

VEGREVILLE ECONOMIC DIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN



APRIL 2019



The Vegreville Economic Diversity Enhancement Plan has been developed by MDB Insight with additional support on its preceding three prerequisite studies from Invest Cooper & Associates and Key Planning Solutions, and with stakeholder engagement and public relations support from ISL Engineering.



Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW | 3 |
| Purpose of the Economic Diversity Enhancement Plan..... | 3 |
| Three Prerequisite Studies | 5 |
| Services and Inventory Gap Analysis | 5 |
| Retail Gap Analysis | 6 |
| Investment and Innovation Study | 7 |
| Process and SOARR Assessment | 11 |
| Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Risks & Results | 12 |
| SOARR Assessment..... | 12 |
| Economic Development Pillars, Objectives and Actions | 19 |
| Action Plan Overview..... | 21 |
| Action Plan for Pillar 1: Innovation | 21 |
| Action Plan for Pillar 2: Business Retention, Investment and Attraction | 25 |
| Action Plan for Pillar 3: Land Development..... | 29 |
| Action Plan for Pillar 4: Residential Growth | 31 |
| Critical Path Actions | 35 |
| Linking Activities to Outcomes | 35 |





INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Vegreville is one of the most dynamic places in northeastern Alberta and a community in transition. While its economy has waxed and waned on its successes and challenges over the years, the resilient agricultural, transportation, manufacturing, supply, and retail sectors offer an economy that has allowed local entrepreneurs and international firms to establish and grow.

Vegreville recognizes the vital importance of diversification and with key assets including a provincially driven innovation centre, a location on the Trans-Canada Highway and a national railroad, competitive property prices, and proximity to the Edmonton Metro Region, Vegreville is well positioned to grow.

A generally diverse economy has contributed to prosperity for residents of Vegreville and the surrounding area, however, recent economic events have resulted in concern. The need for an Economic Diversity Enhancement Plan comes on the heels of the recent closure of an Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Case Processing Centre that was operated by the Federal Government. The facility was officially closed in September of 2018, nearly two years after being announced and has resulted in the direct loss of 200 jobs and an estimated 80 additional indirect jobs. This loss is a very significant impact on a community of about 5,700 people.

Purpose of the Economic Diversity Enhancement Plan

The purpose of the Economic Diversity Enhancement Plan is to generate a framework for a balanced and growing economy in Vegreville.



Each pillar is supported by a series of strategic objectives and accompanying actions. These will help the Town of Vegreville's decision-makers and other community and business leaders chart a course for economic success that is built on the community's aspirations and opportunities.



Methodology

The methodology underpinning the strategy is based on two forms of information gathering:

1. Secondary data gathering and analysis including local, regional and provincial policy and legislative documents, socio-economic statistics, and studies conducted by the community including the Town's corporate strategy, economic-related documents, and planning and other strategies
2. Primary research and analysis comprised of stakeholder engagement activities in the community including interviews, workshops, and surveys

Notes on Data

Data from the Statistics Canada's 2016 Census, 2011 Census and National Household Survey, and 2006 Census were consulted and analyzed. In addition, Statistics Canada's December 2017 Canadian Business Counts data provided a record of business establishments by industry and size. Extensive research was conducted both qualitatively and quantitatively. Where appropriate, comparator data was collected and analyzed for the municipality and the Province of Alberta.

Data was also collected via stakeholder engagement activities including:

- A random sample telephone survey of local business owners (80 businesses)
- A retail shopping habits telephone survey (150 Vegreville residents, including 15% cellphone)
- A series of workshops with business and community leaders, an online survey designed to capture feedback, and an open house focused on three prerequisite studies (elaborated below)
- A series of workshops with business and community leaders, an online survey designed to capture feedback, and an open house focused on the Draft Economic Diversity Enhancement Plan



Three Prerequisite Studies

Early in the project, three prerequisite studies were deemed essential to the development of a comprehensive plan. Only by fully understanding the background data and appreciating what community members want for their future can a plan be developed that will have broad support. A brief overview of each prerequisite study is presented here. Each complete study is available as a separate document.

Services and Inventory Gap Analysis

The purpose of the Services and Inventory Gap Analysis was to present an overview of Vegreville's current economic environment and competitiveness, understand its existing assets and gaps, and frame key findings in such a way that allows for an understanding of local strengths, opportunities, aspirations, risks, and expected results. Key themes were uncovered that are associated with investment readiness, each with a supporting series of recommendations:

Commercial and Industrial Land

Vegreville is poised for strong growth with new commercial and industrial subdivisions slated to come on-line in the next two years. Capacity for water and sanitary sewer services is strong and there is a broadband trunk that runs through the community to satisfy technical requirements.

Creative Destruction and New Birth

The closure of the Federal Government's processing facility represents an important opportunity for leveraging assets related to property and skilled labour.

Business Retention and Expansion

A business survey found business satisfaction in Vegreville is most significantly affected by taxes, development and building permit processes, business assistance from the municipality, and development charges and off-site levies. Understanding what it is about these considerations that is frustrating businesses will help identify paths to improve business satisfaction. An ongoing business retention and expansion program will ensure ongoing monitoring of satisfaction levels, timely intervention with businesses that are experiencing difficulties or frustration, and identification of leads for expansions or new business attraction.

Data, Data, Data

Investors and the people who work for them to identify the right location for their new operation demand easy-to-access, timely, and accurate data. In this age, if the facts and figures that prospective investors need at the start of this process are not easily available online there is a high probability of losing them to other options where data are available.

Resident Attraction and Retention





Traditionally, new residents have been attracted by two key variables; employment for themselves and employment for their spouses. This still holds true to a degree. In the knowledge-based economy, labour and entrepreneurs can be more selective. In these cases, quality of place features play an incredibly important part in decision making. Vegreville must be competitive in quality of place features.

Retail Gap Analysis

A Retail Gap Analysis was conducted for the Town of Vegreville over the period of August - October 2018. The objectives were to:

- Document Vegreville's current retail inventory
- Estimate the realistic retail Trade Area that Vegreville serves
- Create a retail expenditure profile across various retail categories/store types as an indication of retail inflow/outflow and opportunities that the Town of Vegreville could pursue

The Retail Gap Analysis presumes an optimal outcome of filling gaps and bolstering the local retail market by retaining or attracting greater market share of resident and passing motorists' spending.

- Vegreville has an estimated street front floor space of approximately 708,931 square feet (sq.ft.) comprised of business types that include grocery, home improvement, restaurants, personal services, and professional and medical services. When excluding businesses that are not retail related but do occupy retail street front spaces, the total inventory is an estimated 534,981 sq.ft. The current overall vacancy rate is 22.7% which is high, but does include spaces that are likely to not be considered as appropriate for future retail.
- Per capita retail space is estimated at 19.5 sq.ft. for the trade area of approximately 28,000 people. Based on industry modelling, the community should have the potential for 25 sq.ft. per capita.
- The size of the retail inventory combined with vacancies suggests that demand may not be robust, but that Vegreville can be very targeted in its approach to obtaining businesses to fit within the community's existing vacant buildings and land fronting or visible from Highway 16A.

Consumer Demand Summary

A retail consumer survey was also conducted to understand local spending habits.

