



Village of McBride Economic Development Action Plan Report

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Presented to:

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Action Plan was prepared following a three-phase process. The first phase consisted of research and analysis of socio-economic data, sector and business data, development activity, trends, and strengths, challenges, and opportunities (SCO) analysis. A Baseline Report was also completed. The consultation program in Phase 2 engaged businesses, stakeholders and the public through an online survey, focus groups and interviews.

In the final phase, a planning workshop was held with elected officials, Village staff, and select business leaders to frame up plan content, addressing such issues as vision, goals and core strategies. This led to the development of draft and final Action Plan reports, and a subsequent presentation of the Action Plan to council.

The Current Situation in McBride

If McBride and area are to expand and diversify its job base, it must foster an environment conducive to the attraction and development of human and financial capital. It can utilize key strengths like low land costs, affordable housing costs, proximity to Prince George, Valemount, Jasper and Edmonton, and exceptional natural environment, while correcting weaknesses that inhibit job creation.

The Action Plan

Key elements of the planning process involved revisiting the Village's economic development vision and mission.

Vision:

"McBride and District will engage in sustainable economic development to foster a healthy and growing community."

Mission:

"The McBride Community Economic Development Office welcomes growth and development by encouraging economic activity, facilitating employment and enhancing quality of life in the Robson Valley."

In addition, strategic goals were laid down to guide the Economic Development Action Plan. Finally, strategic themes were identified to help organize the fifteen strategic initiatives.

Strategic Themes:

Fifteen strategies are grouped into four themes:

- Capacity Building
- Business Sustainability and Attraction
- Sector Development
- Quality of Life and Local Services

Action Plan At A Glance:

The strategies stand on their own but of course provide synergy by interacting to build a successively more dynamic approach to the practice of economic development planning. The planning horizon is five years, with priorities established as high, medium and flexible, the latter recommended for implementation if and when resources and time allow. The medium and flexible priority initiatives are aimed at supporting several of the high priority initiatives but can be undertaken once priority initiatives have been initiated.

The specific initiatives, organized by priority and theme, are outlined in Executive Summary 1 Chart with their associated timelines. The four colours associated with the themes include: Capacity Building (red); Sector Development (green); Quality of Life and Local Services (blue); and, Business Sustainability and Attraction (orange).

Executive Summary 1 Timelines for Each Economic Development Initiative

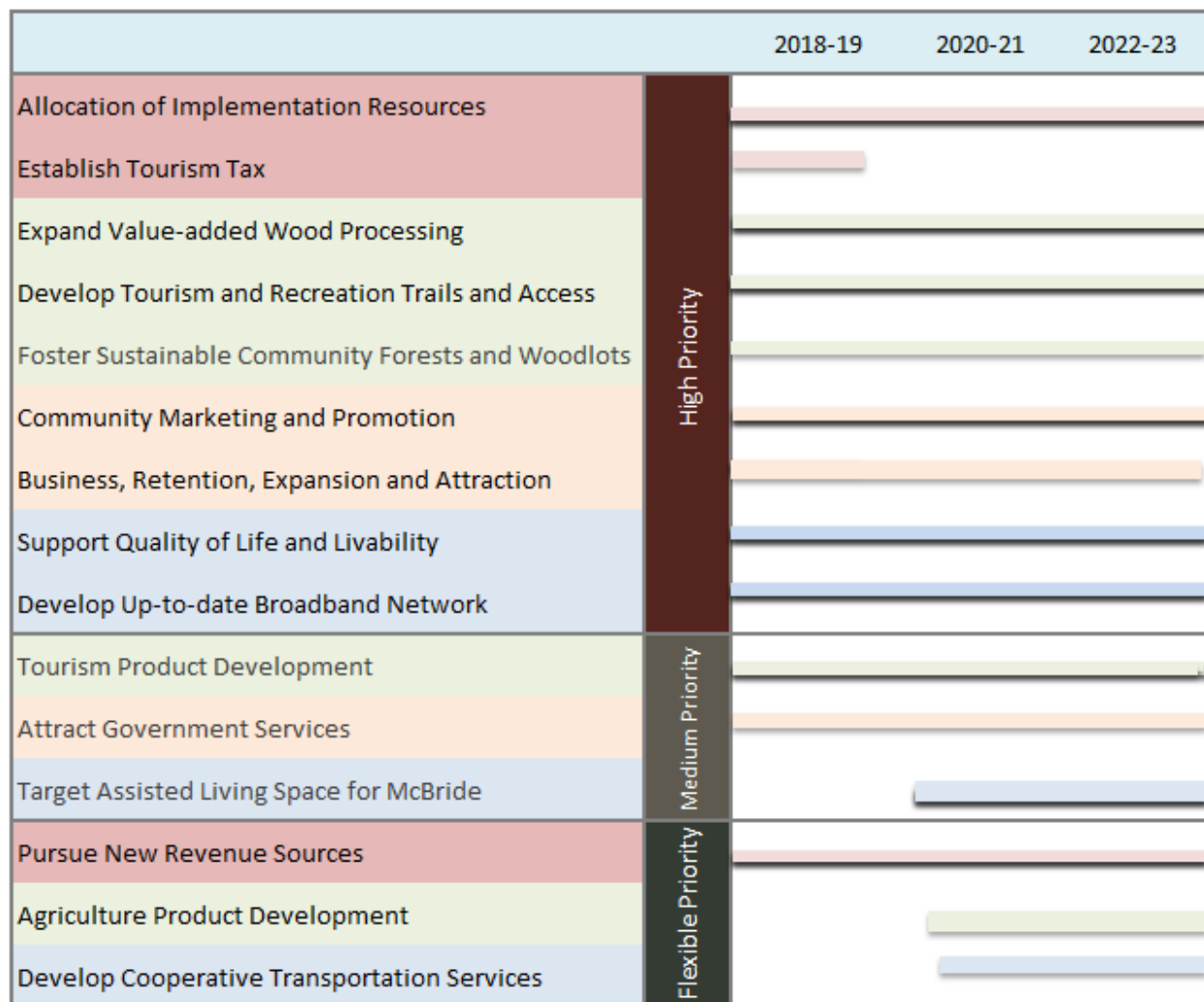


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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE BACKGROUND TO THE PLAN

McBride, like other communities in Canada, is facing many challenges cultivating a sustainable economy for the future. The population is aging rapidly, and although it has been losing population over the past 20 years it appears that McBride and Area is now entering a period of stagnant population change, this is much different than the population growth anticipated at the provincial level. Much of its developable land in the surrounding area is locked up in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), which is currently seeing outside interests to buy this land for recreational purposes, robbing the area of its agriculture potential. The transition from a historical reliance on forestry and other extractive activities to a service-based economy is well underway, but there is considerable uncertainty regarding the source of new employment and income opportunities. In addition, over the past 15 years the provincial government has pulled government offices from McBride, the loss of these jobs has been a serious blow to the local economy as it has taken place at the same time as the downturn in the local forest sector.

McBride does have distinctive assets and advantages that have been, and could continue to be, leveraged in stimulating economic activity. The region is renowned for its wilderness and already sees summer and winter backcountry tourism activities as an important contributor to the local economy. In addition, the area is home to the recently announced Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut Park and Protected Area and its Western Red Cedar trees, with some trees being over 1,000 years old. The Village of McBride recently trademarked "Gateway to the Ancient Forest". Resort operators in the area are looking to expand and local groups continue to build trails to better access and utilize the region's wilderness areas further diversify and grow tourism and recreational opportunities locally.

The community does have a hospital and full public school system as well as two private schools that have been important in retaining residents in the local area. The community is well situated on the Yellowhead #16 highway approximately 210 kilometers from Prince George, 165 kilometres to Jasper, and 530 kilometres to Edmonton. While the forest sector has seen a significant decline in employment locally, McBride continues to have a valuable forest resource and with both McBride and Dunster having community forests, there is the start of an opportunity for local decision making to use the forest resource to generate community wealth.

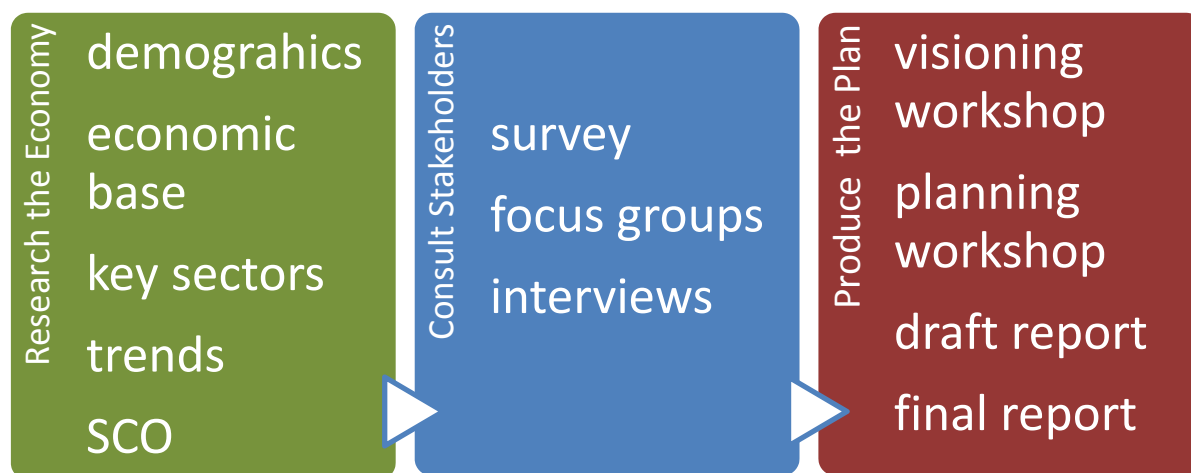
This report is being prepared to identify long term economic development actions that reflect the community's vision for future prosperity, in accordance with the intent and guidance of the Village. It will allow the Village and community leaders to pursue appropriate economic programs and services that contribute not only to new investment and business activity, but also to broader community wellbeing.

