



Community Economic Development Plan

June 9, 2014



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Community Economic Development Vision

To improve the quality of life within Lacombe by fostering a collaborative environment focused on cultivating innovation, nurturing a business friendly culture, promoting sustainable growth and creating a safe, inclusive, vibrant and healthy community.

Background

On April 21, 2010, Council adopted Bylaw 359 which was a significant step aimed at acknowledging that both community and economic development are intimately related and must be cultivated together to grow a vibrant and sustainable community. This is the fundamental principle of Community Economic Development (CED). A strong economy is required to build a solid community and similarly, an active community is required to build a robust economy. They are two halves of the same coin, each equally responsible for strengthening the other. In that way, the upcoming CED Plan will need to be well-rounded in both community and economic development objectives to ensure it is relevant, achievable and ultimately successful. To achieve this, it is clear that government cannot bring about change in isolation. It will be paramount to mobilize our citizens, including key private, public and non-profit sectors of the economy, towards a set of common goals. Developing partnerships will be vital to jumpstarting the process, as will be introducing a measure of consensus driven decision making.

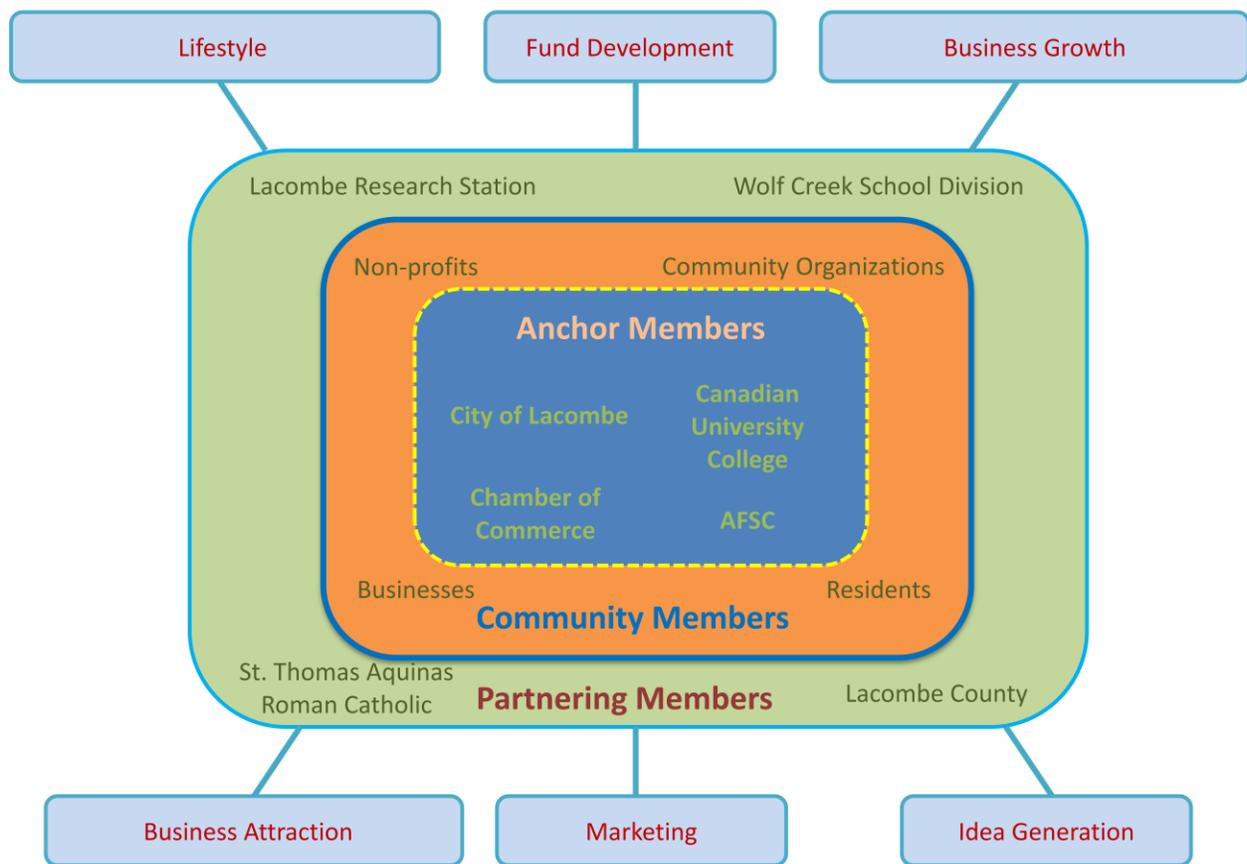
To achieve the broad goals of the CED plan, an organization will be nurtured that fosters the development of each of these dimensions to ensure balanced community growth. Each defined priority is represented – in that way, interested community members/groups can thereby access a more dynamic and flexible organization which is better able to appeal to their specific interests. (see diagram below)

