

# Economic Development Advisory Committee 2024 Update

Priorities Committee  
April 8, 2025

Barbra Korol, Chair EDAC  
Ryan Osterberg, Vice-Chair EDAC

# Agenda

1. Committee member introductions and acknowledgements
2. Economic Development Committee Purpose and Duties
3. Strategic Approach
4. Focal Areas
5. Recommendations for Council
6. Final Thoughts
7. Q/A

# 2024 Committee Members

- Barbra Korol, Chair, Owner Peitho Group consultancy
- Ryan Osterberg, Vice Chair, Associate Director, Community and Government Relations, Energy, University of Victoria
- Marguerite LeBlanc, Owner The Leaders' Kitchen
- Roy Mills, Owner Mills Group
- Rick Barr, Owner Barr Estate Winery
- Todd Banks – Sherwood Park Chamber of Commerce Representative
- Councilor Corey-Ann Hartwick- Council Representative
- Councilor Lorne Harvey- Council Representative
- Mayor Rod Frank, Ex-officio member

# EDAC Purpose

- Under BYLAW 23-2024 The Economic Development Advisory Committee is an Advisory Committee tasked with providing advice to Council on economic development. In fulfilling its mandate, the Committee may:
  - Seek input from stakeholder groups;
  - Conduct research on issues related to regional economic development;
  - Provide advice to Council on County policies, programs or services that impact economic development.

# Duties of Committee

- On May 29, the EDAC received a mandate letter for 2024/25 instructing the Committee to focus on the following activities:
  - Advice on economic diversification opportunities.
  - Advice on business and investment attraction.
  - Advice on four key sectors of opportunity: petrochemicals, value added agriculture, advanced manufacturing and transportation & logistics.
  - Trends and best practices for small business development including business coaching, business education, financing and other small business growth opportunities.

# Strategic Approach

- In early May, the Chair held virtual one-on-one meetings with committee/public members to understand individual values, priorities and outcomes.
- In late May, committee/public members held a planning retreat to get to know each other, to confirm team culture/values and to undertake operational planning.
  - Committee members shared they want to deliver informed perspective and advice that is impactful, actionable, trackable and reflects principles of affordability and good fiscal management.
  - Committee members agreed advice should be informed by internal and external stakeholders/presenters holding knowledge and expertise.

# 2024 Focal Areas

- A key outcome of the May planning retreat was to identify and confirm focal areas to be addressed by the Committee in 2024, these are:
  - Perspectives and advice on trends and best practises for **small businesses** to keep County small businesses healthy and growing;
  - Perspectives and advice on emerging economic opportunities within the **advanced manufacturing** sector such as hydrogen, alternative energy, and the circular economy so our County can be sustainable and prosperous.

# Strategic Discussions – Small Business

## Presentations:

- Strathcona County Chamber of Commerce
- SC/Economic Development

## Discussion Points:

- SC lacks a full Small Business Strategy – focus has been on concierge support, reducing red tape, lowering cost. Opportunity to update.
- Mental health and business success are closely connected. Mental health post COVID is alarming, particularly among farmers and rancher communities. Opportunity for SC to increase awareness of small business mental health supports aimed at:
  - Normalizing conversations about psychological toll;
  - Sharing the struggle;
  - Shifting culture.



# Small Business - Recommendations

**Create a Small Business Strategy** to promote development growth and expansion and inclusive of mental health supports, in concert with the Chamber of Commerce.

## **Tactics:**

- Enhance collaboration on business development between Ec Dev and Chamber.
- Create a user-friendly small business portal (one stop shopping) for small business owners to access information on starting/running a successful small business and highlighting mental health supports for entrepreneurs.
- Elevate and expand communications offered through FCS to build awareness about mental health and entrepreneurship.
  - Create a small business one-pager (like one done by St. Albert) and include a reference to mental health supports populated with resources, links to core services offered by FCS.

**Measurement:** Ensure strategy and tactics define and report on measurable targets.

# Strategic Discussions – Advanced Manufacturing

## Presentations:

- SC/Economic Development – Advanced Manufacturing
- InnovaCleanTech – Hydrogen and Graphite Manufacturing

## Discussion Points:

- Barriers to landing investment in AM are political uncertainty, lack of regulatory regime, infrastructure and transportation network.
- Raw materials needed to make batteries are in SC.
- Hydrogen and graphite value chains are complementary and improve economics.
  - Hydrogen can be used to fuel batteries for data centres and graphite can be used to make batteries.
  - Graphite can be added to asphalt, concrete and soil, making it more durable and reducing environmental impacts.

# Advanced Manufacturing - Recommendations

**Create an Advanced Manufacturing Strategy** to navigate the economic opportunity to 2050, aimed at future proofing the County's economic prosperity.

## **Tactics:**

- Update existing policies to see if they help or hinder the adoption of local emerging advanced technologies in buildings, houses, roads and piping, while still managing risk to taxpayers.
  - Ec Dev team should meet with Leg Services to understand and remove legislative barriers as appropriate.
  - Consider demonstrating advanced manufacturing products in SC buildings.
- Build and promote a "basket of tools" to accelerate the deployment of advanced manufacturing technology in the County with other governments, industry associations and the Province of Alberta.
- Build general awareness of the advanced manufacturing opportunity to SC businesses and potential investors.

**Measurement:** Ensure strategy and tactics define and report on measurable targets.

# Final Thoughts – Opportunities to Improve Committee Effectiveness

- Ensure EDAC mandate is provided at first EDAC meeting.
- **Use the committee proactively** as SC explores/tests/validates Economic Development strategy going forward.
- **Align EDAC mandate to Committee recruitment strategy.**
  - Recruit people with knowledge and experience in focal areas.
  - Recruit at least one member from under 30 demographic to ensure broader perspectives.
  - Extend term to a minimum of two years to grow committee maturity and effectiveness.
- **Elevate communications broadly** – More and diverse communications aimed at promoting awareness of local business and tools/supports available.

# Thank you