- The percentage of spending that residents make locally is estimated to be 73%.
- The estimate of sales inflow from the surrounding trade area is less than a 15% of available spending. This lower market share is where the greatest opportunity arises for more retail spending. In other words, there are opportunities to better penetrate the existing trade area beyond Vegreville.

Retail Demand Summary

The analysis supports the finding that specific merchandise categories could boost their market share and





warrant additional businesses in the community by 2023.

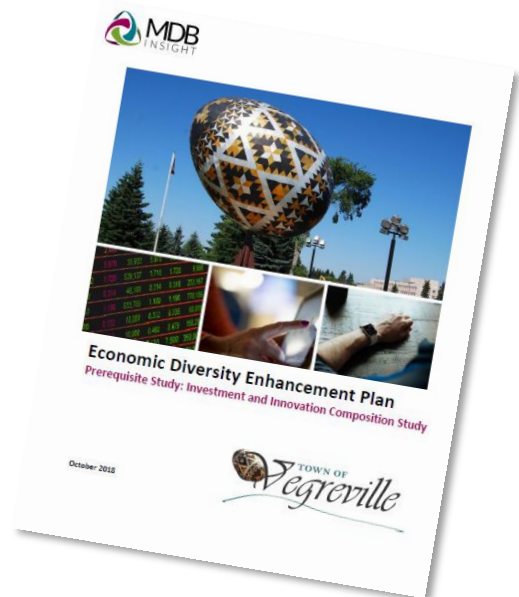
- Grocery and convenience's new demand is equivalent to 16,500 sq.ft., a market share increase from 22% to 25%. Restaurant food and beverage's new demand is equivalent to 6,500 sq.ft., a market share increase from 31% to 34%. Clothing and apparel's new demand is equivalent to 7,000 sq.ft., a market share increase from 35% to 38%. While these numbers may seem low, they are in step with the size of the trade area and in step with the likely demand from potential businesses with the understanding that growth will occur from better penetration of the existing trade area.
- If the market share of the town's retail and service businesses were to increase by only 4% then the total demand by the year 2023, without new population growth, could be approximately 90,000 sq.ft.
- Part of the overall demand in Vegreville is not premised on providing new retail space since the current vacancy is high and there are some well positioned assets available for tenancies.
- The reality is that this space may only result in a few specifically targeted new businesses, but rather the goal should also be to ensure that existing businesses can increase their market share, sales and profitability rather than adding new space to further dilute what exists today.
- Retail growth need not always be about adding new retail, but creating an environment for stronger retention and performance of existing businesses, particularly in a community like Vegreville where larger competitive forces exist within a 1-hour drive time.

Investment and Innovation Study

The objective of the Investment and Innovation Study was to evaluate and provide recommendations on the most likely and most fitting industry sectors to pursue investment attraction. Investment attraction brings new wealth into the community, which allows other businesses to thrive as suppliers or in terms of having well-paying jobs which allow for increased local spending.

While it would be great to be able to focus on all sectors and drive investment, it is not practical, and, as a result, decisions need to be made about which opportunities should be prioritized. There are two forms of investment attraction, active and passive. Active investment attraction means making targeted and purposeful attempts to develop and convert leads into investors. Passive investment attraction means being prepared for investors who approach Vegreville for information and assistance. Ideally, the Town is ready to assist and serve as a concierge through the information gathering, decision-making, and development process.

Appreciating that investment attraction is an expensive and time-consuming process of marketing and sales, even the largest economic development offices focus their proactive efforts on specific targets. Four specific sectors have been identified for Vegreville.





Hemp and Cannabis Industry

The growth of the medicinal, (future) edible, and fibre market in the cannabis industry will be significant. Despite these strengths, the greatest differentiator for Vegreville is in the hemp industry. It is still a young industry but has incredible global potential and businesses, farmers and researchers at InnoTech have been on the leading edge of the industry. Furthermore, the community has the land for farming and processing, labour force talent, and capacity to support industry growth in this space. This should be an active investment attraction sector.

Professional, Scientific and Technical Services

A strong fit with Vegreville's Supernet broadband backbone and interconnections to sectors such as oil and gas, value-added agriculture, and hemp and cannabis on the research and development or consulting side. Proximity to Edmonton is an advantage because it is a potential significant source of these small businesses. This should be an active investment attraction sector.

Value-Added Agriculture

A large local population, proximity to Edmonton's consumers, access to critical infrastructure, and deep connections to regional agricultural inputs make Vegreville an ideal location for value-added agricultural products including food processing and advanced extraction. This should be an active investment attraction sector.

Oil and Gas Manufacturing & Servicing

The resurgence of the market after a slump over the last few years is still not definite, but easy access to the Trans-Canada Highway and rail transportation, proximity to Alberta's Industrial Heartland, available workforce, and inexpensive land relative to the Edmonton Metro Area make Vegreville a good location for petroleum product manufacturing or support services. The timing in this sector may not be right so in the short-term investment attraction should be passive with the community standing at the ready to assist business leads in the sector. If momentum picks up then proactive efforts should be made.



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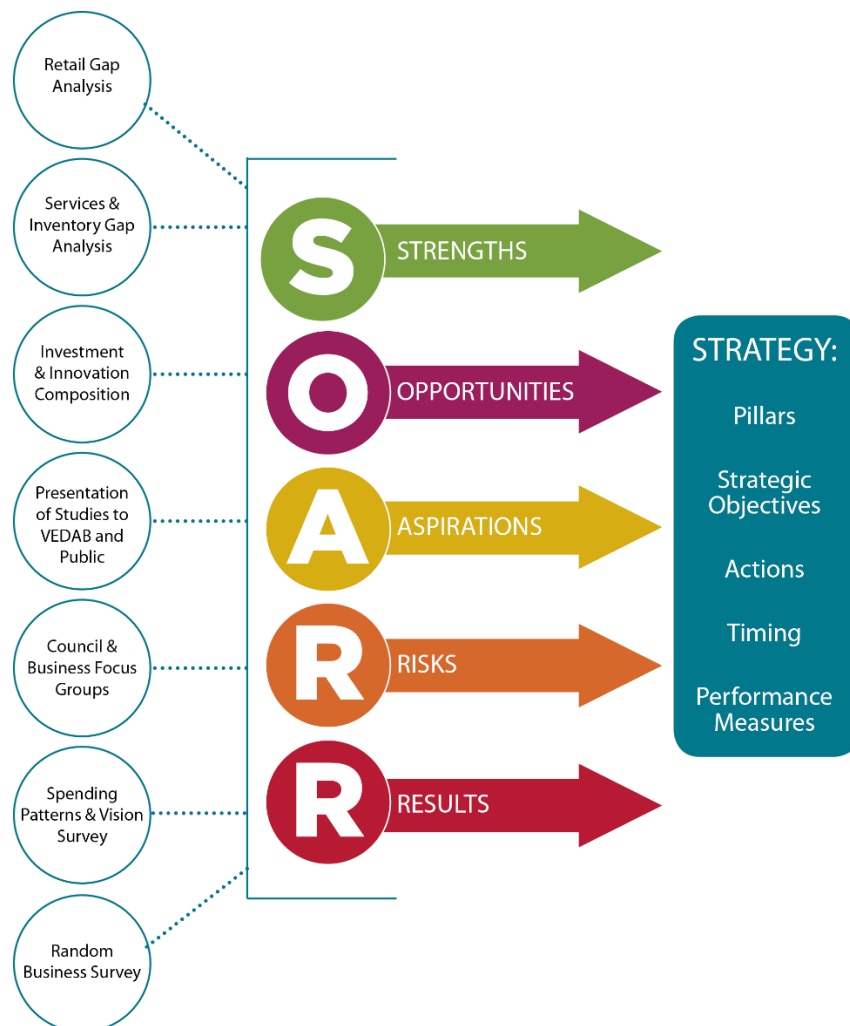




Process and SOARR Assessment

This plan is designed for maximum impact and actionability. Staying true to this objective, the entire strategy and implementation plan is contained at the front end of the Plan. Supporting materials such as the Prerequisite Studies are provided as separate supporting materials.

