

STRATEGIC MARKETING PLAN

Town of Fort Smith, December 7, 2021



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Executive Summary

PURPOSE

The purpose of this project is to develop a focused, comprehensive, and impactful marketing plan that lays out a strategic approach to achieving the Town's goals of attracting new businesses, residents, and visitors. This document provides a detailed summary of the research undertaken, including key informant interviews, a survey of businesses, and a detailed document and data review. It also presents a marketing plan for Fort Smith.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Communities often prepare attraction strategies only once they are in a crisis situation. This is not the case for Fort Smith. At least prior to COVID-19, the local economy had been relatively strong. Household incomes were above average for the Northwest Territories (NWT) and Canada, and unemployment rates have been relatively low. While COVID-19 has had some impacts on many of the businesses in the community, most have been able to maintain operations. Some of the **key strengths** on which Fort Smith can build going forward include a high quality of life, economic stability, a well-educated labour force, friendly and welcoming people, its history, culture, and art, natural attractions, and its position as a centre for education.

While Fort Smith has some key elements that are important for attracting visitors, new residents, and businesses, a successful attraction strategy will need to be combined with an effective economic development program that will assist Fort Smith in overcoming some factors that are constraining development. Some key **weaknesses or challenges** facing Fort Smith include transportation access, access to workers, access to affordable housing, cost of business operations, a small local market, limited entrepreneurial base, an underdeveloped tourism base, a low profile of the community and businesses, access to land and property, need for improvements in energy and communications infrastructure, regulatory issues, and a lack of economic diversification (i.e., over dependence on the public sector).

There are **opportunities for development** associated with each of the attraction areas targeted by Fort Smith: tourists, residents, and business attraction.

- **Tourist Attraction.** Tourism represents a significant potential growth market for Fort Smith. Driven in the summer by outdoor adventure activities and in winter by aurora viewing, tourism has been a growth industry for the NWT over the past decade. However, in 2019- 20, there was a moderate decline in both the number of tourist visits to the NWT and tourist expenditures largely as a result of the pandemic. This greatly accelerated during the current fiscal year. There continues to be considerable uncertainty regarding the timelines for recovery in the tourist industry, with some estimates indicating that it may be 2025 before the industry fully recovers.

As the industry emerges from the impacts of the pandemic and returns to a new normal over the next few years, Fort Smith is reasonably well-positioned to take advantage of potential future growth in the tourist industry. Potential growth segments include outdoor adventure travel, with a particular focus on ecotourism, the southern road touring market, the short haul getaway market with a particular focus on Yellowknife, sports and events, meetings and conferences, Indigenous tourism, and Aurora viewing. The limited accommodation, packages and products serve as a constraint to development in the short-term. The pandemic has likely slowed the rate of new investment into the industry for the next few years.

- **Resident Attraction.** The population of Fort Smith has tended to be very mobile relative to other communities in the NWT and in particular, to communities in southern Canada. At the time of the 2016 Census, 11% of the population had moved to the community in the past year and 26% had moved to the community in the past five years. Our research notes that new residents have come from a wide range of different communities, drawn primarily by opportunities for employment. However, they stay because of the quality of life, the friends they have made, the small-town character, access to amenities and services, and the range of recreational and outdoor adventure opportunities available. Over 85% of the key informants expect to stay for at least the next five years, and many expect to retire in the community. Geographically, the key target segments for resident attraction include existing NWT residents, the rest of Canada (between 2015/16 to 2019/20, 37% of new NWT residents from other parts of Canada came from Alberta, 19% from BC, 16% from Ontario, and 28% from the rest of the country), and outside of Canada. To date, relatively small numbers have come from outside of Canada.

Going forward, there are opportunities for Fort Smith to leverage potential local economic developments (e.g., Taltson Grid Expansion or reopening of Pine Point) and the trend towards distributed workplaces and remote work. Key targets would include people aged 18 to 34 years (labour mobility tends to decline with age), regions experiencing economic downturns, and younger families who could be drawn to a smaller centre because of considerations such as a quality of life, safety, lower housing costs, desiring a simpler life, reduced commuting times, and opportunities to better integrate their families into the community.

- **Business Attraction.** In some cases, business attraction involves an existing operation based in one or more communities opening a new location in another community. However, in a community such as Fort Smith, new businesses are generally “one-off” operations started by people who were drawn to the community by employment opportunities or other reasons. The business survey identified 16 businesses established in Fort Smith in the past five years, only one of which operated previously in another community. It is likely that the greatest opportunity to expand the business base in Fort Smith is to better support local residents who are interested in starting a business.

Potential target segments for a business attraction strategy include entrepreneurs targeted as part of a broader resident attraction strategy (those 18 to 34 tend to be most mobile), remote workers and footloose businesses, existing businesses in communities experiencing economic difficulties, and business that could serve markets developing as part of major

developments (e.g., energy or mining). As the industry recovers, there may also be opportunities to attract tourism businesses.

In terms of **threats**, while Fort Smith is not in a crisis situation, there are some concerns on the horizon regarding the community's economic outlook. Four areas of concern include upcoming closures of diamond mines, potential erosion of the number of government positions, the possible establishment of a university in Yellowknife, and the ongoing impact of COVID-19.

OBJECTIVE AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

The primary objectives of the marketing plan are to:

1. **Raise the profile of Fort Smith.** The general consensus amongst those interviewed and surveyed is that Fort Smith is a great place to visit, live, and work, but that few people outside of the town know that.
2. **Promote development by connecting prospective tourists, residents, and investors to opportunities, information, and supporting resources.** The marketing campaign will rarely drive people to consider travelling, moving, or investing. Those decisions are typically driven by a range of factors beyond the influence of the campaign. Rather, the focus of the marketing plan is to encourage members of the target group to consider Fort Smith as a potential destination or place to invest; provide them with descriptions of specific opportunities and information that will assist them in making that decision; and provide access to information and resources that will assist them in acting on the decision (e.g., providing links to accommodation, real estate, and business support services).

KEY FEATURES OF THE PLAN

Some of the key features that are incorporated into the marketing plan include:

- **An integrated approach to marketing.** To maximize the visibility of Fort Smith, we believe that it will be important to develop an integrated strategy that includes separate components for businesses, residents, and tourists, but also incorporates common branding elements and positioning, and overlapping campaigns.
- **A focus on storytelling.** The key is to tell people why they should want to visit, live, and invest in Fort Smith. Featuring the experiences of existing residents and visitors, as well as the history of community, is often the most effective way to communicate those interests and values.
- **A strong website supported by aggressive social media campaigns.** Given the small size of the community, Fort Smith is likely to have limited funding available on an on-going basis for marketing. As such, it will be important to make innovative use of social media to magnify the impact and have a strong, effective website in place with clear calls to action.

- **Ongoing refinements to marketing activities based on continual testing of target groups, messages, and campaigns.** Effective campaigns develop and evolve over time. Ongoing A/B and split testing should be implemented to assess the effectiveness of different approaches, target groups, materials, messages, and campaigns.
- **Close coordination with economic development initiatives.** Marketing is not the only constraint to development facing Fort Smith. Some of the priorities for improvement that were identified in our research include:
 - *Improving the attractiveness of the community to potential residents and businesses.* Improvements need to be made in increasing access to affordable housing, reliable and affordable high-speed internet, business development services, serviced land and property, and childcare.
 - *Increasing the capacity for tourism.* The Town needs to encourage the further development of tourism products, packages, and accommodations, and support improvements in permitting processes.
 - *Advocating the interests of Fort Smith with the GNWT and, to a lesser extent, the federal government.* Of particular interest is improvements to the transportation, energy, and communications infrastructure, the development of major projects, attraction and maintenance of government positions in Fort Smith, and the expansion of Aurora College programs in Fort Smith.
- **Communicating to local residents as well as external groups.** While the marketing program will be targeted primarily at prospective visitors, residents, and businesses, it should also target local businesses and residents. The messaging delivered by the marketing program can help to reinforce the commitment of businesses and residents to Fort Smith.
- **An emphasis on partnerships and leveraging other resources.** Recognizing both that its own resources are limited and that many of the levers for promoting economic development lie beyond its direct control, the Town should place a high priority on working with key partners.

PRIMARY TARGETS AND POSITIONING

The main body and appendices of the report define a series of potential targets for the marketing activities and provide personas for the leading visitor, resident, and business segments (e.g., outdoor enthusiasts, job seekers, and relocating businesses). Given the intent to coordinate marketing activities across these three groups (prospective visitors, residents, and businesses), it is useful to identify the characteristics that are common across the target groups and messages. These represent areas where it will be possible to leverage the varying marketing campaigns to raise awareness of Fort Smith and build a shared, recognized brand across the priority target groups.

Common Characteristics	
Demographic characteristics	Highest priority across the marketing campaigns will be attracting and retaining younger couples (particularly those aged 18-34 years of age, with young families), as a means to energize the community and ensure continuity.
Regional targets	Priority targets will be prospective visitors, residents, and businesses from the NWT and neighbouring regions particularly Alberta, BC, and Saskatchewan.
Core attributes	Common attributes of importance to each segment include the unique setting and the range of outdoor adventure, historical and cultural experiences available, the welcoming nature of the community, a high quality of life, the local infrastructure and access to support services. Another key attribute will be the ability of Fort Smith to provide information and connections to resources that will assist in planning trips, moves or investments.

KEY COMPONENTS

The key components of the marketing plan include:

- **A refreshed brand.** Fort Smith currently uses a brand incorporating the tagline “UNEXPECTED, UNFORGETABLE” which was designed to capture in two words the surprising variety of sights and experiences offered along with their special, one-of-a-kind nature. The tagline works well for tourism but may be less appropriate for business or resident attraction. We recommend that Fort Smith review and, if deemed necessary, update its brand, resulting in a brand that resonates with outsiders and newcomers to the area and reflects the essence of the region.
- **A dedicated website.** While the community currently has a website, it would be advisable to develop a website specifically designed to support the attraction program. A dedicated, optimized website would present detailed information on opportunities related to visiting, residing, and investing with clear calls to action. Key features of the website would include a section providing detailed information on the tourism attractions, packages, and accommodation options (preferably with links to booking options); a section specific to targeting residents whom the Town wants to attract (e.g., “Living in Fort Smith”); and a dedicated section on economic development and investment attraction.
- **Annual campaigns.** The social media campaigns would incorporate content marketing materials targeted at one or more of the target groups (i.e., potential visitors, residents, or businesses). The purpose is to drive traffic to the attraction website. The campaigns would be complemented with social media advertising, which can be targeted to specific target segments and geographic markets.
- **Other activities.** Over time, there may be opportunities to place more of an emphasis on earned media, hosting familiarization (fam) trips with visiting travel media and travel trade and attending tradeshow.

STRATEGIC PILLARS AND ACTIONS

Strategy #1: Establish an effective governance structure to guide, coordinate and oversee implementation of the plan.

The Town of Fort Smith will serve primarily as a convener, facilitator and financial contributor to attraction efforts. While some initiatives will be driven by the Town (e.g., development of the website), most will be championed by others such as the private sector, the GNWT or Indigenous governments. As a general rule, the Town will only get involved in those types of initiatives when there is a clear champion or group of champions who have stepped forward to lead implementation.

Key actions under Strategy #1 including recruiting and maintaining an Advisory Committee, preparing an annual plan, and accessing funding. The Advisory Committee will assist in establishing priorities, developing and implementing annual plans, accessing funding and other support, and facilitating connections with businesses and other key stakeholders.

Strategy #2: Improve the readiness of Fort Smith to attract, support and service tourists, residents and businesses.

To address key issues that are constraining the ability of Fort Smith to attract tourists, residents and businesses, we recommend that the Town of Fort Smith work to:

- **Develop a strategy to increase access to housing.** This will involve reviewing the existing mix of housing, current and projected housing demand, factors slowing the rate of new home construction, and potential strategies. The Town will then work with developers, builders and other stakeholders to accelerate construction.
- **Develop a labour market strategy to increase employer access to workers, including skilled workers and managers.** The study will review the demand for and supply of workers, identify critical skills and labour shortages, assess key constraints to accessing needed staff, outline strategies to fill the identified gaps, and develop a plan through which employers can coordinate recruitment activities and work together to address the major constraints.
- **Increase access to business development training and services.** The Town needs to create more of an entrepreneurial culture and an environment that is supportive to business development.
- **Improve access to reliable and affordable connectivity.** Given the importance of the reliable, affordable connectivity to competitiveness, the Town should continue to advocate with the GNWT, Northwestel, and other telecom providers for system improvements.
- **Improve the regulatory environment.** In particular, the Town will advocate for streamlining the process and reduce the costs associated with tourism licenses.

Strategy #3: Broaden the base of events, products, services and packages available to be actively marketed to attract to tourists.

To attract more visitors, Fort Smith needs to broaden the base of events, products, services and packages that it is able to market to attract to tourists. In some cases, this may involve developing or attracting new capabilities (e.g., an outdoor adventure tour operator). More commonly, it will involve further defining available resources and experiences, which can then be actively marketed to various target groups and incorporated into packages.

The research identified opportunities to market:

- *Meetings and conferences*, building on the new Salt River First Nation Business & Conference Centre. The first step in further towards actively marketing meeting and conferences is to determine if and how the Centre and other facilities are interested in working with the Town and its partners in promoting Fort Smith as a host community for conferences and meetings.
- *Sports and cultural events*. The next step is to assess community interest, determine which events represent opportunities to attract visitors from outside of the region, work with local organizations and others to develop/attract new events, and then develop resource materials that can help to market the events.
- *Outdoor adventure*. The outdoor adventure market can be advanced by creating self-guided itineraries and working to attract tour operators who can package and promote outdoor adventure products such as from aurora viewing, ecotourism, hiking, paddling, wildlife viewing, camping, fishing, hunting, dogsledding, and snowmobiling.

These opportunities can also be packaged along with transportation (e.g., reduced fares for Northwest Air), accommodation, dining and other options.

Strategy #4: Create common tools and content that can be used to increase awareness of Fort Smith as an attractive place to visit, live, and invest.

This strategy focuses on the development of common resource materials while Strategy #5 focuses on targeted campaigns. The resource materials will present a profile of the community, provide users with descriptions of opportunities and information that will help them in considering Fort Smith as a potential destination or place to invest, and then link them to information and resources that will assist them in acting on the decision (e.g., providing links to accommodation, real estate, and business support services).

The steps that should be taken to develop these resources include first reviewing and then, if deemed necessary, refreshing the Town's brand, developing a dedicated website, developing standard marketing content, tools and resources, establishing social media channels, and upgrading signage.

Strategy #5: Implement two to four direct campaigns annually targeted at priority markets.

The number of campaigns will increase over time, taking advantage of opportunities to build on established relationships, packages, and marketing materials. Each campaign will involve meeting with local businesses, potential champions and others to determine the level of interest and support for the campaign, developing any packages, contests and information sheets to be promoted as part of the campaign, and planning and implementing the campaign components.

The priority markets and segments should be defined in association with the Advisory Committee and reflect the level of interest of potential beneficiaries, champions and funding partners in contributing time and resources to the campaign. Suggested priorities are outlined in them main body of the report.

Goal #6: Monitor conditions and the progress made on ongoing basis.

The progress made in implementing the marketing plan should be tracked and reported annually to the Advisory Committee and the Town Council. There are four types of indicators, including indicators related to inputs, outputs and outcomes and macro-economic conditions.

BUDGET

The main report outlines an implementation plan for the first three yeas. We have budgeted \$85,000 in funding for each of the first two years and \$50,000 in funding for third year.

1. INTRODUCTION



1.1 TOWN OF FORT SMITH

The Town of Fort Smith is a diverse community located in the South Slave Region of the Northwest Territories, along the border with Alberta. Its 2,700 residents are comprised of Indigenous persons (59%), which include Chipewyan, Cree, and Métis as well as non-Indigenous people (41%). Some resident families have resided in the community for generations while others are long-term residents who made it their home, while others are more recent arrivals. The community has a strong cultural heritage and is surrounded by great tracts of undisturbed boreal forest that continue to be used by residents for traditional hunting and gathering practices as well as a range of outdoor recreational activities. It is the gateway to Wood Buffalo National Park. The Town of Fort Smith is committed to working with local and regional partners and stakeholders including the Salt River First Nation, Smith's Landing First Nation, Métis Council, and the Town of Hay River.

In 2017, the Town of Fort Smith adopted an Economic Development Plan which prioritized three streams of growth for the community: attracting new residents, attracting new businesses, and attracting business and leisure travellers. The Town recognizes that a more versatile and diversified economy and workforce is required to maintain and grow the community. Currently, more than half of Fort Smith's employed residents work for municipal, territorial, Indigenous, and federal governments. In recent years, the community has seen some reduction in territorial government jobs as a result of centralization, which increases the importance of seeking out alternatives to ensure that the community has the critical population mass necessary to continue being a healthy and prosperous community.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this project is to develop a focused, comprehensive, and impactful marketing plan that lays out a strategic approach to achieving the Town's goals of attracting new businesses, residents, and visitors. This will mean, among other things, analyzing whom the town wants to target, developing strategies for how to target them (in terms of distribution channels), and identifying what resources currently exist and which partnerships could be leveraged to better support their needs and attract them to the community.

The ultimate objectives of the strategy are to help ensure that Fort Smith remains a healthy and prosperous community. Attracting businesses, workers and tourists will each contribute to building a stronger and more diversified economy and help to offset losses in territorial government jobs. To maximize the visibility of Fort Smith, we believe that it will be important to develop an integrated strategy that includes separate components for businesses, residents, and tourists, but also incorporates elements of common branding and positioning (perhaps building off the "Unexpected, Unforgettable" brand) and takes advantage of opportunities to leverage campaigns, coordinate promotional activities, and share tools. This could include an integrated, optimized website and supporting marketing material that promotes Fort Smith as a great place to visit, invest, work, and live.

1.3 WORK COMPLETED TO DATE

We undertook this project in three phases: a planning phase; a data collection and analysis phase; and a strategic marketing plan development phase.

Planning Phase

The work that we completed to date is described below.

- **Met with the Senior Administrative Officer** (the Owner Representative for the project) of the Town of Fort Smith to discuss the assignment and ensure that we share a common understanding of the objectives, process, and intended outputs as well as how the strategy would be implemented.

- **Met with the Economic Development Officer** of the Town to discuss the potential opportunities and constraints to development as well as to obtain available documentation and data. Through these interviews, we obtained input regarding:
 - How the strategy might be implemented including the leadership, support, and resources that could be contributed by the Town and potential partners.
 - Key individuals and organizations that should be targeted in the research.
 - Characteristics of the local economy including key sectors, perceived strengths and weaknesses, existing labour shortages, trends in employment, tourism attractions and assets, and potential opportunities for development;
 - Available studies, community plans, data, key findings and recommendations from previous work, and key issues and questions going forward;
 - The key audiences and intended use of the strategy and supporting research.

- **Conducted preliminary research** to assess available information and determine what information could be collected from secondary sources and what information needed to be obtained from primary sources. This included a review of both documents on the region as well as a review of attraction strategies employed elsewhere.

- **Finalized the proposed methodology**, developed detailed stakeholder lists for the consultation process, and prepared data collection instruments, protocols, and communication materials.

The output of the first phase was a detailed work plan which presented the methodology, data collection tools, and communication materials that were employed in the second phase of the study.

Data Collection and Analysis Phase

The data collection and analysis phase included:

- **A review of economic indicators, research reports, plans, strategies, and profiles** relevant to the town of Fort Smith including statistical data on the town, recent plans and strategies developed for the town, and examples of attraction strategies in other communities. A list of the documents that were reviewed is provided in Appendix 1.
- **Interviews with 40 key informants** who reported on the benefits and challenges associated with living in Fort Smith, key opportunities and priorities for development, factors that may be contributing to and constraining growth, and recent trends, priorities, opportunities, and potential strategies that should be considered related to the attraction of new businesses, residents, and tourists.

Key Informants Interviewed

Type of Organization	2020	
	#	%
Town Staff and Council Members	9	23%
Government Agencies	8	20%
Tourism Related Businesses	7	18%
Parks Canada	4	10%
Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Mines	3	8%
NWT & Nunavut Construction Association	1	3%
Other Businesses and Organizations	8	20%
Total Interviewed	40	100%

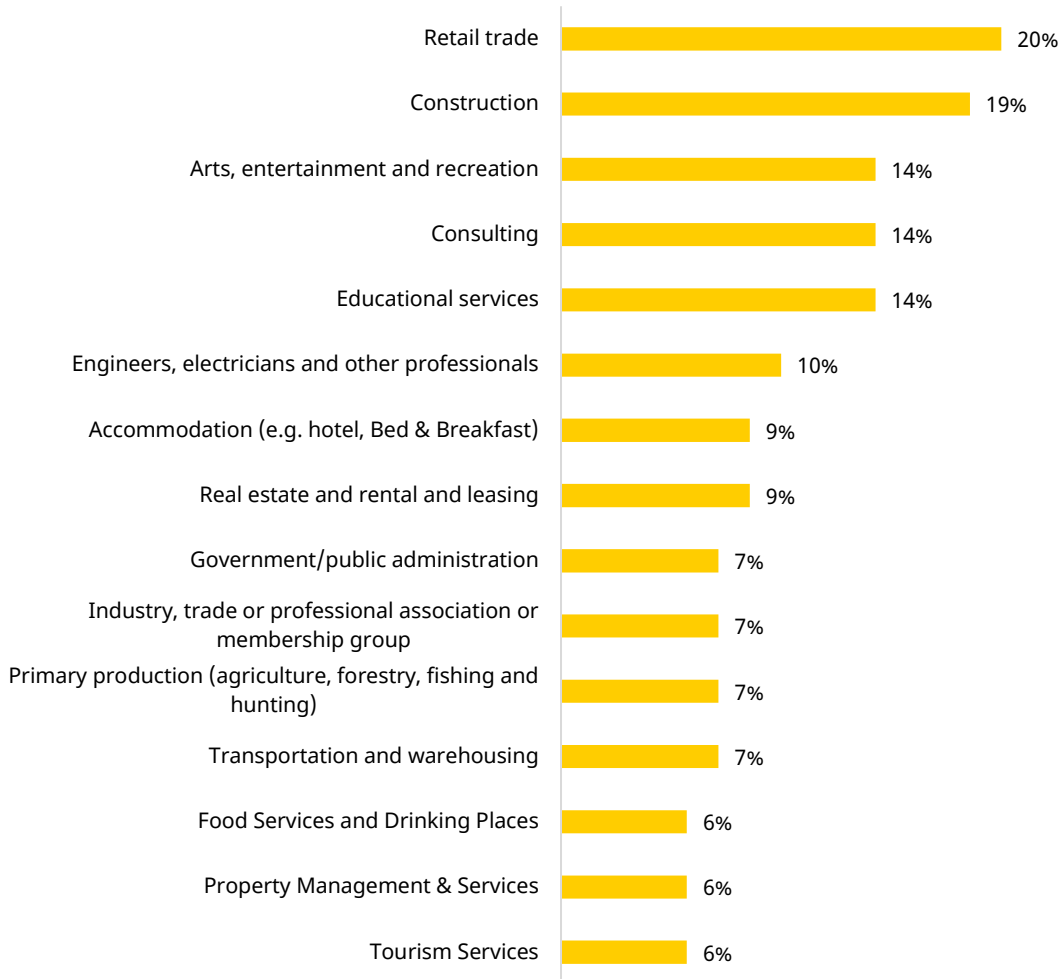
The key informants who were interviewed are listed in Appendix 2.

- **A survey of 69 businesses operating in the town of Fort Smith.** The respondents came from a population list of 161 businesses located in the town. We followed-up with target respondents four to five times by telephone and email. When phoning, we provided businesses with the option to complete the survey at that time over the telephone. Of the 92 that did not complete a survey, 26 indicated that they did not want to participate.

The responding businesses were also drawn from a wide variety of economic sectors, the most common of which included retail trade, construction, arts, entertainment and recreation, consulting, and education services.

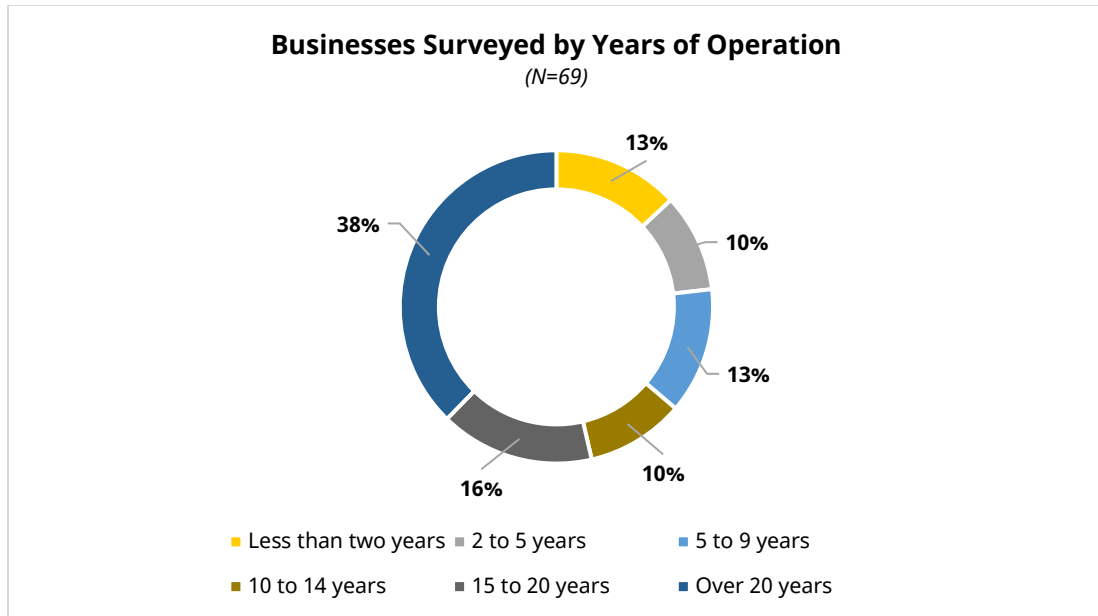
Businesses Survey: Top 15 Industry Sectors

Question: In what sector or sectors is your organization primarily involved?



Most of the businesses are small (72% have five or fewer employees) and primarily serve local customers.

Of the businesses surveyed, 65% have been in operation for 10 or more years including 38% that have been in operation for over 20 years.



- A focus group with 10 representatives from the Town of Fort Smith.** Participants including representatives from industry, the college, First Nations, and council including the Mayor of Fort Smith. The focus group involved a discussion of the key priorities, opportunities and messages on which the marketing strategy should focus, the potential to leverage partnerships in implementing the marketing strategy, and the relationship between the marketing plan and other elements of the economic development strategy.