1.2 THE APPROACH IN PREPARING THE PLAN

The Action Plan was prepared following a three-phase process (Figure 1). The first phase consisted of research and analysis of socio-economic data, sector and business data, development activity, trends, and strengths, challenges, and opportunities (SCO) analysis. A Baseline Report was delivered to and reviewed by the Village in February, 2018. The revised version is available under separate cover.

The consultation program in Phase 2 engaged businesses, stakeholders and the public through an online survey, focus groups and interviews. The on-line survey, available on the Village's website and distributed directly to residents via email for 14 days from January 26 to February 9, 2018, received a total of 130 responses. On January 22 and 23, 62 residents, businesses and interested stakeholders participated in a set of focus groups sessions to discuss economic and community development issues. The focus groups were organized by key sectors including: Seniors, Youth, Retail and Services, Education, Health, Recreation, Forestry, and Accommodation and Tourism. Another seventeen interviews were conducted in person or by phone with stakeholders who were unable to participate in the focus groups or provided specific expertise on key topics.

Figure 1 Plan Preparation Process



In the final phase, a planning workshop was held with elected officials, Village staff, and select business leaders to frame up plan content, addressing such issues as vision, goals and core strategies. This led to the development of draft and final Action Plan reports, and a subsequent presentation of the Action Plan to council.

1.3 THE CURRENT SITUATION IN MCBRIDE

The McBride economy is determined primarily by macroeconomic factors and driving forces in the provincial and national economies. Globalized trade and financial markets are affecting local economies today more than at any time in the past. In 2005, developed economies

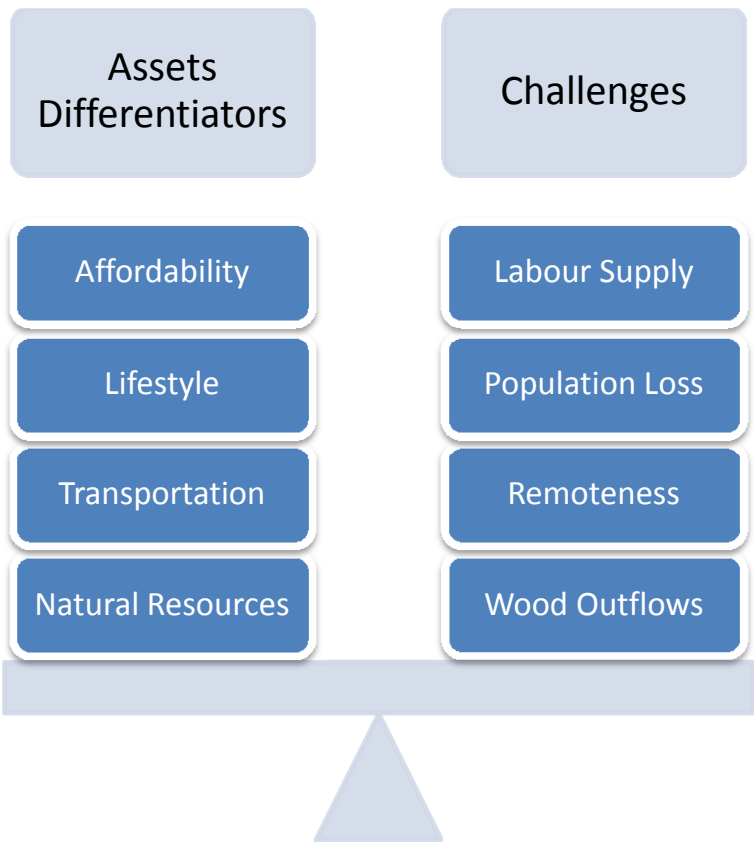
accounted for 62.9% of all exports and imports of goods and services. By 2016 that share had dropped to 56.5% (UNCTAD 2018). At the same time, the shift away from goods production to services continues in almost all developed economies. Over a third of McBride and Electoral Area H workforce are employed in goods production (i.e. forestry, mining, oil and gas, agriculture, manufacturing, utilities, and construction industries), compared to 18.8% for the province.

In Canada, regions that are experiencing growth have benefited from immigration and a mix of public and private services that provides a more stable economic platform through the business cycle in contrast to rural economies that depend on goods production. Although service sectors contribute over three out of five jobs in McBride and area, some, such as information, culture, management, health and financial services, are under-represented when compared to the province. In addition, sectors like professional, scientific and technical and education are over represented in terms of locational quotients, their total labour force number remains small. Overall, if goods producing jobs continue their decline as a proportion of the total job base, then the better-paying jobs of the future will have to come from these key industries.

If McBride and area are to expand and diversify its job base, it must foster an environment conducive to the attraction and development of human and financial capital. It can utilize key strengths like low land costs, affordable housing costs, proximity to Prince George, Valemount, Jasper and

Edmonton, and exceptional natural environment, while correcting weaknesses that inhibit job creation. Figure 2 summarizes the key asset differentiators and challenges present in McBride and Area.

Figure 2 McBride and Area’s Assets and Challenges



2 LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

The focus groups, interviews and survey provided local stakeholders with the opportunity to express their views about economic development in McBride and the Robson Valley. A synopsis of selected results is presented below (Figure 3). While residents are clearly satisfied with McBride as a place to live and work, concern over jobs and economic activity is evident. Tourism and agriculture-food are seen as targets for growth whereas there is less optimism for the traditional resource sectors. Noted strengths include natural and human resources, the weaknesses: negativity, fear of growth, lack of change or slow pace of transitioning to new economic activities.

Figure 3 Summary of Key Findings from McBride and Area Engagement Process



3 PRESENTING THE PLAN

3.1 OVERVIEW

Key elements of the planning process involved revisiting the Village's economic development vision and mission. In addition, strategic goals were laid down to guide the Economic Development Action Plan. Finally, strategic themes were identified to help organize the fifteen strategic initiatives. These are laid out in the remainder of this section.

3.2 VISION

What will McBride look like in 15 years?

The vision is an aspirational description of what an organization would like to achieve or accomplish in the mid-term or long-term future. It is intended to serve as a clear guide for choosing current and future courses of actions. In discussion with work shop participants the vision for the economic development activity was updated to:



"McBride and District will engage in sustainable economic development to foster a healthy and growing community."

3.3 MISSION

The Mission statement is a declaration of an organization's core purpose and focus. The mission statements serve as a filter to separate what is important from what is not. The McBride Community Economic Development Office mission is:

"The McBride Community Economic Development Office welcomes growth and development by encouraging economic activity, facilitating employment and enhancing quality of life in the Robson Valley."

3.4 GOALS

The Plan has six main goals that will guide strategic action over the next five years and contribute to the successful attainment of the vision.



3.5 ACTION PLAN AT A GLANCE

Fifteen strategies are grouped into four themes:

- Capacity Building
- Business Sustainability and Attraction
- Sector Development
- Quality of Life and Local Services

The strategies stand on their own but of course provide synergy by interacting to build a successively more dynamic approach to the practice of economic development planning. The initiatives organized into the four core themes are outlined in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4 Economic Development Initiatives by Theme Area

