization leading the marketing efforts but they also have hundreds of community ambassadors as part of the team – your local businesses.

External marketing is vital to diversifying an economy. It can significantly improve a community's economic health by creating new higher paying jobs and increasing the tax base. For communities today, it is important to have a website as primary collateral and also to have material to distribute at conferences, tradeshow, meetings, etc. An integrated approach to external marketing includes a combination of word-of-mouth, publicity, and personal meetings. Effective marketing programs are not just about targeting new industry; they are about educating local business, attracting and retaining residents and increasing the overall awareness of the region.

- 4.1 Expand Presence at Tradeshow
- 4.2 "Shuswap - the Opportunity Awaits"
- 4.3 Resident Attraction
- 4.4 CSRD – Explore/Live Shuswap (booth – regional sell)
- 4.5 Physician/Medical Worker Recruitment
- 4.6 Regional Wayfinding Program
- 4.8 Video Testimonials

5.0 A Strong and Vibrant Agriculture Sector

Agriculture plays a key role in the economy and identity of the Shuswap region, contributing to the high quality of life in this area. The 2014 Shuswap Agriculture Strategy builds on previous regional discussions

to solidify a vision for agriculture in the region and identifies mechanisms to support food security and the sustainable growth of agriculture in the Shuswap region. Elements addressed by the Strategy include:

- Regional differentiation
- Collaboration between organizations
- Community engagement
- Research and education
- Marketing

The agriculture strategy, just like this economic development strategy only addresses regions managed by the SED including, Sicamous, and CSRD Electoral Areas C (South Shuswap), D (Deep Creek/Falkland), E (Malakwa/Eagle Valley) and F (North Shuswap). It does not address Electoral Areas A (Golden) and B (Revelstoke). It does, however, include the City of Salmon Arm and as such the following strategies do as well. The following strategies have been incorporated for the most part, from the Shuswap Agriculture Strategy and are the ones determined to be the most important as it relates to economic development over the next three years.

- 5.1 Establish a CSRD Agriculture Advisory Committee
- 5.2 Hire a Part-Time Agriculture Coordinator
- 5.3 Shuswap Grown Program
- 5.4 Develop and Maintain Agriculture Asset Map
- 5.5 Agriculture Tour – Celebrate Agriculture
- 5.6 Agriculture Fact Sheet
- 5.7 Identification of Agri-Processing Park
- 5.8 Partner with Local Farmers and Agricultural Landowners to Explore Options for Succession
- 5.9 Annual Review of Agriculture Strategy

6.0 Shuswap is A Film Location of Choice

The film sector is one of British Columbia's fastest growing sectors. In 2015/16, film and television production activity was robust, demonstrating BC's resiliency and reflecting its reputation as an enticing, cost-effective and dependable centre for the production of creative content. The sector includes a wide range of direct and indirect employment opportunities in areas such as pre- and post-production, costume design, set design, construction, catering, transportation and special effects. An estimated 42,000 direct and indirect jobs were created through film and television production in 2014/2015.

With its diverse and friendly areas, natural beauty and proximity to major transportation networks, the Shuswap is "picture perfect" for filmmakers. Easy accessibility, unique and diverse locations and Regional District support, make it a welcoming place for filming productions. Every region of the Shuswap offers something different for the film industry such as the remoteness of Seymour Arm and the western nature of Falkland.

- 6.1 Establish an Effective and Efficient "One Stop" Film Office
- 6.2 Integrate Film Communication with overall Economic Development Communication
- 6.3 Conduct Post-Production Feedback
- 6.4 Work with Creative BC

- 6.5 Location/Resource Inventory and Photo library
- 6.6 External Marketing Program for Film

7.0 Support Community Specific Needs

As a regional function, the CSRD SED Region is made up of several rural areas and one incorporated community. It is always difficult to develop a strategy that provides items for every part of a region, and at times some initiatives need to be identified that are specific to a portion of the region or community. Through the changes recommended in the restructuring of the current structure for economic development, staff will have the opportunity to get expanded and specific input on the needs of the different areas of the SED region. Every fall the staff should meet with the regional economic development group to discuss one or two specific initiatives that could be implemented in the following year. The following are some initiatives that have been identified for specific parts of the SED.