All of the research and engagement that contributed to the Prerequisite Studies, provides input for a Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Risks, and Results (SOARR) assessment. The SOARR assessment represents a model of appreciative inquiry, which allows the Plan to go beyond the current situation in Vegreville and make important links to where the community wants the economy to go in the future. It assists in ensuring the action plan is rooted in the desires of the community.





Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Risks & Results

SOARR Assessment

A SOARR Assessment is a forward-looking model, taking elements of what would traditionally be affiliated with a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis and using insights gained through stakeholder consultations to inform what is desired for the future and how to know when aspirations have been met. It represents a summary of the key learnings that will inform the Economic Diversity Enhancement Plan's action and implementation plan.



Source: MDB Insight, 2019.



Strengths



STRENGTHS

What can we build on?

- What are we doing well?
- What key achievements are we most proud of?
- What positive aspects have individuals and enterprises commented on?

- **Competitive Labour Force Cost** – With a median household income that is lowest among regional comparators and the province, Vegreville may be in position to leverage labour force competitiveness.
- **Skilled Trades Population** – There is a higher proportion of people with apprenticeship or trades certificate/diploma.
- **Technical Skills** – 29% of labour force have educations in architecture, engineering, and related technologies with additional strengths in management and science.
- **Serviced Industrial Land** – A recently enacted Area Structure Plan for industrial land includes full servicing to 83 acres on the southeast edge of the community.
- **Infrastructure Capacity** – The Town has significant water and sanitary sewer capacity and a broadband trunk can be found in the community
- **Transportation** – Vegreville is located on the Trans-Canada Highway and Canadian Pacific Railway
- **Portage College and InnoTech Research Centre** – Two key assets that can help link entrepreneurship to greater opportunities and ensure a skilled future labour force.
- **Alberta Hub Member** – The Alberta Hub helps to collectively draw attention to the region and contains helpful statistics about each member, including Vegreville.

Opportunities



OPPORTUNITIES

What are our best possible future opportunities?

- What changes in demand do we expect to see in the future?
- What external forces or trends may positively affect development?
- What are the key areas of untapped potential?
- What weaknesses or threats can be converted into SMART improvements?

- **Business Retention and Expansion Priorities** – A random business survey identified the following strategic priorities that are most likely to increase business satisfaction: municipal property tax, development/building permit processes, business assistance from the municipality, development charges and off-site levies, and availability of skilled labour.
- **Leverage Portage College** – Use Portage College to grow future entrepreneurs and as an audience for targeting future resident attraction among recent graduates.



- **New Trade Agreements** – Recently enacted USMCA and CETA represent new horizons that have not been fully understood by most communities. Those with an expertise in both agreements will see the greatest benefits and opportunities.
- **Oil and Gas-Related Industries** – Building on regional strengths in oil and gas, complimentary sectors such as oil and gas by-product manufacturing or chemical production may be possible in the region, as well as support industries for the sector.
- **Agrifood** – The nexus between agriculture and food processes or other value-added agricultural product processes (e.g. biomass, oil extraction, etc.).
- **Fibres and Composites** – Sectors related to agriculture and forestry can produce different materials useful in composite development, such as hemp fibres, cellulose products, or other agro-forestry by-products or inputs.
- **Federal Talent** – With the closure of a Federal Office that specialized in documentation processing and which employed nearly 200 people locally, there is an opportunity to attract businesses to Vegreville that require similar skills.
- **Increased Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship** – Vegreville currently has a low self-employed population. There is room to grow self-employment locally, thereby diversifying the economy and minimizing the risk of large shocks. Space may be required for small-scale industrial companies, such as colocation facilities.
- **Key Growth Sectors** – Sectors demonstrating capacity for growth include agriculture, manufacturing, professional, scientific and technical services, and transportation and warehousing, but areas of overlap hold the most significant opportunities for growth (e.g. manufacturing and agriculture, oil and gas and manufacturing or technical services).
- **Key Areas of Slippage** – Business retention efforts can be focused on sectors that are experiencing slippage such as oil and gas extraction, utilities, finance and insurance and real estate and rental and leasing, administrative and support, and waste management and remediation services.

Aspirations



ASPIRATIONS

What do we care deeply about achieving?

- What are we deeply passionate about?
- As a region, what difference do we hope to make (e.g. to residents, for institutions, to businesses)?
- What does our preferred future look like?

- Shift tax assessment burden away from residential contributions, by growing investment in non-residential sectors.
- Diversify the economic base by focusing on business opportunities in ways which diversify the economy and encourage entrepreneurship.
- Develop high quality intuitive, accessible, complete, and accurate data for investors.
- Become an international leader in the hemp growing and processing industry.



- Attract, develop and promote local lifestyle amenities most likely to appeal to target demographics such as young professionals, independent entrepreneurs, and skilled-labour/trades people.
- To retain students after they have completed post-secondary education while also building a quality of place that encourages people who have moved away for studies to return later to raise families.
- To have stronger local business support by residents as well as existing businesses, who may assist in supporting each other and identifying common commercial or supply chain needs which could signal growth opportunities.

Risks




RISKS
How will we recognize and mitigate or eliminate potential risks?

- What challenges do we need to be aware of?
- What policy shifts could impact our aspirations?
- What contingencies should we have in place to address threats or unexpected consequences?

- **Fluctuations in Energy Prices** – The threat of future oil and gas-related recessions could prove to be a source of insecurity among investors, but also demonstrate an opportunity for diversification into cleantech or other sectors of the economy that are more distant from oil and gas.
- **Out-migration** – With the closure of a large Federal Government office in Vegreville, the community must fight to retain those residents that have been directly impacted by the closure. Vegreville must anticipate some out-migration (which theoretically would make for a less severe unemployment rate), but develop opportunities for skills upgrading, resident retention, entrepreneurship, and investment attraction associated with dominant skills plus add quality of place amenities that compel residents to remain.
- **Poor Performance** – Low performing base industries such as manufacturing and professional, scientific and technical services hold the potential to limit further growth in other sectors such as retail and personal services.

Results



RESULTS
How will we know we are succeeding?

- What are the key goals we would like to accomplish in order to achieve these results?
- What meaningful measures will indicate that we are on track toward achieving our goals?
- What resources are needed to implement our most vital projects and initiatives?

- Assessment ratio tracking.
- Successful transition of laid-off federal workers.
- Ongoing business satisfaction measurement and intervention success rates.