- Anchor Members: there are four recommended permanent Anchor members who will be asked to provide funding support for the initiative and name one director to the Board.
- Community members: will include a wide range of public representatives including businesses, service clubs, non-profit organization and citizens at large. These members would be elected at an Annual General Meeting, serve a set period and have voting full voting rights.
- Partnering Members: these will include organizations that may participate with the CED organization on specific initiatives. They would not have voting rights.
- Out of this membership, a series of working committees would be spawned to address our specific objectives/priorities.

The working committees and/or task forces will be customized to Lacombe's specific priorities and goals. Concepts from the other organizations/strategies researched will be blended to create a configuration that is unique to Lacombe. This group will pursue quicker and more participative decision making, take on multiple initiatives with greater organizational capacity and promote more significant and prolonged collaboration through its authoritative design. While the City will hold a permanent position on the board along with a corresponding vote, it would also function in a more advisory capacity, similar to its

current role with Lacombe Regional Tourism. In taking more of an industry led approach, that group has been able to secure alternative funding and develop partnerships that have successfully increased its effectiveness and awareness within the region.

Proposed CED Organizational Structure



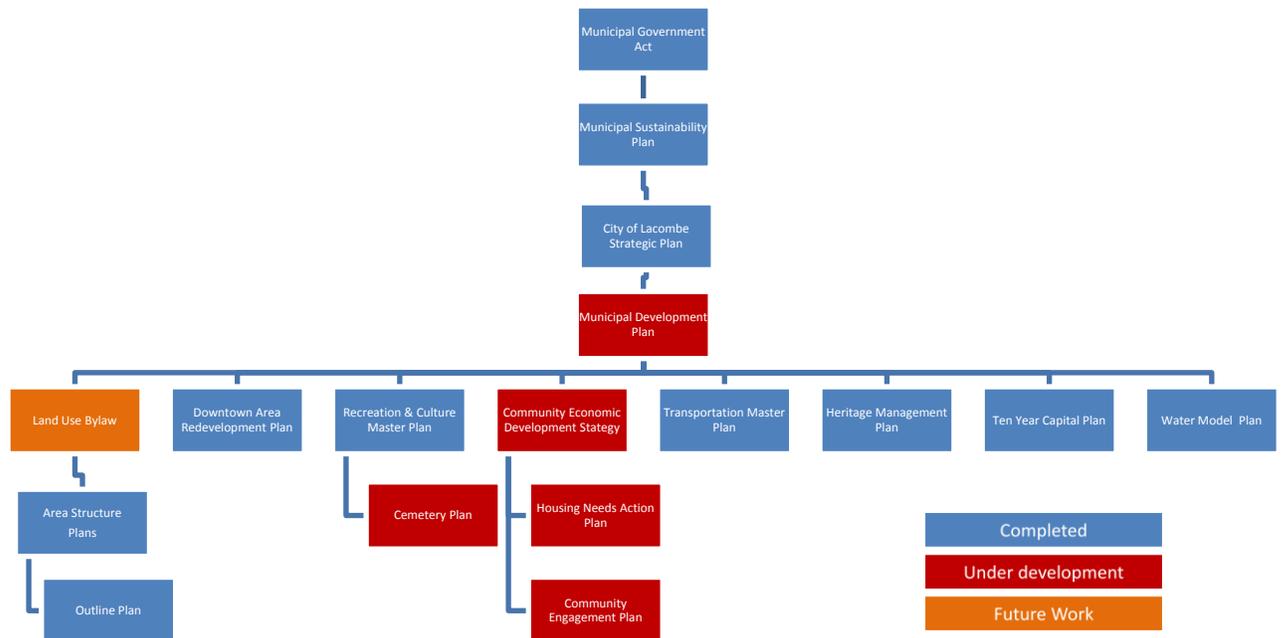
This new organization will be much more fluid and dynamic, allowing for a better match of skills with the task at hand. Commitments will both short and long in duration depending on the project. It is this flexibility in approach that will be a key in attracting participation from a broad range of stakeholders throughout the community.