Development of the Marketing Plan

We then analyzed the results and prepared an interim report. The report outlined the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT), including a discussion of the specific opportunities related to visitor, resident, and business attraction. It then outlined a preliminary marketing plan in terms of its objectives, and intended outcomes of the plan, key features, primary elements, and steps involved in implementation.

We then prepared this marketing plan. The marketing plan takes into consideration:

- Input received from the Town of Fort Smith on the interim report.
- Input provided by our creative agency. Pace Creative prepared personas regarding key targets for the marketing strategy and worked with us in defining and costing an implementation plan.

The plan outlines the objectives of the attraction activities, key features of the marketing activities, the primary targets and key messages, the core components and implementation plan and the performance measurement strategy. The implementation plan was developed through an iterative process involving Town of Fort Smith representatives, particularly the Economic Development Officer.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

Chapter 2 provides a detailed profile of the Town of Fort Smith. Chapter 3 presents the findings of the interview and survey programs, Chapter 4 contains the SWOT analysis, and Chapter 5 outlines the marketing plan. The final chapter presents an implementation plan, defining the role of the

Town of Fort Smith and outlining the steps that can be taken towards implementing
Appendix 1 provides a list of the documents that were reviewed in preparing the report, Appendix 2 provides a list of the key informants who were interviewed, Appendix 3 outlines the community's vision, values and goals, and Appendix 4 summarizes the existing economic development strategy for the Town of Fort Smith. Appendix 5 contains personas and segment descriptions for key target markets for the attraction strategy.

2.

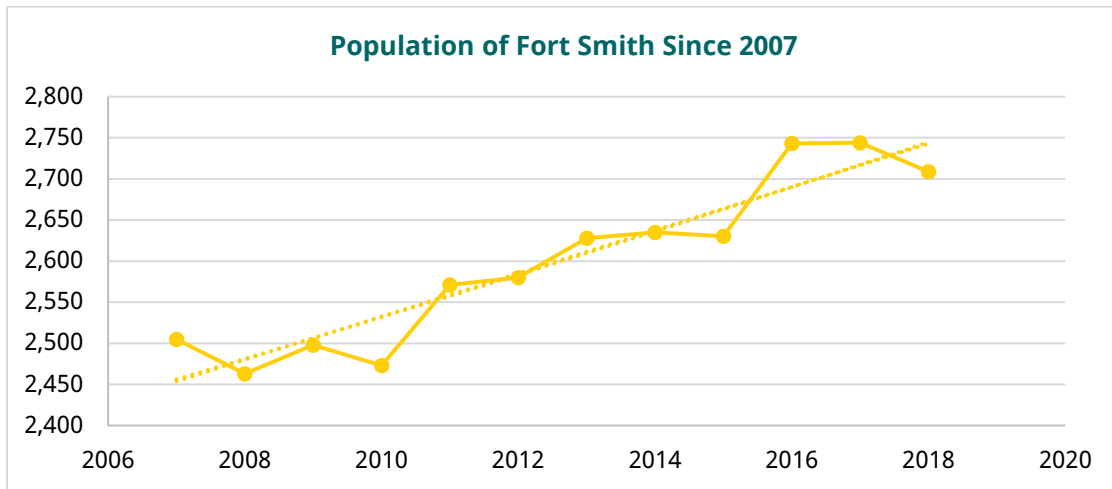
PROFILE OF FORT SMITH



2.1 RESIDENTS OF FORT SMITH

2.1.1 Population

Fort Smith is a diverse community located in the south of the Northwest Territories along the border with Alberta. The population of Fort Smith has increased somewhat over time, from 2,505 in 2007 to 2,709 in 2019.



A demographic breakdown of Fort Smith is presented in the following table.

Characteristics of the Population in the Town of Fort Smith (2019)

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics (2019)

	#	%
Total Population	2,709	100%
Gender		
Males	1,376	51%
Females	1,333	49%
Aboriginal Status		
Aboriginal	1,598	59%
Non-Aboriginal	1,111	41%
Age Group		
0 - 4 Years	160	6%
5 - 9 Years	223	8%
10 - 14 Years	181	7%
15 - 24 Years	323	12%
25 - 44 Years	821	30%
45 - 59 Years	553	20%
60 Yrs. & Older	448	17%

The NWT Bureau of Statistics projects no population growth for Fort Smith over the next 15 years.¹

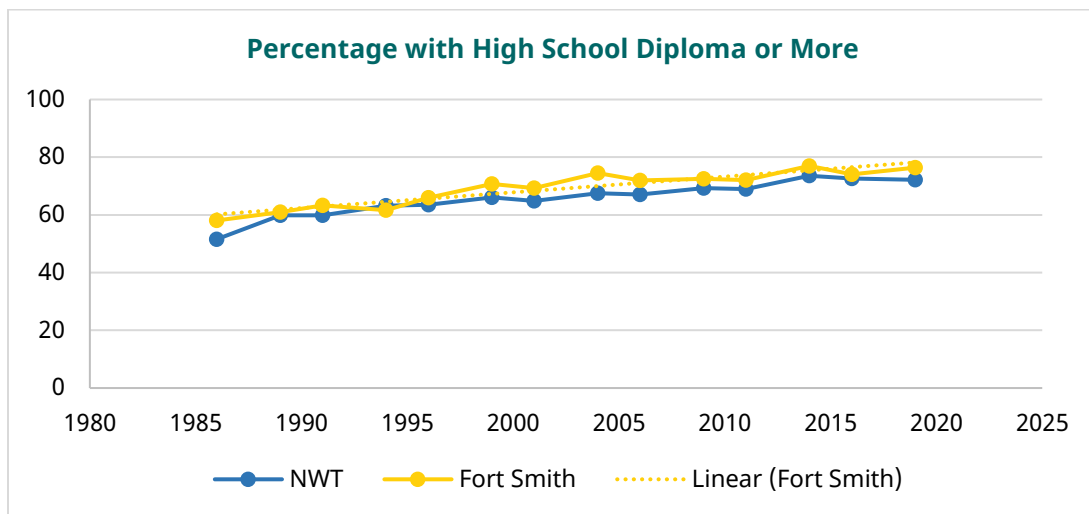
Population Projections of the Town of Fort Smith

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics 2019

Year	Fort Smith Population Estimates
2020	2,698
2025	2,682
2030	2,650
2035	2,629

2.1.2 Education

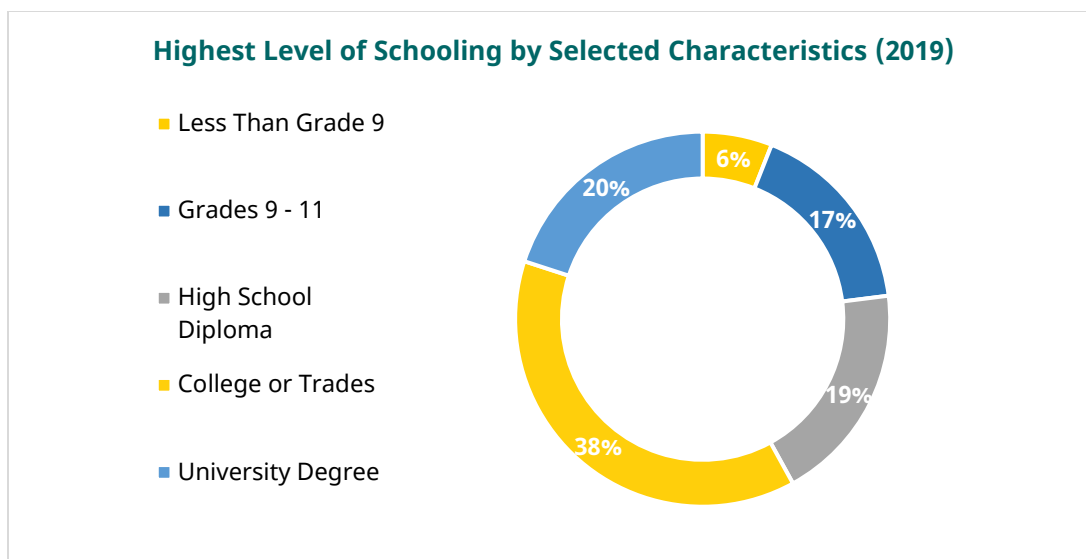
The percentage of residents in the Town of Fort Smith with a high school diploma or higher increased by nearly 20% between 1986 and 2019 (increasing from 58% to 76%). As the figure below shows, this percentage is slightly higher than for the Northwest Territories (NWT) overall.



Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics 1986-2019

More specifically, 20% of the population over 15 years of age in 2019 had a university degree, 38% had a college or trades diploma, and 19% graduated with a high school diploma.

¹ NWT Bureau of Statistics Community Profile 2019.



Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics 2019

2.1.3 Mobility

Of the Fort Smith residents surveyed as part of the 2016 census, 11% had moved to the community in the past year (of whom 6% had moved from within the NWT and 5% had moved from other parts of Canada) and 26% had moved to the community in the past five years (of whom 11% had moved from within the NWT, 13% had moved from other parts of Canada, and 1% had moved to the community from outside of Canada). The rate of migration has increased marginally over the past ten years.

Fort Smith Mobility Status²

(Source: Statistics Canada Census 2006, 2011, 2016)

Characteristics	2006		2011		2016	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Surveyed - Mobility status 1 year ago	2,280	100%	1,985	100%	1,955	100%
Intraprovincial migrants	70	3%	95	5%	125	6%
Interprovincial migrants	100	4%	105	5%	90	5%
External migrants	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total Surveyed - Mobility status 5 years ago	2,150	100%	1,850	100%	1,850	100%
Intraprovincial migrants	160	7%	185	10%	200	11%
Interprovincial migrants	340	16%	220	12%	250	13%
External migrants	15	1%	15	1%	10	1%

² Refers to the status of a person with regard to the place of residence on the reference day May 10, 2016 in relation to the place of residence on the same date one year earlier at the provincial/territorial level. Movers include non-migrants and migrants. Non-migrants are persons who did move but remained in the same city, town, township, village or Indian reserve. Migrants include internal migrants who moved to a different city town township village or Indian reserve within Canada. External migrants include persons who lived outside Canada at the earlier reference date.

The rate of mobility is higher in Fort Smith than for the NWT overall. Of the NWT residents surveyed as part of the 2016 census, 7% had moved to their community in the past year (of whom 2% had moved within the NWT and 5% had moved from other parts of Canada) and 20% had moved to the community in the past five years (of whom 5% had moved from within the NWT, 13% had moved from other parts of Canada, and 2% had moved to the community from outside of Canada).

Furthermore, the rate mobility is higher in the NWT than for Canada overall. Of the Canadian residents surveyed as part of the 2016 census, 5% had moved to their community in the past year (of whom 3% had moved within their previous province or territory, 1% had moved from other parts of Canada, and 1% had moved to the community from outside of Canada) and 17% had moved to the community in the past five years (of whom 11% had moved within their previous province or territory, 2% had moved from other parts of Canada, and 4% had moved to the community from outside of Canada).

2.1.4 Language

In Fort Smith, English is the language spoken most often at home. Indigenous languages accounted for slightly above 1% of languages spoken most often at home.

Language Spoken Most Often at Home

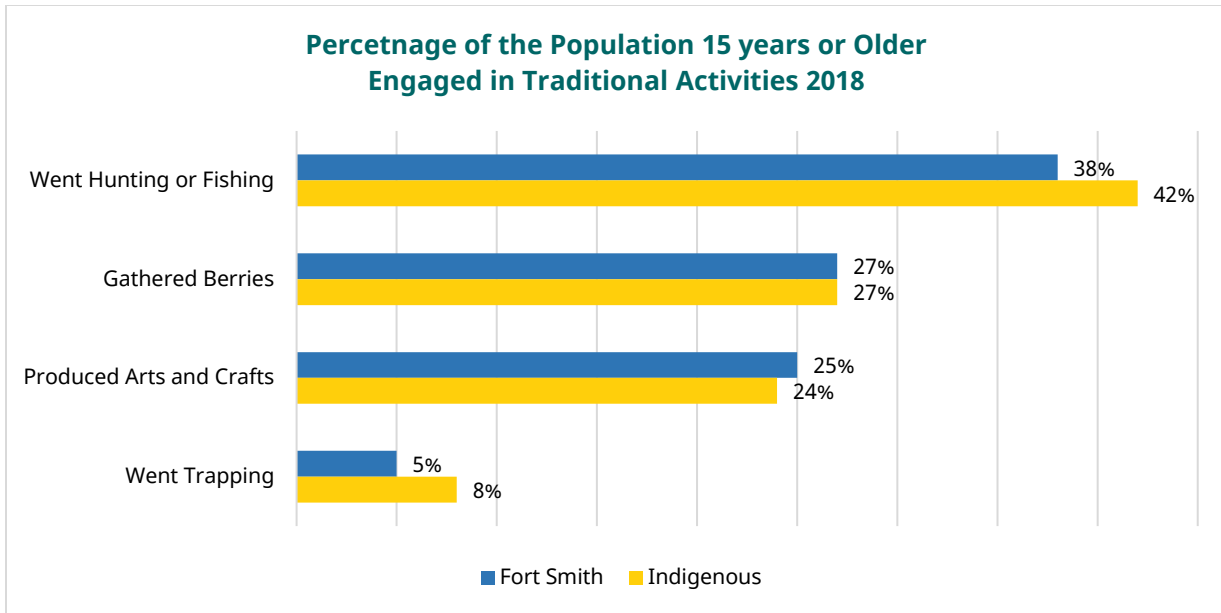
(Source: Statistics Canada Census 2006, 2011, 2016)

Characteristics	2006		2011		2016	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Fort Smith Population Surveyed	2,315	100%	2,060	100%	1,990	100%
English	2,250	97%	2,015	98%	1,930	97%
French	10	0.4%	5	0.2%	10	0.5%
Indigenous Languages	25	1.1%	25	1%	25	1.3%

2.1.5 Engagement in Traditional Activities

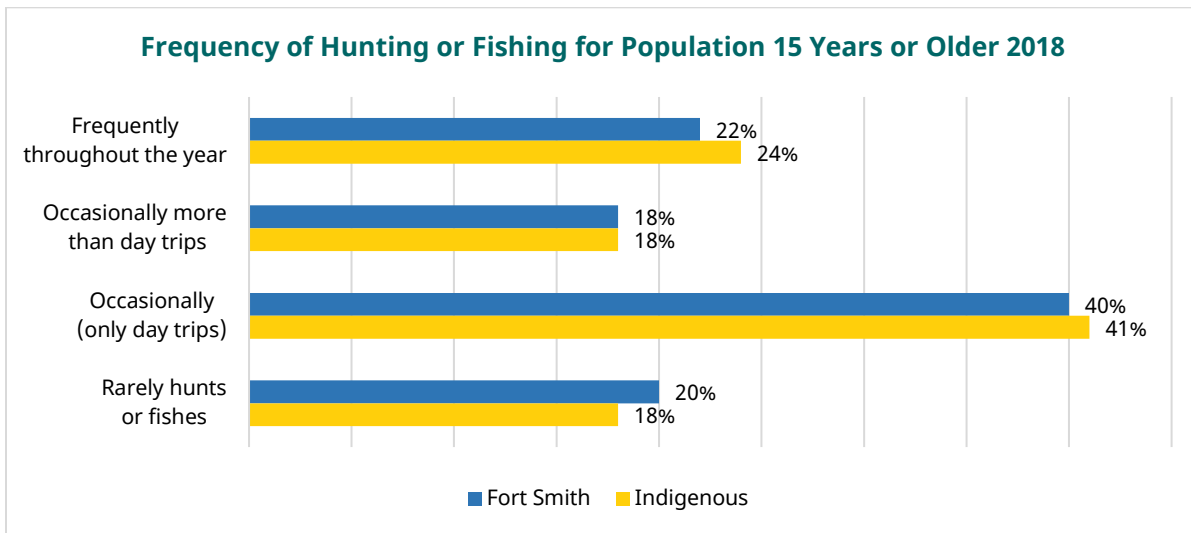
The Town of Fort Smith has a strong cultural heritage and is surrounded by great tracts of undisturbed boreal forest, which continue to be used by residents for traditional hunting and gathering practices as well as a range of outdoor recreational activities. It is also the gateway to and the headquarters of Wood Buffalo National Park.

With respect to traditional activities, 38% of the population aged 15 years or older went hunting or fishing (including 42% of Indigenous people), 27% gathered berries (same percentage of Indigenous people), 25% produced arts and crafts (24% of Indigenous people), and 5% went trapping (8% of Indigenous people) in 2018.



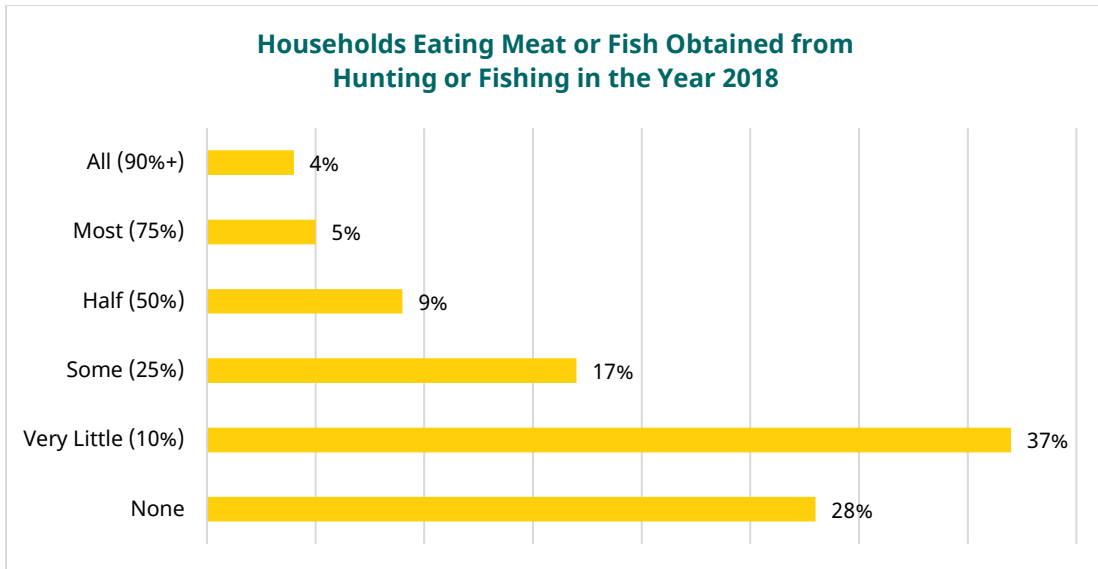
Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics 2018

Nearly 60% of Fort Smith’s population aged 15 years or older reported hunting or fishing occasionally. Those who frequently went hunting or fishing accounted for 22% of the population.



Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics 2018

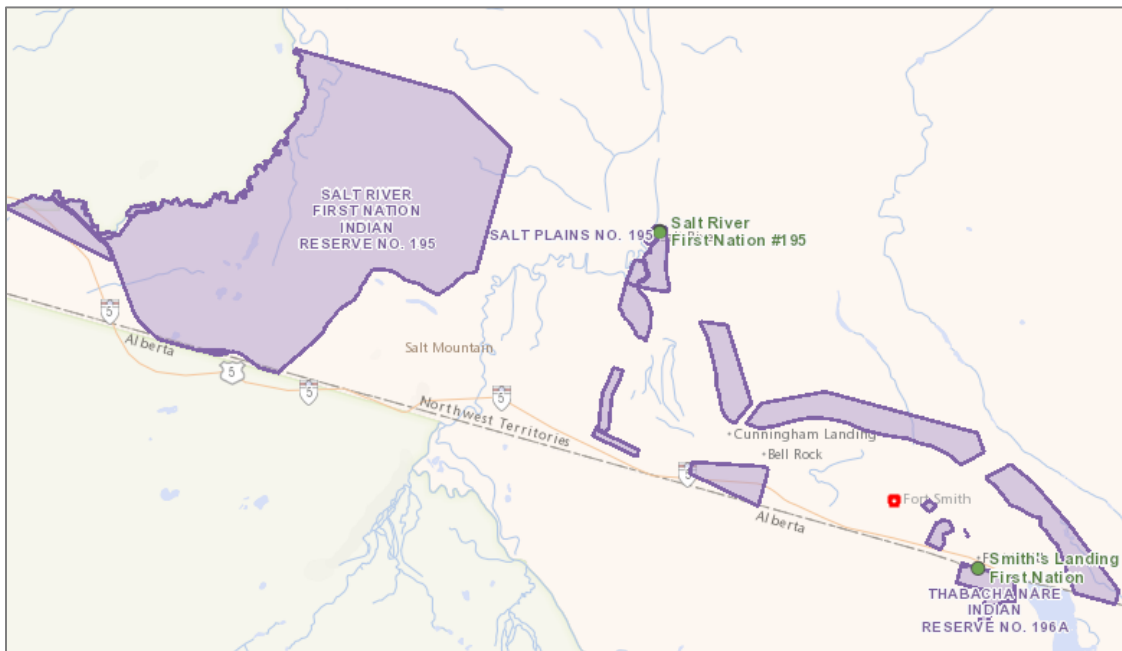
Seventy-two percent of households in 2018 reported consuming at least some traditional food. Of those, about 10% consumed traditional food very frequently (75% of the time throughout the year or more).



Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics 2018

2.2 LOCAL FIRST NATIONS

Fort Smith has long been a cultural meeting place for the Dene First Nations, Cree, Chipewyan and Métis. Its rich diversity is exemplified in the Salt River First Nation, the Smith’s Landing First Nation, and the Métis Council.



Source: <https://geo.aandc-aadnc.gc.ca/geoviewer-geovisualiseur/index-eng.html>

2.2.1 Salt River First Nation

Salt River First Nation has more than 750 members, many of whom live in or near Fort Smith. Their land claim, settled in 2001, gives them reserve land at 16 sites in and around the Town of Fort Smith, and four sites in Wood Buffalo National Park.³ The Nation includes a mix of Cree and Chipewyan people

2.2.2 Smith's Landing First Nation

Smith's Landing First Nation has 331 members and was formally recognized as an Indian band in 1988. In 2000, a Treaty Land Entitlement Settlement Agreement (TLE) was signed and a 21,500-acre reserve was created around Thebathi Reserve 196 (known as Fort Fitzgerald) near the Alberta/Northwest Territories border, including three small parcels of land in Wood Buffalo National Park in Alberta. About 10 families live in Thebathi Reserve 196 (Fort Fitzgerald) and 11 families live in Thebacha Nare 196A (known as Border Town) while many band members reside in Fort Smith.⁴

2.2.3 Fort Smith Metis Council and NWT Metis Nation

The Métis have a long history in the area, dating back to when explorers and fur traders of European descent first set foot in the north and intermarried with Aboriginal people. They are one of the three South Slave Métis groups involved in land claims negotiations.⁵

2.3 THE LABOUR MARKET

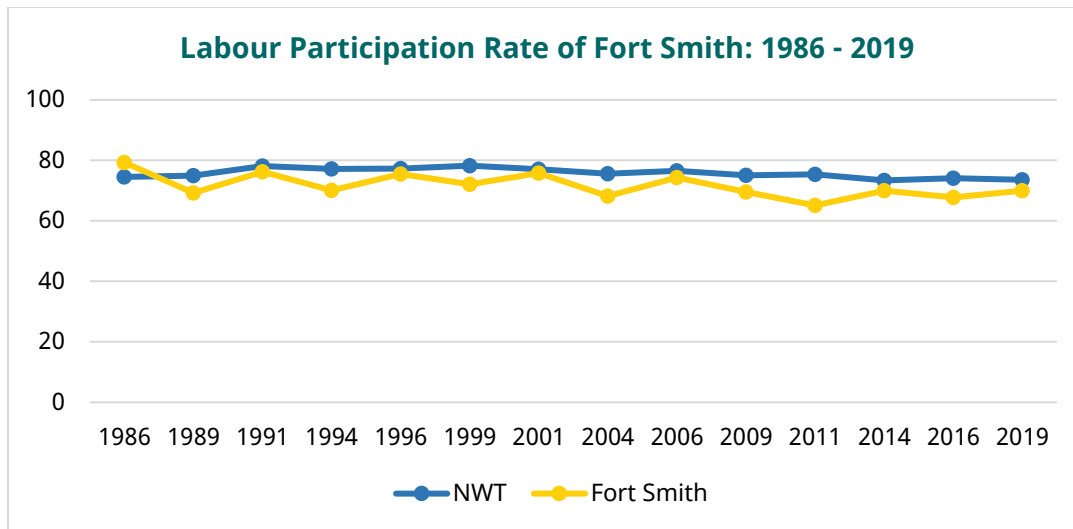
2.3.1 Labour Market Participation and Employment

In 2019, 70% of Fort Smith's population over 15 years of age were active in the labour force (approximately 1,500 people), which represents a slightly lower participation rate than for the NWT overall (74%). The labour force participation rate of Fort Smith has remained relatively constant over the years.

³ Fort Smith Community Profile

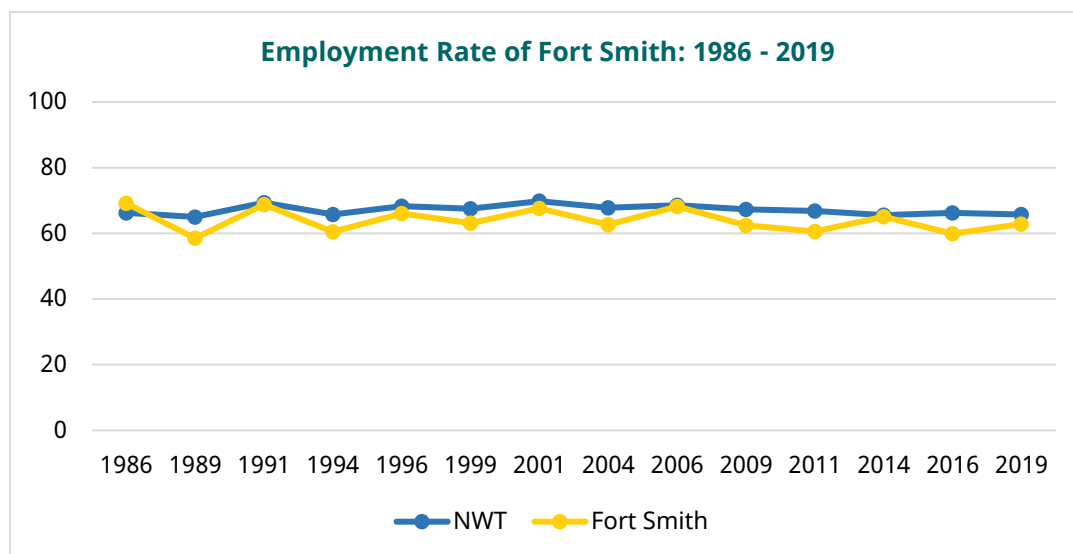
⁴ Fort Smith Community Profile

⁵ Fort Smith Community Profile



Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics 1986-2019

Similarly, the employment rate (63%) in Fort Smith was slightly lower than the NWT (66%) in 2019.



Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics 1986-2019

The table below summarizes the variation in the labour force, employment base, participation rate, and employment rate since 2011.

	2011	2014	2016	2019
Population 15 years or more	1,575	1,976	1,970	2,145
<i>Growth Rate</i>	25.5%	-0.3%		8.9%
Labour Force	1,025	1,382	1,335	1,502
<i>Growth Rate</i>	34.8%	-3.4%		12.5%
Employed	955	1,285	1,170	1,348
<i>Growth Rate</i>	34.6%	-8.9%		15.2%

	2011	2014	2016	2019
Participation Rate	65%	70%	68%	70%
Employment Rate	61%	65%	59%	63%

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics 2011-2019

In 2016, 35% of Fort Smith's labour force worked full-time for the full year, while 41% reported either working part-time or part of the year.

2.3.2 Labour Force by Occupation

Leading occupations in the community include education, social, community, and government services (22%); trades, transport, and equipment operators (16%); sales and services (15%); and business, finance, and administration (15%). Participation in education, social, community, and government services has been growing since 2006, while there has been a downward trend within sales and service occupations.

Fort Smith Labour Force by Occupation

(Source: Statistics Canada Census 2006, 2011, 2016)

Occupations	2006		2011		2016	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Fort Smith Labour Force Surveyed	1,320	100%	1,020	100%	1,045	100%
Occupations in education; law and social; community and government services	215	16.3%	225	22.1%	230	22.0%
Trades; transport and equipment operators and related occupations	210	15.9%	180	17.6%	165	15.8%
Sales and service occupations	300	22.7%	160	15.7%	160	15.3%
Business; finance and administration occupations	205	15.5%	140	13.7%	155	14.8%
Management occupations	165	12.5%	140	13.7%	120	11.5%
Health occupations	65	4.9%	45	4.4%	60	5.7%
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	75	5.7%	50	4.9%	45	4.3%
Occupations in art; culture; recreation and sport	30	2.3%	30	2.9%	40	3.8%
Occupations in manufacturing and utilities	10	0.8%	10	1.0%	15	1.4%
Natural resources; agriculture and related production occupations	45	3.4%	35	3.4%	25	2.4%
Occupation - not applicable	0	0.0%	5	0.5%	30	2.9%

The following table compares the distribution of the labour force by occupation between Fort Smith and the NWT in 2016. Fort Smith has a higher percentage of its labour force involved in education, law and social, community and government services, while having somewhat fewer people involved in sales and service occupations and business, finance, and administration.

A Comparison of the Distribution of Labour Force by Occupation in 2016

(Source: Statistics Canada Census 2016)

Occupations (2016)	NWT		Fort Smith	
	#	%	#	%
Labour Force Surveyed	23,945	100%	1,045	100%
Occupations in education; law and social; community and government services	4,045	16.9%	230	22.0%
Trades; transport and equipment operators and related occupations	3,785	15.8%	165	15.8%
Sales and service occupations	4,325	18.1%	160	15.3%
Business; finance and administration occupations	3,895	16.3%	155	14.8%
Management occupations	2,830	11.8%	120	11.5%
Health occupations	1,205	5.0%	60	5.7%
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	1,550	6.5%	45	4.3%
Occupations in art; culture; recreation and sport	605	2.5%	40	3.8%
Occupations in manufacturing and utilities	330	1.4%	15	1.4%
Natural resources; agriculture and related production occupations	670	2.8%	25	2.4%
Occupation - not applicable	695	2.9%	30	2.9%

2.3.3 Location of Employment

In 2016, 94% of the employed labour force commuted within town (Fort Smith) to their usual place of work, while 5% commuted to a different community within the NWT (e.g., by air to mines in the NWT).

Fort Smith Commuting (Work) Destination

(Source: Statistics Canada Census 2006, 2016)

Commuting destination of work	2006		2016	
	#	%	#	%
Total surveyed labour force worked at usual place	1,105	100%	850	100%
Commute within town	1,025	93%	795	94%
Commute to a different town within the country	60	5%	0	0%
Commute to a different town within NWT	0	0%	45	5%
Commute to outside of NWT	15	1%	10	1%

Utilizing a car, truck, or van accounted for almost 75% of commuting transportation methods in 2016. Walking or bicycling were the second most utilized methods of transportation (20%).

Model of Transportation to Work

(Source: Statistics Canada Census 2006, 2011, 2016)

Model of Transportation to Work	2006		2011		2016	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total surveyed labour force with a usual place of work or no fixed workplace address	1,170	100%	925	100%	885	100%
Car, truck, van - as a driver	730	62%	550	59%	590	67%
Car, truck, van - as a passenger	65	6%	70	8%	60	7%
Public transit	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Walked	305	26%	215	23%	170	19%
Bicycle			30	3%	10	1%
Other method	70	6%	55	6%	50	6%

2.4 LEADING EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

2.4.1 Employment by Industry

The following table outlines Fort Smith's labour force by industry sector. The leading industry sectors in 2016 were public administration (28%), educational services (12%), health care and social assistance (11%), and retail trade (10%).

Fort Smith Labour Force by Industry

(Source: Statistics Canada Census 2006, 2011, 2016)

Industry Sector (NAICS)	2006		2011		2016	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Fort Smith Labour Force Surveyed	1,320	100%	1,020	100%	1,045	100%
11 Agriculture; forestry; fishing and hunting	80	6%	10	1.0%	0	0.0%
21 Mining; quarrying; and oil and gas extraction	-	-	30	2.9%	60	5.7%
22 Utilities	-	-	15	1.5%	15	1.4%
23 Construction	85	6%	65	6.4%	70	6.7%
31-33 Manufacturing	0	0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
41 Wholesale trade	0	0%	0	0.0%	10	1.0%
44-45 Retail trade	150	11%	105	10.3%	100	9.6%
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	-	-	65	6.4%	60	5.7%
51 Information and cultural industries	-	-	10	1.0%	15	1.4%
52 Finance and insurance	25	2%	0	0.0%	10	1.0%
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	-	-	10	1.0%	0	0.0%
54 Professional; scientific and technical services	-	-	15	1.5%	15	1.4%
55 Management of companies and enterprises	-	-	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

Industry Sector (NAICS)	2006		2011		2016	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
56 Administrative and support; waste management and remediation services	-	-	30	2.9%	20	1.9%
61 Educational services	180	14%	105	10.3%	125	12.0%
62 Health care and social assistance	145	11%	85	8.3%	110	10.5%
71 Arts, entertainment and recreation	-	-	65	6.4%	55	5.3%
72 Accommodation and food services	-	-	30	2.9%	35	3.3%
81 Other services (except public administration)	470*	36%*	45	4.4%	25	2.4%
91 Public administration	-	-	300	29.4%	290	27.8%
Business Services	175*	13%*	-	-	-	-
Industry - not applicable	-	-	35	3.4%	30	2.9%

*Note that in the 2006 Canadian Census, many sectors were included as "Other," no break down was provided. Hence, data with a * shall not be used for comparisons or making any confident conclusions.

The table above also displays data from 2006. However, many industry sectors were not listed in the 2006 Canadian census. Based on the available information, industry sectors such as retail trade, and educational services were experiencing a decline in the share of labour force from 2006 to 2016.

Retail employment has declined across Canada, from 12.3% of total employment in 2006 to 11.5% in 2016. The decline in retail is likely to continue, in part because of the increasing movement to online sales. Across Canada, retail e-commerce sales increased by 71% in 2020 and accounted for 5.9% of total retail sales in 2020, up from 3.5% in 2019. Of the online sales, about 60% were purchased from retailers which also have physical stores. Across Canada, grocery, pharmacy, electronics, and building and garden supply retailers generally experienced increases in both online and in-store sales during 2020, while clothing and automotive retailers experienced the sharpest declines.

The following table compares the percentage of employment by industry between Fort Smith and the NWT in 2016. Industry sectors in Fort Smith such as educational services; arts, entertainment and recreation; and public administration employed a higher proportion of the labour force than for the NWT overall. On the other hand, no employment in Fort Smith was reported in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and real estate.

A Comparison of the Distribution of Labour Force by Industry in 2016

(Source: Statistics Canada Census 2016)

Industry Sector (NAICS)	NWT		Fort Smith	
	#	%	#	%
Fort Smith Labour Force Surveyed	23,945	100%	1,045	100%
11 Agriculture; forestry; fishing and hunting	190	0.8%	0	0.0%
21 Mining; quarrying; and oil and gas extraction	1,440	6.0%	60	5.7%
22 Utilities	300	1.3%	15	1.4%

Industry Sector (NAICS)	NWT		Fort Smith	
	#	%	#	%
23 Construction	1,745	7.3%	70	6.7%
31-33 Manufacturing	240	1.0%	0	0.0%
41 Wholesale trade	290	1.2%	10	1.0%
44-45 Retail trade	2,260	9.4%	100	9.6%
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	1,460	6.1%	60	5.7%
51 Information and cultural industries	465	1.9%	15	1.4%
52 Finance and insurance	345	1.4%	10	1.0%
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	415	1.7%	0	0.0%
54 Professional; scientific and technical services	930	3.9%	15	1.4%
55 Management of companies and enterprises	15	0.1%	0	0.0%
56 Administrative and support; waste management and remediation services	710	3.0%	20	1.9%
61 Educational services	1,805	7.5%	125	12.0%
62 Health care and social assistance	2,175	9.1%	110	10.5%
71 Arts; entertainment and recreation	350	1.5%	55	5.3%
72 Accommodation and food services	1,230	5.1%	35	3.3%
81 Other services (except public administration)	870	3.6%	25	2.4%
91 Public administration	6,010	25.1%	290	27.8%
Industry - not applicable	700	2.9%	30	2.9%

The following table shows the change in Fort Smith's employment concentration between 2006 and 2016 for those industries with data available in 2006.⁶ In particular, in 2016, the data presented below implies that there were comparative advantages in sectors such as educational services; health care and social assistance; arts, entertainment and recreation; and public administration.

Location Quotients for Labor Force by Industry in Fort Smith, 2006 and 2016

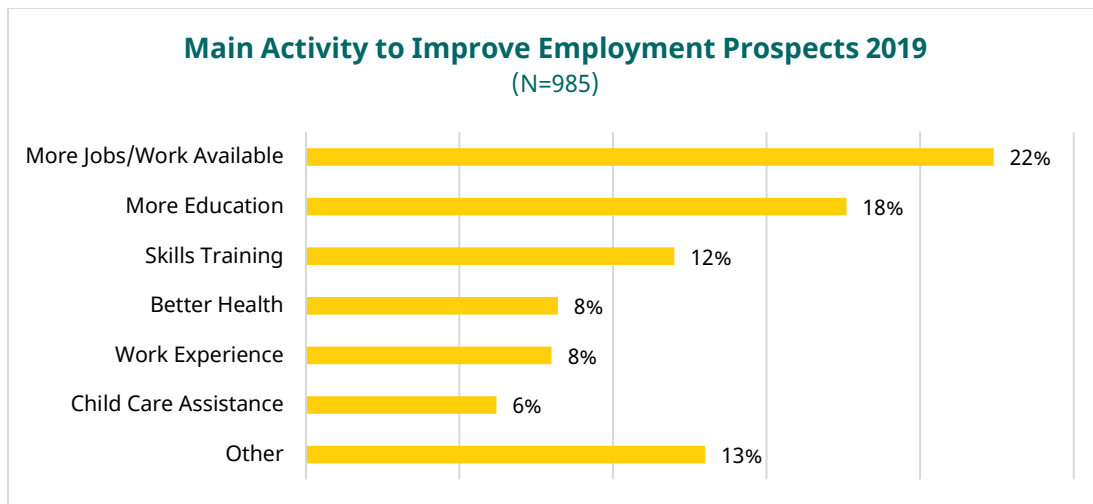
(Source: Statistics Canada Census 2006, 2016)

Industry Sector (NAICS)	LQ		Labour Force #		
	2006	2016	2006	2016	Change
11 Agriculture; forestry; fishing and hunting		0.00		0	
21 Mining; quarrying; and oil and gas extraction	0.67	0.95	80	60	20
22 Utilities	-	1.08	-	15	-

⁶ Location quotients (LQs) are a tool for comparing a community's labour force distribution with a benchmark area (in this case NWT) to identify comparative advantages and disadvantages. A location quotient of 1.0 indicates that the region employs the same proportion of its labour force in that sector as the province does, and that the region has no comparative advantages or disadvantages. A location quotient of greater than 1.0 indicates that relatively more people are employed in that sector, and that there are comparative advantages in that sector. Conversely, a location quotient of less than 1.0 indicates that there are relatively fewer people employed in that sector, and that there are likely comparative disadvantages affecting activity.

Industry Sector (NAICS)	LQ		Labour Force #		
	2006	2016	2006	2016	Change
23 Construction	0.94	0.92	85	70	15
31-33 Manufacturing	0.00	0.00	0	0	0
41 Wholesale trade	0.00	0.83	0	10	-10
44-45 Retail trade	1.21	1.02	150	100	50
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	-	0.93	-	60	-
51 Information and cultural industries	-	0.74	-	15	-
52 Finance and insurance	0.52	0.71	25	10	15
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	-	0.00	-	0	-
54 Professional; scientific and technical services	-	0.36	-	15	-
55 Management of companies and enterprises	-	0.00	-	0	-
56 Administrative and support; waste management and remediation services	-	0.63	-	20	-
61 Educational services	1.90	1.60	180	125	55
62 Health care and social assistance	1.20	1.15	145	110	35
71 Arts; entertainment and recreation	-	3.53	-	55	-
72 Accommodation and food services	-	0.65	-	35	-
81 Other services (except public administration)	-	0.67	-	25	-
91 Public administration	-	1.11	-	290	-

According to a 2019 survey, the activities that would have the greatest impact in terms of increasing access to employment for local residents include increasing the jobs or work available, increasing education and skills training, and providing greater access to work experience as well as health and childcare assistance.



Note: This survey was administered to the labour force in Inuvik, Hay River & Fort Smith
Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics 2019

2.4.2 Leading Employers

According to a compilation of various sources, Fort Smith’s leading employers include the GNWT (which reported 513 employees in 2018/19, including about 120 employed with NWT Health & Social Services, 80 at the Justice Department, and 50 with the Environment & Natural Resources Department), Aurora College (93 employees), Northwestern Air Lease, Parks Canada (Wood Buffalo National Park), and the Town of Fort Smith.

Fort Smith’s Leading Employers

(Source: Draft Fort Smith Community Profile)

	# Employees
Government of the Northwest Territories	513
Aurora College – Thebacha Campus	93
Northwestern Air Lease	70
Parks Canada – Wood Buffalo National Park	65
Town of Fort Smith	63

2.4.3 Overview of Major Economic Sectors

Government

Government is the leading employer in the NWT. According to the NWT Bureau of Statistics, the public administration sector accounted for about 14% of GDP in the NWT in 2018, 25% of direct employment in the NWT, and 28%⁷ of employment in Fort Smith. People in the NWT are more than four times as likely to work in public administration than those in other parts of Canada, where public administration accounts for only about 6.0% of employment. Including government-funded positions associated with other economic sectors (e.g., healthcare and education), nearly half (46%) of those employed in the NWT work (9,300 of the 21,400 people employed) for a public sector employer.

Fort Smith was the administrative capital of the Northwest Territories for 56 years before the designation was moved to Yellowknife in 1967.⁸ The GNWT continues to be the leading employer, employing over 500 Fort Smith residents of whom 54% are Indigenous. According to the GNWT Public Service Annual Report 2018/2019, the GNWT employed 5,289 people as of March 2019, of whom 513 (10%) were located in Fort Smith. GNWT employment is funded largely through transfers from the Government of Canada. Of the GNWT total budget of \$1.9 billion for 2019-20, 68% came from the Government of Canada Territorial Formula Financing (TFF) grant, 12% from transfer payments from the Government of Canada (e.g., related to the Canada Health Transfer, the Canada Social Transfer, and Equalization), 13% came from tax revenues (e.g., income, payroll, property, etc.), 2% from non-renewable resource revenues, and 4% from general revenues. Under

⁷ According to 2016 Canadian Census.

⁸ <https://www.gov.nt.ca/careers/en/fort-smith>

the funding arrangement between Canada and the GNWT, the budget is affected in part by the population of the GNWT. As such, the public administration sector serves as somewhat of a steady force for the economy, to the extent that any economic downturn does not result in a decline in population.

GNWT Fort Smith Employees

(Source: GNWT Public Service Annual Reports 2014/15 – 2018/19)

Characteristics	2014/15		2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Employees	499	100%	513	100%	505	100%	508	100%	513	100%
Indigenous	298	60%	292	57%	283	56%	284	56%	276	54%
Non-Indigenous	201	40%	221	43%	222	44%	224	44%	237	46%

Education

Fort Smith's students are provided an education enriched with northern traditions and values. According to Statistics Canada (2016), the educational sector employed the second highest (12%) proportion of the labour force in Fort Smith. Culture camps, literacy activities, student achievement awards, and parent councils create a vibrant educational environment.

In 2019, more than 800 students (2018/19) were enrolled at Aurora College - Thebacha Campus. Thebacha Campus is the largest of the three Aurora College campuses in the NWT and draws students from across the NWT and Nunavut. It offers a wide variety of programs including Bachelor of Education, Environment and Natural Resources Technician Program, Office Administration, Business Administration, and Heavy Equipment Operator, along with numerous apprenticeship programs in various trades.

The following table shows enrollment numbers at Fort Smith's Aurora Thebacha campus. The number of full-time equivalent students decreased between the 2016/2017 and 2018/2019 school years.

Thebacha Campus	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19	
	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT
Head Count	164	765	217	610	161	669
Full Time Equivalents	310.65		300.73		275.42	

Source: Aurora College Annual Report 2018/19.

The Aurora Research Institute's South Slave Research and GIS Centre is located on Aurora College's Thebacha Campus. As the research division of Aurora College, Aurora Research Institute (ARI)'s mandate is to improve the quality of life for NWT residents by applying scientific, technological, and Indigenous knowledge to solve northern problems and advance social and economic goals.

Other educational institutions in Fort Smith include:

- *JBT Elementary School*. Approximately 300 students are enrolled at JBT Elementary School in Kindergarten to Grade 6. Both English and French Immersion tracks are offered for all grades. Core language programs are available in French, Cree, and Chipewyan.
- *PWK High School* offers Grades 7 to 12, with a French Immersion stream up to grade 9, as well as an alternative study program. PWK High School boasts an active and varied selection of extracurricular activities including athletics, student leadership, and student interest clubs.
- *The NWT Cree language program* is an activity centre that creates audio, visual, and written documents to share and teach the Cree language. Some of their work includes children's books, video games, flashcards, calendars, and online apps that assists with language instruction.
- *SaLT College*. The College partners with a subsidiary of Northwestern Air Lease (*the Terry Harrold School of Aviation*) to jointly deliver training for northerners seeking to become commercial pilots. The SaLT College Aviation Diploma Program is a two-year program that combines classroom theory and flight training.

Mineral Resources

The economic growth of the NWT in the 20th century has been largely based on the development of non-renewable natural resources including minerals, oil, and gas. In 2016, jobs in the resource industry accounted for 6% of the total labour force in Fort Smith. There continues to be significant mineral potential associated with diamonds, gold, rare earth metals, lead, zinc, uranium, tungsten, cobalt, bismuth, silver, nickel, copper, iron, sand, gravel, and stone. The NWT has established mining infrastructure and geoscience data resources, although it has no smelters, refineries, or pelletizers.

Fort Smith serves as a bedroom community for some workers in the mining industry. The Thebacha Campus in Fort Smith provides several programs and courses related to mining. The Aurora College's Centre for Mine and Industry Training opened in January 2019.

Three diamond mines operate in the NWT. The Gahcho Kué mine is located about 270 kilometres northeast of Yellowknife while the Ekati and Diavik mines are each located about 320 kilometers north of Yellowknife. With its three producing diamond mines, the NWT is the world's third largest producer of diamonds (by value). The value of diamond production in the NWT has averaged about \$1.8 billion annually over the past 16 years and totalled \$2.1 billion in both 2017 and 2018 (which represents about 4.5% of Canada's total mineral production).

The impact of the mines on Fort Smith is highlighted below:

- The Gahcho Kué mine provided 13.8 person years of employment to Fort Smith in 2019, which accounted for 5% of the mine's total NWT employment.⁹
- 495 (42% of total employment) of the employment opportunities at the Ekati mine were provided to Northern residents in 2019. Although Ekati mine did not provide a breakdown

⁹ Gahcho Kué Mine Socio-Economic Report Building Forever: 2019

of employment by community, it was noted that the mine spent \$656,203 in Fort Smith for business related purposes.¹⁰

- In 2018, the Diavik mine provided 16.1 person years of employment to Fort Smith residents, accounting for approximately 3% of the mine's total northern employment.¹¹

Diamond mining is the largest single economic contributor in the NWT, accounting for 33% of GDP in 2018. Apart from diamond production, the mineral industry also generates significant economic activity related to exploration, remediation, purchase of products and services, construction, and travel.

Upcoming closures of the diamond mines will have a significant negative impact on the economy in the NWT. The three diamond mines have reached peak production and, according to estimates provided by Conference Board of Canada, production will begin declining in 2021. According to the Conference Board's 2019 Territorial Outlook Economic Forecast, Diavik's operating life is scheduled to end in 2025, Gahcho Kué's in 2028, and Ekati well into the 2030s (contingent on developing the Jay pipe). There is considerable uncertainty regarding timing of the economic shocks.

Mineral development opportunities being pursued in the region include the Nechalacho rare earths project and the potential reopening of operations at the Pine Point Mine. The Nechalacho rare earths project is located about 100 kilometers southeast of Yellowknife at Thor Lake. It would be the first rare earths project in Canada. Located about four hours from Fort Smith, the old Pine Point mine is projected to create between 280 and 500 jobs during the construction phase, while the operational mine will provide employment for 460 people. The Pine Point zinc operation benefits from established infrastructure, including an onsite electrical substation that provides low-cost hydroelectric power, a network of paved roads to the former mine site, and haul roads that connect all the major deposits.

Tourism

The latest statistics, released in November 2020, report that 117,620 visitors travelled to the NWT in 2019-2020¹² spending just over \$200 million, which is a 3% decrease from the \$210 million spent in 2018/2019. Leisure visitation accounted for 73% of visitors and 62% of spending in 2019/2020, while business travel accounted for 27% of visitor numbers and 38% of visitor spending in the same fiscal year. The majority of visitors are Canadians from other provinces and territories, followed by people from the USA and Germany. For those travelling by air, Asian visitors make up a significant proportion (24%).

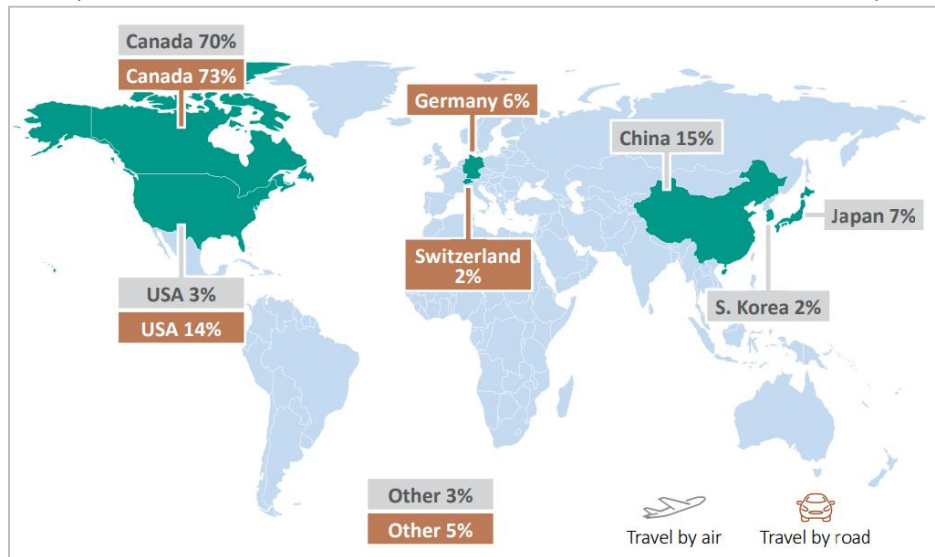
¹⁰ EKATI DIAMOND MINE 2019 Socio-Economic Agreement Report

¹¹ Diavik Diamond Mine 2018 sustainable development report

¹² Tourism Visitation and Expenditures (2019-2020), <https://www.iti.gov.nt.ca/en/tourism-research>.

Country of Origin: NWT Travellers, 2019/20

(Source: 2019-2020 Year in Review Tourism Indicators, GNWT, Tourism Research)



Over the five years from 2015/16 to 2019/20, the main purpose of leisure visitation to the NWT was viewing aurora borealis. In 2019/20, aurora viewing eclipsed business travel as the primary motivation for visiting the NWT with 37,100 visitors naming it as the primary motivation for travel to the NWT. This reflects a 53% growth rate over the preceding five years. Hunting and fishing as the primary purpose of tourism has remained a small and stable market, while outdoor adventure and general touring has collectively¹³ seen good growth (28%). The Visiting Friends and Family segment of leisure visitation has also seen a 23% growth in both visitor numbers and spending over the same period.

More specifically, visitors typically plan their trip eight months in advance and made a firm decision to travel to the NWT 4 months in advance. In 2019/20, 76% traveled to the NWT by air and 24% by road. The most common reasons travelers identified for visiting the NWT were aurora viewing (43%); general touring (24%); and visiting friends and family (18%). When planning their trip, almost two thirds (65%) of visitors did not consider other destinations. In 2016, just over half (55%) of visitors used the internet to plan their trip, 35% used the NWT parks website, 32% used brochures, posters or maps, and 30% used the Spectacular NWT website.¹⁴

Northwest Territories Visitation

(Source: Northwest Territories Visitor Surveys 2015/16-2019/20)

Main Purpose of Travel	2018/19		2019/20		% Change 2015/16-2019/20
Aurora Viewing	41,500	47%	37,100	43%	53%
Fishing	4,800	5%	5,300	6%	15%

¹³ The methodology for data collection was adjusted in 2016-17 for General Touring and Outdoor Adventure visitors and must be considered when considering historical comparisons.

¹⁴ 2016 summary of Northwest Territories road visitor survey findings. <https://www.iti.gov.nt.ca/en/tourism-research>.