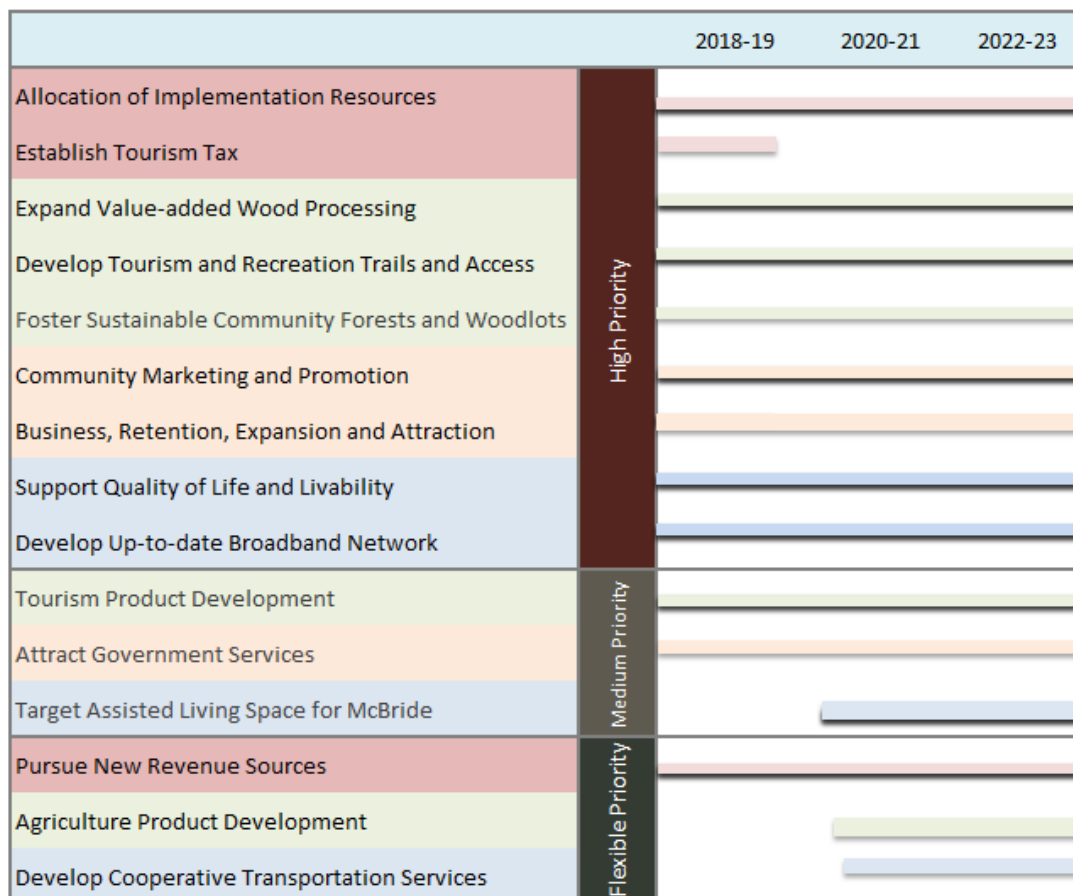


The planning horizon is five years, with priorities established as high, medium and flexible, the latter recommended for implementation if and when resources and time allow. High priority initiatives include:

- Allocation of internal resources;
- Business, Retention and Expansion;
- Foster sustainable community forests and woodlots;
- Expand value added wood processing;
- Develop tourism and recreation trail and access;
- Community marketing and promotion;
- Establish tourism tax;
- Support quality of life and livability; and,
- Establish up-to-date broadband network.

The medium and flexible priority initiatives are aimed at supporting several of the high priority initiatives but can be undertaken once priority initiatives have been initiated. The specific initiatives, organized by priority and theme, are outlined in Figure 5 with their associated timelines. The four colours associated with the themes include: Capacity Building (red); Sector Development (green); Quality of Life and Local Services (blue); and, Business Sustainability and Attraction (orange).

Figure 5 Timelines for Each Economic Development Initiative



3.6 THE STRATEGY IN FULL

3.6.1 Capacity Building

3.6.1.1 Allocation of Implementation Resources

Objectives:

- Increase work efficiency
- Enhance relationships with funding partners

Rationale:

The delivery of a new strategic plan requires a consideration of the resources that will be needed to proceed with implementation. In terms of this economic development action plan, the economic development officer will be available to resource the initiative; however, this is only one person and there are other administrative tasks placed on this position. Therefore, consideration needs to be given to implementation with specific consideration given to:

- Seeking to gain efficiencies by minimizing administrative tasks and maximizing time allocated to initiatives;
- Reallocating existing resources to new initiatives; or/and
- Adding new resources that increase capacity, which may include:
 - Internal Village resources;
 - Establishment of strategic partnerships; and/or
 - External or leveraged resources.

The consulting team has not undertaken any organizational evaluation as part of this strategy so does not have an opinion on the first of these matters. We do note, however, that many economic development offices spend too much time on administrative tasks and not enough time “on the street” and recommend the division ensure it is being as efficient as possible in its use of internal resources. Work flows should be consistent with the level of priority for each of the strategic goals, or areas of responsibility, and the organization’s performance outcomes measured accordingly. Key factors to consider include budgets, salaried and contracted resources, and what the ‘highest and best use’ of staff time is according to skills and responsibilities, but especially based on the outcomes expected from the Village.

Actions:

- Develop a work flow chart that includes delivery of the economic action plan, as well as all other economic development and administrative requirements, assess resources and timelines for delivery of each activity and prioritize according to the Village’s internal and external objectives. Based on the resources available, identify where internal resources should be applied and external resources should be engaged.
- Develop a transition plan to adjust work flows according to priorities, for example ensuring administrative responsibilities can be delegated to free up internal resources so they can focus on the economic development outcomes that will be measured by funding partners.

- Add outcomes and metrics that will track success.
- Develop a work flow report that can be shared with the Village on a semi-annual basis.
- Prepare annual progress reports that will clearly identify both outputs and outcomes.

Partners	Priority Level	Timelines		
		2018-19	2020-21	2022-23
	High			

3.6.1.2 Establish Tourism Tax

Objectives:

- Establish a Committee of Council to oversee MRDT
- Implement the Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT)
- Determine feasibility of a Destination Management Fee (DMF)
- Support the Committee of Council with regional marketing activities

Rationale:

The MRDT is a tax of 2 to 3% on the purchase price of accommodation collected on behalf of municipalities, regional districts and eligible entities. The tax applies to purchases of eligible accommodation, which includes fixed-roof facilities of more than four rooms that currently collect and remit provincial sales tax. The tax is voluntary and must be supported by a) local government and b) at least 51% of commercial accommodation providers representing at least 51% of accommodation rooms. Properties of less than four rooms are not covered. Short-term rentals such as Airbnb have historically been exempt from MRDT but a new agreement between the Province and Airbnb will see both the Provincial Sales Tax (PST) and MRDT remitted by the company directly to the Minister of Finance. The latter only applies if the subject property is in a designated area for MRDT.

The MRDT is currently collected in 59 communities across BC. The tax is collected by accommodators at time of purchase, remitted to the Ministry of Finance (as with the PST), which then returns the tax to the designated recipient in the community. The MRDT is fully supported by the BC Hotel Association and Destination BC.

MRDT revenues must be used to fund tourism programs, projects and marketing, and any other uses listed by regulation. Spending is expected to increase local tourism revenue, visitation and economic benefits year-round. Other than marketing, defined eligible costs include administrative, Board, staff, location/space and overhead expenses to oversee funds management.

McBride has been exploring a 2% MRDT and has successfully secured the support of accommodation providers representing 80% of rooms in McBride. The tax is expected to bring in around \$50,000 annually and provide the foundation for marketing and tourism experience development.

A secondary objective would be to explore a Destination Management Fund (DMF), although it is recognized that the feasibility needs to be determined before proceeding. DMFs are in place in Vancouver, Merritt and Port Alberni and are the predominant DMO funding model in Alberta. DMFs are different from the MRDT in that they are strictly voluntary and without government intervention. That is, they are simply local agreements among participating businesses that they will self-tax and use those funds to support DMO efforts. The DMF in Vancouver is an increment to the MRDT so that hoteliers there have a bigger pot to market with (i.e. 5% rather than 3%). The DMFs in Port Alberni and Merritt are in lieu of the MRDT (although both communities are re-examining MRDT applications). A DMF in McBride would serve to bring in smaller properties who could benefit from more effective marketing but who are not subject to the MRDT. This would include smaller B&Bs, vacation properties and short-term rentals.

Actions:

- Establish a select Committee of Council to oversee MRDT spending. This would be a similar arrangement to Valemount. Given the small size of the community a society or other legal entity to operate Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) is unnecessary. The Committee could be structured to ensure that accommodation providers hold the balance of power.
- Apply for a Rural Dividend grant to help fund a Marketing Strategy that will act as a road map for MRDT strategies.
 - Continue to engage tourism stakeholders in the MRDT application process - could convene a ½ day workshop to strengthen support as well as solicit feedback and suggestions for the application's requirement for 1 and 5-year strategic plans.
 - Prepare terms of reference or agenda on plan components, goals of the plan, messaging, audience prioritization, calendar, and outreach strategies, mediums such as social media, budget and evaluation procedures.
- Conduct research on potential member services that will increase stakeholder support and enthusiasm
 - Conduct research on both a booking engine and smart-phone app as potential member services.
 - Request assistance from Northern BC Tourism (NBCT) on best practices and example jurisdictions in northern BC.
 - Prepare development concepts for each of these services and how they might be rolled out to members.
- Prepare and submit application.
 - Obtain approval of the Village Council and Regional District of Fraser Fort-George (if applicable).
 - Prepare accommodator inventory and obtain signatures.
 - Conduct outreach and information sessions according to MRDT requirements.
 - Complete all other necessary schedules, including 5-year and 1-year plans, and evidentiary documentation.
 - Apply for designation.

- Implement strategy.

Partners	Priority Level	Timelines		
		2018-19	2020-21	2022-23
– Accommodators – Northern BC Tourism – Destination BC	High			

3.6.1.2 Pursue New Revenue Sources

Objectives:

- Access a higher share of provincial revenue that leaves the region.