Finally, many initiatives will be lead more effectively by this consensus model organization. New grants may be secured that are unavailable to municipalities and innovative concepts like a community economic development investment fund and business incubation will be better received as a project spearheaded by the community as opposed to a municipally led initiative. The City of Lacombe will still be an active participant in making suggestions, influencing decisions and providing guidance; the process will simply be more collaborative and participatory.

CED Strategy is rooted within existing plans

- CED Strategy direction has the ability to engage and empower both businesses and residents alike. Careful consideration has been taken to ensure alignment with current planning.
- This began at the very highest level with the recently completed and Council endorsed Municipal Sustainability Plan (MSP) which provides the overarching direction to the community for the next 30 years. References to community goals and targets have been used to determine CED priorities.
- The plan also demonstrates clear linkages to the Council Strategic Plan as this document provides shorter term and more detailed direction for the community.
- The CED Strategy pays close attention to Bylaw 359, which clearly states a prospering and sustainable community requires a comprehensive strategy that addresses economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions to ensure quality of life for everyone.

Our Legislative Plan Framework



- Additionally, the plan blends in concepts introduced by:
 - Municipal Development Plan
 - Land Use Bylaw
 - Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan (DARP),
 - Housing Needs Action Plan,
 - Recreation and Culture Master Plan,

- Citizen Satisfaction Survey.

CED Objectives, Strategies & Goals

Objective: Nurture a business friendly culture and foster an innovative, entrepreneurial environment

Up to 80 percent of job creation comes from the existing business base. Regular and consistent contact with existing businesses is necessary to ensure their continued viability and success.

Strategy: Develop policy to encourage innovation and development

Proposed Action: Joint initiative land acquisition strategy

Action description: This is an innovative strategy that allows the municipality to acquire land, but work with a developer to limit the long term cost of financing. The steps are as follows:

- Identify land for development
- Partner with a developer of the City's choosing to make plans for development
- City purchases the land, with an agreement from the developer to pay all interest on the debenture and develop a minimum percentage of land on an annual basis
- Once the land is purchased, the City and developer will work together to develop a concept and outline plan for the land

The above strategy has been utilized most effectively by the City of Spruce Grove for the development of the Westwind Centre (click on the link to access project):

http://www.wamdevelopment.com/media/14209/westwind_centre_lease_brochure_nov_20_2013_.pdf

Resources required: A change to our Debt Policy would be required. Administration would need to identify potential sites for development, and create a Request for Proposal to attract interested partners to the initiative.

Proposed Action: Promote high density and work/live development opportunities

Action description: Use the guidelines established by DARP to reach out to developers/builders in order to encourage redevelopment that allows people to live and work in the downtown area. Aid in the development of a Land Use Bylaw that stimulates denser development.

Resources required: CED and Planning Personnel; may require development incentives.