Main Purpose of Travel	2018/19		2019/20		% Change 2015/16-2019/20
General Touring	17,900	20%	20,100	24%	6%
Hunting	530	1%	520	1%	2%
Outdoor Adventure ¹⁵	7,200	8%	7,300	9%	--
Visiting Friends/Relatives	15,600	18%	15,000	18%	23%
Total Leisure Visitation	87,510	100%	85,320	100%	35%
Business Travel	32,600	-	32,300	-	5%
NWT Total Visitation	120,110	-	117,620	-	25%

In 2019/20, a total of \$126 million was spent on leisure travelling in the NWT. The top 3 spending activities were Aurora viewing (\$59.8 million), general touring (\$20.5), and outdoor adventure (\$14.4).

Northwest Territories Visitor Spending (millions)

(Source: Northwest Territories Visitor Surveys 2015/16-2019/20)

Main Purpose of Travel	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	5 Year Change (%)
Aurora Viewing	\$39.70	\$48.70	\$56.90	\$67.70	\$59.80	51%
Fishing	\$9.70	\$9.20	\$9.70	\$11.60	\$13.70	41%
General Touring	\$19.80	\$19.30	\$16.40	\$17.80	\$20.50	4%
Hunting	\$7.20	\$6.70	\$6.00	\$7.10	\$7.20	0%
Outdoor Adventure ¹⁶	\$7.00	\$21.40	\$17.10	\$15.60	\$14.40	--
Visiting Friends/Relatives	\$8.50	\$11.30	\$10.10	\$10.90	\$10.40	22%
Total Leisure Spending	\$91.90	\$116.60	\$116.30	\$130.70	\$126.00	37%
Business Travel	\$75.20	\$84.90	\$87.10	\$79.40	\$78.60	5%
NWT Total Spending	\$167.10	\$201.40	\$203.40	\$210.30	\$204.60	22%

Indigenous tourism is a growing segment. Local artists produce carvings, moosehides, stained glass, jewellery, and beadwork.

In 2016, visitors spent an average of 7.2 days in the NWT and spent an average of 3.6 months to plan their trip. The percentage of returning visitors ranges from 40% to 60%. Important vacation considerations include outstanding scenery, viewing wildlife, parks, and wilderness areas. On the other hand, luxury accommodations, exciting nightlife, and package tours to destinations are the least important vacation considerations. A summary of leading segments is provided in the table on the following page.

In terms of outdoor adventure attractions, Fort Smith features the Wood Buffalo National Park, aurora borealis viewing, world class rapids, abundant wildlife, and a range of winter activities.

¹⁵ The methodology for data collection was adjusted in 2016-17 for General Touring and Outdoor Adventure visitors and must be considered when considering historical comparisons.

¹⁶ The methodology for data collection was adjusted in 2016-17 for General Touring and Outdoor Adventure visitors and must be considered when considering historical comparisons.

- **Wood Buffalo National Park and the Aurora Borealis.** Wood Buffalo National Park is the second largest in the world and the largest Dark Sky Preserve in the world. Its minimal light pollution means that the night sky and aurora borealis displays are incredible.
- **The Slave River.** The Slave River serves boaters, picnickers, kayakers, canoeists, and hikers. The rapids between Fort Fitzgerald and Fort Smith provide for 25 kilometres of Whitewater adventure.
- **Wildlife.** Local wildlife includes whooping cranes, a free roaming bison herd, wolves, black bears, the American White Pelican, moose, lynx, and foxes.
- **Winter.** Winter experiences can include snowmobiling, skiing, snowshoeing, dogsledding, and ice fishing in the early spring.

Local signature festivals and events include:

- **Slave River Paddlefest (August).** Paddlefest features instructional clinics, river trips, and events for kayaks, canoes, voyageur canoes.
- **Summer Splash Arts Festival (August).** Focused on the arts, the regional festival features multiple workshops in visual, performing, and culinary arts as well as Meet-the-Artist events, demonstrations, and exhibits.
- **Thebacha & Wood Buffalo Dark Sky Festival (August).** The festival is a 4-day journey featuring science-based workshops such as aurora photography, rocket making for the kids, and an evening star party.
- **Thebacha Loppet (March).** It is the longest running cross-country skiing event in Western Canada.
- **Wood Buffalo Frolics (March).** Frolics is a four-day carnival which includes dog-team racing, snowmobile racing, a talent show, northern games and competitions, the Mad Trapper's old-time dance, and activities for children.

The Fort Smith Mission Historic Park is an attraction for visitors, containing a well-preserved historic site complete with historical buildings from the Oblate Catholic Mission dating from the early 1900s, interpretive signage and a grotto (constructed in 1954).

Comparison of Visitor Group Trip Characteristics (2016)
 (Source: 2016 summary of Northwest Territories Road Visitor Survey findings)

Characteristic	Outdoor Adventurers	Fair Weather Voyageurs	Vocation Voyageurs	Roaming Retirees	Cultural Connoisseurs	Wilderness Wanderers
Number of nights	7.4	6.2	6.4	5.8	8.4	9.0
Travel party size	2.8	3.1	2.8	3.4	2.8	2.9
Trip planning (firm decision to visit NWT)	4.2 months	2.5 months	3.0 months	3.0 months	4.8 months	4.3 months
Return visitor	48%	54%	52%	60%	42%	43%
Plan to return	83%	65%	68%	52%	89%	72%
Important vacation considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical Adventure Outstanding scenery Viewing wildlife 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relaxing break from work Warm, reliable weather Viewing wildlife 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outstanding scenery Viewing wildlife Personal safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parks and wilderness areas Outstanding scenery Viewing wildlife 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outstanding scenery Viewing wildlife Learning opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outstanding scenery Viewing wildlife Parks and wilderness areas
Least important vacation considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Luxury accommodations Exciting nightlife Package tours to destination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal challenges Experiencing nature with a guide Shopping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Luxury accommodations Shopping Number of transfers or layovers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shopping Physical adventure Personal challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Luxury accommodations Exciting nightlife Package tours to destination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Luxury accommodations Exciting nightlife Package tours to destination

A review of online sites identified one hotel, two apartment suites, five bed and breakfast lodgings, and three campgrounds and cabins in the town of Fort Smith¹⁷. Pelican Rapids Inn & Suites is a 41 room full-service facility with a restaurant, dining, gift store, lounge, and night club. The recently expanded Wood Buffalo Inn offers comfortable, fully equipped suites and Whispering Pines Cottages offers four private units. Bed and breakfast lodgings include Whooping Crane Guest House; Reliance Airways Ltd; King George's Bed & Breakfast; Axehandle Guest House; And Thebacha Camp Services. Campgrounds and cabins include Salt River Elders Village; Little Buffalo River Falls Territorial Park; and Queen Elizabeth Territorial Park. An overview of accommodation is provided below.

Overview of Accommodation

Accommodation	Units
Hotels, Beds & Breakfast	
Pelican Rapids Inn & Suites	41
Wood Buffalo Inn	15
Reliance Airways Ltd	10
Thebacha Camp Services	5
Whispering Pines Cottages	4
King George's Bed & Breakfast	4
Whooping Crane Guest House	3
Axehandle Guest House	1
Campgrounds/Cabins	
Queen Elizabeth Territorial Park	24
Little Buffalo River Falls Territorial Park	6
Salt River Elders Village	4
Total Units	117

Fort Smith features a range of venues that can be used to host meetings or conferences.

- The Salt River First Nation Business & Conference Centre opened in 2019. Its large conference room has a capacity of 400 people. The building's shape was inspired by the oxbow river form found on the original lands of the Salt River First Nation. This shape is referenced in the building's plan form and in the linoleum pattern, which depicts a river running through the building.¹⁸ The Salt River First Nation invested \$16.7 million from the First Nations Finance Authority to build the centre.¹⁹
- The Roaring Rapids Hall. This large wooden log building can host up to 200 people (Theatre Style Seating Capacity), or 180 for a sit-down dinner (Banquet Style Seating Capacity).
- Fort Smith Recreation Centre. The gymnasium at the Fort Smith Recreation Centre gymnasium has a maximum capacity up to 375, while the theatre room has capacity for 59 people.

¹⁷ <https://spectacularnwt.com/directory/accommodations>

¹⁸ <https://www.manascisaac.com/work/salt-river-first-nation-multipurpose-facility>

¹⁹ <https://cabinradio.ca/14906/news/south-slave/salt-river-first-nation-opens-new-building-in-fort-smith/>

- Fort Smith Centennial Arena features an arena ice surface and can have up to 700 people with exhibitor space for 90 booths and an upper mezzanine that can seat up to 50 people including a canteen and food bar service.

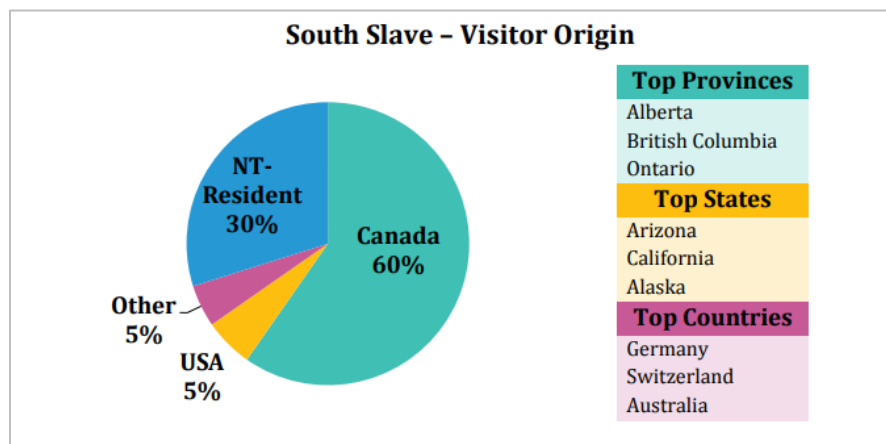
Other venues include the Northern Life Museum & Cultural Centre (capacity ranges from 35 to 65), St John’s Anglican Church Hall (maximum capacity is 75), and the Fort Smith Ski Club which has a newly renovated clubhouse that can be used for meetings, parties, and social get-togethers.

Territorial parks are one of the main attractions for visitors to the NWT and the South Slave Region where Fort Smith is located. In 2019/18, of the 35,249 total visitors to NWT territorial parks, 33% visited parks located in the South Slave Region. However, the number of visits to the region decreased by 4% between 2018/19 and 2019/20. Visitor’s length of stay in the South Slave Region averaged 2.6 days in 2019/20. Moreover, the number of visitors to the Wood Buffalo National Park amounted to 3,904 in 2018/19.²⁰

NWT Territorial Parks – Overnight Visitors by Region
 (Source: Northwest Territories Camping Permit Database 2015/16-2019/20)

Region	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	% Change 2015/16-2019/20
Beaufort Delta	2,441	2,687	2,526	5,615	6,292	+ 158%
Dehcho	1,960	2,139	2,335	2,156	1,931	- 1%
North Slave	13,794	13,675	17,631	16,623	15,430	+ 12%
South Slave	10,187	10,656	12,559	12,133	11,596	+ 14%
NWT Total	28,382	29,158	35,050	36,526	35,249	+ 24%

As the Town of Fort Smith is located in the South Slave Region, the following chart presents visitor origin focusing on the South Slave Region. In particular, in 2018/19, 60% of visitors were from Alberta, BC, or Ontario, while 30% were NWT residents.



(Source: Northwest Territories Camping Permit Database 2018/19)

²⁰ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/501659/visitors-to-wood-buffalo-national-park/>

Small Businesses

Fort Smith takes pride in its thriving small business community, fostering an entrepreneurial spirit that attracts businesses of all sorts. Support services are available for those looking to start their own business, and many programs are available to help support existing businesses. More than 200 businesses operated in Fort Smith in 2019/20, leading business sectors included construction (19%); professional, scientific, and technical services (19%); arts, entertainment, and recreation (10%); and health and personal care services (9%). If we combine grocery, appliance, clothing, and building material stores as retail stores, this sector has the third highest share of small businesses, accounting for 13%.

Fort Smith Businesses Operating in FY2019/20

(Source: Business License 2020, Fort Smith)

Sector - NAICS code	#	%
Construction - 23	38	18.7%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services - 54	38	18.7%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation - 71	21	10.3%
Health Care – 62; Personal Care Services - 8121	18	8.9%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing – 53; Activities Related to Real Estate - 5313	12	5.9%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting – 11; Support Activities for Forestry – 1153; Animal Production and aquaculture - 112	11	5.4%
Food and Beverage Stores – 445; Grocery Stores – 4451	10	4.9%
Janitorial Services - 56172	10	4.9%
Food Services and Drinking Places - 722	9	4.4%
Appliance, Television and Other Electronics Stores – 44311; Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores – 448; Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores - 442	9	4.4%
Accommodation Services - 721	9	4.4%
Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers - 444	7	3.4%
Educational Services - 61	5	2.5%
Manufacturing of Plastic, Wood, Miscellaneous, Textile and Fabric - (31331; 3261; 321; 339)	5	2.5%
Air Transportation – 481; Support Activities for Air Transportation - 4881	4	2.0%
Automotive Repair and Maintenance – 8111; Engineering Services - 54133	4	2.0%
Transit and Ground Passenger Transportation - 485	3	1.5%
Public Administration – 91; Grant-Making and Giving Services – 8132; Banking - 52211	3	1.5%
Travel Agent - 5615	1	0.5%
Total	203	100%*

*Categories are not mutually exclusive.

The number of business licenses has declined somewhat in recent years, from 226 in 2012 to 217 in 2016 and 203 in 2020. In 2016, 43% of the licensed businesses were home-based, of which 21% were located in residential properties for which seniors/disabled tax relief had been claimed.

According to the 2018 Fort Smith Business Visits Report, 60% of business owners reported that their business was doing well, 10% reported that it was doing very well, 23% reported somewhat slower activity, and 3% indicated that their business was faring poorly. As indicated in the report, regular contracts with government agencies are the most helpful support for business owners. Nonetheless, there are a number of challenges facing Fort Smith businesses, including:

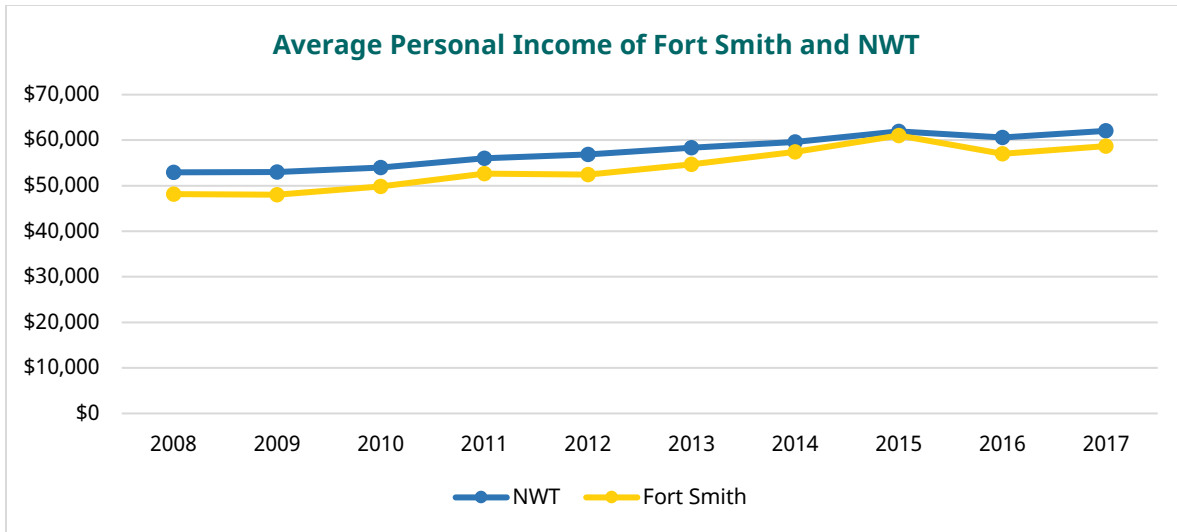
- Small market, small town, limited customer base (23%)
- Finding qualified, dependable staff (17%)
- Marketing & Advertising – a lack of time to market themselves or wanting the town to be marketed better as a whole (16%)
- High shipping costs (13%)
- High cost of travel (13%)
- Taxation (10%)

The report, however, also identified a number of potential strategies that the Town could implement to assist businesses and promote growth. Chief among those was assisting with advertising and marketing. Promoting tourism was also cited as a potential way forward for the Town.

2.5 FINANCIAL SITUATION

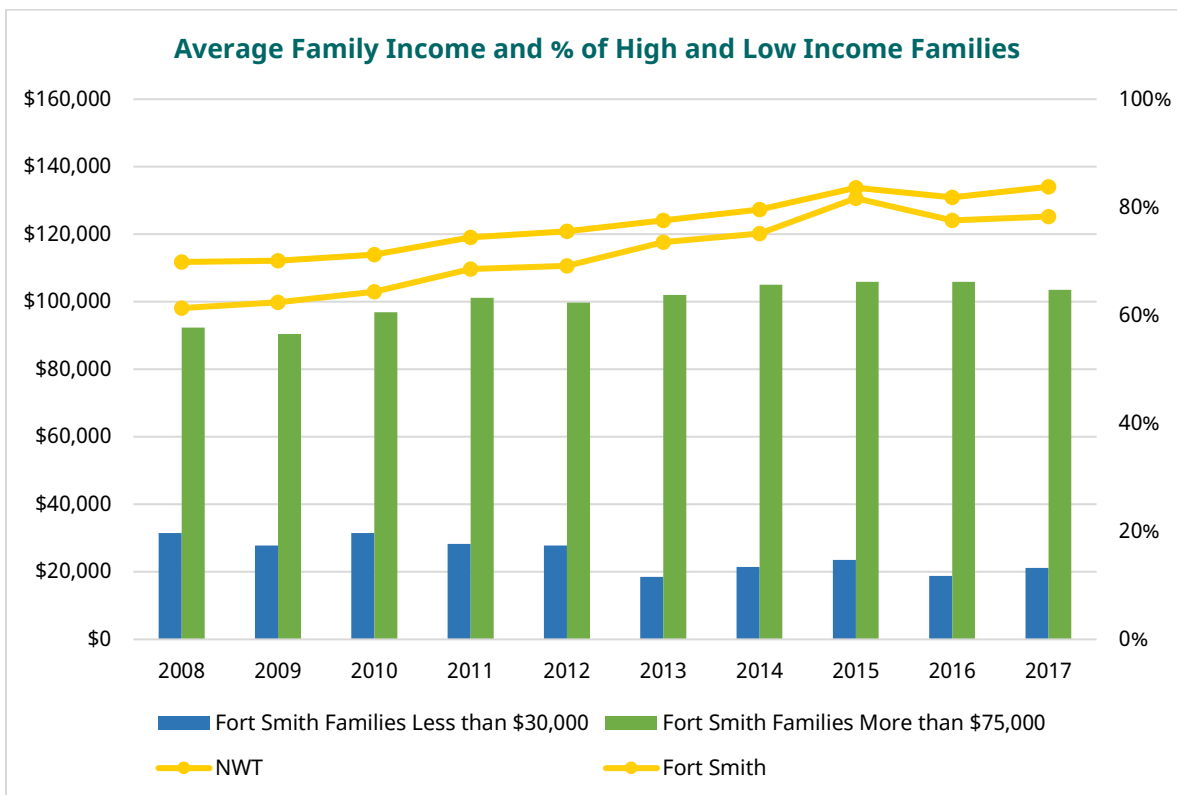
2.5.1 Personal and Family Income

Fort Smith's average personal income in 2017 was \$58,692, which is lower than the average for the NWT (\$62,049). The average personal income in Fort Smith increased from \$48,145 in 2008 to \$58,692 in 2017. As the figure below illustrates, over the last decade the trend of personal income of Fort Smith and the NWT are similar, though the average personal income is generally lower in Fort Smith.



Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics 2008-2017

The average family income in Fort Smith in 2017 was \$125,250, which is approximately \$10,000 lower than the average in the NWT. The average family income in Fort Smith increased from \$98,127 in 2008 to \$125,250 in 2017. Over the last decade, the trend of family income of Fort Smith and the NWT are similar, while the gap has been generally shrinking since 2008. In particular, 65% of the families in Fort Smith in 2017 were high income families with over \$75,000 annual income. Low-income families accounted for 13% in the same year.



Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics 2008-2017

Yellowknife residents have higher personal incomes (\$74,181 compared to \$58,692) and household incomes (\$161,796 compared to \$125,250) than Fort Smith residents. Contributing factors include:

- The GNWT pays higher than average wages. GNWT employees account for about 14% of the population in the North Slave region as compared to 12% in the South Slave Region. Furthermore, average salaries for GNWT workers in Yellowknife are higher than for those in Fort Smith. While payment classifications are standardized, the workforce in Yellowknife has, on average, a higher classification. For example, according to the GNWT data, 6% of the GNWT employees in the North Slave region are in senior positions as compared to 2% of those in the South Slave Region. Annual salary data from Indeed suggests that there is little difference in average GNWT salaries between Yellowknife and Fort Smith for most positions; however, for director level positions, Indeed reported an annual salary of \$156,915 for Yellowknife as compared to \$130,992 in Fort Smith.²¹
- The higher incidence of lower income workers brings the average down in Fort Smith. In 2017, 39% of those reporting personal income in Yellowknife earned less than \$50,000 including 14% who earned less than \$15,000. In contrast, 50% of those reporting personal income in Fort Smith earned less than \$50,000 including 17% who earned less than \$15,000.²²

2.5.2 Cost of Living

In 2018, living costs in Fort Smith were 33% higher than in Edmonton. The food price index was 18% higher than Yellowknife (100).²³

2.6 BUILDING STOCK

2.6.1 Development Permits

In 2019, the total value of permits issued for construction in Fort Smith totalled \$4.3 million, of which most related to the construction of new buildings. Some data for 2020 is also presented in the table below (up to July 2020).

Development Permits Issued in Fort Smith
(Source: Fort Smith Development Permits Issued 2019, 2020)

Type of Development	2019	2020 (Up to July)
New Building Construction (e.g., house, duplex, motel suites)	\$4,282,000	\$670,000

²¹ https://ca.indeed.com/cmp/Government-of-the-Northwest-Territories/salaries?job_category=techsoftware&location=CA%2FNT%2FFort+Smith

²² Personal Income Distribution Northwest Territories by Community and Selected Geographic Aggregation 2018

²³ NWT Bureau of Statistics

Type of Development	2019	2020 (Up to July)
Additional Construction (e.g., porch, garage, shed, workshops, car lot etc.)	\$93,330	\$132,000
Home Occupation (e.g., general contracting, lawn care & landscaping, wildland fire planning, locksmith etc.)	\$2,250	\$930
Demolish existing construction	\$575	\$5,000
Other (e.g., move building onto lot, excavate lot)	\$5,000	\$3,000
Total	\$4,383,155	\$810,930

2.6.2 Commercial and Industrial Property

As listed on the official Fort Smith real estate and rental property listings website, there are four single detached houses for sale (ranging from \$240,000 to \$300,000), in addition to three commercial spaces, and 11 rental properties.²⁴

2.6.3 Housing

In 2016, there were approximately 960 private dwellings in the Town of Fort Smith, almost all (82%) were detached houses, while apartments, flats in a duplex, or row houses accounted for 17% of dwellings. Moreover, 59% of private dwellings were owned by their occupants in 2016, this percentage has not changed much in 2019.

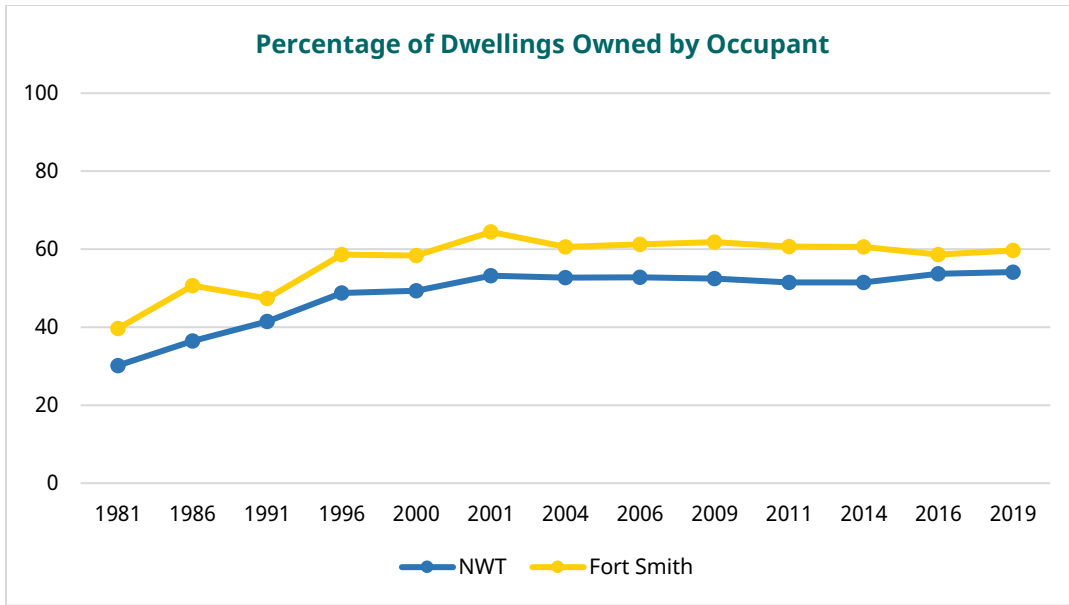
Private Dwelling by Structural Type in the Town of Fort Smith (2016)

Structure Type	#	%
Single-detached house	685	71%
Semi-detached house	110	11%
Row house	80	8%
Apartment in a building that has fewer than five stories	50	5%
Apartment or flat in a duplex	35	4%
Total private dwellings	960	100%

Source: Statistics Canada Census 2016

In 2019, 60% of dwellings in the Town of Fort Smith were owned by their occupants, this percentage is slightly higher than the NWT (54%). As the figure below illustrates, this trend has been somewhat constant at roughly 60% since 2004.

²⁴ <https://www.fortsmith.ca/node/1035>



Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics 1981-2019

In 2016, housing prices in Fort Smith ranged from \$150,000 to \$500,000 which is similar to Hay River (\$150,000 to \$500,000) but considerably less than Yellowknife (\$380,000 to \$800,000).²⁵ The following table shows housing price statistics in 2016. Six percent of Fort Smith’s property owners, and 10% of tenant households, reported spending 30% or more of their income on shelter costs. The percentage of Fort Smith’s tenant households in subsidized housing (40%) is similar as to the NWT (41%).