Rationale:

Rural regions in BC consistently send far greater amounts of revenue to the Province than what is returned to the region. The Robson Valley, in particular, the north Robson Valley including McBride, is a critical example of the substantial net revenue outflows (i.e., stumpage revenue). In some of the predominately rural areas of the province, agencies and systems have been established to partially address the financial outflow/inflow imbalance. For example, a previous Provincial government, under pressure from Columbia Basin communities, established the Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) (1995). The CBT was designed to distribute some of the significant financial benefits resulting from electricity generation in the Columbia River basin to impacted community, wealth that had been leaving the region for decades. By 2016/17 CBT's Delivery of Benefits equalled \$37.46 million up from \$19 million in 2012/13. Residents and organizations in the CBT have benefited enormously from these redirected funds allowing for enhanced recreation amenities, expanded arts and cultural programs and infrastructure as well as grants for housing and social development. Unfortunately, McBride is not part of the Columbia basin unlike Valemount to the south. The lack of CBT funding has limited McBride's ability to conduct research, analyze, strategize and implement local projects.

To the northeast the municipalities and the regional districts combined political forces to negotiate a "fair share memorandum (1994)" of the industrial tax base that was taking place outside their boundaries and flowing directly to the Province while the municipalities were responsible for the required infrastructure. The annual amount increased significantly in 1997 and 2005 with new agreements. Now called the Peace River Agreement, it will have provided \$694.54 million to the region from 1994-2019 equally approximately \$48.6 million per year in the last 7 years for a region with a population of only 66,504 (2016). McBride is part of the Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT) area which does significant granting in a more heavily populated region and provides approximately 1/3 the value of grants per year to its region than CBT, and approximately ¼ of the value of northeast agreement, totalling \$12.9 million in 2016.

McBride, and the North Robson Valley, similar to many other rural areas in BC, continues to endure the effects of significant net public revenue outflows when substantial local reinvestment is required.

Actions:

- Consistently build joint actions with other BC rural areas for increased return of locally generated public revenues.
- Jointly lobby the new provincial government for increased return of revenues to rural areas through local and regional agencies.

Partners	Priority Level	Timelines		
		2018-19	2020-21	2022-23
– Partnership from Robson Valley, other Upper Fraser Basin rural communities – Northern Development Initiative Trust	Flexible			

3.6.2 Sector Development

3.6.2.1 Foster Sustainable Community Forests and Woodlots

Objectives:

- Create new forest resource revenue to support local initiatives.
- Ensure sustainable access to community forests and wood lot forestry resource.
- Foster incremental employment in the local value-added wood sector.

Rationale:

The long-term vision of the McBride Community Forest Corporation is to serve the social, environmental, and economic needs of the community. In 2007, the McBride Community Forest Corporation (MCFC) signed a 25-year community forest agreement (MCFC. 2017). McBride is located in the northern portion of the Robson Valley Timber Supply Area (TSA). In 2014, the Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) of the Robson Valley TSA was set at 400,000 m³. Major licensees transport the vast majority of the white wood harvest to sawmills located outside the Robson Valley. Within the Robson Valley is the McBride Community Forest. The long term vision of the McBride Community Forest Corporation is to serve the social, environmental, and economic needs of the community. In 2007, the McBride Community Forest Corporation (MCFC) signed a 25-year community forest agreement (MCFC. 2017). The AAC associated with the McBride Community Forest was set at 30,000 m³ (down from 50,000 m³) In addition, neighbouring Dunster has a community forest with an additional AAC of 15,000 m³ (MCFC. 2016), and the seven wood lot owners in the Robson Valley contribute a further 12,000 m³ to the overall harvest annually (Thiessen, per comm. March 10, 2018).

Cedar, hemlock and hardwoods from the community forests and the TSA have supported a small local value-added wood sector in recent years. There is potential to foster more value-added activity around this portion of the fibre basket, and potentially with the old fir that is located in the valley. However, the Community Forest and the woodlots continue to address several challenges to ensure that the fibre supply allocated to them remain sustainable moving forward.

Actions:

- Pursue fibre inventory for Prince George East and private lands in the northern Robson Valley.
- Conduct a fiber inventory of McBride Community Forest lands with Village focused on leveraging funding. In addition, support McBride Community Forest in establishing a third level of AAC for their Community Forest that would include 04 (decadent cedar and hemlock) to go along with AAC apportionments for coniferous and deciduous volumes. The economic development effort here would focus on the Village educating provincial government staff of the importance of the community forests to the valley and being prepared to carry forward specific Community Forest issues.
- Support the Dunster Community Forest in their re-inventory efforts.
- Exploit post and rail access that is available on area industrial lands.

- Many of the woodlot owners in the Robson Valley are nearing retirement and in order to foster sustainability in the sector, engage the woodlot owners and see what type of training or support would foster a smooth transition in the sector.
- Lobby the provincial government to locate a tenure forester in the McBride government office. This is critical to the sustainability of programming for community forests and woodlots. Currently see limited service out of Prince George which creates challenges in the on-going work that is required to maintain viability and smooth operation for this important local resource. In addition, there is only two FLNRORD staff based in McBride, with both of them nearing retirement, and maintaining local knowledge and insight in the Robson Valley is critical. Support specific research tasks as they come up on land-base and community forest issues that foster best practices.
- Support the community forests in identifying and attracting grant funding that will support specific inventory and fibre access objectives.

Partners	Priority Level	Timelines		
		2018-19	2020-21	2022-23
• McBride Community Forest • Dunster Community Forest • Robson Valley wood lot operators • Valemount Community Forest • Local value-added wood operators	High			

3.6.2.2 Expand and Diversify Local Value-added Wood Processing

Objective:

- Expand and Diversify the existing local value-added wood production
- Encourage new local value-added wood production
- Grow the employment in the local value-added wood employment

Rationale:

Historically, the Robson Valley TSA supported a vibrant forest industry, with the former Zeidler Forest Industries sawmill and veneer mill, TRC Cedar mill and Castle Creek Forest Products mill in McBride area, while Slocan Forest Products Ltd, Hauer Brothers and Bell Pole had processing facilities in Valemount (Deloitte & Touche Management Consultants. 1995). However, as these mills closed and logging employment contracted with increased mechanization, local employment declined significantly.

Today, there are five small-value added firms in the McBride area including BKB Cedar, Cedar 3 Products, Midget Mills, Syncra Wood Products and Gibbs Custom Sawmill. Of these, BKB Cedar is the largest employer; however, they suffered a fire in 2017 and this has resulted in the layoff of some of their work force. Moving forward, it will be important to see these businesses

remain successful and capitalize on new market opportunities. In addition, seeing new businesses take advantage of new value-added niches will be critical to expanding the wealth created from the local forest resource.

Actions:

- Establish a committee to oversee the investigation of access to fibre and the value-added wood opportunities.
- Become familiar with the services provided by UNBC, [Wood Innovation and Design Centre](#) and [FP Innovations](#) to determine available technical support for the investigation of value added wood opportunities.
- Determine what market niches may be available to foster expanded value-added wood activities.
- Undertake feasibility research that identifies barriers and solutions to new value-added activity in the valley, looking at specific opportunities such as:
 - Torification
 - Pellets
 - Power infrastructure
 - Log home or timber framing opportunities
- Work with Syncra Wood Products to see if there is any potential for additional value-added products being used in their dry kiln and if there is potential for cooperative use by other local wood processors.
- Review the Robson Valley Industrial Land Survey conducted in 2012 with an eye to marketing to prospective wood processors (RD of Fraser-Fort-George. 2012).
- Identify, lobby and promote solutions for better power access in the value that would better position the region for larger power consuming industrial activities.
- Research current and future availability of power to support industrial forestry expansion

Partners	Priority Level	Timelines		
		2018-19	2020-21	2022-23
• Local value-added companies • McBride Community Forest • Dunster Community Forest • Valemount Community Forest • UNBC and Wood Innovation Centre	High			

3.6.2.3 Develop Tourism and Recreation Trails and Access

Objective:

- One iconic trail developed
- Increased trail infrastructure
- Maintenance of backcountry logging road access

Rationale:

Outdoor recreation is the foundation of the visitor experience in McBride but, unfortunately, not enough travellers are aware of opportunities while others may be reluctant to participate because of insufficient infrastructure or amenities.

Trails are a critical piece of public infrastructure with innumerable benefits for both residents and visitors. They generate health benefits by encouraging an active lifestyle, serve as an alternative mode of transportation, and provide access and linkages between and within communities, neighbourhoods and destination areas. Trails are inexpensive to use and readily accessible to most. If developed properly they can attract persons with disabilities, children and youth, the elderly and others who may have fewer opportunities to be physically active. Economically, trails tend to increase property values and can lead to employment and wealth creation in the tourism economy.