Strategy: Develop policy to encourage innovation and development

Proposed Action: Business visitation program

Action description: Business visitation can be much more than simple networking and interaction with businesses. The following options will be researched and the best solution for our needs selected:

- **Formal Business Visitation program:** This would require a consultant to provide some assistance in mining for data. The extent and type of data would depend on the intended purpose. If the goal is to address issues like business retention and attraction, and to identify problems such as labour shortages and barriers to employee training, we would likely end up with a report like the one produced for Drayton Valley (click on the link to access the report): http://draytonvalley.ca/documents/Business_Visitation_Report.pdf. This type of report will allow for an in-depth analysis that can lead to some clear actions. This could also involve the collection of Foreign Direct Investment related information (i.e. NAICS codes) that will determine what sectors local businesses belong to, so when foreign investment or partnership opportunities arise, those businesses can easily be identified.
- **Informal business visitation program:** If detailed information is not desirable, a more informal program can be led by City staff and/or a group of volunteers. This is the current practice in communities like Cochrane, where they have utilized community partners to help deliver an annual questionnaire. This approach allowed for a more honest assessment of the business landscape. The program in Cochrane was initiated through a consultant and was carried out by economic development staff in subsequent years.
- **Community Satisfaction Survey:** Most of the questions asked in these other formats were recently adapted for use in the business component of our Citizen Satisfaction Survey. As the survey is planned for every other year, it may be prudent to continue piggybacking off this resource and obtain the information required without retaining a consultant.

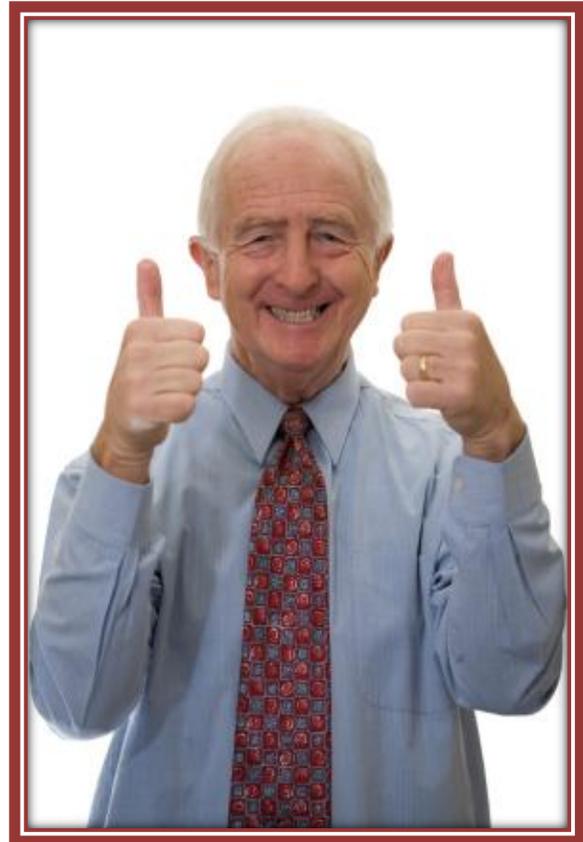
Resources required: A consultant (for a formal visitation program); CED staff and business community partners will be required.

Proposed Action: Advance entrepreneurship development

Action description: Continue to offer and expand upon training opportunities for local entrepreneurs. These courses could be offered directly through the City of Lacombe or by another group (e.g. Chamber of Commerce, Lacombe Regional Tourism), and simply promoted by the City of Lacombe and/or offered in partnership with one or more of these groups.

To properly address the issues facing the business community there first must be an opportunity for information to be collected for analysis. This can be accomplished through regular and consistent dialogue or through a formal business visitation program.

A proposed new initiative to advance entrepreneurship development would see the assembly of a network of retirees to provide support services to local entrepreneurs. The idea here is take advantage of a growing resource – a number of productive entrepreneurs and business people are moving into retirement age, but may still be interested in contributing to the growth and vibrancy of our community. If they are long term residents, they may have some keen insight into specific business considerations for new entrepreneurs. Their acumen and experience with business planning, marketing, networking or accessing capital would be most beneficial to start-up businesses.



Resources required: This new network would be best achieved as a program operated by an Olds Institute-type organization, with support from the CED department. Further training opportunities can be realized by the continued collaboration between Community Economic Development, Lacombe Regional Tourism, Lacombe Chamber of Commerce and Community Futures East Parkland.

