

Mayerthorpe Community Diversification Plan 2010 - 2015

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1 Introduction

The Town of Mayerthorpe is surrounded by a wonderful sense of geography, and is comprised of residents who make it one of the most caring communities in Alberta. With its deep agricultural roots, ties to the oil & gas and forestry industry, and location at the confluence of Highway 43 and the Cowboy Trail, Mayerthorpe has a long history of strong community spirit and culture making it an attractive place to live, work, retire and invest.

With approximately 1500 residents and an economic base reliant on natural resources, Mayerthorpe is faced with common issues of growth and sustainability frequently experienced in rural communities with populations under 2000 residents – aging demographics, outflow of youth, community capacity, and a depleting economic base.

However, recent sales of town land for development, the emergence of new businesses, a new arena complex, renewed municipal infrastructure, significant tourism traffic spawned by the Fallen Four Memorial and increased traffic on Highway 43 has created an environment of opportunity if action is taken.

The Mayerthorpe Chamber of Commerce has led the charge to develop this Community Diversification Plan in cooperation with the Grande Alberta Economic Region. The team involved was tasked with designing the objectives and goals for diversifying the economic growth of Mayerthorpe over the next ten years, as well as the priorities, strategies and action plans required over the first five years (2010-2015) of the plan.

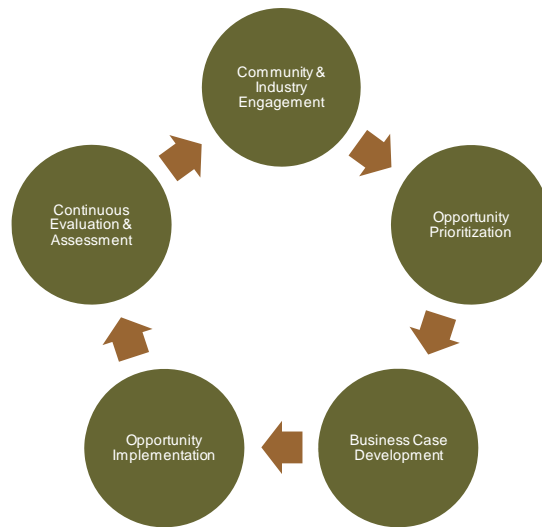
2 Purpose of Document

This Community Diversification Plan charts the strategic direction for Mayerthorpe and the Mayerthorpe Chamber of Commerce, and is designed as an engagement document for residents, business owners, investors and elected officials to understand the initiatives to be undertaken, the results to be achieved, and the opportunities to become involved.

The purpose of this document is twofold. First, the document captures and highlights the opportunities, and risks and builds on the big ideas generated by community participants in the Workshop. The result of this work is the high level framework that is captured in the strategic priorities and associated goals and strategies. Secondly, the document can be utilized as a playbook. The implementation section of the document provides the critical next steps that will facilitate the development of the priorities into specific and appropriate business plans that can be delivered within the community.

3 Diversification Process

The diversification process is an ongoing endeavour that encourages the continual development of a community's economy to foster community growth, maintain quality of life, increase economic base, provide future opportunities for youth, and increase the capacity of the community. It is not a one-time process; rather, it requires continuous renewal in order for ideas to self-generate and for the community capacity to evolve to be responsible for implementation. The framework below highlights the importance of diversification as a continual process.



Mayerthorpe has evolved from the Community & Industry Engagement Phase to the Opportunity Prioritization Phase as part of this diversification process. With priorities set, Mayerthorpe is now ready to complete the Business Case process for its priorities and position the priorities for being linked to budget and ready for implementation.

4 Mission Statement

The Mayerthorpe Chamber of Commerce generates and initiates community-led, community-driven and community-implemented economic solutions. Our aim is to diversify the economic growth of the community such that we achieve a resilient economic tax base, strong employment options for the next generation, and increased quality of life for our residents.

The Mayerthorpe Chamber of Commerce will accomplish these goals by working with the Grande Alberta Economic Region, local businesses, municipal and provincial governments and community groups to identify opportunities to accelerate the implementation of this Community Diversification Plan and eliminate barriers to local economic growth.