Housing Prices in the Town of Fort Smith (2016)

Source: Statistics Canada Census 2016

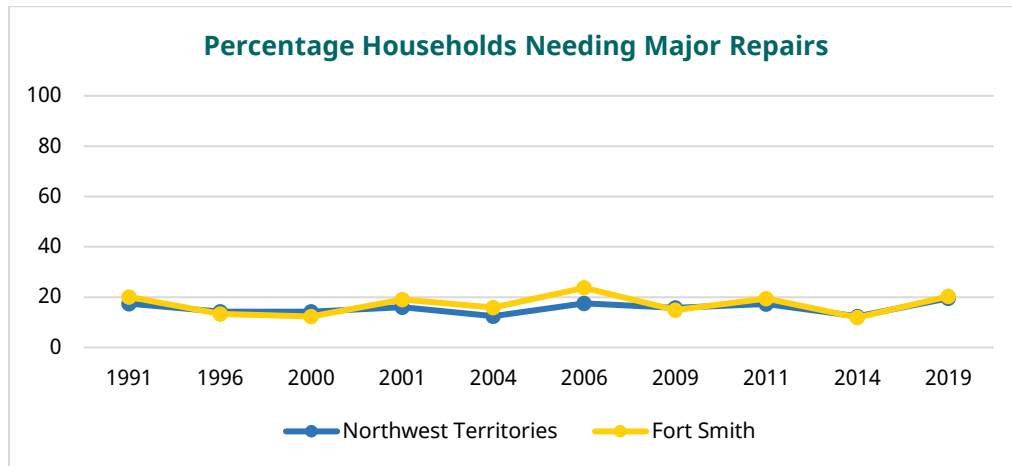
	Fort Smith	NWT
Average value of dwellings	\$256,677	\$346,427
Average monthly shelter costs for owned dwellings	\$1,242	\$1,739
Average monthly shelter costs for rented dwellings	\$861	\$1,190
% of owner households spending 30% or more of its income on shelter costs	6.1%	9%
% of tenant households spending 30% or more of its income on shelter costs	9.9%	16.3%
% of tenant households in subsidized housing	40.3%	41.3%

The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is responsible for addressing the quality, adequacy, suitability, and affordability of housing in the NWT. The Corporation offers programs to help NWT residents become homeowners. The Fort Smith Housing Authority provides and maintains public housing for residents of Fort Smith. There are no active real estate agents in Fort Smith, so most

²⁵ Fort Smith Economic Development Baseline 2016.

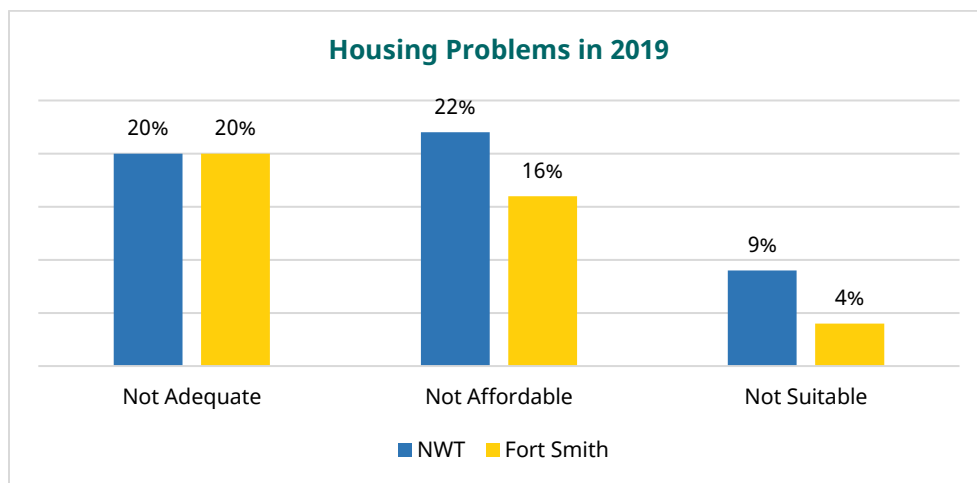
property sales in the community are completed as private transactions between homeowners and buyers, with the help of lawyers.²⁶

In Fort Smith, the portion of dwellings needing major repairs in 2019 was 20%. The trends of both Fort Smith and NWT are similar, though there exist some gaps between 2001 and 2009. The percentage has remained approximately between 10% to 20% over the last two decades.



Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics 1991-2019

Of the 957 Fort Smith households surveyed in 2019, 34% reported experiencing at least one housing problem. Adequacy was the main contributor of housing problems in Fort Smith (20%). Affordability was the second leading issue (16%), while suitability issues accounted for only 4%.



Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics 2019

A program is available that provides property tax relief for residents who are aged 65 years or older or are disabled. According to an analysis conducted by the Town in 2017, claims were received on 21% of the residential developed properties in Fort Smith. This was up from 13% in 2006, illustrating the aging of the population and increasing consolidation of home ownership among older residents. The purpose of the property tax rebate program, delivered in partnership with the

²⁶ Fort Smith Community Profile

GNWT, is to keep seniors in their home given that there is limited seniors accommodation in the NWT. However, by doing so, it can also add to the housing shortage and make it more difficult for younger residents and families to access housing.

Housing affordability can be a key issue for resident attraction. Initiatives that could lower property prices, as mentioned in the Fort Smith Housing Affordability report (2017), include:

- Identifying potential existing lots to convert from R1 to R2 zoning
- Creating smaller lots by splitting large lots
- Zoning and land identification for higher density housing\apartments

Similarly, in the 2018 Economic Development Strategy, increasing housing options is one of the strategies to attract and retain residents in Fort Smith. In particular, the activities include:

- Working with landowners to develop affordable housing through programs and policies.
- Development of location and design guidelines for different housing types and densities.
- An affordable housing strategy.
- A public information campaign about building requirements for secondary suites, and the benefits of infill housing and residential intensification.

In addition, Fort Smith residents cite affordable housing and rental accommodations as the most important community issue.²⁷

2.7 INFRASTRUCTURE

2.7.1 Health

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA) is a centrally located facility that serves the 2,700 residents of Fort Smith and more from the surrounding region. They operate the local health centre, Northern Lights Special Care Home, and community-based health and social services programs for the Fort Smith region. They have over 100 employees who provide a full range of medical and health services such as home care, midwifery, counseling, mental health, lab, x-ray, speech therapy, and emergency care.²⁸ In particular, services/facilities include:

- Emergency centre
- Ambulance bay
- Medical clinic
- Public health clinic
- Birthing rooms
- X-ray and laboratory testing
- Morgue
- Administrative offices
- Medical travel offices
- Social services offices

Fort Smith also has a Medical Clinic and a Women's Shelter/Transition House.

²⁷ Fort Smith Citizen Satisfaction Survey 2019

²⁸ Fort Smith Community Profile

2.7.2 Transportation

The community is connected year-round by the NWT Highway system to other NWT communities including Hay River (270 kilometres away) and Yellowknife (740 kilometers away). In the winter, an ice road through Wood Buffalo National Park connects Fort Smith to Fort Chipewyan (230 kilometres) and Fort McMurray (500 kilometres) in Alberta.

Driving Distances From Other Communities

Community	Driving Distance to Fort Smith
Via NWT Highways 1, 2 and 5	
Hay River	272 km
High Level	583 km
Yellowknife	740 km
Edmonton	1,365 km
Via Winter Road	
Fort Chipewyan	228 km
Fort McMurray	499 km
Edmonton	955 km



Source: <https://www.dot.gov.nt.ca/Highways/Highway-Conditions>

There has been discussion of building a northern road through Wood Buffalo National Park. Representatives of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, the Town of Fort Smith, and several Indigenous organizations, including the Mikisew Cree First Nation, the Fort Smith Métis Council, and the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, met in August 2019 to discuss the project.

Daily air service to Fort Smith is provided by the local airline, Northwestern Air Lease, that offers scheduled flights to and from Yellowknife, Fort McMurray, and Edmonton.

Travelling by car is a great way to see the North, and to visit Fort Smith. NWT highways are all two lanes and well maintained. Highway 5 leads into Wood Buffalo National Park and on to Fort Smith. It is fully paved and conducive to travel by car, van, truck, and camper trailers. Key transportation infrastructures are summarized below²⁹:

- **Highway.** NWT highways are all two lanes. Highways 1 and 2 are paved and Highway 5 is chip sealed. The roads are well-maintained, and conducive to travel by car, van, truck, and camper trailers.
- **Trucking.** Fort Smith is serviced daily by several trucking and transport companies for complete service options to points north and south. The companies include Wesclean, Grimshaw Trucking Ltd, Matco, Manitoulin Transport, and Buffalo Express. Businesses depend on the ability to order and ship their commodities in a timely process.
- **Air Service.** Northwestern Air Lease Ltd, is locally owned and operated. They provide flight service to and from Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Fort Smith, Hay River, High Level, Fort Chipewyan, and Yellowknife, with regular return flights to Edmonton and Yellowknife six days a week. Charter air service and sightseeing flights are also available.
- **Taxi Service.** There are three taxi companies in Fort Smith with 24-hour service.
- **Vehicle Rentals.** Avis truck rentals are available.

2.7.3 Communication

Communication infrastructure in the town of Fort Smith includes full postal service, cable television, radio stations, and 4G cellular service. The majority of residents use the Town of Fort Smith's Facebook page (and social media pages) to find out about Town services, news, and events. Seventeen percent of respondents use the Town of Fort Smith's website to keep up to date on local events and announcements.³⁰

Investments have been made to improve the quality of the 4G network. Continuing improvements will be needed as the communication technology moves to 5G. In August 2020, Northwestel was approved for \$62 million in funding to improve broadband internet service in the NWT and Yukon, and is introducing a new plan to offer unlimited data to northern residents. Fort Smith is one of the first communities to be offered the unlimited data plans. The top-rated Internet 250 plan allows unlimited data with 250 Mbps download speeds and 15 Mbps upload speeds. It is priced at \$249.95 per month. Relative to plans in southern Canada, internet speeds are considerably slower and monthly fees considerably higher.

²⁹ Fort Smith Community Profile

³⁰ Fort Smith Citizen Satisfaction Survey 2019

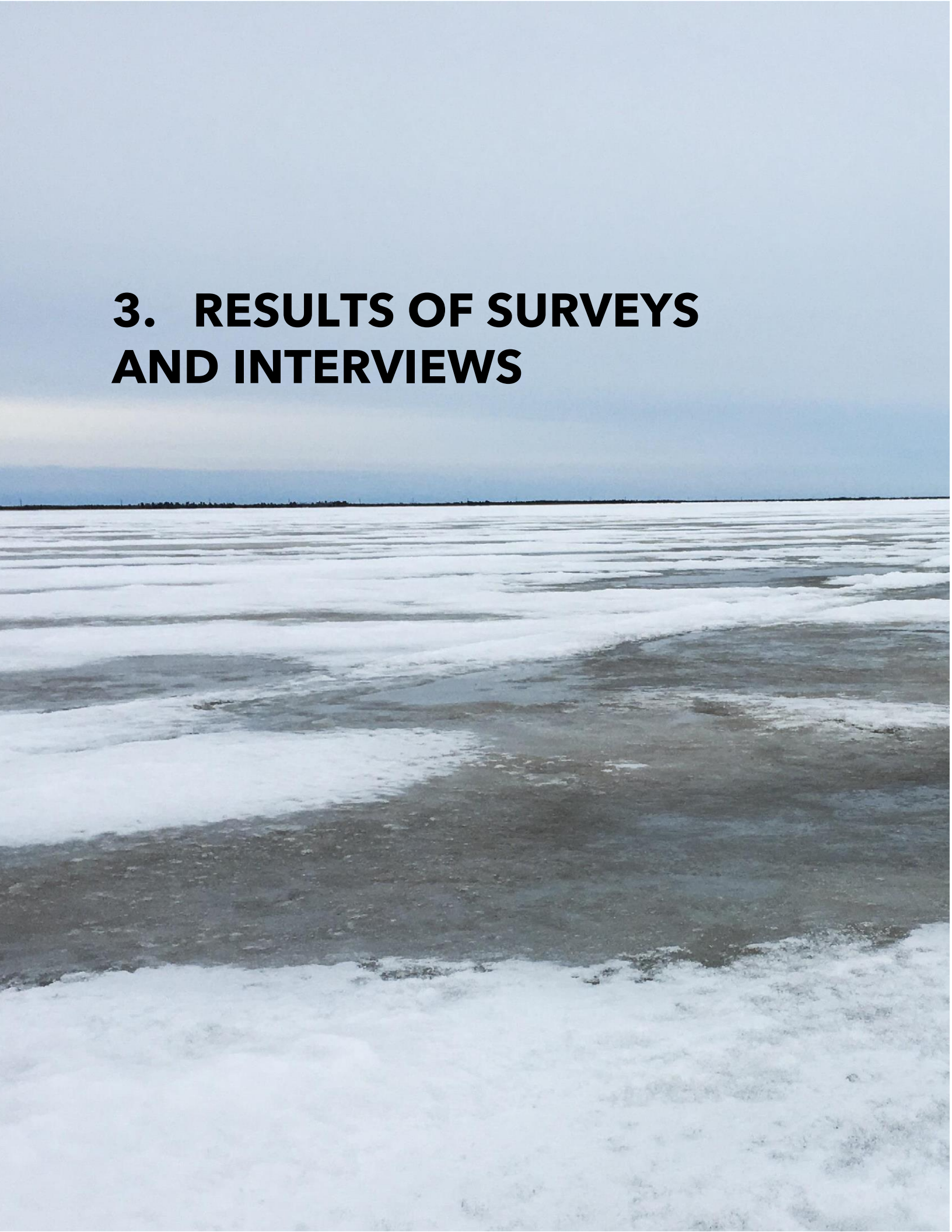
2.7.4 Other Infrastructure

In addition to the key facilities, services, and infrastructure outlined in previous sections, the town of Fort Smith also has an RCMP detachment, a volunteer fire department, and a correctional facility. Electricity infrastructure includes Hydro and NTPC.

Sector	Key Infrastructure
Judicial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Police Service ▪ Correctional Facility
Electricity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hydro/Diesel Backup Electricity Supply ▪ NTPC Electricity Supplier

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics (2014)

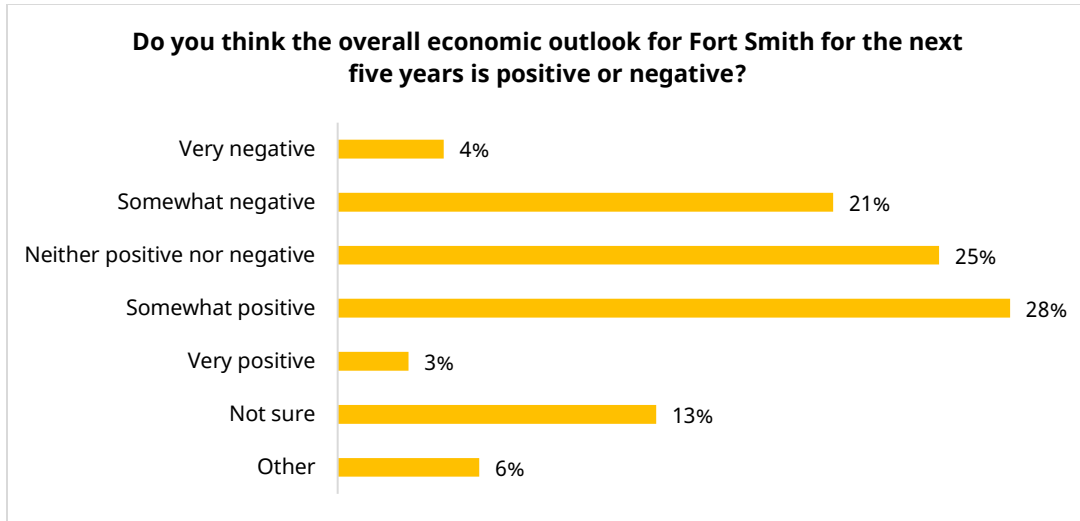
3. RESULTS OF SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS



3.1 GENERAL ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

1. Businesses and key informants expressed mixed expectations regarding the economic outlook for Fort Smith over the next five years.

Thirty percent of the businesses view the economic outlook for Fort Smith to be positive, including 3% who view it as very positive. On the other hand, 25% view the economic outlook to be negative over next 5 years, including 4% who view it as very negative.



Those survey respondents who view the economic outlook for Fort Smith as positive over the next five years mentioned that:

- The COVID-19 pandemic may encourage people to move away from larger urban centres to smaller communities like Fort Smith.
- Existing residents are “hard working” and committed to “building a better future”.
- There are opportunities for business to provide products and services for the local market as well as support expected mining, energy, and roads developments.
- Ongoing government expenditures provide a stable base for the economy.

On the other hand, those who view the economic outlook for Fort Smith to be negative noted:

- Uncertainty regarding the future of Aurora College, which would likely be impacted if a university is established in Yellowknife. A decline in enrollment would reduce Fort Smith’s population and reduce the size of the market for local businesses.
- The high dependence on public sector jobs. The perception amongst some is that the town has been losing government jobs to Yellowknife, “which has hurt our businesses” and that more needs to be done to prevent the loss of jobs.
- Various factors serve to constrain growth. For example, the location of the town and the road condition are weaknesses (“we are located at the end of the road, with one way in, and one way out”). The population is not growing, housing is limited, construction costs are high, and there is a lack of rental properties and daycare options.

- There is a lack of vision and leadership. Fort Smith needs to create a more entrepreneurial culture.

Those who are not expecting change indicated that the community has not changed or grown much over the years, a pattern which is not expected to change.

Of the key informants who expressed an opinion regarding the economic outlook for Fort Smith:

- Eight were optimistic about the 5-year economic outlook. Unlike others who noted that the level of entrepreneurship in Fort Smith is very low, these key informants felt that an entrepreneurship culture is beginning to emerge particularly amongst younger residents and newer immigrants. Historically, entrepreneurship has not been seen “as a work option by youth or the community as a whole; most people prefer a government job with a pension.” However, over the last 18 months, several entrepreneurs have opened new businesses in Fort Smith, and some new residents between the ages of 25 and 40 came to the community and “put roots down.”
- 25 expect little change, noting that the level of population and economic activity in Fort Smith will remain largely the same. While these key informants did not see significant opportunities to further develop the economy or attract many new residents, they expect that government expenditures will continue to sustain the economy. A few did note the existence of some downside risks, particularly related to the potential downsizing or relocation of Aurora College and declining employment in the mineral sector.
- Four view the outlook to be negative, noting a series of factors constraining economic development, the ongoing impact of COVID-19, and possibility of declines in government employment and employment with the College.

2. Key informants noted several recent, planned, or proposed major developments and investments that could impact Fort Smith.

Key informants were asked to identify any major government, business, or infrastructure developments and investments that have been made recently, or are planned or proposed, which could have a significant impact (positive or negative) on Fort Smith. The key developments that were identified included:

- *Taltson Hydro plant expansion.* The Taltson Hydroelectric facility is located about 64 km north of Fort Smith and provides power to Fort Smith, Hay River, K'atl'odeeche First Nation, Fort Resolution, and Enterprise. The proposed expansion project, funded by the federal and Northwest Territory governments³¹, would more than triple the power plant's generation capacity (from 18 to 60 megawatts) and link electrical grids north and south of Great Slave Lake via an underwater cable. Key informants noted that the expansion would lower the price of electricity and create innovation opportunities for energy, fiber

³¹ The federal and Northwest Territories governments invested about \$1.2 million into preliminary work for a proposed expansion of the Taltson Hydroelectricity Expansion Project.

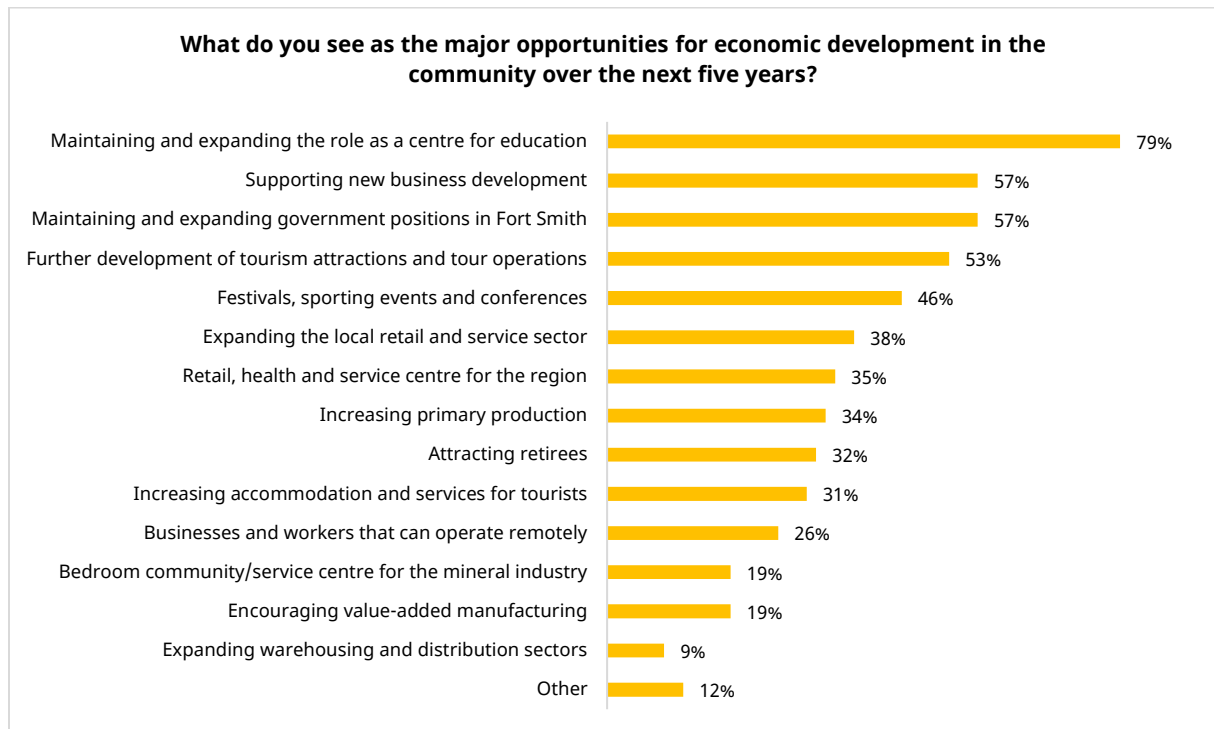
line, power, IT, hydro, or even electrical car charging capacity. They expect this expansion to have a long-run benefit.

- *Reopening of the Pine Point mine.* Located about four hours from Fort Smith, the old Pine Point mine is projected to create between 280 and 500 jobs during the construction phase, while the operational mine will provide employment for 460 people. Reopening of the mine could create opportunities for local construction and suppliers as well as opportunities to attract new residents who would be associated with the mine and its operations.
- *Expansion of the Aurora College.* If the GNWT decides to expand the Aurora College and its programs (e.g., mining related, formal hospitality, industry training etc.) without moving the headquarters to Yellowknife, it would create investment opportunities for (smaller micro) businesses in town and produce more job opportunities.

In addition, the recent development of the Salt River Conference Centre has created opportunities to attract meetings, conferences, and other events.

3. When asked to identify the three major economic development opportunities for the community over the next five years, the businesses most commonly identified maintaining and expanding Fort Smith’s role as a centre for education; supporting new business development; and maintaining and expanding government positions in the town.

Other commonly identified opportunities included further development of tourism attractions and tour operations (53%); and increasing the number of festivals, sporting events, and conferences that are hosted in Fort Smith (46%) as indicated below.



The “other” category includes reducing the cost of living, lowering the cost of utilities, incentivizing new housing starts, and increasing rental and daycare service options.

When asked about major opportunities for economic development in the community over the next five years, key informants most commonly identified tourism (identified by 20 of the 40 key informants), Taltson power expansion (8), and expansion of Aurora College (7).

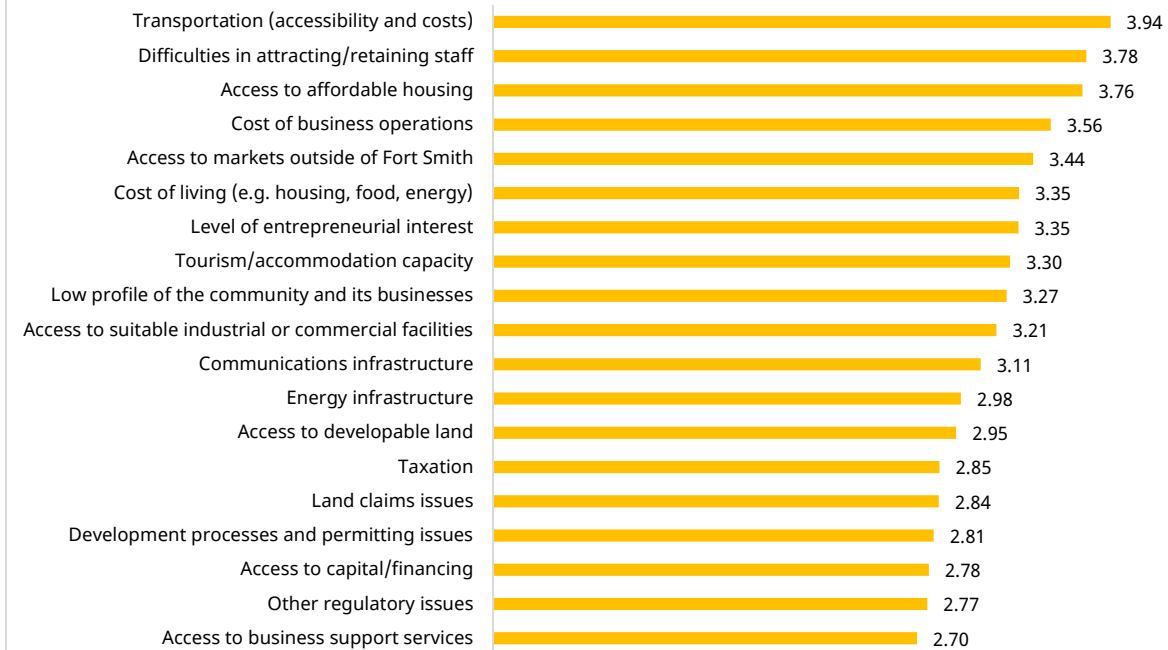
- *Tourism opportunities.* Key informants highlighted opportunities related to outdoor adventure activities (e.g., ecotourism, world class rapids, canoeing on Slave River, hunting, and fishing), winter tourism, festivals, and aurora borealis viewing as well as the further development of accommodation (e.g., hotels and bed and breakfasts).
- *Taltson power expansion.* This expansion project would lead to lower prices for power which may spur new business development.
- *Expanding Aurora College.* Key informants indicated that the Town should focus on keeping the college headquarters in Fort Smith, expanding the college to a university, broadening the range of programs, and developing programs that could encourage students to stay longer in town than they would during a typical apprenticeship (e.g., vocational polytechnic, mine training, formal hospitality, industry training etc.).

Other opportunities were identified related to mining, the film industry (building on Yellowknife’s position as a local film hub), greenhouses, service sector businesses, remote workers, and buy local campaigns.