Objective: Increase Lacombe's Economic Diversity

The idea would be to stimulate sustainable economic growth and diversification by engaging in activities that are consistent with our existing assets and resources. This involves a measure of target marketing – businesses that are courted are a natural extension of our strengths and values.

Strategy: Business Attraction

Proposed Action: Research and create incentives to attract new businesses

Action description: A thorough investigation is required into what other communities are providing for incentives to attract businesses and whether this would be a desirable activity for the City of Lacombe to engage in. An initial analysis found that some communities offer property tax reductions for a set period of time. Others offer grants, such as a façade improvement program. In Penticton, they took a more aggressive stance, with tax reductions in only certain areas of the community, in line with priority projects identified by the municipality:

<http://www.penticton.ca/assets/City~Hall/Bylaws/Land~Use/Bylaw%202014-04%20Downtown%20Economic%20Investment%20Zone%20Bylaw.pdf>

Resources required: Investigation to be completed by CED Department in conjunction with Planning & Development Department.

Proposed Action: Develop a marketing campaign (including a promotional video)

Action Description: Working with an agency to develop a fully-fledged marketing campaign including a short video for visitor attraction purposes.

Resources required: CED and Communications staff time, marketing firm support, advertising budget increase.



Proposed Action: Attend trade shows and exhibitions

Action description: Take in trade shows and exhibitions that are in support of strategic planning initiatives. These efforts should be aligned with a targeted marketing campaign and/or policy initiatives like joint-initiative land acquisition.

Resources required: Increased budget to accommodate travel, and develop high quality advertising/marketing collateral.

Proposed Action: Business Incubation

Action description: An incubator is a program designed to support the successful development of local entrepreneurial businesses. In some cases, the municipality is heavily involved in the incubation operation. This is certainly the case in Alix with their recent Moonwalker Fun Centre development: http://www.reddeeradvocate.com/community/Alix_hoping_to_draw_Central_Albertans_to_new_fun_centre_204502671.html?mobile=true

In other situations, the municipality and/or community partner(s) becomes a landlord, affording the tenant the time to build up the required skills and financial capabilities to one day acquire the property themselves. Such is the case with the aforementioned Sangudo Custom Meats Packers example.

Finally, some incubators simply are permanent establishments, used as a vehicle to promote the development of small business and stimulate renewal. In these cases, the idea is to provide an environment where entrepreneurs can develop a client base, receive business training and share resources (i.e. internet, utilities, phone, staff) before moving into their own storefront. This scenario can be used to encourage revitalization efforts in the downtown core, as was the case with the Marigold Centre in Truro, Nova Scotia.

Resources required: Depending on the preferred option, this may require a change to the Debt Policy, the use of an Olds Institute-type organization to facilitate the project, and/or community investment funds. CED staff would need to seek out partnerships, identify granting opportunities, and help to facilitate opportunities.

Proposed Action: Community investment funds

Action description: This would be an initiative best spearheaded by an Olds Institute-type organization. Community Economic Development could advise the group by providing research background, helping to facilitate discussion, and conduct networking with an aim to establishing a community investment fund. Part of the process would include assisting the organization with identifying projects that would be ideally suited for investment. Once the projects are identified, investors can be sought out.



A partnership with a financial institution would likely be required – one with more of a local focus would be most desirable. Such projects would help promote a more ‘shop local’ culture, given that the fund would be established by investors from within the community.

Resources required: An Olds Institute-type organization to spearhead initiatives and to build the relationships required to garner interest in potential projects. This may also allow for outside grant funding to be added to the weight of the investment fund. Community Economic Development would advise, conduct research, and help to establish the connections necessary to bring about the success of this project.

Proposed Action: Encourage and support the development of home based businesses

Action description: This is an action cited directly from the City of Lacombe’s Municipal Development Plan. It would involve facilitating new entrepreneurial development, and helping to grow a portion of these into storefronts. This initiative would be supported through other actions, including a website redesign, incubation, and regular business training opportunities.

Resources required: Facilitated through Community Economic Development staff.