5 Call to Action

Mayerthorpe's location may be its biggest asset, and also may be its biggest unrealized opportunity. Highway #43, the Canamex Trade Corridor, is a major transportation route with a steady stream of passenger, recreational and commercial traffic that can bring new economic value to Mayerthorpe, so long as the ~50,000 vehicles per year have a reason to stop.

Mayerthorpe is located at the end of The Cowboy Trail, a major transportation route that can draw tourists discovering aboriginal and western heritage, so long as the ~10,000 tourist vehicles recognize Mayerthorpe as a valued destination north of Highway #16.

Mayerthorpe's renowned Fallen Four Memorial attracts ~11,000 tourists per year, but is not linked to other local activities or experiential opportunities that allow those ~11,000 tourists to spend additional time and money within the Mayerthorpe community.

Mayerthorpe's population has shifted such that the two largest demographic groups are now the 15-19 year old and the 45-54 year old categories, representing an opportunity for renewed ideas, energy, leadership and investment, so long as these groups continue to be active and invested in their community.

Mayerthorpe is a community in need of action, otherwise these opportunities will not be capitalized upon, and the traffic and economic wealth will simply pass Mayerthorpe by. Definition as a critical stop on Highway #43, as a pinnacle destination on Highway #22, and as a Top 20 tourism destination in Alberta has the ability to build the foundation for diversified, service-based economy that can lead to greater prosperity and community life.

6 2020 Objective

Economic diversification is the long-term process by which a community builds on its inherent assets and strengths to solidify and enhance its economic tax base, to ensure long-term sustainability and resiliency in the face of change, and to expand its variety of businesses and jobs that produce local earnings, employment and skill development.

The 10-year objective is for Mayerthorpe to become one of Alberta's Top 20 tourist destinations. This objective will be realized through the following goals:

- Strengthen community identity through marketing and branding
- Increase number of transient and overnight traveller visits to Mayerthorpe

- Multiply expenditures per traveller visit
- Enhance the number of commercial businesses related to tourism and hospitality services
- Develop expertise at hosting events that draw travellers and engage community volunteerism

These goals have been established by the community working group and have been validated by the municipal administration as both needed and realistic community diversification goals to be achieved. The priorities and strategies outlined in the following pages are designed to support these goals.

7 Key Priorities

7.1 Develop Mayerthorpe Image and Brand

Co-Brand Mayerthorpe with Fallen Four Brand

Mayerthorpe is forever linked to the Fallen Four, and its opportunity for significant brand identification is tied to one of the most recognized, favored and timeless global brands – the Canadian Mountie. This should be pursued as an opportunity to create unique identity and positioning for the community.

- License the use of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the municipality
- Co-brand Mayerthorpe with the strong visual identity
- Continue to enhance the Fallen Four Memorial
- Expand the range of experiential tourism options with other RCMP educational-based learning
- Create RCMP university and training centre
- Develop RCMP learning module for Alberta K-12 school curriculum

Enhance use of Cowboy Trail Identity

The Cowboy Trail is a 700 km route along Highway 22 which features western vacations and adventures. As the final stop on the Cowboy Trail, Mayerthorpe could take advantage of this established partnership to create a Cowboy image for the community.

- Work with local businesses to increase cowboy image in Mayerthorpe
- Development materials linking the Cowboy heritage with the Northwest Mounted Police in the region

7.2 Develop Visual Highway Identity

Highway #43 is a busy highway that moves traffic quickly between Edmonton and Whitecourt, and Mayerthorpe can be quickly by-passed unless it develops a strong highway identity that stops traffic and establishes a strong identity for the community.

- Establish a highly visible identity at Highway #43 & #22 that brings pride to the community
- Develop Truck Stop at the intersection of Highway #43 and #22 to cater to transient travelers
- Enhance signage with visual identity and truck stop along Highway #43
- Establish Mayerthorpe as the final destination along the entire Cowboy Trail

7.3 Professionalize Marketing Presence

To be recognized as a Top 20 tourist destination, Mayerthorpe should enhance its marketing collateral at the level of a Top 20 tourist destination.