While the upside development potential of trails are substantial, the challenges are imposing. A lack of coordination and shared planning among regions, communities and recreation groups/users is the single biggest issue, as it leads to inefficiencies, unnecessary competition for a limited pool of funds and resources, and ultimately sub-optimal outcomes for trail potential. Conflicts between different types of uses motorized and otherwise, are common. As the vast majority of trails are Crown land, development potential is severely constrained by provincial budgets and regulations. Trail surfaces and conditions are often found lacking and services and amenities often non-existent. Those prepared for rustic conditions and the associated risks will always venture into the backcountry but many visitor markets will not be willing to participate in trail use and related outdoor recreation activities unless the risks are adequately managed and a reasonable experience assured.

Logging roads play a different role in supporting tourism because they represent mainly motorized transportation access to backcountry destinations and play areas. Without industrial permit holders to maintain them, they risk being decommissioned, which in some cases may strand critical tourism assets. The decommissioning issue is a concern around the province, and like trails, has been created because of a lack of provincial funding, direction and legislation.

Actions:

- Develop a community and preferably regional master plan for trails.
 - Encourage the Village, Regional District and Valemout to investigate a regional trails master plan. This could be a companion to the Regional District's *Regional Parks Plan 2010-2020*.
 - Alternatively, the Village could prepare its own plan, possibly to include reference to active transportation and greenway objectives.
 - Utilize BikeBC resources and guidance to prepare the plan.
- Create a McBride & Area Recreation Development Association (MARDA), patterned after the development association in Valemout (VARDA).
 - Invite VARDA to make a presentation to McBride recreation groups.
 - Create a website.
 - Recruit members and establish the association.

- Under the auspices of MARDA, establish a sign committee for connecting and coordinating recreation groups and trail stewards on sign policies and practices.
 - Conduct a community signage audit.
 - Prepare an inventory of local government signage manuals and policies and work with signage partners such as Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) on a region-wide signage framework.
 - Identify, report and monitor provincial highway signage standards.
- Align highway and trail signage guidelines so wayfinding is consistently delivered in the community.
- Develop a connector trail that links the Village of McBride to the McBride Peak Mountain Bike Trail Network.
- Under the auspices of MARDA further develop a destination trail(s):
 - Review and adopt best practices of other trail groups, for example the [Shuswap Trails Alliance](#), the most successful regional trail initiative in the province.
 - Develop an inventory of recreation trails, using data and linework from the BC Data Warehouse.
 - Develop a cost/benefit methodology for prioritising trail developments and improvements so there can be more informed and targeted discussions about where resources and efforts can best be allocated.
 - Identify one or two ‘exceptional’ experiences and target development to these, with consideration given to all forms of trail use.
 - Prepare work plans for funding, amenities and services development, maintenance, marketing by MRDT Select Committee of Council, and initiatives to encourage tourism operators to develop market-ready experiences.
- Provide better online and smartphone map capabilities to visitors, residents and trail stewards:
 - Promote a map and app initiative to industry to get more buy-in and a greater number of services listed along with the trails and tourism features.
 - Enquire with OpenDataBC to see if they might be willing to support enhanced app development.
 - Contact the provincial Open Data Initiative and propose the development of a pilot app that makes better use of government data sets. The Government has prioritized enabling engagement with residents and visitors through the use of new technologies.
 - Review and integrate trail map models from other tourism regions and integrate best practices into a Robson Valley Trails Map. The [North Vancouver Island](#) trail map and [Shuswap Trail](#) map are suitable for computer and smartphone viewing. The former provides an app through Google and Apple.
 - Integrate transit and access options to trail heads and staging areas.
 - Provide better information to visitors on transportation restrictions on logging roads, the condition of gravel roads, issues with following back roads on Google maps and safety considerations.
 - Create a trails atlas and maps for display and distribution on the MARDA website and apps for use on smartphones.

- Increased engagement with the provincial government (as recommended in the Trails Strategy for British Columbia) and specifically Recreation Sites and Trails BC on local trail priorities and funding.
- Encourage product and experience development on trails by promoting business opportunities for guided experiences, rentals and other services that could be delivered to users and visitors.
- Lobby the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD) to ensure resource roads are not decommissioned.
 - Prepare an inventory of key logging roads with prioritization set according to use levels and purpose as access corridor, staging areas, recreation corridors.
 - Prepare a policy statement on not decommissioning select routes.
 - Work with FLNRORD, Ministry of Environment (ENV) and forest licensees to assist with the prioritization and discussion of budgetary constraints to maintaining the select routes.
- Work with the McBride Community Forest on improving winter road access.

Partners	Priority Level	Timelines		
		2018-19	2020-21	2022-23
• McBride & Area Recreation Development Assn (to be formed) • Local government • Local trail stewards and bodies that hold agreements with the Province re: trail use/maintenance • McBride Community Forest • Recreation Sites and Trails BC • Trails BC • FLNRORD	High			

3.6.2.4 Tourism Product Development

Objective:

- One or more new market-ready visitor experiences
- Informed, competitive and innovative tourism operators

Rationale:

When visitors have an “experience” in their travels, it usually results from the combined impressions left by interactions with businesses, visitor service providers and residents. Tourism operators have a major influence on the experience spectrum given that they invest the money,

promote the product, bring in the markets and generate the jobs and income, whether that's for accommodation, food and beverage services, transportation or guided activities. Ideally, these operators will be innovative and responsive to the constantly changing world of demographics, consumer choices, macro-economic conditions like gas prices and technology. That is what will keep new and existing visitors coming back to the destination.

In rural communities like McBride and the Robson Valley, however, there is also the reality of lack of scale. The region has a small population base and very few businesses. The natural resources are exceptional and, in some cases, world-class, but the fact remains that most visitors are touring highway travellers that are not staying overnight, and unless this change, the tourism economy will be hard pressed to expand. The December 2017 closure of the Gigglin' Grizzly, which is said to be having a major adverse impact on snowmobiler visitation, is a case in point. Some sledders are apparently going to Valemount and perhaps Blue River instead. The fact that a single business could have this type of real or perceived impact speaks to the lack of depth and diversity in the local tourism landscape. Focus group participants suggested many ways to improve tourism in the valley, from new infrastructure and visitor services to more targeted marketing. Given the small size of the local economy, however, any such improvements will likely have to proceed one at a time and on a scaled basis.

It has been shown that internationally renowned, high yield products can be successful in the region, heli-skiing being a case in point, yet even then the operations of Canadian Mountain Holidays (CMH) has left little economic footprint locally, and no recognition for the valley as a visitor experience other than skiing.

The challenge, therefore, is to leverage more private investment in tourism products through the strategic use of public capital and community efforts at creating a more robust and attraction destination. Many operators have limited access to new capital, even if they have a sound business proposition. The Village can also support efforts of partner organizations such as Community Futures.

Destination BC has been active with product development through the Remarkable Experiences program, which is delivered in the region by Northern British Columbia Tourism (NBCT). The program offers a hands-on guidance through facilitated workshops, coaching and access to traveler research. The opportunity to connect with other local operators and learn about their own experiences has raised the bar on operator competitiveness and performance.

A competitive tourism industry is one in which individual businesses meet or exceed minimum standards of industry and professional development that reinforces and accentuates the destination's comparative advantages. Those standards can be wide-ranging, from Destination BC's guidelines for being market-ready and export-ready, to recognized accreditations and professional training for staff, including the adoption of operating best practices. The sustainable leveraging of the region's natural and heritage resources can then complete the circle of development and form the basis of a healthy tourism economy.

There are other reasons McBride should be involved in tourism development, not the least of which is that tourism is an economic base sector that creates wealth. It is small business-based and distributes wealth, rather than concentrating it. And, importantly, it requires economic

infrastructure that is highly valued by residents—the more visitors to a rural community the more available services there will be. Lastly, tourism is amenable to local action and aligns well with other objectives of the community such as population growth—“ every new investor and resident was a visitor at one time...”