Objective: Advance community development initiatives to further improve Lacombe’s quality of life

Business and residents want to be part of a vibrant community with good access to services and amenities. Investing time into developing key resources that will enhance the standard of living is a key retention and attraction strategy. This includes supporting initiatives such as Regional Transit, Echo Energy, and Cultural Development.

Strategy: Support a creative environment where arts culture and recreation contribute to community richness and economic resiliency

Proposed Action: Downtown Storefront Enhancement Program

Action description: Offer financial incentives to businesses and/or building owners to encourage façade improvements within the Downtown core. This initiative is already underway, but the scope of the program could be reviewed and perhaps broadened. The current design is modeled after a similar program in Brooks, Alberta. The strengths of the program include the relative low cost to the municipality, and the shared involvement with Alberta Community Futures. Similar programs in other communities such as Sylvan Lake, which is committing \$50,000.00 to garner increased interest and bring

about the desired change: http://www.sylvanlake.ca/uploads/Facade_Improvement_Program_-_Pilot_Project_2014_FORM.pdf

Resources required: Increased budget allowance for the Downtown Storefront Enhancement Program if a broader solution and quicker impact is desirable.

Proposed Action: Assist with Mainstreet Accreditation

Action description: Access to grants for historical preservation and enhancement are improved by becoming a Mainstreet Community. Additionally, the program offers marketing support and resources for staff development.

Resources required: The Mainstreet Accreditation process can be started with existing staff, but as the program develops there may be a need for a dedicated staff person. This individual would assist with fund development, grant writing, and marketing efforts.

Proposed Action: Encourage the development of Lacombe as an arts/cultural hub

Action description: We are well aware that Lacombe has a strong and lively arts scene. Since Blackfalds has created a niche for itself by opening a field house to serve as a regional recreation hub, it may be wise to position Lacombe as the focal point for arts and culture within the area. This positioning would not only attract businesses and residents, but would also establish Lacombe as an entertainment destination.



Resources required: CED staff to help develop partnerships and identify granting opportunities; financial contribution consideration for priority arts and culture projects.

Strategy: Create a safe, inclusive, vibrant and healthy community

Proposed Action: Explore a Community Housing Development Corporation (CDC)

Action description: This involves establishing an arms-length body that transacts deals, provides incentives, assembles land and promotes residential development. A CDC could focus on revitalizing the downtown and stimulating housing construction through loans, loan guarantees and tax credits.

Resources required: Community Economic Development and Planning staff to assist with fund development and grant proposals. This could be established as a sub-committee of the Olds Institute-type organization. There will be a financial impact, depending on the mix of products the CDC would employ.

Proposed Action: Joint initiatives for sustainable housing

Action description: Researching existing projects in other communities (i.e. Habitat for Humanity), identifying possible partnerships, and working to attract these programs to Lacombe.

Resources required: Community Economic Development and Planning staff time. May require development incentives. Some of this work could be vetted through the Housing Development Corporation and supported through some targeted marketing initiatives.

Proposed Action: Identify key revitalization opportunities and facilitate their development

Action description: DARP speaks to the need for a central plaza, performing arts support, incubation, and streetscaping. Community Economic Development would closely with Planning & Development to identify opportunities and work towards an implementation plan.

Resources required: CED and Planning staff time; Olds Institute-style organization to help in the development of ideas.

Core Community Economic Development Business

CED Plan Action: Improve website functionality

Action description: Redesign the municipal Community Economic Development website pages to provide all relevant business information in a user-friendly way (e.g. site selector, how to start a business, business directory, licensing information, etc.)

Resources required: Community Economic Development staff time; Planning and Information Technology staff time; some contract work required.

CED Plan Action: Help streamline approval processes and timelines

Action description: Liaise with the local business community and the Planning Department on ways to improve permit processing time. This may include the development or enhancement of online tools that will provide insight into municipal legislative requirements, so applicants are better informed and can anticipate potential issues before they arise.

Resources required: Achieved with internal resources, primarily Community Economic Development, Planning and Information Technology staff.