- 7.1 Annual Community Specific Needs Identification
- 7.2 Seymour Arm Wharf
- 7.3 Dementia Friendly Community Designation
- 7.4 Electrical Power Expansion
- 7.5 Broadband Expansion

8. Tourism

Typically, tourism is not a component of economic development organizations. However, some organizations, including SED, combine both economic development and tourism activities. Currently, SED spends approximately 75% of staff time on tourism-related activities. It should be noted that many of the tourism-related activities include cross-over economic development activities. For SED to successfully implement economic development and tourism initiatives, both have been combined into this strategy. With the hiring of additional staff, the increased capacity will help to ensure that both can be delivered effectively.

- 8.1 Implement Tourism Strategy and Marketing Plans

Strategy Implementation Timelines

The following table places each strategy by year of implementation. In addition, the table identifies the strategies that will be ongoing after initial implementation. For example, Strategy 1.5 will begin implementation in year one but work will continue on in years two and three (ongoing).

Strategies	Year			
	1	2	3	Ongoing
A Modern, Inclusive and Effective Economic Development Program				
Restructure Existing Economic Development Structure				
Board Training				
Business Development Officer				
Communication Plan				
Economic Disaster Resiliency Plan				
CSRD has a Best of Class Economic Development Toolbox				
Enhanced Regional Profile with Individual Sub-Region Profiles				
Expanded Website Presence				
Promote the Shuswap Through Townfolio				
Develop and Maintain Commercial and Industrial Land Inventory				
Business Guides for each Community within CSRD				
Complete a Review of Development Approval Process				
Create a “Business First” Expediated Program				
Be a Leader in Business Development and Support				
Enhance BRE Program				
Annual Business Walk				
Seniorpreneurship				
Marketing/Support Launch-a-Preneur				
Encourage pop-up shops (Sicamous, Sorrento – all regions)				
Regional Business Lunch and Learn				
Voluntary Business Licencing Program				
Best of Class Marketing & Investment				
Expand Presence at Tradeshow				
“Shuswap - the Opportunity Awaits”				
Resident Attraction				
CSRD – Explore/Live Shuswap (booth – regional sell)				
Physician/Medical Worker Recruitment				
Regional Wayfinding Program				
Video Testimonials				
A Strong and Vibrant Agriculture Sector				
Establish a CSRD Agriculture Advisory Committee				
Hire a Part-Time Agriculture Coordinator				
Shuswap Grown Program				
Develop and Maintain Agriculture Asset Map				
Agriculture Tour – Celebrate Agriculture				

Agriculture Fact Sheet				
Identification of Agri-Processing Park				
Partner with Local Farmers and Agricultural Landowners to Explore Options for Succession				
Annual Review of Agriculture Strategy				
Shuswap is a Film Location of Choice				
Establish an Effective and Efficient “One Stop” Film Office				
Integrate Film Communication with Overall Economic Development Communication				
Conduct Post-Production Feedback				
Work with Creative BC				
Location/Resource Inventory and Photo library				
External Marketing Program for Film				
Support Community Specific Needs				
Annual Community Specific Needs Identification				
Seymour Arm Wharf				
Pocket Community				
Dementia Friendly Community Designation				
Electrical Power Expansion				
Broadband Expansion				
Tourism				
Implement Tourism Strategy and Marketing Plans				

Ten Things to Remember About the Shuswap Economic Development Strategy

The following factors will be discussed throughout this report and are important to bear in mind while reading through the document.

1. Shuswap Economic Development will play leading roles, but economic development requires the **involvement** of many individuals, businesses, and stakeholder organizations throughout the region.
2. The recommendations in the Economic Development Strategy are designed to be comprehensive and includes some activities that are either currently planned or underway. This report **coordinates with and reinforces** productive activities that are already in place.
3. There is a **close connection between economic development and community development**. One cannot occur without the other.
4. The focus of economic development in the Shuswap should be on **entrepreneurship and supporting the expansion of local businesses**.
5. Addressing the Shuswap's challenges and achieving overall goals will not be free. **The community must be willing to invest in itself and in economic development**.
6. The Economic Development Strategy is a **living document** that should be reviewed and updated over time to adapt to changes in the marketplace. A system should be set into place for reporting implementation progress back to the community on a regular basis.
7. There are **no silver bullets** that solve community challenges. Addressing the Shuswap's challenges takes a coordinated, multipronged approach.
8. There will never be 100% unanimous agreement on every recommendation and every word choice in this report. Striving for an elusive consensus will delay and quite possibly derail implementation.
9. To successfully accomplish the Shuswap economic development goals will require an **unprecedented level of cooperation and communication**. **Setting aside differences** and working together toward greater goals is essential.
10. Economic development is a **marathon**, not a sprint. Implementing recommendations will require long-term community investments and continued momentum and patience for years to come.