- Entrepreneurship support programming provided (workshops, consultations, grant assistance and wins).
- A roadmap for non-residential land development that coincides with a strategy for long-term competitiveness in development costs and assessment; improved non-residential assessment ratio.
- Transition and urgency triage programming for recently laid-off federal employees to assist in new career opportunity identification, skills matching, and second career planning.
- Participation rate, employment rate and unemployment rate tracking.
- Ongoing business satisfaction monitoring and benchmark comparisons.
- Number of expansion leads acted upon, and new projects generated from expansion leads; number of business closures or downsizings prevented due to follow-on activities associated with business-retention and expansion servicing.
- Increased investment lead generation and increased lead-to-conversion ratios.
- Labour force demand monitoring to understand sector or occupation pipeline needs.
- Entrepreneurship programming that is robust and helpful (e.g. workshops, consultations, business plan reviewing).



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Economic Development Pillars, Objectives and Actions

The Pillars of this Economic Development Action Plan were identified by the Town of Vegreville as the guiding components of this project. Each is crucial to the success of the plan and requires specific strategic objectives and actions. The pillars are heavily interconnected and build on each other to synergistically support the goals and aspirations of the community as identified in the SOARR assessment.

Pillar 1: Innovation

Innovation is a key pillar that runs through every aspect of the Economic Diversity Enhancement Plan. By choosing to focus on connections between industries, technologies and key strengths, Vegreville commits to supporting diversification and building on existing momentum in the community.

Innovation is the state-of-mind of being open to and creating change through new products, ideas and methods. By focusing on the development of a culture of innovation the community is choosing to embrace change and intentionally build the foundation for the future.

PILLAR 1: INNOVATION

Objective 1.1: Support and Grow the Entrepreneur (Start-up) Community

Objective 1.2: Develop an Incubator/Co-working Space

Objective 1.3: Attract and Enable Remote Entrepreneurs

Objective 1.4: Position Vegreville as a Regional Centre for Innovation

Pillar 2: Business Retention and Investment Attraction

Once the community has chosen to embrace an innovative lens on economic development, the focus shifts to core industry practices. Existing businesses are the backbone of Vegreville's economy, and supporting their success provides the highest return on investment to the community. Creating the conditions that enable local businesses to grow supports local investment while proactively setting the stage for outside investment. Also, by intentionally attracting new investment, Vegreville can diversify and grow the local economy in key sectors, grow the residential workforce and fully leverage community assets.

PILLAR 2: BUSINESS RETENTION, ATTRACTION AND INVESTMENT

Objective 2.1: Enhance Overall Business Attraction Programming

Objective 2.2: Continue to Implement Business Retention and Expansion Programming and Solutions Identification

Objective 2.3: Initiate Proactive Investment Attraction Programming Focused on Key Sectors



Pillar 3: Land Development

Closely related to business retention, expansion and attraction activities, land development is the next key enabler of growth. Perhaps the most significant role that a municipality can play in investment attraction is one of ensuring institutional processes are streamlined so as to make the process of land selection and acquisition easy for investors. Relatedly, a municipality has a major role in ensuring there is adequate infrastructure and land to satisfy projected demand and that there is an accurate and easy-to-search inventory of available investment properties.

PILLAR 3: LAND DEVELOPMENT

Objective 3.1: Work Proactively to Fill Retail Gaps

Objective 3.2: Identify, Develop and Promote Available Sites

Objective 3.3: Develop Sites for Investment

Pillar 4: Residential Growth

The first three pillars have laid the groundwork for what is really the heart of the matter in communities: attracting and supporting the people who live in Vegreville. Without residents, a community is a patch of dirt on the highway. The perception of a community as livable, diverse and inclusive is a vital component of its ability to attract and retain residents from a wide range of demographic groups. This discussion takes on greater relevance in the battle to attract the workforce required to drive the development of more knowledge-based sectors of an economy (e.g. advanced manufacturing; professional, scientific and technical service firms; and information, culture, and communication technology firms). Attracting creative workers, or the intellectual capital that powers the development of a knowledge-based economy, has become a priority in many areas of Alberta.

PILLAR 4: RESIDENTIAL GROWTH

Objective 4.1: Ensure Vegreville's Assets are Understood and Promoted

Objective 4.2: Enhance Vegreville's Quality of Place

Objective 4.3: Initiate a Resident Attraction Task Force that Engages with and Promotes the Benefits of Living in the Community

Objective 4.4: Grow Vegreville's Population by 20% Over the Next 10 Years



Action Plan Overview

The following section provides a series of action plans which directly support the economic development pillars described above.

Beneath each strategic pillar is a preamble that establishes the core ideas that are actioned in its respective framework. In the framework are a series of strategic objectives, which were summarized above according to each pillar, and each objective is supported by a series of actions that will present step-by-step details about satisfying the objective. The timing of the actions will be established to demonstrate when they should be met, and performance measures are specified.

As noted, the timing assigned to each action item also corresponds to a specific timeframe, which can be operationalized as:

- Short – immediate to one year
- Medium – one to two years
- Long – three to four years
- Continuous – ongoing throughout the life span of the Strategy

Action Plan for Pillar 1: Innovation

Innovation is a pillar that runs through every aspect of the Economic Diversity Enhancement Plan. By intentionally focussing on the connections between industries, technologies, and key strengths, Vegreville has made a commitment to support diversity and build on momentum in the community.

Successful innovation requires facilitation and support for creative-collisions between businesses, ideas, individuals and institutions. This pillar is about creating the conditions for innovation and supporting the growth of ideas and start-ups. Facilitating the ability for entrepreneurs to collaborate with businesses, investors and each other is a role that proactive municipalities play in modern economies.

Key sectors and businesses can contribute to the development of increasing innovation in Vegreville. Some sectors such as professional, scientific and technical services which are below provincial concentrations in Vegreville put the community at a disadvantage and suggest a deficit in non-construction-related skilled labour (e.g. engineers, architects, designers, lawyers, accountants). These lower concentrations combined with fewer home-based businesses which would typically be encouraged to eventually scale-up and expand put Vegreville at a disadvantage. For this reason, aggressive development of the knowledge sector is needed.

In the most operational sense, this objective and its actions are about creating long-term supportive networks of businesses, investors, start-ups and support organizations that can mobilize to support entrepreneurs in the community. Incubators/Co-working spaces allow entrepreneurs to meet and work in a supportive and collaborative environment and is a feature of many communities that are supporting their business start-ups. These spaces make it easier to facilitate connections between industry, workforce and technology. Hosting pitch nights, new product development events and workshops on a consistent basis will develop a start-up culture and network that grows and supports new businesses.

Finally, there's the notion of positioning Vegreville as a hub for innovation for the broader region. This



makes good sense, given the local assets affiliated with InnoTech and post-secondary education. Being aggressive in raising the profile of Vegreville in the innovation space relates to being proactive about generating opportunities for broader exposure.