Actions:

- Expand the uptake of Remarkable Experiences training by local operators:
 - Work with NBCTA to deliver Remarkable Experiences in smaller communities to increase outreach and uptake.
 - Identify sources for a funding pool that can be accessed by local businesses that might not have the resources to participate in the program.
 - Provide direction on how businesses can build on their Remarkable Experiences attendance by accessing business planning services.
 - Invite CMH to the community for a seminar on how to develop more market-ready experiences. The Village recently supported the company’s efforts to establish a new lodge in the valley and should be asked to reciprocate by providing guidance on how small operators can build their own destination experiences.
- Promote the adoption of certification standards to tourism operators.
 - Work with post-secondary institutions to identify industry standards and education opportunities that can be promoted to local operators.
 - Identify costs and the business case for achieving certifications.
 - Encourage industry participation in certification programs, offering more co-op marketing opportunities through the select Committee of Council overseeing the MRDT and DBC.
- Organize a study tour of best practice tourism destinations for local government and the select Committee of Council overseeing the MRDT (assuming the MRDT is approved).
 - Undertake research of other similar tours conducted by BC communities, focusing on jurisdictions that have comparable assets or challenges to the Robson Valley.
 - Prepare terms of reference for a tour focusing on best practices in outdoor recreation, wildlife viewing, guiding experiences and public-private partnerships. Costs, funding and other logistics can be outlined in the terms.
- Enhance visitor services by educating local operators about other visitor experiences:
 - Consider a familiarization tour of local features, venues and experiences
 - Promote WorldHost delivery and uptake
 - Approach employers to enhance service training for workers, including high school students
- The Ancient Forest/Chun T’oh Whudujut has been established approximately 90 kilometres northwest of McBride. The Ancient Forest is BC’s newest Class A provincial park and consists of 11,190-hectare. With this site now anticipated to gain greater profile from tourists, McBride should:
 - Investigate how the community could position itself as the gateway to the Ancient Forest

- Incorporate in the feasibility assessment of local transportation, travel to and from the Ancient Forest (dove tail with research associated with section 3.7.4.4, Development of Cooperative Transportation Service)
- Explore specific marketing efforts to promote and raise the awareness of the Ancient Forest in McBride
- Increase outdoor adventure experiences.
 - Monitor the provincial land and resource management process and continue to advocate for tourism interests. Resource road policies, visual quality objectives and resource extraction activities continue to have potentially adverse effects on tourism values.
 - Monitor the progress of the Valemount Glacier Resort project and the potential for collaborative experience development, as suggested in the 2012 Preliminary Impact Study Valemount Glacier Resort Proposal “Opportunities and Risks”.
 - Promote the development of backcountry outdoor recreation opportunities and encourage greater operator uptake of crown tenures as provided in the provincial Adventure Tourism Policy.
 - Identify infrastructure and service priorities that will support nature-based activities.
 - Hut-to-hut development is something already available in the Valley. A development model similar to the Sunshine Coast Trail would bring more destination trail visitors to the planning area.
 - Promote the development of shuttle services to major use areas/sites so visitors without their own vehicles have access.
 - Connect with the cooperative transportation service initiative to determine tourism demand for services.
 - Expand RV camping opportunities in McBride area – especially given that Jasper’s Whistler campground will be closed in 2019.
 - Support development of a connector trail that links the Village of McBride to the McBride Peak Mountain Bike Trail Network.
 - Develop new winter experiences to increase visitation in the off and shoulder seasons.
 - Work with accommodators to develop packages around snowmobiling and Nordic skiing.
 - Encourage operators to offer more winter activities.
 - Encourage more excursions and day tours so visitors have more activity choices when travelling through the planning area.
 - Identify self-guided day tours for wildlife viewing, nature observation, sight-seeing, and local history and cultural interpretation that will appeal to highway travellers.
 - Work with NBCT to develop itineraries and packages resources that will appeal to, and be marketed to, tour operators who are looking for hands-on, locally-sourced experiences.
 - Examine the feasibility of developing a geo-caching experience that takes advantage of local history, culture and industry.
 - Explore opportunities for excursions/day tours in our region with existing operators out of Jasper
 - Build on opportunities for visitor experiences stemming from VIA Rail passengers

service stops in McBride

- Increase arts and cultural heritage experiences.
 - Build stronger linkages between the arts and culture community and develop interpretive materials that present the various elements of the Robson Valley story.
 - Develop a cultural walking tour in McBride that will increase visitors’ awareness and interest.
 - Encourage façade improvements and new recreation infrastructure that encourages visitation.

Partners	Priority Level	Timelines		
		2018-19	2020-21	2022-23
• Northern BC Tourism • Destination BC • Robson Valley Tourism • MRDT Committee of Council • Village of Valemount	Medium			

3.6.2.5 Agriculture Product Development

Objective:

- Increase the value of agriculture production in the Robson Valley
- Increase agriculture support activities in the Robson Valley

Rationale:

The Robson Valley has successfully produced and exported quality agriculture products for more than 100 years. It has produced a range of livestock, dairy products, berries, vegetables, honey and forage crops. The local climate has significant climate-oriented limitations in terms of frost free days and degree days that have been officially recorded since 1914. There have been on-going shifts in farm ownership, crops, livestock, production systems and markets. These market, livestock, crops and production systems shifts are expected to continue. There have also been subtle changes in the climate over the last 100 years and more significant climate change is expected.

Climate change modelling predicts slightly warmer winters, slightly longer frost-free period extended into the fall, dryer winters (less snow) and increased degree-days. The Robson Valley is expected to have the highest increase in summer temperatures in the Omineca Region. Also “evaporation and climate moisture deficit will increase despite moderate increases in growing-season precipitation” increasing the importance of irrigation. With less snow there may be a need to store water upstream from irrigation operations.

The production capability of the agriculture land is expected to increase given longer frost-free periods and higher degree-days and the types and variety of crops that can be successfully grown will widen. The year to year variability is expected to expand pointing to increased production risks for crops that require the maximum growing period and degree days and ones

that are not pre-started in green houses. The variety of potentially viable crops and livestock is expected to continue to expand. The combination of the climate and agriculture products demand shifts taking place province wide and in the Robson Valley, linked with the variety of current and potentially future agriculture activities points to the need for an agriculture enhancement strategy.

Actions:

- Prepare a detailed agriculture development strategy for the Robson Valley.
- Work with Community Futures and the Regional District on “Beyond the Market” initiative.
- Monitor provincial initiatives that may be delivered or have benefits locally across the many different crops and livestock currently in production.
- Investigate a farm land access initiative, whereby people can access small lots for food production or small scale intensive farming.
- Explore supply chain and market connectors best accessed by small groups of current producers.
- Explore other agriculture opportunities in the Valley:
 - Wildcrafting products
 - Robson Valley lamb

Partners	Priority Level	Timelines		
		2018-19	2020-21	2022-23
• McBride Farmers Institute • Open Gate Garden Society • Dunster Community Association • Fraser-Fort George Community Futures Development Corp.	Flexible		●	●

3.6.3 Business Sustainability and Attraction

3.6.3.1 Community Marketing and Promotion

Objectives:

- Coordinate community marketing resources and expenditures
- Raise awareness of McBride
- Attract increased number of visitors, residents and amenity migrants
- Increase investment activity and business development

Rationale:

The focus group participants highlighted several areas where a more consistent, coordinated marketing effort would help McBride achieve its underlying goals of economic development and sustainable population growth. Attracting new residents, visitors and businesses, a sharpened, targeted online presence, and a better communication of the community's assets and advantages were all identified.

The accompanying graphic on place marketing by Philip Kotler shows how communities should view their marketing activities. Here, the planning group, in this case the Village, its residents and businesses, use marketing factors such as infrastructure, attractions, image and quality of life to reach its targets. The targets in this marketing model are totally inclusive involving investors, manufacturers, exporters, new residents and visitors. Tourism marketing undertaken by DMOs should not be treated as a silo activity because there are impacts and implications for the other marketing objectives and targets. For

example, it is important to align investment and resident attraction with tourism marketing so there is consistency (and more efficiency) in branding and messaging. At the moment the Village, Robson Valley Tourism (responsible for tourism marketing) and Robson Valley Region (responsible for resident and business attraction) all have independent websites that



admittedly are focusing on different targets but which could nevertheless benefit from coordination and potentially shared activities.

Actions:

- Review NDIT's [Small Town PR Handbook](#) for guidance on the public relations aspect of community marketing. The accompanying webinar is also useful.
- Utilize NDIT's [Marketing Initiatives Program](#) for securing funds for new marketing activities.
- The Village, Robson Valley Tourism (RVT) and Robson Valley Region (RVR) should agree to a semi-annual meeting schedule so there is an opportunity to share news, research, plans and resources. The objective would be to increase consistency and alignment in marketing activities among the organizations. Suggested shared resources or improvements include:
 - News;
 - Current census and economic statistics/data (currently lacking in all three sites);
 - Community and industry profiles;
 - Success stories and personalities (excellent profiles and videos on RVR website);
 - Best practices image bank; and
 - Other audio/visual content.
- Develop a stronger community web portal.
 - Review and remove or update obsolete content—for example, Tourism BC (rather than Destination BC) is still mentioned on the Village website;
 - Regularly access Google Analytics to monitor traffic and determine content that is not accessed and begin experimenting with tactics to drive traffic to content considered most important; and
 - Consider posting new content as “articles” rather than pages that are easily searched, and drive traffic to new content using a simple communications and/or marketing plan that utilizes both social and traditional media channels crafted to be relevant and attraction to potential investors and entrepreneurs.
- Explore the business case for future development of web-based GIS capabilities. The integration of the Content Management System with GIS platforms such as ERSI's, ArcGIS, and consumer products such as Google Maps and Microsoft Bing Maps would create dynamic search and site location tools for McBride and the Robson Valley.
- Work with NDIT and Province, utilizing their marketing websites to feature specific opportunities, including [BC's Economic Atlas](#).
- Develop a social media strategy.
 - Develop a campaign theme—one suggested at the focus groups was “Move to McBride”. Another suggestion was to develop more video material to promote McBride. These two ideas would be combined to launch a campaign on YouTube with complementary exposure on the website.
 - Media tools like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube managed hand-in-hand with the website can be highly useful in promoting McBride's story, supporting branding, and engaging partners.
 - Scale the strategy by using one media to begin. The strategy should be manageable, but of course active and engaged.