4. Access to transportation, staff, and affordable housing were identified by businesses as key factors constraining economic development in Fort Smith.

The businesses were asked to rate a series of factors on a scale 1 to 5 (where 1 is not at all, 3 is somewhat, and 5 is to a great extent) that may be a constraint for economic development in the town of Fort Smith. As indicated in the figure below, the highest rated factors include transportation accessibility and costs (average rating of 3.9 with 42% of businesses indicating it to a great extent), difficulties in attracting/retaining staff (average rating of 3.8 with 31% of businesses indicating it to a great extent), access to affordable housing (average rating of 3.8 with 41% of businesses indicating it to a great extent), cost of business operations (average rating of 3.6 with 24% of businesses indicating it to a great extent), access to markets outside of Fort Smith (average rating of 3.4 with 28% of businesses indicating it to a great extent), cost of living in terms of housing, food, and energy (average rating of 3.4 with 24% of businesses indicating it to a great extent), and the level of entrepreneurial interest (average rating of 3.4 with 17% of businesses indicating it to a great extent).

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all, 3 is somewhat, and 5 is to a great extent, to what extent do you believe the following factors are constraining economic development in Fort Smith?



Other factors constraining or slowing economic development, as identified by survey respondents, include:

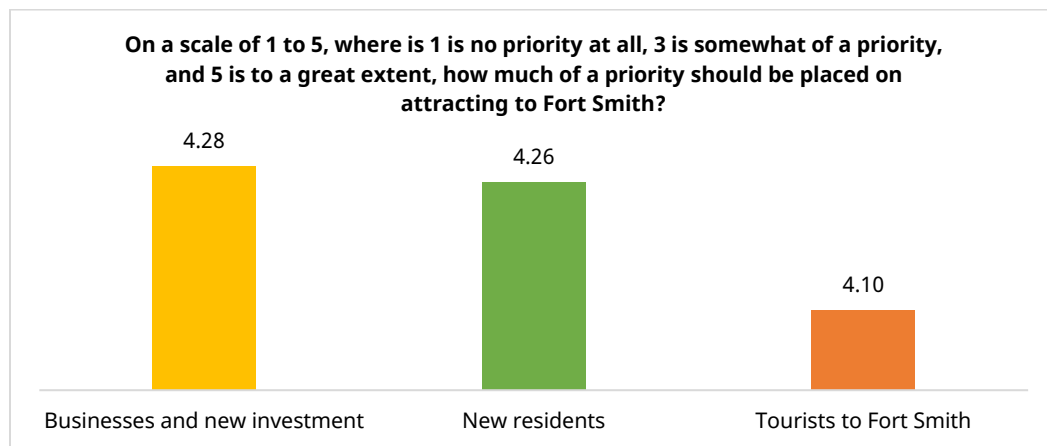
- The time and costs associated with transporting goods to and from outside markets (e.g., there are no couriers and Canada Post delivery is by road only).
- A lack of 'welcoming services' for newcomers. It was suggested that some type of group (e.g., town sponsored or a society) should be established to help connect new residents with community members and help build connections to retain new residents.
- Fort Smith has affordable housing to purchase but the rental market is almost non-existent and finding housing for a single person is very difficult.
- The private sector cannot compete with government for skilled workers (government jobs are relatively higher paying).
- Obtaining approval of development permits is a lengthy and cumbersome process.
- There is a need for more innovative and creative leadership.
- The market for local bricks and mortar businesses (e.g., retail, restaurants, etc.) is small.
- There are minimal childcare options.

As indicated in the table below, the constraints most commonly identified by key informants were location (e.g., limited to one road in and out) and the costs of transportation (shipping and airfares). Other commonly identified factors include the lack of promotion and marketing for tourism; the lack of a diversified economy; limited access to skilled workers and development land; and uncertainty surrounding the college.

Key factors that serve to constrain economic development in Fort Smith:	#	%
Total Survey Respondents	37	100%
Location and cost of transportation (e.g., Lack of a “loop” road/it is at the end of the road/only one road in and out; air travel is costly; expensive shipping; limitations on product distribution/market access)	24	65%
Lack of promotion and marketing on Tourism attraction sites and products (e.g., lack of marketing support by the NWT tourism association; Lack of awareness of tourism products as tourists are not guided with tours)	13	35%
Lack of a diversified economy (e.g., the economy has no other major industry except the government and the college; lack of economy of scale and volume that could encourage larger businesses)	13	35%
Uncertainty with Aurora college’s relocation/expansion	7	19%
Lack of and access to skilled workers (e.g., Difficult to compete with GNWT in terms of wages; Seasonal workers are often unemployed and staff retention is low)	7	19%
Lack of land (e.g., unsettled land claims; uncertainty to where/which lands to invest; limited available land for development etc.)	7	19%
Housing Availability (e.g., Lack of rental housing for families and singles; Lack of accommodation; Lack of housing prevents people from staying or working here)	6	16%
Lack of entrepreneurship spirit/attitude	4	11%
Cost of living and low population base (e.g., Energy costs; non growing population rate)	4	11%
Mine closures (e.g., Not proactively promoting/developing new mines; the planned opening of new mines would not balance out the planned mine closures)	3	8%
Regulations for resource development (e.g., Taxes; Lack of services and support from GNWT in general)	2	5%

5. Businesses felt that the attraction strategy should target businesses, residents, and tourists.

As indicated in the figure below, businesses prioritized attracting businesses and new residents marginally higher than attracting tourists.



Accelerating the rate of new business development will help to diversify the economy, create jobs, expand the tax base and provide opportunities that help retain youth in the community. The businesses saw a close inter-relationship between attracting new businesses and new residents. New residents are most commonly attracted by employment opportunities and, once there, are also more likely than older residents to start new businesses.

Attracting more tourists to the community will help to expend the local tourism industry and increase the profile of Fort Smith which, in turn, can help in attracting businesses and new residents.

6. Past efforts to attract tourists, businesses, and residents have been constrained by the low profile of the community, a shortage of tourism products, and the lack of an entrepreneurial culture.

Some work has been done in the past to attract tourists, investment, and residents. However, key informants indicated these efforts achieved limited success. Some of the challenges that were faced included:

- Awareness of Fort Smith is very limited. Relative to what has been done in the past, attracting visitors, investors, or new residents will require a more concerted and sustained effort to first raise the profile of the community and demonstrate what opportunities are available.
- The under-developed nature of the tourism industry. From a product packaging point of view, Fort Smith tourism is in the early stages of development. There is little in the way of packaged products and a shortage of both accommodation and hospitality services.
- Business development, whether focused on tourism or other economic sectors, requires strong industry champions. However, the Town has historically not had a strong entrepreneurial base that is willing to make the personal investments and take the risks necessary to build these sectors.

3.2 BUSINESS ATTRACTION

1. Fort Smith is mostly characterized by small businesses with fewer than 10 employees that primarily serve local customers.

Of the businesses surveyed in Fort Smith, 72% employ 5 or fewer employees, 12% employ 5 to 10 employees, 9% employ 11 to 20, and 7% employ over 20 employees (three firms employ over 40 people).

Size of the Businesses

Employees	2020	
	#	%
Less than 5	50	72%
5 to 10	8	12%
11 to 20	6	9%
Over 20	5	7%
Total Respondents	69	100%

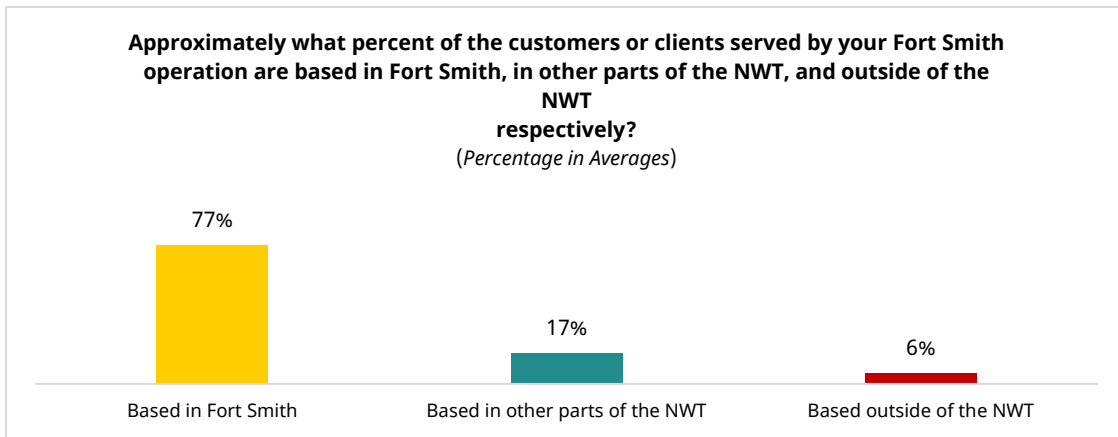
Three quarters of the businesses in Fort Smith indicated that at least 70% of their revenues are generated from products or services sold to customers or clients based in Fort Smith. As demonstrated in the table below, 30% of the businesses reported that the local market accounts for 100% of their demand, while 55% reported that it accounts for over 90%. Conversely, only 9%

of the businesses surveyed reported that 80% or more of their customers or clients are based outside of the town.

Percentage of Customers Based in Fort Smith

Percentage of customers based in Fort Smith:	#	%
Total Respondents	66	100%
100% customers	20	30%
90% or more customers	36	55%
80% or more customers	45	68%
70% or more customers	49	74%

On average, the local market accounts for 77% of the demand for products or services offered by businesses in Fort Smith, followed by customers based in other parts of the NWT (17%), and outside of the NWT (6%).



2. **Although there has been an overall decrease in employment compared to two years ago, most business owners do not expect employment to further decrease over the next two years.**

Of the businesses surveyed, 60 were in operation two years ago. Relative to 2018, 17% employed more people on the day of the survey than they did on that day two years earlier, while 25% employed fewer people. Of the 68 who ventured an opinion, 26% expect to employ more people in two years than they did on the day of the survey, while 22% expected to employ fewer.

Employment Change: Current, 2 Years Ago, 2 Years from Now

Employees	2018-2020		2020-2022	
	#	%	#	%
Increased/Expect to increase	10	17%	18	26%
Decreased/Expect to decrease	15	25%	15	22%
Stayed the same/Expect to stay the same	35	58%	35	51%
Total Respondents	60	100%	68	100%

The following table compares the employment distribution between 2018, 2020, and 2022. Excluding data provided by one large employer, 58 surveyed businesses provided data on employment in 2018 and 2020 as well as projections for 2022. As indicated, aggregate employment for these 58 businesses declined from 371 in 2018 to 359 at the time of the survey (a decrease of 3.2%) but is projected to increase slightly to 365 in 2022 (an increase of 1.7%).

Employment Distribution: Current, 2 Years Ago, 2 Years from Now

Employees	2018		2020		2022	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Less than 5	44	76%	40	69%	42	72%
5 to 10	7	12%	8	14%	6	10%
11 to 20	2	3%	6	10%	6	10%
Over 20	5	9%	4	7%	4	7%
Total reported all periods of employment	58	100%	58	100%	58	100%
Total	371		359		365	
Average Employment³²	6.4		6.2		6.3	
Change	-3.2%				+1.7%	

- Over the past two years, nearly half of the businesses surveyed have hired new workers on a permanent, temporary, or part-time basis to work in Fort Smith. While most of those new hires were already residing in the town, nine percent of the new hires moved to Fort Smith for the employment opportunity.

Of those surveyed, 27% of the businesses had 1 to 4 new hires over the past two years, 12% had 5 to 10 new hires, and the remaining 10% had over 10. Two large employers were excluded when calculating the average number of new hires per firm.

Number of New Hires over the Past Two Years

# of New Hires	2018	
	#	%
None	34	51%
1 to 4	18	27%
5 to 10	8	12%
11 to 20	5	7%
Over 20	2	3%
Total Respondents	67	100%
Total New Hires	434	
Average New Hires³³	2.8	

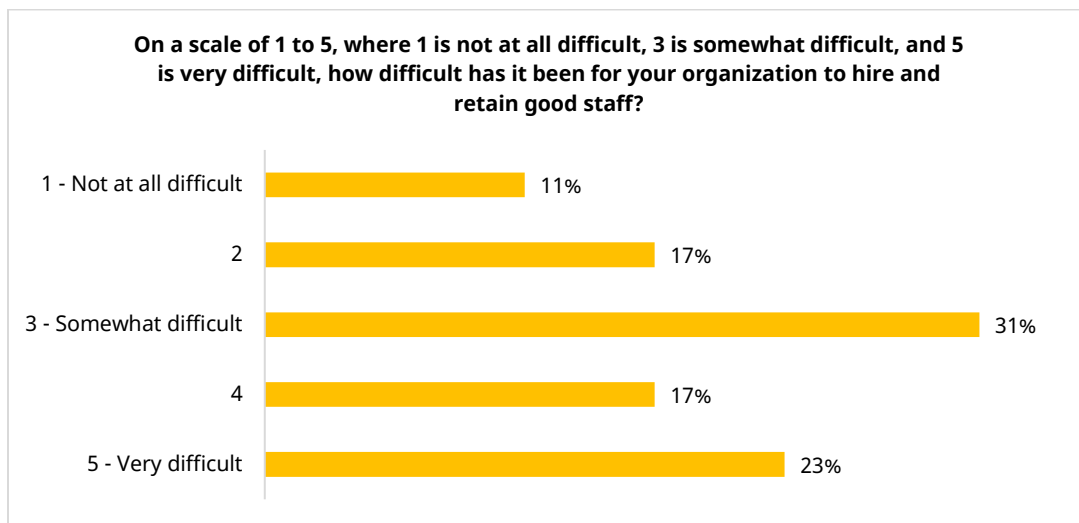
³² Excluded one large employer in the accommodation sector that had a significant change in employment as an outlier when calculating averages and employment changes.

³³ Excluding two large employers in the accommodation and food services sectors who had new hires of 50 and 200 over the last two years when calculating averages.

Of those new hires, 9% moved to Fort Smith (as opposed to already residing in the town) to take the position. These new hires came from Yellowknife, North Slave, Alberta (e.g., Calgary, Edmonton), Ontario, BC, Québec, and outside of Canada (India, Pakistan, or Korea).

4. Labour challenges can make it difficult for a business to maintain and expand operations. Seventy-one percent of businesses who had new hires over the past two years indicated that it has been at least somewhat difficult to hire and retain good staff, particularly for entry level, customer service, management, and administration positions.

Twenty-three percent reported it was very difficult.



The following types of positions were identified as difficult to attract and retain staff:

- *Entry level positions.* While Fort Smith has unemployed workers, many of those are not ready or willing to work in the private sector. Government competes with industry not only for skilled workers but also for semi-skilled and entry level positions, making it more difficult for the private sector to fill those positions.
- *Customer service positions* (e.g., retail sales, baristas etc.). Businesses reported difficulties in hiring qualified and disciplined staff for front line retail and customer service work. Adding to preexisting difficulties, pandemic-related programs (e.g., CERB) provided some people with a viable alternative to returning to work.
- *Skilled positions.* Some of the examples that were given included manager and administration positions, accounting professionals, tax preparers, bookkeepers, pilots and aircraft maintenance engineers, mechanics and other trades, and child and youth care workers.

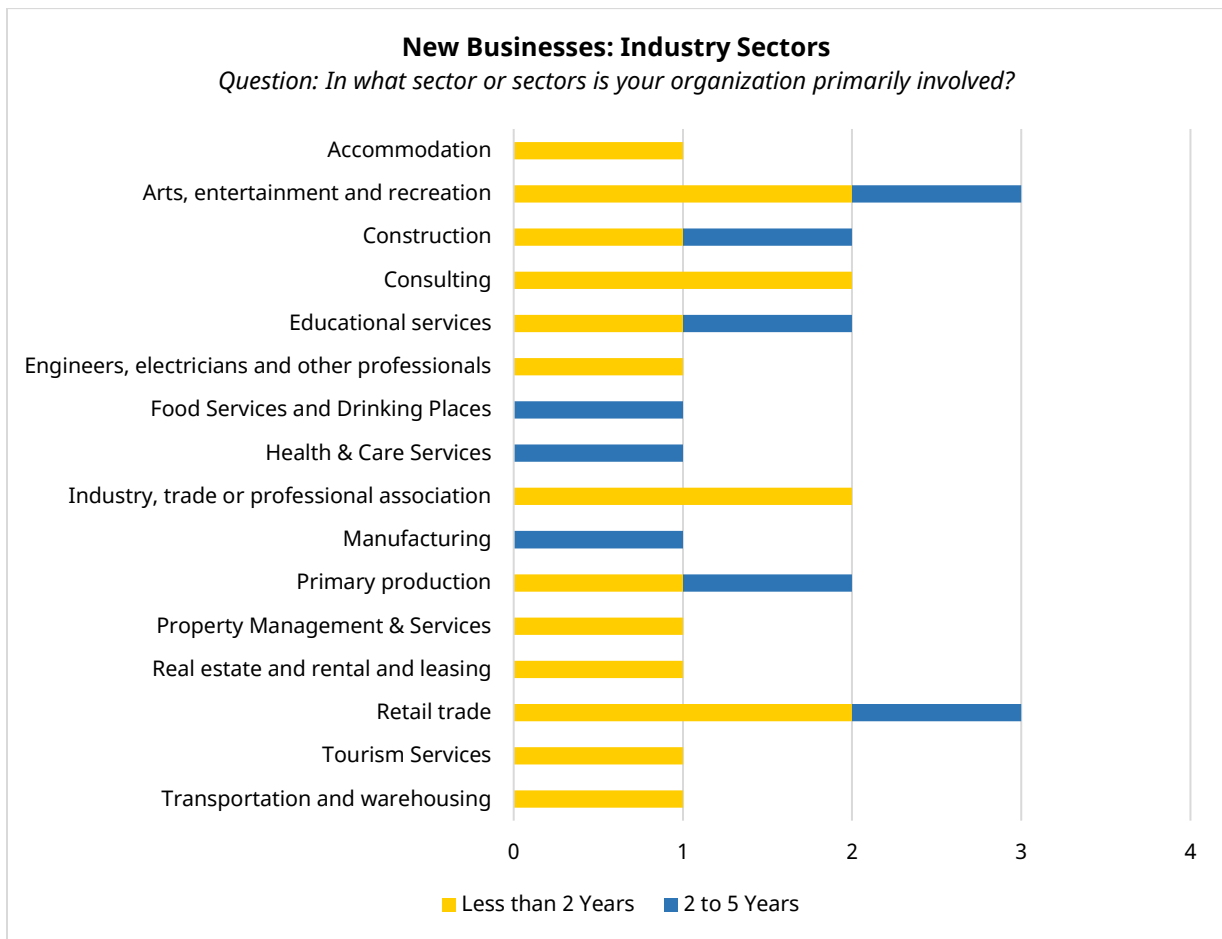
Difficulties in accessing staff can serve to slow the rate of growth or reduce hours of operation.

5. Business retention has not been an issue in Fort Smith.

Most key informants indicated that business retention has not been an issue in Fort Smith. Businesses tend to operate for the long-term and, apart from the occasional succession or ownership change, the structure does not change much. Those who identified that business retention may be an issue noted that they are familiar with some largely part-time businesses which have closed, largely because of limited demand or because the owner moved on to other activities.

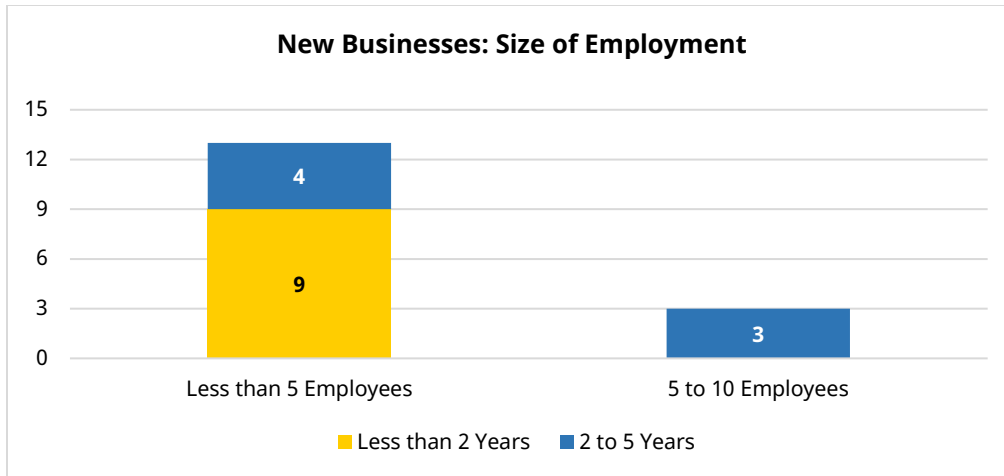
- 6. Of the 69 businesses surveyed, 16 businesses have been established in the past five years including nine in the past two years. New businesses typically are smaller in sized with less than five employees and operate over a wide range of industry sectors.**

These new businesses are involved in a wide range of industry sectors.



Of the 16 businesses, 15 were newly established in Fort Smith while one was relocated from another community to Fort Smith because of a new contract awarded through a tendering process.

Most of these new businesses have fewer than five employees and primarily serve local customers (accounting for approximately 75-80% of total demand).



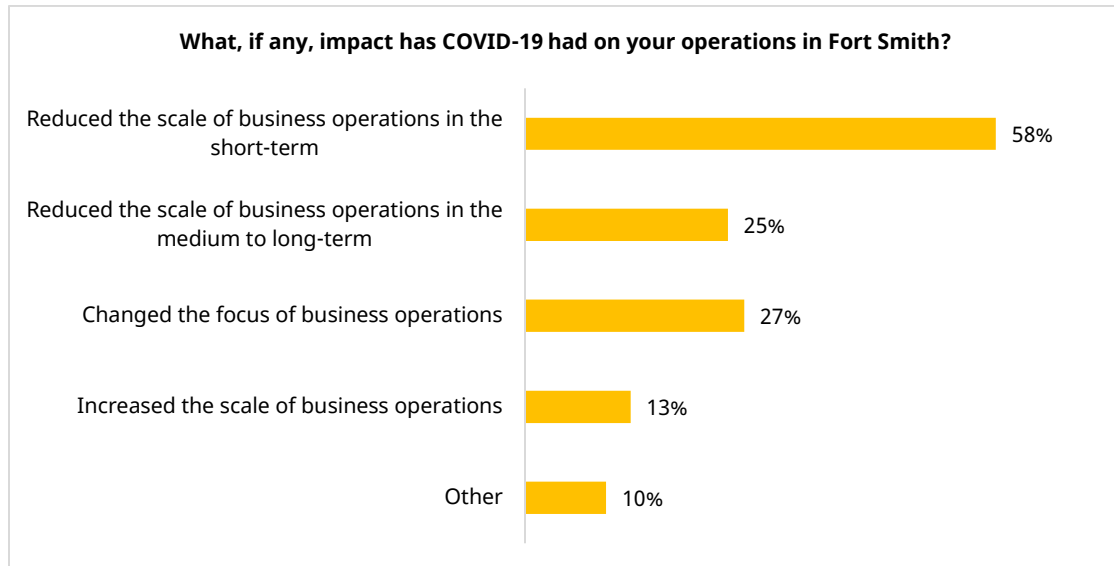
A few examples of newly opened businesses include:

- Northern Hound Supply which carries dog and cat food, small animal supplies, fish food, treats, toys, and grooming supplies. Other services include self-serve dog wash, dog park, and boarding.
- Blades Construction Ltd offer various construction services such as carpentry, new construction, renovations, roofing/shingling, flooring. etc.
- Aurora Heat offers uniquely handmade natural sheared beaver fur warming products (e.g., Hand & Foot Warmers), much of which is sold to customers outside of the NWT.
- N60 Trading Company is a general store specializing in office supply, electronics, coffee, specialty foods, hobby games, and toys.
- Lumen Supply Technical is a store that offers a range of industrial and residential lights, guitars and music accessories, and various cables.
- Roots and Ruminants is a greenhouse that sells bedding plants, vegetables, seeds, and garden supplies.
- Thorn Wildland Fire Consultants provides services related to wildland fire planning, advice on wildfire fire operations and fire behaviour, prevention, and training
- Berthiaume Arboriculture offers a range of general tree services such as pruning, removal, assessment, fire smarting services (axel reduction, brushing)

7. While the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted business operations in Fort Smith, other factors such as the level of market demand, access to skilled labour, and government programs are also expected to impact operations over the next two years.

Nearly three-quarters of the businesses surveyed reported that their operations have been impacted by COVID-19. Most commonly, it reduced the scale of their operations in the short or

medium to longer-term. Others have changed their focus of business operations, and some have been positively impacted.



Apart from the COVID-19 pandemic, potential factors, issues, or developments identified by survey respondents that are the most likely to affect the number of people businesses employ in Fort Smith in the next two years are summarized in the table below. The leading factors are the level of demand and revenue (i.e., the amount of work available and sales); the availability of skilled labour; government funding programs, contracts, and spending; and how much tourism related activities return post pandemic.

What potential factors, issues, or developments are most likely to affect the number of people your organization employs in Fort Smith in two years?

Potential factors, issues or developments	#	%
Total Survey Respondents	40	100%
The level of demand/revenue and available business opportunities	12	30%
The availability of and access to qualified workers/talent (e.g., difficulty in finding qualified staff in town or those willing to work town or the NWT)	9	23%
The current COVID-19 situation (e.g., finding a vaccine for COVID-19)	8	20%
Government funding, contracts and spending (e.g., funding for filming such as ITI or NWT Arts)	7	18%
The level of Government travel and tourism and related activities return post COVID-19 (e.g., travelers, music festivals, filming etc.)	5	13%
The economy in Fort Smith in general (e.g., development and growth opportunities; business capacity; local resource developments etc.)	5	13%
GNWT policies and decisions; Utility and power related policies (e.g., the town's strategic direction; local bargaining of unions; Taltson power dam)	4	10%
Housing availability; housing market fluctuations, and cost of living	2	5%

- 8. Key informants recommend that business attraction efforts should focus primarily on basic goods and services as well as tourism. Attraction efforts should feature Fort Smith's healthy and relaxing lifestyle, opportunities for business development, and easy access to**

the outdoors. Social media should be the primary marketing channel for business and investment attraction.

Key informants were also asked to provide recommendations regarding primary targets (characteristics of businesses and target regions), key messages, branding, and marketing channels:

- In terms of businesses, key informants most commonly recommended basic goods and services (e.g., small retail, restaurants, bars, grocery stores, accommodation, hairdresser etc.; 8 of 23), tourism businesses (e.g., smaller/local tourism operators; 7), local entrepreneurs and online/remote businesses (5).
- In terms of target regions, key informants most commonly suggested Yellowknife (5 of 11), northern communities (e.g., Fort McMurray, Northern Alberta, Fort Resolution, Fort Chipewyan; 3), Indigenous communities (e.g., Metis and local Indigenous communities; 2), and urban centers (2).
- In terms of key messages, key informants recommended that attraction efforts should feature Fort Smith’s healthy and relaxing lifestyle; opportunities for business development; easy access to the outdoors; and the relatively low cost of living.