These various ideas are advanced in the action plan framework that follows.

| Actions | Municipal Role | Key Partners | Timing | Performance Measures |
|---|--|--|--------------------|--|
| OBJECTIVE 1.1: SUPPORT AND GROW THE ENTREPRENEUR (START-UP) COMMUNITY | | | | |
| <p>1. Encourage local entrepreneurship in growth industries that locals have experience in, specifically in technical and consulting services for the agriculture, oil and gas, and manufacturing sectors.</p> <p>This process includes communicating with/listening to entrepreneurs to identify where gaps in products/services exist and what support would be required to provide those products/services. Focusing on industries and skills that exist in the community will anchor the start-up community in shorter term, more achievable goals while building the foundation for a larger more diverse economy.</p> | Faciliatory, providing information, research and connections to support services. | InnoTech, Community Futures Elk Island, Portage College, Business Community, Alberta Council of Technologies Society (ABCTECH), Alberta HUB. | Ongoing, Aftercare | Number of start-ups, number of product/service gaps identified, number of new jobs, amount of investment attracted, number of new patents |
| <p>2. Continue to expand research programming underway at InnoTech Research Centre in Vegreville. As the preeminent innovation asset in the community (it's primary focus is to facilitate the conversion of applied research to economic, social, and environmental benefits for Alberta) InnoTech needs to be fully promoted and supported by the community to maximize opportunities for Vegreville's entrepreneurs. The facilities, skills and networks InnoTech has access to are all key assets that Vegreville should leverage to the best of its ability and are key differentiators that can be used to attract new businesses and start-ups to the community.</p> | Faciliatory and promotional role: providing information, research and connections to support services. | Innotech, Portage College, Alberta Council of Technologies Society (ABCTECH) | Ongoing | Number and value of new research grants secured, number of new programs, facilities and equipment purchases supporting research and development, number and value of new public private research partnerships, number of active researchers and projects |
| <p>3. Develop a comprehensive database of all supports available to entrepreneurs and provide guidance on how to access and build a business in Vegreville. This should include connecting to or developing a network of investors willing to consider new projects.</p> | Lead, collecting and providing information and research and connections as well as network building. | Chamber of Commerce, Province of Alberta, InnoTech, Portage College, Alberta Council of Technologies Society (ABCTECH), Alberta HUB | Ongoing, Aftercare | Number of individuals and start-ups accessing database, number of businesses supported by promoted programming, number of partnerships with agencies providing support, amount invested in start-ups from investor network. |



| Actions | Municipal Role | Key Partners | Timing | Performance Measures |
|---|-----------------------|--|-----------------|---|
| OBJECTIVE 1.2: DEVELOP AN INCUBATOR/CO-WORKING SPACE | | | | |
| 1. Undertake a feasibility study to determine the type of facility most-relevant to Vegreville's context. Implement the recommendations of the feasibility study in partnership with all appropriately identified actors. Explore the industrial commercial land next to InnoTech as a potential public/private sector campus, or look at opportunities to collaborate with InnoTech directly for space. | Lead | InnoTech, Portage College, Business Community, Alberta HUB | Short to medium | Successful development of facility, number of users and businesses operating at the space |
| OBJECTIVE 1.3: ATTRACT AND ENABLE REMOTE ENTREPRENEURS | | | | |
| 1. Target and attract skilled remote enabled entrepreneurs to Vegreville by appealing to their chosen lifestyle and access to research facilities (InnoTech) | Lead | InnoTech, Business Community | Ongoing | Number and scope of marketing initiatives, number of attracted residents |
| 2. Focus on attracting small companies in the professional, scientific and technical sector, that carry large amounts of knowledge capital, including home-based businesses, who can help increase resident population. The following should be considered in marketing: these businesses and individuals are increasingly mobile and are influenced by infrastructure considerations like Vegreville's great broadband access and quality of place attributes which should be promoted heavily. They are given confidence by knowing that there is already a strong business support network and lower cost labour. They are most likely to be in the greater Edmonton area, looking for escape. Develop an investment prospectus for this specific audience and market it aggressively. The prospectus should highlight all the relevant local assets that suit professional, scientific and technical individuals. | Lead | None | Medium | Number and scope of marketing initiatives; investment prospectus complete, number of attracted residents |
| OBJECTIVE 1.4: POSITION VEGREVILLE AS A REGIONAL CENTRE FOR INNOVATION | | | | |
| 1. Leverage and support regional economic development efforts. Maintain a comprehensive visible community profile that can be shared with regional partners and used in conjunction with regional marketing and promotion activities. Ensure the Alberta Hub profile is also consistent with content used in the local community profile. | Lead/Regional Partner | InnoTech, Business community, Alberta HUB | Short | Number of partnerships, size of partnerships, type of partnerships |
| 2. Be proactive in generating opportunities to showcase innovation coming out of Vegreville. Develop an "Innovation Successes" section on the webpage to highlight key industry leaders emerging in Vegreville, and promote new inductees heavily via social media. Ensure local and regional media are notified of major break-through's from Vegreville's entrepreneur base. | Lead | InnoTech, Business community | Short, ongoing | Media coverage; number of press releases; number of topical Tweets or social media announcements, and analytics |



| Actions | Municipal Role | Key Partners | Timing | Performance Measures |
|--|----------------|-------------------------------|----------------|---|
| 3. Identify and engage with Venture Capital firms that have shown interest in cannabis, hemp, and agrifood innovation, and work productively to maintain and expand relationships and networks. Refer local entrepreneurs to prospective investor leads. Get the word out when big deals are facilitated. | Lead | InnoTech, Business community | Short, ongoing | Number of Venture Capital contacts generated; correspondence; number of relationships facilitated; investment generated; social media results |
| 4. Undertake an asset mapping exercise to identify all local businesses operating in the four target sectors (agrifood, cannabis, professional scientific and technical, and oil and gas. Arrange discussion sessions with target groups to identify critical gaps in local support or servicing that could be provided via the promotion of entrepreneurial opportunities or investment attraction. Actively seek-out and identify gaps in the local market that could be filled with new local businesses, with a focus on the key business and research strengths in the region. For example, working with farmers to develop industrial hemp to feed the InnoTech processing facility and connect other businesses in the supply chain that utilize the outputs. | Lead | InnoTech, Chamber of Commerce | Medium | Asset map complete; primary gaps identified; gaps filled by investment entrepreneur development; gaps filled by investment attraction; \$ new investment; \$ new assessment |



Action Plan for Pillar 2: Business Retention, Investment and Attraction

Enabling local businesses supports investment and generates new opportunities. Preparing Vegreville for local expansion and proactively attracting investment is key to the town's success. By intentionally attracting new investment, Vegreville can diversify and grow the local economy in key sectors, grow the residential workforce and fully leverage community assets.

It is important for the Town to maintain a supportive small business climate by looking at ways to streamline regulation and approval processes, provide information and other services important for small business success and provide programs (such as support for training, knowledge sharing and accelerator activities, co-working spaces).

The three prerequisite studies have isolated numerous themes associated with the process and cost of doing business in Vegreville. Overall, 82% of businesses are either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with Vegreville as a place to own and operate a business; however, issues such as taxes, development charges, and business development processes are perceived negatively by existing businesses.

These perceived short-comings, whether accurate or not, may also reflect investor opinions. In part, this is because none of the details (taxes, charges, or processes) are easily found online, representing a critical gap for business expansion and attraction considerations. Because these issues were among the top priorities for increasing business satisfaction, it stands to reason that addressing them and doing so in a way which gets the attention of local businesses, will help to reverse the trend.

Strong business retention and expansion programming allows the municipality to be proactive about learning from businesses that are considering expanding or closing/downsizing, but it also improves community relations in general, by showing that the municipality wants to act on the concerns that it hears from its businesses. Growing and maintaining relationships with existing business also leads to increased ability to identify supply-chain gaps. Therefore, Vegreville's activities have both provided valuable input into the priorities for increasing business satisfaction, have exposed opportunities for intervention in business growth or mitigation opportunities, and opened the door for identifying opportunities for new investment. It follows, that continued outreach should be a key plank of the Plan going forward.