CED Plan Action: Proposed Open Door Policy

Action description: Extend and maintain an open invitation to all businesses to have a one-on-one conversation with municipal staff at any time.

Resources required: Collective effort across all departments and Council. Some dedicated Communications Department time to promote this new policy.

CED Plan Action: Industrial land sales

Action description: Ensure that there is always an inventory of serviced industrial land within Lacombe available for sale.

Resources required: Depending on land acquisition opportunities, a change to the Debt Policy may be required.

CED Plan Action: Help establish a viable Downtown Public Market

Action description: Part of stimulating activity downtown will be to host regular activities that will generate visitation from both residents and tourists. A downtown market, complete with vendors, artisans, and live entertainment would be a great way to achieve this goal. This initiative is in line with DARP recommendations, and there is plenty of opportunity for downtown merchants to benefit from the increased traffic.

Resources required: Community Economic Development staff to help facilitate the establishment of a downtown public market.

CED Plan Action: Grow Lacombe Regional Tourism capacity

Action description: Continue to facilitate the development of this organization into an industry-led partnership. Encourage the pursuit of further memberships, event growth, and development of a Destination Marketing Fund.

Resources required Community Economic Development staff

CED Plan Action: Support events of regional significance

Action description: Now that the marquee events are established, the key will be event refinement to ensure alignment with target markets. Existing facilities should be used to flush out other event opportunities (e.g. the ME Global Athletic Park could be used to stage Canadian Football League practices or host outdoor concerts).



Resources required: Community Economic Development personnel to lead networking and partnership development.

CED Plan Action: Regional Transit Initiative

Action description: Build a regional transit service that grows with the needs of the community.

Resources required: Community Economic Development staff, partnership development and financial commitment to assist with requirements (i.e. creating permanent bus stops, evening or Sunday service). A regional committee is needed to review service requirements.

CED Plan Action: Expand Echo Energy Program

Action description: This program will be the engine that powers the Echo Lacombe Fund. As the program grows, it will serve as a regular and consistent revenue source for the fund, giving it the ability to finance a variety of community initiatives.

Resources required: Community Economic Development personnel. No budget provision required as this will be a self-funding program.

Municipal Sustainability Plan		Council Strategic Plan	Community Economic Development Plan		
Main Priority Goal	Outcome Measure	Strategic Pillar	Objective	Strategy	Proposed Actions
Building a strong, local and diverse economy	Number & mix of business	Land Acquisitions	Nurture a business friendly culture and foster an innovative , entrepreneurial environment	Develop policy to encourage innovation and development	Joint Initiative Land Acquistion Strategy
	Economic diversity	Economic Prosperity		Enhance communication with business community	
					Business Visitation Program
				Advance Entrepreneurship development	
			Increase Lacombe's economic diversity	Business Attraction	Research and develop incentives that attract new businesses
					Develop a marketing campaign (including a promotional video)
					Attend trade shows and exhibitions
			Business Retention & Expansion	Business Incubation	
				Community Investment Funds	
	Encourage and support the development of home based businesses				
Preserving and enhancing heritage and culture	Heritage Protection	Community Relations	Advance community development initiatives to further improve Lacombe's quality of life	Support a creative environment where arts, culture and recreation contribute to community richness and economic resiliency	Downtown Storefront Enhancement Program
	Number of events				Assist with Mainstreet Accreditation
	Arts, Cultural, Heritage opportunities				Encourage the development of an Arts/Culture hub
Promoting a healthy, connected and active community	Recreational Opportunities	Safe, Healthy and Vibrant Community		Create a safe, inclusive, vibrant and healthy community	Organize new CED support organization
	# of Physicians				Explore a Community Housing Development Corporation
	Sense of belonging				Joint initiatives for sustainable housing
Providing high quality services and infrastructure	Public Transportation	Infrastructure Growth and Asset Management			Identify key revitalization opportuntiiies and facilitate their development
	Communications				
Protecting our natural environment	Protected areas				
	Green Space				

City Led CED Work



CED Organization Led Work