- Improve online presence to inspire target traveler audience
- Develop marketing materials to communicate Mayerthorpe as a weekend educational destination

- Continue to enhance the Fallen Four Memorial
- Expand the range of experiential tourism options to other RCMP and Cowboy educational-based learning
- Develop RCMP learning module for Alberta K-12 school curriculum

7.4 Increase Development and Capital Expenditures

Expand Overnight Accommodations

Mayerthorpe has limited overnight accommodation capacity to serve travelers and event attendees. This critical enabler to economic growth provides the necessary infrastructure to host multi-day events or travelers which produce significantly higher expenditures per visit.

- Reduce the risk for targeted motel or hotel accommodation developments
- Support the development of functional area for group training
- Encourage expansion of RV and overnight campgrounds options with children features
- Partner with County to encourage small cabin rentals/ownership on Paddle River
- Encourage and promote guest ranch and/or bed & breakfast businesses

7.5 Facilitate Beautification

Pride in a community can often be lost due to graffiti, broken windows or run-down facilities. Municipal incentive programs and business peer pressure offer effective methods for implementing beautification projects with highly visible return.

- Implement main street beautification project
- Incentivise building restoration initiatives

7.6 Increase Access to Capital

Access to various levels of capital is critical to successful diversification efforts, and Mayerthorpe should cultivate and communicate the following capital mechanisms to support initiatives.

- Grant and Community Trust Programs
- Local Social Philanthropy
- Government Community Bonds
- Business Succession Financing Programs
- Regional AFSC, Community Futures or ATB Programs
- Seed Capital Pools or Angel Networks

7.7 Develop Community-Led Initiative Model

Cultivate Event Management Expertise

Expertise in hosting small annual events provides a foundation for undertaking larger events in the future. Events draw traffic to Mayerthorpe who then stay overnight, eat meals and buy t-shirts and newspapers etc. Building on Mayerthorpe's active volunteer and community spirit, event management best practices should be sought out, applied and shared on community-driven events in Mayerthorpe.

- Ensure excellence in the annual events currently undertaken
- Encourage the creation of new, innovative events that draw others to the community and builds on the Mayerthorpe image and brand
- Support the implementation of new event initiatives within the community led by community-based leaders and volunteer groups

7.8 Expand Community Capacity

Leadership capacity needs to be expanded within the community to undertake initiatives associated with this Community Diversification Plan and other strategic initiatives within the community.

- Partner with counties on collaborative approach – Woodlands and Lac St. Anne
- Showcase best practices and heroes within community to inspire others
- Improve communications across industry sectors and demographic groups
- Establish formalized volunteer programs and volunteer development models

7.9 Develop Support Services for Local Entrepreneurial Diversification

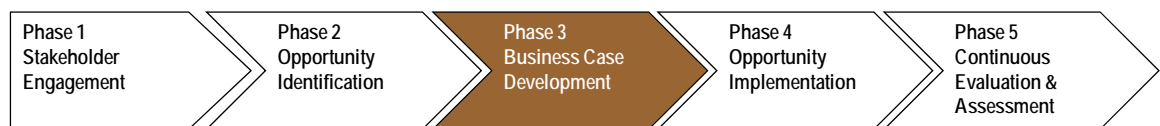
Small Business Development will lead future diversification for the community. In order to create success for the existing and future businesses of the community, support services will need to be available. The following actions are designed to meet this need.

- Engage local entrepreneurs in networking opportunities which increase the passion for entrepreneurship in the community and engage youth in entrepreneurial programs
- Provide training and support for new and existing businesses to businesses
- Develop resources to ensure growth businesses have access to capital, training and support

8 Implementation: Working the Plan

Implementation Overview:

Community Diversification Planning takes place in five phases, and Mayerthorpe is ready to move into Phase 3 of the diversification process – Business Case Development.



Phase 1

Stakeholder Engagement:

Phase 1 begins the diversification process with community, political and industry leaders becoming aware and engaged in the diversification process. For this to happen, the process needs to be owned and endorsed by Council and a key champion identified to facilitate the process and be accountable for progress. As many communities are burdened with capacity challenges, Phase 1 ensures that a broad number of people are engaged, such that tasks can eventually be delegated and implemented. In Mayerthorpe, the Chamber of Commerce has been engaged through the process and has been identified as the lead responsible for overseeing the implementation.