Vegreville's businesses community wants a diverse mix of businesses across industries, to attract and develop the local workforce, and attract new investment because they understand that these factors create the conditions for their own success.



| Actions | Municipal Role | Key Partners | Timing | Performance Measures |
|--|----------------|---|-----------------|--|
| OBJECTIVE 2.1: ENHANCE OVERALL BUSINESS ATTRACTION PROGRAMMING | | | | |
| 1. Compile an accessible online database of community-related data including, but not limited to, census results, available properties (including private holdings), cost and tax information, utility rates and capacities, business mix, labour force composition, employment rate, and all pertinent community assets. Connecting results to municipal Geographic Information System platforms is also a recognized best practice among investment decision makers. | Lead | Province of Alberta, Community Futures Elk Island, Business Community, Alberta HUB | Short | Development of database, tracked usage |
| 2. Talent is key! Continue to monitor Vicinity Jobs supply and demand to better align the needs of businesses and job seekers. If key skills are continually being sought after, alert training providers to develop solutions to upgrade the workforce. If skilled individuals are unable to find employment look to attract businesses that require that workforce or encourage entrepreneurship. | Lead | Province of Alberta, Community Futures Elk Island, Business Community, Alberta HUB, Portage College | Ongoing | Number of Developed and Shared Reports to the business community |
| 3. Develop a strong partnership with Portage College to identify talent pipeline requirements locally and provide needed training. | Lead | Portage College, Business Community, Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures Elk Island, Alberta HUB, InnoTech | Short, ongoing | Number of; training programs developed, partners, students |
| 4. Continue to aggressively target back office support services investment in line with the dominant skills of the recently closed Federal processing facility. | Lead | Province of Alberta, Community Futures Elk Island, Business Community | Ongoing | Number of attracted businesses, number of laid off workers connected with new employers/jobs |
| 5. Follow the confidential investment lead generation and prioritization companion research designed to assist Vegreville's economic development team in reaching the appropriate leads to start more targeted investment activities ¹ . | Lead | Community Futures Elk Island, Business Community, InnoTech | Short | Number of leads identified, followed up with and successfully attracted |
| 6. Implement a business ambassador program that encourages local business leaders to assist in identifying industry gaps and opportunities and serve as an intermediary in connecting the Town with potential investment leads. Ambassadors also serve as local references for familiarization tours and should meet semi-regularly with Vegreville Economic Development. | Lead | Community Futures Elk Island, Business Community, Alberta HUB, InnoTech | Short to medium | Ambassadors, Opportunities Identified and Familiarization Tours |

1 Note: This was a confidential document shared with Town of Vegreville constituting a list of best-fit leads for investment attraction.



| Actions | Municipal Role | Key Partners | Timing | Performance Measures |
|--|----------------|--|----------------|--|
| 7. Attract retail and commercial businesses that represent the largest sources of economic leakage. Review the results of the Retail Gap Assessment Prerequisite Study to better understand the sub-sectors that are currently the largest gaps and sources of leakage. Concentrate commercial investment attraction efforts in those areas. | Lead | Vegreville Agricultural Society, InnoTech, Business Community. | Medium | Opportunities identified, successfully replaced imports |
| OBJECTIVE 2.2: CONTINUE TO IMPLEMENT BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION PROGRAMMING AND SOLUTIONS IDENTIFICATION | | | | |
| 1. Address top local business concerns: review competitiveness of taxes and charges (fees) associated with development in comparison to other key communities, and review business approvals process to ensure it is as smooth as possible and easy to understand. | Lead | Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures Elk Island, Business Community | Short | Taxes and fees reviewed, reduction of barriers |
| 2. For areas of misperception identified as priorities in the business survey, dispel cost-related myths via public relations campaigns, while also using communications methods to inform locals and potential investors of the business development process. For areas where Vegreville is not competitive, review policies with senior Town staff and Town Council and consider the opportunities and risks related to becoming more competitive. | Lead | Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures Elk Island, Business Community | Short | Policies reviewed, improvements made |
| 3. Engage with businesses that have indicated in the business survey they intent to expand, relocate, downsize or close to understand what challenges can potentially be resolved by the municipalities or area partners. | Lead | Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures Elk Island, Business Community | Short, ongoing | Businesses expanding, retained and challenges overcome; \$ invested; jobs created; \$ new assessment |
| 4. Arrange a Small Business Week, hosted by the Town, Chamber and/or Rotary for existing local businesses in Vegreville and invite a guest speaker to speak to operational or succession planning for local businesses and other relevant topics for local businesses, such as marketing or merchandising. | Lead | Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures Elk Island, InnoTech, Portage College | Short | Event hosted, number of partners, number of participants, number of follow-up consultations |
| 5. Initiate an "aftercare" team within the town to check-in on newly arrived businesses and identify/address challenges or concerns. Also, establish regular visitations with local companies to gather feedback and offer additional assistance. Prioritize high risk companies who have noted expansion, retention or closure challenges. | Lead | Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures Elk Island, Business Community | Short | Development of team, number of businesses retained and supported |
| 6. Use the business retention and expansion program's engagement process to identify potential local or regional supply-chain gaps that could be opportunities for new local businesses or investment attraction. | Lead | Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures Elk Island, Business Community | Ongoing | Companies identified |



| Actions | Municipal Role | Key Partners | Timing | Performance Measures |
|--|----------------|---|-----------------|---|
| OBJECTIVE 2.3: INITIATE PROACTIVE INVESTMENT ATTRACTION PROGRAMMING FOCUSED ON KEY SECTORS | | | | |
| 1. Develop pitch-decks for each target industry and one broader deck to be used or further customized when investor meetings are arranged. | Lead | Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures Elk Island, Business Community | Short | Industries identified, pitch decks developed, investor meetings, companies attracted |
| 2. Pending legalities, promote research and development and scale-up opportunities for product developers affiliated with advanced cannabis production and product manufacturing, including edible products, hemp products-fibers and organic foods. Encourage the development of spin-off companies from hemp research and development. | Lead | Vegreville Agricultural Society, Business Community, InnoTech, Community Futures Elk Island, InnoTech, | Medium to Long | Opportunities identified, companies pitched, attracted |
| 3. Develop a plan for cannabis-related tourism to increase the value proposition of local producers including future edible providers. | Lead | Vegreville Agricultural Society, Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures Elk Island, Business Community, | Medium to Long | Tourism products developed, marketing campaigns, number of visitors |
| 4. Position Vegreville as the agrifood processing investment place of choice by using marketing vehicles such as social media, trade shows, and partnerships with regional economic development alliances. Celebrate new arrivals broadly. Highlight existing innovators and powerhouses. Make some noise for the agrifood sector! | Lead | Vegreville Agricultural Society, Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures Elk Island, Business Community, InnoTech, | Short | Marketing campaigns, trade shows attended, partnerships developed; social media traction; media attention |
| 5. Aggressively pursue innovative food processing companies in the global marketplace to maximize the use of the regional feed stock in Vegreville. Leverage the diversity of local crops and trends in specifically-competitive components, such as proteins. | Lead | Vegreville Agricultural Society, Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures Elk Island, Business Community | Short to medium | Companies identified, attracted; jobs created; \$ invested; \$ new assessment |



Action Plan for Pillar 3: Land Development

Investment attraction is about ensuring institutional structures are streamlined to make the process of land selection and acquisition easy for investors while following required legislation; providing an accurate inventory of available investment properties; and ensuring there is adequate infrastructure and land to satisfy projected demand.