- Increase communications with provincial trade officials and programs.
 - Participate in networking events (e.g. Trade and Invest BC, AdvantageBC).
 - Broker outreach to trade reps for local companies interested in exporting.
 - Support local companies participating in trade missions.
 - Explore the BC JTST site selector website and identify opportunities for marketing McBride
 - Work with Province to ensure [Trade and Invest BC website](#) has up-to-date and accurate McBride information.
- Develop the capacity to monitor and report out on marketing activities
 - Research, evaluate and select customer relationship management (CRM) capabilities. This can be done at low cost by adapting project management software (e.g. Wrike) or through a low-tech approach by customizing an internal tracking program, for example in Excel.
 - Track marketing and communications activities, including all investment and business enquiries, major projects in the region, major events, incentives and grant programs, partners, red flags and opportunities.

Partners	Priority Level	Timelines		
		2018-19	2020-21	2022-23
• Robson Valley Tourism • Robson Valley Region • MDCC • Local businesses • NDIT • Trade and Invest BC	High			

3.6.3.2 Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction

Objectives:

- Establish a strong relationship and knowledge base with local business
- Improve business climate
- Grow local jobs, expand local tax base
- Attract and facilitate investment

Rationale:

Effective economic development for communities means paying a significant amount of earnest attention to local business health, both individually and collectively, as well as the associated social-amenity and liveability standards that most people have come to expect as minimal requirements of their status quo. ***First and foremost, it's about taking care of business and the entrepreneurs who choose your community to establish roots.***

Existing local businesses generate the majority of new jobs in a community, and it can be as high as 90% depending on the structure of the economic base (Government of Ontario 2000,

Boyles 2014). A variety of programs and activities are implemented as part of a community's business care platform, but the best practices of the economic development discipline are straightforward, they are Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction (BRE+A). How these activities are carried out can vary greatly from community to community, but generally rely on local resources, expertise and priorities, and range across three categories:

- Business Retention and Expansion (BRE);
- Investment and Business Attraction; and,
- Community Development.

Executing a BRE program is a structured, action-oriented approach to business and economic development. This proactive outreach style of interviews identifies opportunities to support local business retention, facilitate expansion and promote attraction. There are many reasons to implement BRE programs, but the seven main objectives include:

- 1) To establish a presence and build an active relationship with local business;
- 2) To gather information on business challenges or opportunities, and identify expansion plans;
- 3) To detect 'red flags' and companies at risk of leaving/downsizing/closing;
- 4) To lever relationships for business match-making that links businesses with resources and opportunities;
- 5) To gather information that will improve the business climate with new or modified programs, services and regulations;
- 6) To support businesses at every stage of development from ideation to commercialization and globalization; and,
- 7) To attract additional investment and business suitable to local socio-economic conditions.

While there are many moving parts to a BRE program, managing it effectively generates a better understanding of the business community, identifies the needs of business clients and where/when they need support, forms relationships that lead to additional prosperity, and helps the community become tactical when it comes to investment attraction. This is all accomplished through scheduled visitation and outreach programs, informed intervention, and working with partners to identify and participate in appropriate international outreach that leads to investment. The broader benefits of BRE are significant.

This is a proven methodology that produces trackable results and levers partnerships, as well as helps to identify trends and influences that impact local prosperity and business function. Moreover, it builds a base of business champions that are instrumental in promoting additional business and investment in the community—the most powerful messaging a community can lever is Business-to-business dialogue.

Actions:

- Conduct research on successful BRE programming that can be used to guide the McBride process, [explore BC government](#) materials, liaison with province on potential BRE support and explore on-line training from [Economic Developers of Alberta](#) (EDA).
- Develop a team that can support BRE+A activities.

- Build on the initial business walk program conducted in the community earlier by formalizing a tracking system and formal survey to document local business information.
- Identify the list of businesses/companies to be surveyed in a six-month BRE pilot that includes visitation and outreach, data collection and aftercare requirements.
- Implement EDA's [Investment Readiness Toolkit](#) to measure the Village and Area's investment readiness.
- Link McBride and Area investment priorities into Robson Valley Marketing program. Evaluate, adjust, launch full program in 2019.

Partners	Priority Level	Timelines		
		2018-19	2020-21	2022-23
• MDCC • Robson Valley Region Marketing Program • Fraser Fort-George Community Futures Development Corp.	High			

3.6.3.3 Attract Government Services

Objectives:

- Increase public sector employment in McBride
- Increase the local population and incomes in the communities
- Enhance local public services to meet community needs

Rationale:

Beginning with the 2002 closure of the forest district office and rationalization of other government services the local area has seen a steady decline in the public sector. The initial decline within the provincial government with the closure of the forest district office resulted in 35 forestry and 10 highway jobs being eliminated. Further, data from Statistics Canada has documented a continual outflow of public sector jobs from the Village and Regional District of Fraser-Fort George Electoral Area H. These jobs tend to be well paying, stable jobs that helped to support the community. In addition, employees had spouses and children who helped maintain the need for services including education, health and retail. This has also contributed to the downward pressure on the local population over the period.

Despite the declines of the past, there is an opportunity to begin attracting some of those jobs back to the community. Attracting and relocating public sector jobs will bolster employment in the community, stabilize incomes and grow the demand for services, all essential to sustaining a healthy local economy.

Actions:

- Develop an inventory of services and identify gaps for each sector. Possible positions could include:

- Government Agent
 - Receptionist
- Forestry
 - Silviculture – Community Forest
 - Senior forester – Community Forest
 - Forest Service Positions - FLNRORD
 - Recreation officer - FLNRORD
 - Compliance and Enforcement Officer
- Transportation (MoTI)
 - Operations Tech/Area Manager Hybrid
- Health
 - Primary care staff for hospital – Northern Health
 - Physiotherapy – Northern Health
 - Other health services – Northern Health
- Other Provincial Government
 - Economic development staff - FLNRORD and/or through NDI.
- Ministry of Children and Family Development
 - Case worker – Family Services
- Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
 - Case worker – Social Services
- Education
 - Teacher / teacher's aide / support workers – School District 57
 - Create revenue from extra- curriculum (non K-12) use of school facilities
- Initiate discussions with various government ministries and outline a game-plan to re-establish government offices in the community.
- Lobby government on the decentralization of services and positions.
- Research successes in other communities.
- Lobby Northern Health for greater investment in local health infrastructure and services:
 - Increase in-hospital use of services
- Lobby provincial government on school funding formulas
- While not a government agency, Canadian National could also be approached to see if there is a possibility to locate more crew staff in McBride as Jasper and Valemount become more expensive places to live. Develop a value proposition for location of workers in McBride.

Partners	Priority Level	Timelines		
		2018-19	2020-21	2022-23
• Provincial Government • Northern Health • School District 57 • RD of Fraser-Fort George	Medium			

3.6.4 Quality of Life and Local Services

3.6.4.1 Support Quality of Life and Livability

Objectives:

- Increase awareness of McBride as a place to live and do business
- Improve social assets and infrastructure that encourages in-migration

Rationale:

Quality of life and livability factors have a major impact on investment and migration decisions, particularly when it comes to attracting the self-employed and entrepreneurs who are able to do their business from anywhere in the world. The Robson Valley Region Investment Attraction Marketing Strategy (2013) identified “Lone Eagle”, tourism entrepreneur and other industry targets as appropriate for the region. However, it was also noted that local communities like McBride would have to continue to develop and promote their quality-of-life attributes that represent a comparative advantage when compared to urban alternatives.

As livability dynamics become more important rural communities in particular will have to step up their efforts to design and deliver quality standards. It is helpful to define what those qualities of life attributes are. There are a number of global indexes such as the [Mercer Quality of Living Index](#) and [The Economist Intelligence Unit](#) that rank liveability on a global basis, and while criteria differ access to quality education, health, safety services stand alongside the economic environment, infrastructure, housing and the natural environment.

Transportation, assisted living, broadband, government services and of course the economic environment are addressed elsewhere in this strategy, while recreation and the environment are recognized as competitive strengths of the Valley. The Investment Attraction Marketing Strategy highlighted some areas where improvements need to be made, including social and health services, education/training and housing. Those topics are addressed in this strategy.

Actions:

- Update the community profile (e.g. with 2016 census data) and extract content for display onto the Village website.
- Develop a Training and Education webpage listing resources for entrepreneurs and the target industries of tourism, agriculture and forestry. This is not available on any of the local websites, could be easily assembled should be a part of the community profile, which only features “Higher Education”.
- Promote self-employment and entrepreneurship resources to residents and potential in-migrants. The Village should provide links to business resources beyond those already listed (i.e. Community Futures, NDIT) on its website.
- Enhance community support services that encourage a higher local employment participation rate.
 - Work with local community groups to create a task force that can move this initiative forward.
 - Map out a manageable list of local services that if improved would allow more residents

to enter the work force and attract new residents. The focus groups and workshops identified social services, daycare and better health care access as areas of need.