Key Messages Identified by Key Informants	#	%
Total Respondents	22	100%
Healthy and relaxing lifestyle (e.g., good work-life balance)	8	36%
Opportunities for business development and professional training (e.g., Numerous opportunities to provide services that are currently lacking, or need upgrading; training for accounting, business management etc.)	8	36%
Easy access to the outdoors (e.g., Ample outdoor/recreation activities, natural beauty, wildlife, parks, history, and culture)	6	27%
Low cost of living (e.g., Fort Smith has some of the lowest living costs in the North)	5	23%
Friendly and welcoming community (e.g., Fort Smith's community is tightknit and supportive)	3	14%
Relatively high income (e.g., Incomes in Fort Smith are higher on average than in the surrounding area)	2	9%

It was suggested that Fort Smith needs to change its image from that of a “government town” to one that is “business ready and supportive.” That positioning would also need to be reflected by the leadership and in policies and bylaws.

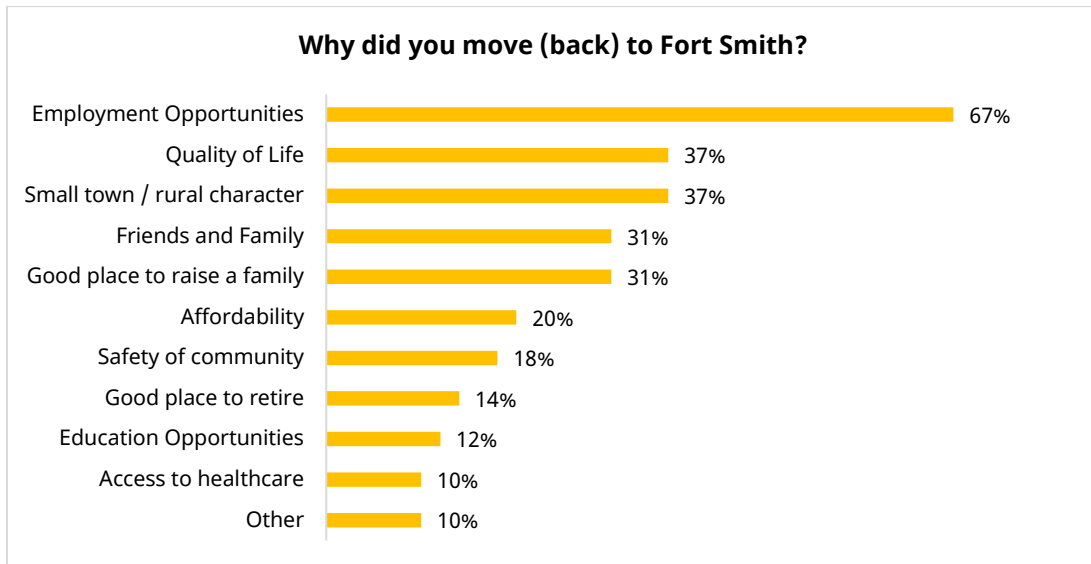
- In terms of marketing channels, almost all key informants suggested social media (11 of 12), while a few indicated business magazines and outdoor or trade TV shows (3).

3.3 RESIDENT ATTRACTION

1. **Current and former residents of Fort Smith identified various attributes they appreciate about living in Fort Smith. The most common factors included employment opportunities, quality of life, and the small community lifestyle.**

Three-quarters of the survey respondents have not always lived in the Fort Smith area, of whom 73% have lived in Fort Smith for 10 years or more since they last lived in another community. The most common communities from which they moved were Yellowknife and Hay River in the NWT. Others moved from Alberta (e.g., Calgary, Edmonton, Cold Lake, Fort Saskatchewan), Ontario, and BC.

Employment opportunities, quality of life (e.g., recreation, amenities and services, access to the outdoors), and small town or rural character were identified by survey respondents as major reasons they moved (back) to Fort Smith.



Key informants, who are current or former residents of Fort Smith, were also asked about the factors they appreciate most about living in Fort Smith. Common factors include the safe, friendly, and small-town lifestyle, the low cost of living, easy access to year-round natural adventures, and easy commute to work and around the town (e.g., people can walk to work and go home for lunch). None of the key informants who live outside of Fort Smith are considering moving to the community as they are either settled in their community or see no job opportunities or incentive for them to move to Fort Smith.

2. There are also challenges associated with living in Fort Smith. Challenges include the remote location and high transportation costs, access to health care services, and wage competition between the private and public sectors.

When asked about major challenges or issues associated with living in Fort Smith, key informants commonly identified the remote location and high transportation costs (20 of 28; e.g., limited to transportation on one road in and out; high cost of air travel); access to health care services (7 of 28; e.g., medical services such as dental services); difficulties for the private sector in competing with the public sector for labour due to the relatively higher wages in government (3 of 28); and difficulties associated with living in a small community (3 of 28; e.g., few restaurants and retail stores; lack of housing and rental properties, especially for singles or couples).

3. According to key informants, new residents tend to be young families who are coming to Fort Smith to pursue employment opportunities. Most new residents were attracted through online job advertisements, word of mouth, and college programs.

During the discussion about the characteristics of new residents, key informants collectively mentioned that new residents may come from all over Canada. Examples provided were other northern communities, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, southern, and eastern Canada. Some new residents were recent immigrants to Canada, but none initially moved to Fort Smith, having first moved to some larger population centre and then relocated to Fort Smith (e.g., usually via applying for a job).

The majority of key informants (18 out of 27) indicated that new residents are mostly young families (aged 20 to 40) who move to Fort Smith to obtain employment or advance their careers.³⁴ The relatively high paying and stable jobs in the national park, government, and college usually require post-secondary education thus attracting relatively well-educated individuals. Additionally, the health care and education sectors as well as the local airline company have attracted professionals, teachers, young pilots, and engineers. Students aged 20 to 30 years also came to town to study at the college or participate in apprenticeship programs. Some students will leave when they have acquired enough experience; however, some do decide to stay.

When asked about how new residents commonly found out about the community, or employment or education opportunities, key informants frequently noted (government) online job advertisements, job bulletins, word-of-mouth from friends or families, and the college's advertisements for their programs.

4. Most business owners and key informants who currently reside in Fort Smith indicated that they are very likely to stay in Fort Smith for at least the next five years. However, the chances of new residents staying for the next five years is half and half. Of those new residents who decide to stay, employment is the primary reason.

When asked about the likelihood of still residing in Fort Smith in five years, the residents provided an average response of 81%. Those who provided a higher likelihood (75% or more), attribute their reasoning to:

- It is their "home." It is a clean, healthy, and welcoming community. It has a small-town lifestyle where most people know each other.
- Close connections to friends and family. Many mentioned that they stayed because of their relatives or families who are employed here or are running a business here.
- Their plan is to retire there. They have been living in Fort Smith for many years and there is no desire to start a "fresh" home in another place.

Those who provided a lower likelihood (60% or lower) noted the:

- Small population and market size, and the lack of amenities and customer services.

³⁴ When asked specifically about the reasons for people to move to Fort Smith, all key informants (34/34) reported that it was due to employment opportunities.

- Lack of housing (to purchase) and lack of rental properties.
- Expensive transportation and travel costs.
- Lack of education opportunities (what exists at Aurora College relative to a university).
- Uncertainty with their employment opportunities, and whether further career advancement may require a relocation.

Similarly, of the 27 key informants who are currently residing in Fort Smith, 23 (85%) indicated that they are very likely to stay in Fort Smith for the next 5 years. However, those who indicated they were not likely said it was because of their need to move closer to their families outside of Fort Smith, or that they were here only for their job and will leave once they retire.

Moreover, when asked specially about the mobility outlook of new residents (i.e., the likelihood of staying in the community; reasons for leaving etc.), just over half of the key informants (16 of 30) responded that new residents are likely to stay for at least the next 5 years. The majority stated employment as the key reason for staying. Other reasons mentioned included the relatively lower taxes; appreciation of the small-town lifestyle; a love of nature and outdoor activities; and the commitment to a job or business.

There was near consensus that those who leave either tend to go back to their families when their job or schooling is done or tend to move away for employment or education opportunities. Some residents or retirees may move south for warmer weather. If they are apprentices or students, they tend to leave earlier than those who have permanent good paying jobs. Those with good paying jobs and those who fit well with the nature of the community tend to stay longer.

Key informants were also asked about what the community could do to encourage new residents to stay. The suggestions included:

- Provide more employment opportunities, diversify the economy, and expand infrastructure (e.g., recreation infrastructure).
- Better orientate people to the small-town lifestyle and encourage them to become engaged in the community. Show them the “caring culture” of the community.
- Promote and market the town’s relatively inexpensive health care services, low cost of living, and higher benefits for seniors.
- Increase access to rental units (especially units for singles and couples).
- Expand the programs and courses offered at Aurora college.
- Lower the cost of travel and transportation (e.g., reducing cost of airlines and building a new road etc.)
- Increase access to services such as health care, childcare, retail, and local food restaurants.

9. Key informants recommend resident attraction efforts should focus primarily on attracting young families and working professionals, and those who enjoy a small town/rural lifestyle, outdoor activities, and nature. Social media should be utilized as the primary marketing channel for the attraction of new residents.

The primary reasons for attracting new residents to the community, as agreed upon by most key informants, are to diversify and grow the economy, develop the skillset of the labour force, and bolster the business community. Some also mentioned that new residents would eventually increase the tax base and generate additional revenue for the town.

Key informants were also asked to identify the primary targets, key messages, branding, and marketing channels with regards to attracting new residents to Fort Smith.

- In terms of primary targets, key informants most commonly identified young families (7 of 16), those who enjoy a small town/rural lifestyle, outdoor activities, and nature (8), (younger) working professional and remote workers (5), unemployed workers who are looking for employment opportunities (4), and international students (2). Similarly, survey respondents suggested young families aged 25 to 40 (26%), retirees and seniors who are looking for a quiet community in which to retire (13%), mobile professionals (10%), and those who enjoy the outdoors and nature (10%). It was suggested that the community should target residents of the NWT including Indigenous communities (13%), and surrounding jurisdictions such as Alberta, BC, and the Yukon (8%).
- In terms of key messages, key informants most commonly identified Fort Smith’s great access to the outdoors, nature, and wilderness activities, low cost of living, strong sense of a community, and small-town feel/relaxed lifestyle. Similarly, survey respondents suggested key messages such as easy access to the outdoors (36%), safe and friendly community (27%), and great work-life balance (21%).

Key Messages Identified by Key Informants	#	%
Total Respondents	19	100%
Fort Smith provides great access to the outdoors, nature, and wilderness activities	10	53%
The cost of living is relatively low	8	42%
Fort Smith is a friendly, safe, clean, and active community (e.g., Strong sense of community)	7	37%
Fort Smith is small, quiet, and relaxed community (e.g., Great lifestyle)	7	37%
Fort Smith provides opportunities for new immigrants to Canada, further education, and business growth (e.g., Business startups, local college, opportunities in restaurants, small retail sectors)	4	21%
Fort Smith provides access to great services and amenities	3	16%

- In terms of branding, three-quarters (12 of 16) of key informants suggested branding the town as a place with easy access to wilderness and nature (e.g., outdoor activities, wildlife, natural beauty, no crowds), followed by a good quality of life (4), and a friendly, welcoming, and supportive community(3).
- In terms of marketing channels, all key informants who provided an opinion suggested social media.

3.4 TOURIST ATTRACTION

- 1. According to the key informants involved in the tourism sector, the local tourism market is seasonal with the summer being the busiest. Tourists usually travel by road to Fort Smith and stay for an average of three to five days at hotels or RV camps.**

The key informants who are involved in the tourism sector were asked a series of questions regarding the characteristics of the local tourism sector. According to them, the bulk of the tourism activities are concentrated between May and September, while winters are typically slower. There is a wider range of tourism opportunities, activities, and products in the summer (e.g., sports activities, paddling, outdoor adventures, fishing and hunting, events and festivals etc.) than in the winter (e.g., aurora viewing, dark sky festival, skiing, snowboarding etc.).

While tourists may come from all over Canada, the U.S., and Europe, visitors from the NWT, Alberta, BC, and Saskatchewan are the most common. Most tourists travel to Fort Smith by road; however, some travel by air (a short flight from Yellowknife, Edmonton, or Fort Chipewyan) and a few by the river. Tourists usually stay for 3 to 5 days while some stay for up to 10 to 14 days. RV camping at the national park and local hotels are the most common options for accommodation.

In terms of demographics, key informants observe tourists of all ages, but younger people and families are the most common. There were also some senior's trips (e.g., a bus load of seniors) pre COVID-19. A few key informants mentioned that their clients (tourists) were normally high-income households that tend to spend a significant amount of money in town. About 85% were new to Fort Smith and found out about the town via tourism marketing.

- 2. Key informants commonly identified the outdoor adventure opportunities, natural setting, events and festivals as key competitive strengths of Fort Smith in terms of tourism attraction. The accessibility to the town, associated transportation costs, and limited accommodation were highlighted as key weaknesses.**

Key informants were asked to identify the competitive strengths and weaknesses of Fort Smith as a destination for tourists. The top five strengths are the attraction sites and nature, the events and festivals, the location and natural setting, the friendly community and people, and the road infrastructure in town. Accessibility to the town, cost of transportation in terms of air and road travel, the lack of accommodation, the lack of tourism marketing, and the limited tourism related businesses were identified as the top five weaknesses.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sites and Nature (national park, trails, world class convention centre, museum, wildlife, world class rapids, fishing and hunting etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessibility (no loop road; end of the road destination)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events and Festivals (dark sky festival, sports events, music festivals, Slave River Paddlefest, kayaking etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of transportation (costly air travel due to low volume, and time to travel by road is long; the transportation services are limited even in town)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location and great natural setting (quiet and good location for outdoor activities; one of a kind eco-tourism; spectacular nature; easy access to Slave River) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of accommodation (especially during the busy time in the summer)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friendly community and people, dedicated volunteers, and community engagement Good road infrastructure (paved road, flat and easy to walk in town) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of tourism marketing (lack of visitor services; rely on travel agents to do their own marketing) Small town with limited scale of business or activities related to tourism (e.g., limited food and drinking places; limited tourism packages and tours)

3. The tourism industry would benefit from expanding marketing activities, accommodation, tourism packages, conferences, events, and festivals.

A summary of recommendations provided by the key informants are provided below.

Area	Major Opportunities and Priorities
Marketing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote tourism activities on water/river (e.g., paddling, float planes, kayaking, canoeing etc.) Promote winter tourism activities (e.g., skiing, snowboarding etc.) Promote the nature and outdoor activities Need program and services to support tourism operators in marketing Sports tourism should be promoted (could tie it to a golf course for example) Optimize internet search engines so that Fort Smith shows up more often as a tourism destination Work with communities such as Fort McMurry, Hay River, Fort Resolution, and Fort Chip to collaboratively market local tourism
Accommodation base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding the conference center to include hotel rooms Utilize the college facilities and dorms to accommodate athletes for sport events when the college is closed (e.g., during the summer and winter breaks) Investing into and improving existing accommodation infrastructure Promote bed and breakfasts Expand cabins and RV spots
Tourism packages and operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop tourism packages with more products included Extend packages or festivals (e.g., Paddlefest, Dark Sky etc.) to year-round instead of just weekends Creating more tourism opportunities that could happen in the park A need for more tourism operators and tours Should target adventure travelers Use social media extensively (can use Great Slave Lake as the key attraction site) Lowering the cost of entry to the sector (e.g., lowering licensing fees for operators)
Conferences, events and festivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Fort Smith’s conference center as the “only conference center in all of the NWT” and if advertised adequately, it is a huge opportunity to hold large conferences Festivals and events should be expanded to include sport events, etc. Paddlefest can be better promoted

4. According to key informants, tourism attraction efforts should feature outdoor adventure opportunities and focus primarily on attracting NWT residents and residents from neighboring jurisdictions, particularly Alberta. Social media and internet marketing should be utilized as the primary marketing channels for the attraction of tourists.

Key informants were asked to identify the primary targets, key messages, branding, and marketing channels regarding the tourist marketing strategy.

- In terms of primary targets, key informants most commonly identified regional residents (i.e., those who live in the local area or region; 5 out of 20), those who enjoy the wilderness, outdoor adventure, and natural beauty (4), and seniors and retired people with more free time and money to spend (3). Key target regions outside of the NWT

include Alberta and the rest of Canada (4). Families and road trip travelers (e.g., RV renters/owners) were also mentioned (3). Packages could also be developed for international tourists (e.g., guided tour groups) who would like to experience the Canadian wilderness.

- In terms of key messages, key informants most commonly identified the easy access to the wilderness, natural experience, and outdoor adventure (9 of 13); small and friendly town (2); and a self-guided low-cost destination (2). Survey respondents also mentioned attractive outdoor activities such as national and regional parks, wildlife, and outdoor recreation activities (40%) as well as the abundant natural beauty (21%).
- In terms of branding, key informants commonly identified the unique and pure wilderness, nature, and outdoor adventure (17 of 27), the small and friendly town with an inviting and hospitable community (e.g., quiet and peaceful, but with all necessary amenities; 6), and a great place to host and attend events and festivals (3).
- In terms of marketing channels, key informants commonly identified social media (e.g., storytelling videos) and internet marketing (10 of 18). Other suggestions include travel magazines (3), and highway and airport signage (3).

4. SWOT Analysis

We developed the following SWOT analysis for the Town of Fort Smith, taking into consideration the results of the interviews and surveys as well as our detailed review of existing reports, data, and other documents.



4.1 STRENGTHS

Communities often prepare attraction strategies only once they are in a crisis situation. This is not the case for Fort Smith. At least prior to COVID-19, the local economy has been relatively strong. Household incomes were above average for the NWT and Canada, and unemployment rates have been relatively low. While COVID-19 has had some impacts on many of the businesses in the community, most have been able to maintain operations.

Some of the key strengths on which Fort Smith can build going forward include:

- **High quality of life.** Of the 215 survey respondents who completed the Fort Smith Citizen Satisfaction Survey in 2019, 90% of residents found the quality of life in Fort Smith to be

good or very good. All respondents reported that they experienced a sense of pride in the community.

- **Economic stability.** The extensive presence of well-paid government positions in the community, which are less vulnerable to economic cycles, provides greater economic stability.
- **Well-educated labour force.** The percentage of the population aged 15 years or older in Fort Smith with a high school diploma or more increased by nearly 20% between 1986 and 2019 (from 58% to 76%) and was higher than for the NWT overall.
- **Involved, friendly and welcoming people.** In the 2019 Fort Smith Citizen Satisfaction Survey, 90% of residents reported a strong sense of belonging in Fort Smith and believe it is a welcoming community. Residents are characterized as smart, ambitious, energetic, and involved. The strong commitment to the community is reflected in the high level of volunteerism which supports local sports and events.
- **History, culture, and art.** The history of Fort Smith is reflected in its people, its museums, cultural centres, and buildings. Local artists produce products ranging from carvings, moosehides, stained glass, jewelry, and beadwork, to fine arts, music, photography, film, and video.
- **Natural attractions.** Fort Smith is the gateway to the Wood Buffalo National Park, the world's largest dark sky reserve as well as the largest national park in Canada, with the largest free-roaming herd of bison in North America and the sole remaining refuge and breeding ground of the endangered Whooping Crane. The Park is a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site, although there is some concern that Wood Buffalo may lose its designation.³⁵ The region features the aurora borealis lights, world class rapids, abundant wildlife, and a range of winter activities.
- **Centre for education.** With more than 300 full-time students, Thebacha Campus is the largest of the three Aurora College campuses in the NWT.
- **Low costs of living relative to most of the NWT.** According to the NWT Bureau of Statistics³⁶, Fort Smith has a lower cost of living relative to most of the NWT except Yellowknife. Key informants also noted that Fort Smith benefits from lower costs in areas such as power and energy (23.86 cents/kWh in Fort Smith vs 30.60 cents/kWh in Behchoko/Dettah/Norman Wells³⁷).

4.2 WEAKNESSES

Fort Smith has some key elements which are important in attracting visitors, new residents, and businesses. However, it should be noted that a successful attraction strategy will need to be

³⁵ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/wood-buffalo-national-park-money-unesco-plan-1.5850362>

³⁶ NWT Bureau of Statistics. https://www.statsnwt.ca/prices-expenditures/living_cost_differentials/

³⁷ <https://www.ntpc.com/customer-service/residential-service/what-is-my-power-rate>

combined with an effective economic development program that will assist Fort Smith to overcome some factors that are constraining development. The marketing plan will need to be closely coordinated with other economic development priorities targeted at both improving the attractiveness of the community to potential visitors, new residents and businesses, as well as better enabling the community to retain its existing resident and business base.

Some key weaknesses or challenges facing Fort Smith include:

- **Transportation access.** The community is accessible by road and by air. However, there are challenges associated with its position at the end of the highway and the costs of air travel. According to the 2018 Fort Smith Business Visits Report, 13% of businesses reported that the high cost of travel and the high cost of shipping (also 13%) are challenges facing Fort Smith businesses. Similarly, in our survey of businesses, transportation cost was the highest rated constraint to development (an average rating of 3.9 on a scale 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all a constraint to development, and 5 is a major constraint)
- **Access to workers, including skilled workers and managers.** Employers report difficulties in filling positions, from entry positions to more senior and skilled positions. Shortages of skills and knowledge were identified in areas ranging from small business management and operations to trades, tourism, marketing, and administration. According to the 2018 Fort Smith Business Visits Report, 17% of businesses reported that finding qualified, dependable staff was their biggest challenge. In our survey of businesses, difficulties in attracting/retaining staff (average rating of 3.8) was the second highest rated constraint to development.
- **Limited access to affordable housing.** In the Citizen Satisfaction Survey, Fort Smith residents cited affordable housing and rental accommodations as the most important community issue.³⁸ Population growth is creating demand for new housing but rising costs and lack of supply in the rental market may be adversely affecting the local labour market. Similarly, survey respondents and key informants indicated that there is a shortage of housing and rental properties particularly smaller units for singles and/or couples. In our survey of businesses, accessing affordable housing was the third highest rated constraint to development (average rating of 3.8).
- **Cost of business operations and cost of living.** In 2018, the cost of living in Fort Smith was 30-35% higher than in Edmonton and 20% to 25% higher than in Yellowknife.³⁹ In our survey of businesses, cost of business operations (average rating of 3.6) and costs of living (average rating of 3.4) were the fourth and sixth highest rated constraints to development.
- **Small local market.** In the 2018 Fort Smith Business Visits Report, 23% of businesses identified that a key challenge facing Fort Smith businesses is the small market and limited customer base. Some suggested a need for the community to better promote buying local. The small local market is compounded with difficulties in accessing markets outside of Fort Smith (average constraint rating of 3.4).

³⁸ 2019 Fort Smith Citizen Satisfaction Survey Results

³⁹ NWT Bureau of Statistics. https://www.statsnwt.ca/prices-expenditures/living_cost_differentials/

- **Limited entrepreneurial base.** The economy in Fort Smith is primarily driven by the public sector. The presence of well-paying jobs in government is viewed as a disincentive to entrepreneurial development and new business development. There is a need to create more of an entrepreneurial culture and an environment that is supportive for businesses (e.g., provide infrastructure, access to financing and professional development resources, and other programs to support businesses). Businesses identified a need for further programming to promote entrepreneurship, including programs targeted at youth and students at the college. In our survey of businesses, the limited entrepreneurial base (average rating of 3.4) was the seventh highest rated constraint.
- **Underdeveloped tourism base.** Potential growth in the tourism industry is constrained by the limited accommodation base, tourism packages and attractions, and food and beverage service operations. Key informants noted that the shortage of accommodation is particularly acute during busy times in the summer. It has also been suggested that a lack of knowledge in developing tourism products or getting started in the tourism industry has slowed development. Those interested may not know what is needed to set up a tourism operation or where to go to get assistance. In our survey of businesses, the underdeveloped tourism base (average rating of 3.3) was the eighth highest rated constraint.
- **Low profile of the community and businesses.** According to the 2018 Fort Smith Business Visits Report, 16% of businesses reported having difficulty with marketing and advertisement (e.g., a lack of time to market themselves or wanting the town to be marketed better as a whole). To date, Fort Smith has not been very aggressive at raising the community's profile or promoting economic development. In our survey of businesses, the low profile of the community (average rating of 3.3) was the ninth rated constraint.

Some other constraints that were identified include:

- **Connectivity.** Stakeholders identified a need to continue to improve internet services in the community to provide businesses with greater access to markets, suppliers, skilled workers and information as well as facilitate involvement of remote workers and digital nomads (who may be located in Fort Smith while working elsewhere or vice versa). Fort Smith is now served by a hybrid fibre-coax network. Costs are very high relative to southern Canada and speeds are capped at different levels depending on the package. Unlimited data prices range from about \$160 per month for download speeds of 50mps (upload speeds of 10 mps) to \$250 per month (download speeds of 250mps and upload speeds of 15mps). Actual rates will vary depending on factors such as the connection, location and number of users sharing the network.
- **Access to the building blocks of development.** Key issues that were identified include limited access to industrial or commercial properties, facilities and land on which businesses can be developed, and the need for improvements to the energy and communications infrastructure. Some representatives also identified difficulties in accessing financing and business support services.

- **Taxation, permitting processes, and regulatory issues.** Key informants noted that the regulatory environment, including licensing, and permitting and zoning issues serves to slow the level of investment and business development. For example, some tourism operators noted that the permitting process in the NWT, which is already complicated and expensive for tour operators, is further compounded when permits are also required to operate in neighbouring Alberta.
- **The lack of economic diversification.** The community is heavily reliant on government and a small number of employers for most of its employment. In the Citizen Satisfaction Survey, Fort Smith residents cited that having a diverse economy was the third most important issue for the town.⁴⁰

The strengths and weaknesses of a community are always relative to other communities with which they are being compared. There is a tendency to interpret strengths and weaknesses primarily in relationship to those of other neighbouring communities. Relative to Yellowknife and Hay River, for example, Fort Smith has advantages in terms of its proximity to the National Park, access to other natural attractions, and arguably higher quality of life while facing some additional challenges in areas such as highway access, a smaller local market, and internet connectivity (at least in the short-term). However, it is important to remember the most significant comparisons are those with other regions. In this context, Fort Smith largely experiences the same strengths and weaknesses (as well as opportunities and threats) as Yellowknife and Hay River. As a result, neighboring communities are best viewed as allies whose individual and joint development efforts contribute to mutually beneficial development opportunities. Each community benefits from increasing the profile of the NWT and awareness of what it has to offer tourists, residents and businesses.