For population and employment growth, it is paramount that Vegreville provides an adequate future supply of commercial and industrial land. A new commercial subdivision has recently been completed as has an Industrial Area Structure Plan. With these components expected to come online within the coming year, Vegreville can now look to investment attraction opportunities. With moderate to low population growth expected in the near-term, an emphasis should be placed on industrial development, which may attract interest in relocation to Vegreville among its commuting labour force.

| Actions | Municipal Role | Key Partners | Timing | Performance Measures |
|--|----------------|---|--------|--|
| OBJECTIVE 3.1: WORK PROACTIVELY TO FILL IDENTIFIED RETAIL GAPS | | | | |
| 1. Target key conferences for participation as a delegate, panelist or sponsor to meet with retail decision makers and get Vegreville on their radar. A list of identified conferences included in the Retail Gap Analysis Prerequisite Study. Do this while the gap analysis data is current. | Lead | International Council of Shopping Centres (ICSC), Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures Elk Island, Business Community | Short | Number of conferences attended, number of meetings secured, number of leads generated number of attracted developments |
| 2. Utilizing the data gathered in the retail gap analysis, develop materials highlighting Vegreville's development opportunities. Proactively meet with regional developers who have a strong presence in Edmonton and Calgary regions and Alberta to showcase identified retail gaps in Vegreville and encourage them to establish locations to fill those gaps. A list of targets included in Retail Gap Analysis. | Lead | Development Community, Chamber of Commerce | Short | Meetings with developers; projects attracted; jobs created; \$ invested; \$ new assessment |
| 3. Build a database of regional franchises and franchise partners in the Edmonton region to identify those which may be looking to secure additional locations or have the financial capacity to open a new franchise. Franchise partners often look for the proven Franchisee when expanding a concept. | Lead | Chamber of Commerce, Business Community | Short | Number of businesses identified, met with, attracted |
| OBJECTIVE 3.2: IDENTIFY AND PROMOTE AVAILABLE SITES | | | | |
| 1. Leverage vacant property for investment attraction or re-purposed use. There is a market for this kind of turn-key location and Vegreville should be aggressive in attracting an investor in this high-demand space. The space could be used as is (office-related work) or converted to light industrial use. | Lead | Development community, site selectors, business community | Short | Sites identified, meetings with investors, businesses attracted |



| Actions | Municipal Role | Key Partners | Timing | Performance Measures |
|--|----------------|--|---------|--|
| 2. Develop and communicate a formal timeline for newly designated commercial and industrial land. Create an "Invest in Vegreville - Commercial Opportunities" brochure/package that lists all the current vacant land and retail units in the community along with sizes, lease rates, site plans, traffic counts, covenants, contact information and any other noteworthy observations. | Lead | Development community, business community | Short | Sites identified, timelines established, marketing materials developed |
| 3. Update the Town's current 2-page "Heart of Regional Retail" profile document and its "Retail Trade Area" table to reflect the actual quantified and verified retail trading region, communities that comprise the trade area, and population counts. | Lead | Business community | Short | Marketing materials updated |
| OBJECTIVE 3.3: DEVELOP SITES FOR INVESTMENT | | | | |
| 1. Ensure new sites can be brought online in a short time frame while meeting the expectations of likely investors. The term shovel-ready typically means an investor can have shovels in the ground within 60 days. Ensure the municipality can process a standard land development application within this window, and if amendments are required, identify the additional time this would take. | Lead | Development community, business community | Short | Site process timeline developed |
| 2. Gather and provide utilities infrastructure data and servicing details, including water, wastewater, loads and capacity and network access. | Lead | Development community, business community, Chamber of Commerce | Short | Data gathered, materials developed |
| 3. Understand local businesses' land needs for new expansion and work with them to bring what they need online. | Lead | Development community, business community, Chamber of Commerce | Ongoing | Data gathered, materials developed |
| 4. Promote the Non-Residential Development Incentive Program, which offers a one-time tax cancellation in exchange for alterations, improvements or new construction that will increase the assessed value by more than \$50,000. Provide examples of successful projects undertaken via the program. | Lead | Development community, business community, Chamber of Commerce | Ongoing | Program developed, program uptake, \$ investment |



Action Plan for Pillar 4: Residential Growth

The perception of a community as livable, diverse, and inclusive is a vital to attracting and retaining residents from a wide range of demographic groups. This discussion takes on greater relevance in the context of supporting and being supported by the other pillars.

Growing a residential population consists of a “perfect storm” of variables. Some core considerations include job or career opportunities, affordable and diverse living accommodations, quality of place characteristics such as entertainment, family activities/programming, and access to post-secondary and children’s education. From an economic perspective, the way to grow population is to attract employment opportunities that lure new labour or job creators (i.e. entrepreneurs) to the community.

There are tools to better understand with labour force supply and demand, which can assist local post-secondary education providers in determining what programming should be promoted most aggressively, as well as indicate where economic development staff can be more engaged in trying to promote job opportunities to meet labour force needs. Growing the labour force base can also be used to leverage interest of residential developers. Prioritizing a few sites for redevelopment, including the development of scenarios that can demonstrate the potential return on investment for investors, could help attract the kinds of new residential development that are likely to add to downtown revitalization.

Local employers shared ideas about why some employees chose to reside elsewhere even if they work in Vegreville. The top reasons offered include:

- Spouse/family live elsewhere
- Employees do not stay long-term
- Cost of living or cost of taxes
- Preference for a bigger city
- Preference for rural life

Vegreville will succeed by appealing to the needs and desires of current and potential residents while being proactive in attracting the people and skills to support the growth of the local economy.



| Actions | Municipal Role | Key Partners | Timing | Performance Measures |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| OBJECTIVE 4.1: ENSURE VEGREVILLE'S ASSETS ARE UNDERSTOOD AND PROMOTED | | | | |
| 1. Map quality of place assets including infrastructure components such as airport, rail, utilities, business parks, available land (serviced and serviced), and amenities (commercial) that can or already do add to Vegreville's attractiveness to businesses and residents. Identify gaps and encourage the development of new assets. | Lead | Business Community, Chamber of Commerce | Short | Asset map developed, gaps identified, promoted opportunities, new assets developed |
| OBJECTIVE 4.2: ENHANCE VEGREVILLE'S QUALITY OF PLACE | | | | |
| 1. Support the build-out of leisure and recreation facilities and other community amenities which provide a quality of place that attracts new businesses and residents. Undertake a residential survey to understand which key amenities are missing that the Town or other groups can assist in providing. | Lead | Business Community, Chamber of Commerce | Medium to Long | Improved quality of place elements (parks, recreation, churches, schools, medical, cultural assets) |
| 2. Green the downtown core by identifying one or two existing vacant properties that are central. Convert these properties into greenspaces for locals and visitors to enjoy, which contributes to the liveliness of the core, encourages people to explore and relax, and increases the visual appeal of the area. Growing the appeal may also motivate nearby businesses to increase their visual appeal. | Work with other municipal departments | Other departments | Short to Long | Project initiated; proximate business increase; business quality and store-frontage improvements |
| 3. Investigate opportunities associated with the completion of a Regional Festivals and Event Strategy to attract and host destination events. | Lead | Business Community, Chamber of Commerce | Medium | Opportunities identified, new events attracted; number of attendees; number of overnight stays |
| 4. Implement a main street revitalization strategy to inspire, lead and enhance the aesthetic and accessibility of main street businesses. | Lead | Business Community, Chamber of Commerce, Development Community | Initiate in the short-term, Execute long-term | Strategy developed, Campaigns delivered |
| 5. Bring back the murals! Once upon a time, panel murals on the sides of buildings were highly common, but many communities have lost those mementos. The Town and Chamber should commission a series of murals to be done by contemporary urban artists. | Lead | Business Community, Chamber of Commerce, Development Community | Long | Murals created; media coverage |
| OBJECTIVE 4.3: INITIATE A RESIDENT ATTRACTION TASK FORCE THAT ENGAGES WITH AND PROMOTES THE BENEFITS OF LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY. | | | | |
| 1. Initiate a resident attraction task force and provide a term of reference for it to explore and evaluate resident attraction in an ongoing manner. | Lead | Business Community, Chamber of Commerce | Medium | Residents attracted |
| 2. Develop a cost calculator tool that allows current and potential residents to clearly see the total cost benefits of living in Vegreville. Promote the tool in conjunction with other resident attraction marketing. | Lead | Business Community, Chamber of Commerce, Development Community | Medium | Cost calculator developed and shared; number of users |



