



**HARVEST
THE OPPORTUNITY**

MOUNTAIN VIEW COUNTY

**Economic Development
Strategy
2022-2027**

1. Introduction

Since 2014, Mountain View County has had a focused direction on the establishment and support of an Economic Development Department combined with a strong strategic direction from Council to guide department activities. In 2018, Council formally adopted an Economic Development Strategy with the objective to provide further alignment with the County's overall Strategic Plan and to outline key actions for Administration to consider in order to work towards the accomplishment of the Economic Development priorities.

The 2018 rendition of the Economic Development Strategy was focused largely on better understanding the economic realities of the County, including its ongoing reliance on linear taxation realized from the oil and gas sector, and the County's current capacity for non-residential growth. Further, the Strategy continued the County's primary focus on Agricultural Operations to support existing businesses wherever possible while attempting to attract new, innovative Agricultural Operations to the municipality. Attraction and Retention continued to be a primary goal of the Strategy, which was put to the test during the recent COVID-19 Pandemic and the various restrictions, lockdowns and challenges new and existing businesses were faced with.

Following the 2021 Municipal Election, the County has undertaken numerous Strategic Planning Sessions with the 2021 – 2025 Mountain View County Council, all of which have had Economic Development relevancy, which has helped to guide the development of this Economic Development Strategy. In early 2022, the Municipal Government Act was amended by Bill 21 (Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment) to add that a purpose of a municipality is to "foster the economic development of the municipality", further supporting the value that a strong Economic Development Strategy has for the County.

The overarching goal of the following document is to provide high level strategic objectives that will guide the Economic Development Program, while providing direction to Administration who is ultimately responsible for developing subsequent action items that will result in furthering Council's Strategy.

1.1 Executive Summary

The Economic Development Strategy is intended to help focus Mountain View County's activities and priorities over the next five years. Estimated deliverables are multi-year while the outcomes are meant to have a long-lasting impact and influence far beyond the five-year lifespan of this document. However, it is imperative to recognize that regular updates are necessary to adapt to new realities and initiatives.

The strategy will complement the County's previously approved statutory plans and policies while providing a solid foundation for future economic development success as well as other studies and documents that may be prepared by Economic Development in the future such as marketing plans, business plans, sector assessments etc.

The Strategy is designed to support Council's Economic Development goals along with their approved 2022-2027 Strategic Plan.

1.2 Mountain View County's Vision Statement

An engaged rural and agricultural community inspired by the unique and diverse qualities of our people and environment.

1.3 Mountain View County's Mission Statement

Provide high quality services in support of a healthy, safe, and vibrant rural community.

1.4 Approval by Council and Review on Annual Basis

The Economic Development Strategy is approved by Council, to ensure that it remains relevant it must be reviewed on an annual basis. An annual report on the progress made toward achieving results will be presented to Council prior to the budget process.

2. Mountain View County Economic Development Goals

In developing the Economic Development Strategy, Council first considered the intent of the overall document to understand what the purpose of the Economic Development program is attempting to achieve. At the foundation of all County programs and identified within Mountain View County's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan Mission is the crucial principle of ensuring that resources are available during the budget process to continue to provide high quality services to the community. As such, the entire program is focused on ensuring that Mountain View County has the resources and ability to continue to provide high quality services now, and into the future. Council has instituted goals for the Economic Development Program to parallel the long-term vision for the community. These goals as they relate to the Economic Development Program include:

1. Protecting the Agricultural Identity of Mountain View County;

Mountain View County differentiates itself from other municipalities in proximity through its Agricultural Identity. The strong foundation of agriculture and support that the sector has from ratepayers, industry, and other community partners, including Olds College, certainly speaks to the importance of Mountain View County's Agricultural Identity. Although a primary focus of this Strategy will be to encourage economic growth to be located in areas that prevent conflict with the agricultural sector, Council is supportive of encouraging traditional, innovative, and value-added agriculture industry throughout the municipality.

2. Diversification of the Economic Base of Mountain View County to ensure tax base sustainability in order to continue to provide the high level of service outlined in Mountain View County's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan;

Mountain View County currently obtains approximately 43% of its total taxation from linear assessment. Council has a focus on diversifying the overall tax base to decrease the reliance that the municipality has on linear assessment and create a higher level of sustainability and resiliency. Further, Mountain View County is desirous of providing opportunities for a diversity of business opportunities to ensure that the non-residential tax base remains sustainable into the future.