Phase 2

Opportunity Identification:

Phase 2 involves the prioritization and establishment of key priorities (see section 7). These priorities help the community to define the concepts that need to be undertaken in order to for the diversification process can occur. For Example, How do we define marketing and communications? What do we mean by increase

land development? Once priorities have been established, additional stakeholder engagement may be required to further refine the priorities in order to pave the way for the business case.

Phase 3

Business Case:

The development of business cases provides validation to the priorities as the business cases quantifies the project into tangible inputs and results. Part of developing the business case is identifying and aligning the project with the overarching themes of diversification, such that each opportunity can be clearly linked to the diversification outcomes the community wishes to achieve. From there, each priority should be broken down into a step-by-step process for implementation, as well as clear understanding of and land, labour and capital needed to bring the priority to reality. Lately, the business case should identify the influencers needed to move the priority forward, such that an action plan can be developed to enlist the key influencers as part of the implementation teams.

Phase 4

Opportunity Implementation:

Phase 4 establishes responsibility and accountability for implementation. The project champion is first selected, and a sub-team of community, political and business leaders are established as the working team to move the project forward. Project teams may include admin, coordination, and communication support from the municipality, and sector specific organizations (i.e. local arts and culture groups) community volunteer groups (i.e. Lions, Kinsmen.), local entrepreneurs, business organizations (i.e. Chambers of Commerce, Rotary). It is encouraged to structure the multiple priority teams similar to the structure outlined in Appendix B.

Phase 5

Continuous Evaluation & Assessment:

As diversification is never complete, Phase 5 is designed to continuously review the economic structure of the community and build the case for change to continuously support the diversification process. Phase 5 should be focused on data accumulation and building the case to support ongoing planning and opportunity generating process.

9 Measuring Progress

Progress towards pre-defined outcomes need to be measured on each initiative in order to assess the value of the Community Diversification plan as well as understanding where improvements can be made. The outcomes for the 2010-2015 Community diversifications Plan are as follows:

- Identifiable and respected brand for Mayerthorpe
- 10,000 more travelers per year (20% overnight stay rate)
- Average \$55 expenditure per traveler
- 40 new RV lots, 32 new cabins and 144 new hotel/motel accommodation suites
- 5 new guest ranches or bed & breakfasts
- 12 new businesses employing 120-144 personnel making above average income

As some of the above outcomes are new to the Mayerthorpe Chamber of Commerce, investment needs to be made in establishing benchmark data as well as the measurement of progress. It is the goal of the Chamber of Commerce that each of the above outcomes to be measured on an annual basis and reported upon as part of the Annual Report to the Community as well as the Grande Alberta Economic Region. The creation of a database that tracks projects, milestones, funding and job creation can provide the evidence needed to measure success for application of further public and private capital investment. The first milestone for the implementation of this plan will be a community meeting of stakeholders by **March 31, 2010** to begin the implementation of the plan.

10 Community Participants

Enabled by the Grande Alberta Economic Region, community input and validation sessions were held between October and December 2009 to solicit input and prioritization to this Community Diversification Plan. The following participants volunteered their time, ideas and energy to the process:

Daryl Yagos	Woodlands County Council member
Karen St. Martin	CAO, Town of Mayerthorpe
Sylvia Krikun	EDO, Town of Mayerthorpe
Carol Besko	Seniors Lodge
Margaret Thibault	Victim Services, Fallen Four
Colette McKillop	Chamber of Commerce
Doug McDermid	GAER alternate, Mayor, Town of Mayerthorpe
Kathy Follett	Community Care, extended care
Michael Suchocki	Agriculture Society
Linda Wilcox	Whitecourt Star, Business
Glen Wilcox	GAER representative, Town of Mayerthorpe
Roy Barker	Economic Development
Charlotte Arthur	Resident
Shila Hibbert	Fallen Four
Judith Bakaluk	Business
Dan Richard	Town of Mayerthorpe Council, Business
Jack Evarts	Town of Mayerthorpe Council
Kathrin Furageti	Business
Kate Patrick	Town of Mayerthorpe Council, Chamber of Commerce
Roxanne Harper	Community Futures Yellowhead East

11 Appendix A- Organization Chart