| Actions | Municipal Role | Key Partners | Timing | Performance Measures |
|---|----------------|---|-----------|--|
| 3. Invest in a community focused marketing, promotion and storytelling content bank (local champion testimonials). | Lead | Business Community, Chamber of Commerce | Aftercare | Marketing materials developed |
| 4. Work with the Chamber of Commerce and real estate firms to develop local familiarisation tours. These tours assist potential investors, newcomers and their families to find local employment and are a key opportunity to highlight the community's quality of place assets and available housing. | Lead | Business Community, Chamber of Commerce | Ongoing | Identified partners, fam tours developed, familiarization tours delivered, number of participants; number of new residents |
| OBJECTIVE 4.4: GROW VEGREVILLE'S POPULATION BY 20% OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS | | | | |
| 1. Create job-match services to link spouses of individuals that are interested in or already working in Vegreville with opportunities for regional or local employment. | Lead | Business Community, Chamber of Commerce | Ongoing | Increased local employment, increased population, measured in households |
| 2. Assist in specialized labour attraction by developing promotional materials and helping local entrepreneurs identify and recruit specific labour that demonstrably cannot be found locally. The program should include a grant amount supplied by the municipality, and it should be capped but designed to offset the costs of marketing labour force attraction outside of Vegreville. | Lead | Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures Elk Island, Business Community | Ongoing | Materials developed; new employees attracted/facilitated; business feedback |





Critical Path Actions

Each of the following “critical path” ideas have been vetted by the Vegreville Economic Development Advisory Board and present a concept for the highest priority initiatives. They are assembled from a variety of the actions in the previous section and show the interconnectedness of different activities – how doing one thing will have a positive impact upon several objectives. The actions also incorporate a number of immediate aftercare activities that have been discussed since the initiation of the strategic planning project. Going forward, this section represents the point of departure in getting the Economic Diversity Enhancement Plan up and running.

Linking Activities to Outcomes

The table below shows how completing activities often supports several outcomes. The activities that are immediately being supported as part of this project are described in the pages following the table below.

Figure 1: Convergence of Key Activities and Shared Outcomes

| Activity | Retention & Investment Readiness | Hemp Industry Global Leader | Place-Making: Greening of Downtown | Population Growth Through Investment Attraction | Retail Investment Attraction |
|--|--|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| INVESTMENT READINESS & PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT | Liven up the core, to connect sites of historic interest (e.g. train station), to encourage people to explore and relax, to create a great civic space | | x | x | X |
| | Get industrial sites shovel ready | X | | | |
| | “Innovation Successes” section on the webpage to highlight key industry leaders emerging in Vegreville, and promote new inductees heavily via social media | x | x | x | X |
| | Review competitiveness of taxes and charges (fees) associated with development in comparison to other key communities | x | x | x | x |
| | Vicinity Jobs – labour force supply/demand reporting and support | x | x | X | x |
| | Searchable online available properties tool | x | X | x | x |
| | Community Profile with special section on residential relocation | x | | X | |
| OUTREACH, MARKETING & SALES | Engagement with ‘influencers’ (e.g. VC, Province, farmers) | x | x | x | x |
| | Follow-up investment leads developed through this project | | x | x | x |
| | ICSC Whistler Conference (January 2020) and Franchise Expo Edmonton (September 2019) | | | | x |
| | New commercial/retail pitch deck and/or “Invest in Vegreville - Commercial Opportunities” (update or remove current pieces) | | | | x |
| | Leverage connections in Alberta’s Industrial Heartland | | | x | |
| | Follow-up Red and Green Flags developed through this project | x | | x | |
| | Triage BR+E Implementation and Support | x | X | x | |



Searchable Online Available Properties Tool

In this era, communities that do not have a searchable online available property map find themselves at a considerable disadvantage. Site selectors want as much information as possible in as little time as necessary. The delay by even a day or two could represent a missed opportunity. The project team recommends establishing this tool to ensure no potential opportunity for investment goes unmissed. The consulting team will ensure a properties tool is developed and implemented and provide instructions for how it can continue to be maintained and leveraged.

Vicinity Jobs Supply/Demand Reporting & Implementation Support

As mentioned earlier in the strategy, labour force is one of the most important criteria that investors examine when evaluating a place for their business. Successfully diversifying an economy may also require adjustments to individual skill sets in order to be ready for the next economy.

Vicinity Jobs data will provide key information about the local labour market and where gaps exist. The data allow the consulting team to identify where the jobs are, who is hiring, and which occupations and skills are in high demand. This data will inform both training providers and materials geared towards investors.

Triage BR+E Implementation & Support

Building on the benchmark established in the initial Triage BR+E Survey, the Project Team will initiate two more random surveys of 80 businesses at an appropriate time during the aftercare period. Comparisons will be made with previous survey results to track improvements or observed changes in priorities. In addition, the survey can be used as a tool to identify businesses in need of immediate support concerning opportunities or threats. The Town of Vegreville and its stakeholders would follow-up with these red/green flag businesses to ensure retention and expansion.

ICSC Whistler Conference Meeting Brokering

ICSC (International Council of Shopping Centers) is the pre-eminent organization for communities that want to attract new retail development to be involved in. Dozens of Alberta towns and cities attend ICSC's congresses every year. Tenant attraction and coordination for attendance at ICSC Whistler and Toronto Conferences will be provided, where Vegreville could have a presence at the Cities of Canada Pavilion or through pre-arranged meetings with strategic retail tenants and franchises deemed compatible with the identified retail gaps.

Commercial/Retail Pitch Deck

Pitch decks were advocated in the action plan. These need to be developed. The pitch deck will include all necessary competitiveness messaging and data to generate interest in investment opportunities, tailored specifically to the retail and commercial sub-sectors that demonstrate the strongest opportunities for attraction to Vegreville. The deck will be a particularly useful tool for the ICSC Conferences and other investment attraction efforts.