3. Maintaining the local autonomy of Mountain View County while supporting growth in both rural and surrounding urban areas.

Mountain View County has centered its Economic Development objectives around the accomplishment of priorities that are specific to the County's objectives. With that being said, Mountain View County has a long and successful history working with its adjacent urban and rural partners and will continue to build a stronger region through working together where outcomes are mutually beneficial and in alignment with Council's direction. The County has a desire to keep communication channels open with all partners to identify projects or initiatives that would further it's Economic Development goals.

3. Economic Development Objectives

The objectives of this Economic Development Strategy have been instituted to achieve the values of Mountain View County as outlined above. Although Council recognizes that Economic Development plays a role in policies, programs and decisions across the organization, Council has outlined four objectives for Administration to focus attention and resources towards. Accompanying each objective are potential action items that will particularly strengthen and work towards the achievement of that objective. It should be noted that the potential action items will vary each year based on Council priorities, Economic Development Strategy progress and budgetary resource allotments.

3.1 Business Growth Potential

The 2017-2021 Economic Development Strategy undertook an extensive review of the County's economic position based on the projected loss of linear taxation compared to the amount of acres of land contemplated for non-residential development. That review noted that there were satisfactory lands available at the time to allow for the County to grow its non-residential assessment at a rate equal to the linear taxation loss. This objective will continue to analyze the County's overall economic position to ensure that policies and programs remain current to achieve the overall strategy of ensuring that sufficient revenue is generated to maintain existing service levels. In the event that the analysis projects that this strategy is not possible, further Council attention to Land Use Policies and availability of non-residential opportunities may need to be considered.

Potential Action Items:

- Annual review of Linear Taxation Gap in comparison with non-residential growth potential.
- Review of Non-Residential/ Non-Agricultural Land Absorption Rates.
- Identification of conflicts with statutory documents to achieve increases in non-residential growth potential.
- Review existing opportunities in Mountain View County for value-added revenue streams.
- Development of inventory of vacant non-residential lands.

3.2 Business Retention and Expansion

Identified in Mountain View County's Strategic Plan, Council has a strong preference on Building the County from within. This is solidified in Council's desire to focus economic development on retaining and expanding existing businesses. In conversations with existing businesses located in Mountain View County, the same desire to be engaged and supported was expressed.

Potential Action Items:

- Increased marketing of existing businesses within Mountain View County.
- Creation of workshop series/networking sessions (Financial, legal etc.).
- On-going site tours and conversations.
- Growing home based businesses.
- Facilitation of future growth possibilities within MVC (marketing of available locations/benefits etc.).
- Celebration of new businesses.

3.3 Business Attraction

Although the priority for business growth is focused on existing industry, Council recognizes that there are a number of locations within Mountain View County that are ideal for business attraction. In particular, utilizing the various business parks and regional airport lots within the County tend to be appealing to new business opportunities.

Potential Action Items:

- Development of marketing plan to showcase existing business park vacancies and airport lots available.
- Future Airport Lot Development.
- Collaboration with Airport Advisory Committee to further market MVC Airports.
- Development of standard template for efficient response to business inquiries.
- Further refine the internal relationship between Planning and Development and Economic Development to ensure that interested parties receive the support they require through all stages of their business development process including the development of an onboarding package.
- Participation in tradeshow / marketing opportunities to further showcase Mountain View County.
- Development of a Film Industry attraction package.
- Review of, and potential alignment with, approved Provincial initiatives that support Mountain View County's Economic Development objectives.

3.4 Building Relationships

Mountain View County has a strong focus on building and maintaining effective relationships with various partners. These relationships will be important in marketing Mountain View County as a region and attracting innovative and sustainable businesses. Further, through the Intermunicipal Collaboration process, Council is desirous of ensuring that Urban Partners continue to grow while promoting diverse opportunities for businesses in both Rural and Urban settings.

Potential Action Items:

- Connect with local developers and realtors to understand any challenges with the MVC market and identify possible solutions.
- Continue established communication lines with existing businesses.
- Facilitate communication between businesses within the County with a focus on retention of customers.
- Connect with local Chambers of Commerce to participate in initiatives that support the County's endeavors.
- Continue to participate in regional initiatives that support the County's Economic Development objectives.
- Facilitate conversations with Olds College on areas of mutual benefit.
- Engage local tourism businesses to identify support requirements and methods to enhance MVC's tourism sector.