- Identify gaps and opportunities for expanding the diversity of the local housing stock:
 - Identify bylaws that incentivize the development of rental units and flexible housing choices
 - Give further consideration to recommendation 2 in the Compact, Affordable, Sustainable and Efficient (CASE) Feasibility Study which suggested development of a residential pocket neighbourhood (Unknown. nd.). Already, the private sector has developed small homes in the community and may have concepts that could be extended in partnership with the Village.
 - Work with BC Housing and community groups on new non-market housing units
 - Promote housing repair and renovation programs for low income households
 - Promote residential land development opportunities to the development community
 - Review the Southern Interior Beetle Action Coalition ([SIBAC](#)) research on aging rural populations and changing housing stock demand, their research identifies active initiatives in BC.
 - Investigate good practices in rural housing affordability. There are approximately 200 Land Trusts in the United States that have created considerable success in creating affordable housing. The [BC Rural Centre](#) has prepared case studies on several of the successful rural examples.

Partners	Priority Level	Timelines		
		2018-19	2020-21	2022-23
• Robson Valley Support Society • Community groups • McBride and District Chamber of Commerce • CMHC, BC Housing	High			

3.6.4.2 Target Assisted Living Spaces for McBride

Objectives:

- Identify and support a champion to organize, plan, construct and operate assisted living accommodation in McBride.
- Establish assisted living accommodation in McBride for seniors transitioning out of self-care facilities and their own homes in the Robson Valley.

Rationale:

As people age their personal needs change, particularly after age 65. A critical component is housing and personal care needs. Currently there are facilities in the Robson Valley in both Valemount and McBride that provide subsidized “self-care” housing focused on seniors. In

McBride its Beaverview Lodge (19 units) and McBride Mountain Manor (10 units), and in Valemount its Golden Years Lodge (13 units) and Valemount House (10 units) operated by Valemount Senior Citizens Housing Society (VSCHS) both which focus on seniors and individuals with disabilities.

There is also programing that focuses on keeping seniors in their own homes longer. At some point most seniors require greater personal services and structured social connections than what can be provided in a “self-care” environment. In larger centres, facilities are specifically built with the increased personal service requirements as a critical component of their housing. These facilities provide “assisted living” services which includes some main meals, often laundry, housekeeping, 24-hour emergency services and social activities. The “assisted living” facilities combined with home care services enables seniors to successfully live fairly independently for as long as their health enables it. In rural areas and small communities, e.g. the Robson Valley this level of facility is missing.

The establishment of a facility (public, private or not-for-profit operated) enables smaller communities to continue to have these seniors as part of their community, increases local expenditures particularly for critical services, (e.g. pharmacy, home care, physicians, and allied health workers), creates or enhance long term stable employment in the personal/health services sector (care aides, food services, massage, foot care, home care, etc.), and can be used for offering respite and as a staging point for other community required services including in-community assisted transportation and social activities.

The population aged 65 and over in 2016 in McBride (130), Area H (390) and Valemount (180) is higher as a percentage than BC as whole and the over 80 population in the three areas (Robson Valley) combined, the usual group in assisted living establishments, is 155 (Statistics Canada 2017). The number is expected to continue to increase. Given that no assisted living facilities exist in the Robson Valley the numbers are substantial. Assisted living accommodation is needed in the region.

Actions:

- Village host a seniors housing session with partners, similar to what was held in Valemount in January 2015, to identify a project champion.
- Identify potential individuals or organizations that are prepared to examine this opportunity.
- Identify funding for feasibility assessment and business planning.
 - Work with Northern Health to move the opportunity forward.
- If enough interest in community, investigate establishing local society to lead project development.

Partners	Priority Level	Timelines		
		2018-19	2020-21	2022-23
- Northern Health, BC Housing - Local companies - Valemount Seniors Housing Society - Health care providers	Medium			

3.6.4.3 Develop Up-to-date Broadband Network

Objectives:

- Increase connectivity in the Robson Valley
- Support businesses requiring high speed or specialized broadband services
- Ensure that up-to-date broadband services are available to residents

Rationale:

In order to attract new connected businesses and support new residents that can bring their job with them and relocate to the area and support established local businesses to better interact with their customers and access new markets, the Village and surrounding area needs to provide the similar connectivity available in larger centres. This suggests that a service that provides 50 Mbps service needs to be widely available locally. This is also the rate that has been mandated by the Canadian Radio-television Telecommunication Commission (CRTC) to be in place for all Canadian homes by 2030. Overall, it is also felt that the 50 Mbps rate will adequately address the needs of the majority of residential and business interests in the area.

Currently, the core of the Village of McBride already has access to the 50 Mbps rate, and Monashee Communication is now beginning to actively address the issue of speed in the remainder of the Village and area immediately surrounding the Village. Specifically, they are upgrading the Chevron Peak tower that will provide 50 Mbps service to most of the Village and a 20 km radius around the Village (Chapman, per comm. February 26, 2018). However, more work will be required to ensure that some businesses and residents that are not in direct line-of-site of the Chevron Tower are connected to the new services. Further additional work will be required to ensure surrounding areas that fall outside of the Chevron tower are connected, providing a universal service across the entire Robson Valley.

Actions:

- The Village of McBride has established a Broadband Select Committee. The purpose of the Committee is to guide the Village in developing strategies to improve broadband capacity in McBride and area. The Committee should become familiar with the upgrades and services planned for the area by Telus and Monashee Communications.
- The committee should map out and monitor ongoing improvements in infrastructure and capacity playing close attention to the timelines and areas for connectivity.

- Confirm the anticipated needs of business and residents to ensure that the connectivity is of the desired speed and quality.
- Work with Monashee Communications on new infrastructure requirements and communicate to senior levels of government the importance of rural connectivity.
- If required, identify and access senior government support to support the expansion of broadband infrastructure (such as updated towers) that will ensure up-to-date connectivity is in place for all rural residents in the McBride area.

Partners	Priority Level	Timelines		
		2018-19	2020-21	2022-23
• Monashee Communications • Telus	High			

3.6.4.4 Develop Cooperative Transportation Services

Objectives:

- Support businesses expanding into e-commerce
- Support growth in the tourism sector
- Provide visitors with an alternative means to travel in the Robson Valley

Rationale:

Sustainable transportation is often considered a “big city” issue. But in order to maintain economic and environmental health and ensure equitable access to key services such as employment, educational institutions and medical services, smaller and rural communities in Canada also need to find solutions to increase mobility options for their citizens and business goods.

In McBride, there is public transportation service available once a week to Prince George and once a week to Kamloops for medical services. However, it was recently announced that Greyhound service to McBride will end May 31, 2018, although Greyhound is entering into a partnership agreement to continue parcel delivery locally (Rocky Mountain Goat. 2018). Greyhound pointed to a significant decline in ridership, escalating costs and increased competition from publicly subsidized services creating challenges for continued operations in rural areas such as McBride (Rocky Mountain Goat, 2017).

At the same time, local small business is looking for service to move product to larger centres and bring in goods in a timely and cost-effective manner. In addition, the community also sees potential for transportation linkages to the growing tourism sector, moving guests to specific sites, supporting regional tourism businesses.

Actions:

- Connect with other communities in the Valley to explore development of a transportation service.
 - Quantify demand for freight and passenger services in the Valley.

- Explore transportation services and opportunities as an alternative to Greyhound.
- Investigate success stories in other communities, such as economic development initiatives in Dawson City that served as the catalyst for the establishment of the [Husky Bus](#) service.
- Conduct a feasibility study that could be used to demonstrate demand for the new service.
- Explore the [Ridesharing](#) network and investigate the experience Kootenay Rideshare and if suitable explore interest for the service in the Robson Valley.
- Investigate the establishment of an electric vehicle charging station in the Village.

Partners	Priority Level	Timelines		
		2018-19	2020-21	2022-23
• Chamber of Commerce • Specific Businesses • Community Groups	Flexible			



4 REFERENCES

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AAC	Allowable Annual Cut
BCBN	BC Bioenergy Network
BCCFA	BC Community Forest Association
BRE+A	Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction
CBT	Columbia Basin Trust
BDC	Business Development Corporation
CASE	Compact, Affordable, Sustainable and Efficient
CAWP	Centre for Advanced Wood Processing
CEGEP	Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel
CMH	Canadian Mountain Holidays
CMHC	Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
DBC	Destination BC
DMF	Destination Management Fee
DMO	Destination Marketing Organization
EDA	Economic Developers Alberta
ENV	BC Ministry of Environment
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FLNRORD	BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IPP	Independent Power Producers
MARDA	McBride & Area Recreation Development Association
MDCC	McBride and District Chamber of Commerce
MOTI	Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
MRDT	Municipal and Regional District Tax
NBCT	Northern British Columbia Tourism
NDIT	Northern Development Initiatives Trust
PNP	Provincial Nominee Program
PR	Public Relations
PST	Provincial Sales Tax
RVR	Robson Valley Region
RVT	Robson Valley Tourism
SIBAC	Southern Interior Beetle Action Coalition
TSA	Timber Supply Area
VARDA	Valemount & Area Recreation Development Association
VC	Venture Capital
VSCHS	Valemount Senior Citizens Housing Society

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