

## **Priorities Committee Meeting\_Mar10\_2020**

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### **STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND UPDATE**

#### **Economic Development and Tourism - Department Business Plan Update**

##### **Report Purpose**

To provide the Priorities Committee with an update on the progress of the 2019 – 2022 Economic Development and Tourism Department Business Plan.

##### **Our Prioritized Strategic Goals**

Goal 3 - Cultivate economic diversification, within the petro-chemical industry and beyond, through a business-friendly environment

Goal 7 - Provide opportunities for public engagement and communication

##### **Report**

The Economic Development and Tourism (EDT) department supports Strathcona County's strategic direction and business goals by increasing the total prosperity, revenue and assessment base. The department is focused on attracting further business investment including the value-added components of the hydrocarbon and petrochemical industry, while building and growing the agri-business, commercial, retail, and small business sectors. Success is achieved through several core business functions including:

- Economic Growth: Industrial, commercial and development attraction
- Diversification and Innovation: Sector development and business mentorship
- Business Support: Small business seminars, business retention and expansion services and focused community events.
- Readiness: Research, communication, business location inventories, business and development outreach, business visitation and networking
- Tourism marketing and product development initiatives that enhance quality of place are also key deliverables based on Council, business and advisory committee input.

The department is comprised of 9 professionals who operate collaboratively and in partnership with a variety of stakeholders such as Edmonton Global, the Alberta Industrial Heartland Association and the Sherwood Park & District Chamber of Commerce to advance the interests of the regional and local economy.

Over the 2019-2022 business planning cycle, economic development and tourism continued to work with business and industry to enable the success and growth of the community. Regional collaboration has been strengthened with the creation of Edmonton Global as their mandate is to promote the region globally to attract and retain foreign direct investment and promote trade. International leads are being directed to all participating partners and as a result the team is actively responding to requests for information. In addition to the ongoing delivery of core services, industrial projects announced, under construction, recently completed or active now total approximately \$12 billion dollars worth of value. Overall business numbers have increased by 1.4% since December 2017 with 3,508 businesses now having employees and 11,027 total businesses now calling Strathcona County home.

A robust customer relationship management system continues to enable the team to track inquiries, contacts, businesses and projects. Numerous retail projects have been landed

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during this business plan cycle as assistance to landlords, real estate agents and developers remain core services. On-going implementation of the foreign direct investment strategy continues with the team focused on petrochemical and energy value added industry. Non-energy related inquiries in agriculture, transportation and logistics, innovation and tourism related sectors are helping with economic diversification.

The team celebrates success through the award winning You Can video and print campaign to attract new industry and visitors. Businesses are showcased to promote the “why do business in Strathcona County”. These efforts instill community pride and result in other businesses wanting to join our success. The video’s paint a vivid picture on the advantages of doing business locally. A strong Business visitation program continues to support business retention and expansion efforts with the team now looking to develop a new formal business retention and expansion program.

The department had one new initiative in 2019 to develop a Tourism Strategy and Implementation Plan. Work has commenced with a consultant to create a ten-year tourism strategy for the community. Opportunities to explore new and enhanced tourism tactics is essential as the tourism industry in Alberta is valued at \$8 billion dollars. The Province of Alberta is also currently developing a 10-year tourism strategy in which EDT has participated. Tourism initiatives will help achieve goal three of the corporate business plan to cultivate economic diversification and will also support the locals hotels and restaurants. The project is on time and on budget. Recently public engagement including tourism cafes, surveys and interviews were completed. The What We Heard Report is planned to come back to Council in April with the complete destination analysis, opportunity assessment and draft strategy and implementation plan anticipated to wrap up in summer 2020.

### **Other Impacts**

**Policy:** N/A

**Legislative/Legal:** N/A

**Interdepartmental:** Recreation, Parks and Culture, Communications, Transportation and Agriculture Services, Family and Community Services, Procurement Services.

**Master Plan/Framework:** N/A

### **Enclosure**

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