4.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

There are opportunities for development associated with each of the attraction areas targeted by Fort Smith: tourist, resident, and business attraction.

TOURIST ATTRACTION

Tourism represents a significant potential growth market for Fort Smith. Driven in summer by outdoor adventure activities and in winter by aurora viewing, tourism has been a growth industry for the NWT over the past decade. However, in 2019-20, there was a moderate decline in both the number of visitors and the tourist expenditures largely as a result of the pandemic which began affecting travel and tourism in early 2020. The latest data (covering the period of April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020) indicates that the 117,620 visitors who travelled to the NWT in 2019-2020 spent almost \$205 million, a 3% decrease from 2018/19. Leisure visitation accounted for 73% of visitors in 2019-2020 while business travel accounted for 27%.

Although statistics are not yet available, the decline in tourism has been much sharper in 2020-21 as a result of the continuing pandemic. For example, in Yellowknife (the only NWT community for

⁴⁰ 2019 Fort Smith Citizen Satisfaction Survey Results

which data is published), hotel occupancy rates varied between 22% (in June) and 42% (in August) from April 2020 to September 2020, which represents a decline of about 50% from the previous year. Given that there was also a decline in average daily rates, revenue per available room has declined by about 60%.⁴¹ On the other hand, the fact that NWT residents were less able and willing to travel outside of the territory meant that overnight visits to NWT parks by residents were actually up 46% from 2019. Overall, however, because of fewer overnight visitors from outside of the NWT, total overnight visits were down by 34% from 2019 (including 49% in the South Slave Region, which illustrates the greater reliance of that market on southern visitors).

There continues to be considerable uncertainty regarding the timelines for recovery in the tourism industry, with some estimates indicating that it may be 2025 before the industry fully recovers. As the industry emerges from the impacts of the pandemic and returns to a new normal over the next few years, Fort Smith is reasonably well-positioned to take advantage of potential future growth in the tourism industry. Key informants and local businesses identified opportunities to increase activity levels and expenditures during the peak periods and further develop the shoulder and off-peak seasons. Potential growth segments include:

- **Outdoor adventure travel, with a particular focus on ecotourism⁴².** Summer activities including camping, sightseeing, wildlife viewing, cycling, boating, fishing, hunting, photography, hiking, and visiting historic sites are popular. At present, these activities are generally unguided. There is also potential for growth in winter adventures including dogsledding, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, ice fishing, ice road tours, and cross-country skiing.
- **The southern road touring market,** with a particular focus on Alberta, BC, Saskatchewan and, to a lesser extent, Ontario and the US. There is a strong overlap between outdoor adventure and the touring segment. A 2016 study of the NWT touring market found that these visitors spent an average of 7.5 days and \$783 per person in the NWT. Yellowknife and Hay River were the most common primary destinations. The most common form of accommodation was camping, RVs, and hotels. The opportunity for Fort Smith is to position itself as one stop on a longer touring vacation, using Wood Buffalo National Park and other attractions to increase its share of this market. While independent RV travel is common, there may also be opportunities to attract group tours.
- **The short haul getaway market, with a particular focus on Yellowknife.** Yellowknife is the primary population centre in the NWT, features the highest average household income, and has a relatively young population that can be attracted by getaway opportunities for outdoor adventure and camping, and sports, festivals, and other events.
- **Aurora viewing.** Aurora viewing is the leading leisure segment in the NWT but is concentrated primarily in Yellowknife. Unlike the other market segments, this segment has primarily targeted visitors from Asian countries including China, Japan, and South Korea. The pandemic combined with increasing geopolitical tensions with China have had a major

⁴¹ https://www.iti.gov.nt.ca/sites/iti/files/indicator_-_yellowknife_hotel_occupancy_july_2020.pdf

⁴² Ecotourism is catering for tourists wishing to experience the natural environment without damaging it or disturbing its habitats.

impact on this segment in 2020/21. Travel packages and viewing facilities would need to be developed to attract this market to Fort Smith.

- **Sports and events.** The region already features some well-established festivals and events such as the Thebacha & Wood Buffalo Dark Sky Festival, Slave River Paddlefest, sporting events, and music festivals. Across Canada, the sport and event market has been one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry, benefiting regions ranging from smaller communities to major urban areas. Many Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) across Canada and internationally, including NWT Tourism, have made sports and events tourism one of their primary segments. The focus is on developing and/or attracting sporting and other events, usually in association with government, interest groups, or clubs, and the local business community, and then actively promoting those events to regional organizations, potential participants, and spectators. The definition of the target markets depends primarily on the scale of event.
- **Meetings and Conferences.** The Salt River First Nation Business & Conference Centre opened in 2019. Assuming sufficient accommodation is available, there will be opportunities to build a meeting and conference market taking advantage of the new facility and the opportunity to combine meeting activities with the unique environment and opportunities available in the region. NWTT has identified Meetings, Conferences, and Incentive Travel (MCIT) as a priority segment. It operates a proactive conference bureau which both works to attract conferences and promote pre/post tourism around such events.
- **Indigenous tourism.** There is significant increasing interest in Indigenous tourism, particularly for authentic experiences where tourists can interact directly with Indigenous people and learn about local cultures, traditions, art, food, storytelling, and history. These attractions are typically visited as an add-on by those already in a region, not as a destination attraction. The NWT Tourism 2020 Strategy incorporates a focus on Aboriginal culture and adopting the recommendations of the NWT's Aboriginal Tourism Champions Advisory Council (ATCAC).

RESIDENT ATTRACTION

The population of Fort Smith has tended to be very mobile relative to other communities in the NWT and in particular, to communities in southern Canada. As noted in Chapter 2, at the time of the 2016 Census, 11% of the population had moved to the community in the past year (of whom 6% had moved from within the NWT and 5% had moved from other parts of Canada) and 26% had moved to the community in the past five years (of whom 12% had moved from within the NWT, 13% had moved from other parts of Canada, and less than 1% had moved to the community from outside of Canada.)

The results of the survey and key informant interviews confirm the high rate of mobility. Nearly three-quarters of respondents were not born in Fort Smith. They came from a wide range of different communities. While they were drawn primarily by opportunities for employment, they stay because of the quality of life, the friends they have made, the small-town character, access to amenities and services, and the range of recreational and outdoor adventure opportunities

available. Over 85% of the key informants surveyed expect to stay for at least the next five years and many expect to retire in the community.

Of the 215 residents who completed the Fort Smith Citizen Satisfaction Survey in 2019, 90% find the quality of life in Fort Smith to be good or very good. When asked about the challenges associated with living in the Town, those surveyed as part of this project most commonly identified the distance to larger centres, transportation costs, some gaps in health care and retail services, more limited access to restaurants and entertainment options (relative to larger centres), and difficulties in accessing affordable housing (particularly rental housing for singles and couples without children). Those who leave the community tend to do so because of employment opportunities, a desire to move closer to family, or a preference for a larger urban area.

Geographically, the target segments for resident attraction include:

- **Existing NWT residents.** As noted above, at the time of the 2016 Census, a majority of those who moved to Fort Smith in the previous year and over 40% of new arrivals in the previous five years came from other NWT communities. Those who were interviewed identified Yellowknife and Hay River as the major sources of intra-territorial migration to Fort Smith.
- **The rest of Canada.** Southern residents represent an important source of new residents. Residents flows within Canada are driven primarily by economic conditions in both the source region and the destination region. Over the five-year period (2015/16 to 2019/20), 10,391 people moved to the NWT of which 36.9% came from Alberta, 19.0% from BC, 15.6% from Ontario, 11.5% from the Atlantic Canada provinces, 5.0% from the Yukon, 4.2% from Saskatchewan, 3.6% from Quebec, 2.5% from Manitoba, and 1.6% from Nunavut.⁴³ According to the key informants, some common sources of new residents include Calgary, Edmonton, Cold Lake, and Fort Saskatchewan.
- **Outside of Canada.** According to both the 2016 Census and those interviewed, comparatively few people immigrate directly to Fort Smith. According to the 2016 Census, less than 5% of Fort Smith residents were born outside of Canada (as compared to 9% of NWT residents and 22% of Canadians) and less than 1% (about 10 residents) had immigrated to Canada in the previous five years (as compared to 2% of NWT residents and 3.5% of Canadians). Common sources of immigrants to Fort Smith included the United States, the Philippines, Europe, and the United Kingdom. There may also be opportunities for Fort Smith and its employers to take greater advantage of federal programs (such as the Federal Skilled Worker Program) or the NWT Provincial Nominees Program (the Business Stream of the PNP has been paused) to attract and retain more foreign students.

The primary reason people move to a new community is for employment. In the case of Fort Smith, that employment may be associated with existing positions which open up with local employers or new positions that are created by new or existing employers. Going forward, new projects and infrastructure could be an important driver of new employment. For example:

⁴³ Statistics Canada. [Table 17-10-0022-01 Estimates of interprovincial migrants by province or territory of origin and destination, annual](#)

- The proposed Taltson Grid Expansion and Great Slave Lake intertie connecting the Taltson and Snare Systems (located in the North Slave Region) could increase access to much needed renewable energy and reduce energy costs, which would help spur economic development.
- A plan to resume mining for zinc and lead at Pine Point, on the south shore of Great Slave Lake, has recently entered the environmental assessment process.⁴⁴ Located about four hours from Fort Smith, the mine is projected to create between 280 and 500 jobs during the construction phase, while the operational mine will provide employment for 460 people. Key informants noted the potential for Fort Smith to house mine workers, whether they be working at Pine Point or commuting on a fly-in, fly-out basis from other mines in the NWT.
- Mining remediation is expected to be a significant source of employment going forward. Forecasted mine closures and contaminated sites management activities will create a significant market for remediation labour and services over the next 10-20 years, related to care and maintenance, assessment, closure and/or remediation, and monitoring of mine and contaminated sites. A high-level assessment of mine closure securities and contaminated sites funding planning shows that the remediation economy will be worth approximately \$1.7 billion over the next 10 to 20 years. This includes projects under the responsibility of mining companies, the federal government and the GNWT.

Quality-of-life factors, such as opportunities for outdoor adventure, are important but most commonly secondary considerations in the final mobility decision. Other factors such as familiarity with the community and accessibility (e.g., ease of travelling to visit friends and relatives) can also be key considerations.

Some common patterns with respect to people who move for employment include:

- Labour mobility tends to decline with age. For example, workers aged 18 to 34 tend to be much more mobile than older workers. Younger workers tend to have fewer employment opportunities locally relative to more experienced workers, have fewer ties in the source community, and feel greater pressure to gain experience and become established in their occupation.
- Men are somewhat more likely to move for employment than women and single people are somewhat more likely to move for employment than those who are married, particularly those who are married with children.
- In the past, migration has been more common among residents of smaller cities, towns, and rural areas than amongst residents of larger cities. This has contributed to an increasing concentration of the population in the major centres.

However, two recent factors are disrupting traditional migration flows:

⁴⁴ <https://cabinradio.ca/56024/news/environment/pine-point-mine-project-enters-environmental-assessment/>

- Technology has greatly increased the ability of people to work from anywhere. Changes necessitated by the pandemic have demonstrated the feasibility of distributed workplace models, in which many staff members work remotely. As a result of technological advancements, many businesses have also become more footloose, able to operate from a much broader range of communities.
- The nature of the pandemic has contributed to a desire, amongst some, to take advantage of new technology to get out of larger urban areas and into smaller communities. A recent survey of more than 1,000 millennials renting apartments in urban areas found that, while 93% have stayed in their city of residence since the start of the pandemic, more than one-third (37%) are considering moving away in the next year. Of these millennials, 34% are now working remotely, which is providing them with greater flexibility as to where they choose to live.⁴⁵

Although the magnitude of the migration is still to be determined, many new articles have highlighted examples of young couples with children who are relocating to smaller centres due to considerations such as a quality of life, safety, lower housing costs, and desiring a simpler life, reduced commuting times, and opportunities to better integrate their families into the community. This is a very important trend for Fort Smith because local residents most commonly identified young couples (particularly those with children) as the priority for resident attraction.

BUSINESS ATTRACTION

In some cases, business attraction involves an existing operation based in one or more communities opening a new location in another community. This is common with franchises or multi-outlet operations, and in situations where there is a significant local market in the new community which could not be served or could not be as well served from the existing location or locations of the business. That pattern is most likely to occur in medium to larger sized centres or in locations where new developments are driving a significant increase in demand (e.g., the development of LNG plants in BC).

However, in a community such as Fort Smith, new businesses are generally “one-off” operations started by people who were drawn to the community by employment opportunities or other reasons. As such, there tends to be a close relationship between resident attraction and business attraction/development. The business survey identified 16 businesses that have been established in Fort Smith in the past five years, including nine that have been established in the past two years. Only one of the 16 businesses had operated previously in another community. An examination of the 16 businesses indicates that four were started by people originally from Fort Smith. The others were started by people who came to the community for other reasons, most commonly drawn by opportunities for employment or by family and friends (e.g., their spouse moved to the region for employment, or they originally came with their parents).

⁴⁵ <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/quicken-survey-shows-millennials-likely-to-flee-cities-over-the-next-year-301110777.html>

Potential target segments for a business attraction strategy include:

- **Entrepreneurs targeted as part of a broader resident attraction strategy.** Similar to resident attraction, younger entrepreneurs (e.g., 18 to 34) tend to be more mobile than older entrepreneurs. A key challenge when attracting married couples is ensuring that both spouses, should they desire it, have the opportunity to earn income once in the community. The ability to demonstrate opportunities to open new businesses in Fort Smith can be an important ingredient in convincing couples to move the community. Perceived business opportunities can also help to reduce concerns that prospective new residents may feel when deciding to move to the community (i.e., there will be opportunities through self-employment or starting a business for the person to stay in the community, even if the position that brought them there does not work out).
- **Remote workers and footloose businesses**⁴⁶. Many employers plan to downsize their main offices, with increasing numbers of workers expected to be permanently working remotely and/or in smaller satellite workspaces. This creates opportunities for a community like Fort Smith. For example, according to a survey conducted by KPMG and published in August 2020, more than two-thirds (68%) of large company CEOs plan to downsize their office space. The rate of downsizing is expected to be higher in larger centres and among larger companies, which are better able to digitize operations and create a next-generation operating model. The movement to distributed work models is helping companies to both reduce costs and widen their potential talent pool.⁴⁷

Even before COVID-19, many communities across North America identified remote workers as a key target in their attraction strategies. Remote workers are valued because they bring with them their own jobs, tend to be more mobile and easier to attract than entire businesses, and are younger and more interested in the higher quality of life and lower costs of living that a smaller centre can provide. They also tend to have above-average disposable incomes.

COVID-19 has further heightened the interest of communities in attracting remote workers and footloose businesses by increasing both the numbers of remote workers and the concerns some have about living in more densely populated areas. It has also increased the competition for those workers. Almost all communities have some remote workers, and, in principle, all communities can compete for these workers. However, those that are most successful tend to be those featuring a high quality of life, comparatively low costs of living, a welcoming attitude, an ability to successfully integrate newcomers, high quality broadband, and accessibility (air travel access can be particularly important for some workers).

⁴⁶ Remote workers tend to be individual workers who are still attached to central business hub but work remotely. Footloose businesses are businesses (i.e., self-employed workers or groups of workers who can “work from anywhere”, either as a separate business or a satellite office of a larger organization). Digital nomads are a special form of remote worker who does not put down permanent roots but rather moves fairly regularly (from every few weeks to perhaps every few years).

⁴⁷ <https://home.kpmg/xx/en/home/insights/2020/08/global-ceo-outlook-2020.html>

- **Existing businesses, particularly in communities experiencing economic difficulties and those involved in the tourism accommodation industry.** The potential migration pattern for businesses is similar to that of residents. Flows are driven primarily by the economic conditions in both the source and the destination region. As such, communities that are experiencing of economic downturns tend to be a key attraction target for both residents and businesses. Over the past five years, key targets would have been Alberta, BC, and Ontario.
- **Business that could serve markets developing as part of major developments.** This could involve targeting businesses that will provide goods and services used in the redevelopment and operation of the Pine Point mine or mining remediation projects, support the Taltson Grid Expansion, or benefit from increased economic activities or potential lower costs or improved energy infrastructure. There may also be opportunities to leverage opportunities that local businesses and entrepreneurs have with businesses outside of the community.

As illustrated by the wide range of sectors represented by businesses established in recent years in Fort Smith, the target sectors for business attraction can be defined broadly. Potential priorities include:

- Construction, supply and service companies that could support upcoming development and remediation projects occurring in the region
- Industrial companies, particularly light manufacturing, that could take advantage of available industrial land or lower cost energy.
- Tourism businesses (ranging from accommodation to tour operators and support services)
- Other retail and service businesses such as small retail, personal and professional services, and health care.

4.4 THREATS

While Fort Smith is not in a crisis situation, there are some concerns on the horizon regarding the economic outlook for the community. While 34% of the businesses surveyed view the economic outlook as positive, 25% view it negatively, and 25% of see it as neither positive nor negative. Four areas of concern include:

- **Upcoming closures of the diamond mines.** The three diamond mines in the NWT have reached peak production. According to the Conference Board of Canada's 2019 Territorial Outlook Economic Forecast, Diavik's operating life is scheduled to end in 2025, Gahcho Kué's in 2028, and Ekati into the 2030s (contingent on developing the Jay pipe). Closure of the mines will have some impact on employment for Fort Smith residents and on the broader economy.
- **Potential erosion in the number of government positions based in Fort Smith.** Given economic and other considerations, there may be a risk to some government positions due to potential cutbacks or consolidation of operations. The local economy is heavily dependent on public sector employment.

- **Possible establishment of a university in Yellowknife.** This would likely have a negative impact on the education sector in Fort Smith, should it proceed. The College is an important employer and normally attracts approximately 300 students per year. Survey respondents and key informants were concerned about Aurora College reducing its operations in Fort Smith which would then cause various negative impacts to the economy including a loss of capacity and well-paid jobs. More generally, the “college downsizing will have a ripple effect, with lesser students, lesser families, and a blow to the economy.”
- **Ongoing impact of COVID-19.** Prior to COVID-19, 70% of business owners reported in the 2018 Fort Smith Business Visits Report that their business was doing well or very well. However, the pandemic has had significant economic impacts to the broader economy, which may slow the rate of new capital investment at least in the short-term. It also provides a challenge to the health system. Nearly 75% of the businesses surveyed in Fort Smith reported that their operations have been impacted by COVID-19 (e.g., reduced the scale of their operations, changed their focus etc.). The overall length of the pandemic remains uncertain at this time.

Across Canada and the NWT tourism has been the industry that has been hardest hit by the pandemic. The disruption in travel patterns caused by the pandemic may continue, with some projections estimating that it will not be until 2024 or 2025 that the tourism industry in Canada recovers to pre-pandemic levels. There is also concern that the financial impact of the pandemic, combined with uncertainty regarding the timing of the recovery, may serve to slow the level of new investment and development in the industry at least in the short to medium-term.

5. MARKETING PLAN



This chapter provides an overview of the marketing plan in terms of the purpose and objectives, key features of the plan, primary targets and positioning, and core components. Chapter 6 outlines specific actions that can be taken to implement the plan and measure the progress made.

5.1 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The ultimate objective of the plan is to help ensure that Fort Smith remains a healthy and prosperous community. Attracting businesses, workers, and tourists will each contribute to building a stronger and more diversified economy and help to offset losses in territorial government jobs.

The marketing program should promote growth and diversification that is consistent with the vision and values of the community. The objective of the marketing plan is not simply to promote growth at any cost. The Town and its residents desire growth that is consistent with their vision for the community and its values and goals. The vision statement is listed below:

“The Town of Fort Smith will work with its partners to enhance our excellent quality of life by respecting values, traditions, and healthy lifestyles. We will continue to advance as a unified, active and prosperous community.”

Appendix 3 lists the vision, values, and goals of the community.

The challenge is to manage and shape that growth in a way that reinforces, rather than erodes, the key attributes of the community that residents value most. This requires first defining what residents, including business owners and entrepreneurs, value about living and working in Fort Smith and why they chose and continue to choose to live, work, and invest there.

The challenge is then to communicate those interests and values to potential residents and businesses to encourage them to move to Fort Smith. Most residents or businesses will not come to Fort Smith because costs are lower; rather, they will come because this is the type of community in which they want to live. The appeal of a community is significantly strengthened when it is able to clearly define its identity, effectively communicate that identity, and build a strong reputation.

The primary objectives of the marketing plan are to:

1. Raise the profile of Fort Smith.

The general consensus amongst those interviewed and surveyed is that Fort Smith is a great place to visit, live, and work, but that few people outside of the town know that. Awareness of the community is very low. Most businesses indicated that they have neither the time nor the resources to undertake much marketing themselves.

To date, Fort Smith has not been very active at promoting the community. As will be described later in this chapter, Fort Smith can use a range of vehicles to communicate to representatives of target groups, including a website and online campaigns, social media, and video and printed materials. These materials can tell the stories of local residents,

businesses and visitors, and highlight the appeal of the community. The marketing activities are intended to raise awareness of Fort Smith and position the town as an attractive place to visit, live, and invest.

2. Promote development by connecting prospective tourists, residents, and investors to opportunities, information, and supporting resources.

The marketing campaign will rarely drive people to consider travelling, moving, or investing. Those decisions are typically driven by a range of factors beyond the influence of the campaign. Rather, the focus of the marketing plan is to:

- Encourage members of the target group to consider Fort Smith as a potential destination or place to invest;
- Provide them with descriptions of specific opportunities and information that will assist them in making that decision; and
- Provide access to information and resources that will assist them in acting on the decision (e.g., providing links to accommodation, real estate, and business support services).

To the extent that the marketing activities will facilitate attraction of new businesses and support further development of the tourism sector, the marketing program can contribute to economic diversification and growth leading to increased direct and indirect employment and gross household income. By attracting new businesses and new residents, it can help to sustain the population, energize the local economy, broaden the business and entrepreneurial base, ease business succession issues, increase access to workers, and help keep the community young.

5.2 KEY FEATURES

Key features incorporated into the marketing plan include:

- **An integrated approach to marketing**

To maximize the visibility of Fort Smith, we recommend developing an integrated strategy that includes separate components for businesses, residents, and tourists, but also incorporates elements of common branding and positioning (perhaps building off the “Unexpected, Unforgettable” brand). The objective will be to take advantage of opportunities to leverage campaigns, coordinate promotional activities, and share tools across target groups. The marketing program, including a main website, will promote Fort Smith as a great place to visit, invest, work, and live.

- **A focus on storytelling.**

Storytelling, including video, and third-party testimonials will be a key component of the content marketing program for each element of the attraction strategy. The approach uses authentic content to get the message across about the beauty, opportunities, welcoming

nature, and quality of life offered by Fort Smith. Other communities have used this approach effectively. For example, Powell River has created written and video profiles featuring new residents that it has promoted through social media, including YouTube and its Live Invest website.⁴⁸ Similarly, Prince George offers an online blog that provides authentic content dedicated to different aspects of community life in Prince George.⁴⁹ The Village of Canal Flats is also showcasing stories of new community members who have established successful lives and careers/businesses after moving to the village.

The key is to tell people why they should want to visit, live, and invest in Fort Smith. Featuring the experiences of existing residents and visitors, as well as the history of community, is often the most effective way to communicate those interests and values. Promotional campaigns that involve telling stories have the added value of reinforcing the vision and value of the community to existing residents.

- **A strong website supported by aggressive social media campaigns.**

As a smaller community, Fort Smith has finite resources available for marketing. As such, it will be important to make innovative use of social media to magnify the impact and have a strong, effective website in place with clear calls to action. Marketing activities need to be focused, with a clear set of priorities regarding the actions to be implemented.

Social media and online campaigns can be relatively inexpensive to implement and generate a wide reach and effective impacts. In our experience, the most successful campaigns have a dedicated website and social media accounts targeted specifically at those whom the community wants to attract. Some examples of successful programs include Prince George, Powell River, and Fredericton. Prince George has created a website called Move Up Prince George⁵⁰ that is specifically dedicated to attracting individuals, businesses, and investors to move to and live in the city. Similarly, Powell River has created dedicated social media accounts called Live & Invest Powell River, which have generated a considerable following. Another example is the Choose Fredericton campaign run by the City of the Fredericton in New Brunswick which is dedicated to attracting newcomers and businesses to the city.

- **Ongoing refinements to marketing activities based on continual testing of target groups, messages, and campaigns.**

Effective campaigns develop and evolve over time. Ongoing A/B and split testing should be implemented to assess the effectiveness of different approaches, target groups, materials, messages, and campaigns. It will be critical to track the results (e.g., reach, open and click through rates, impressions, engagement rates, followers, likes, mailing list subscribers, survey completions, inquiries, and user analytics such as age, gender and geography) and, whenever possible, obtain direct feedback from members of the target groups and visitors to Fort Smith.

⁴⁸ https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCerD3_JDe4nO-UMSK2ZTd8w

⁴⁹ <https://moveupprincegeorge.ca/blog/>

⁵⁰ <https://moveupprincegeorge.ca/>

- **Close coordination with economic development initiatives**

Marketing is not the only constraint to development facing Fort Smith. As such, it will be important to coordinate the timing, focus, and contents of marketing campaigns with other economic developments and initiatives. Some of the priorities for improvement that were identified in our research include:

- *Improving the attractiveness of the community to potential residents and businesses.* Improvements need to be made in increasing access to:
 - Affordable housing, particularly rental housing appropriate for single residents and young families.
 - Reliable and affordable high-speed internet, which will be needed by local businesses, remote workers, and digital nomads.
 - Business development services, in areas such as entrepreneurial development, early-stage support for businesses, such as co-working spaces, makerspaces, and micro investment funds, investment incentives, and business succession programs.
 - Workers, including skilled workers.
 - Serviced land and property.
 - Childcare.

It will also be important to continue to implement a business retention and expansion program which maintains close relationships with businesses, monitors conditions, identifies and then works to address key issues facing the business community, and encourages further investment and expansion.

- *Increasing the capacity for tourism.* The Town needs to encourage the further development of tourism products, packages, and accommodations, and support improvements in permitting processes.
- *Advocating the interests of Fort Smith with the GNWT and, to a lesser extent, the federal government.* Of particular interest is improvements to the transportation, energy, and communications infrastructure, the development of major projects, attraction and maintenance of government positions in Fort Smith, and the expansion of Aurora College programs in Fort Smith.

- **Communicate to residents as well as external groups.**

While the marketing program will be targeted primarily at prospective visitors, residents, and businesses, it should also target local businesses and residents. The messaging delivered by the marketing program can help to reinforce the commitment of businesses and residents to Fort Smith. It is important to remember that retaining one person or business in the community often has more of an economic impact than attracting a new person or business to the community.

- **An emphasis on partnerships and leveraging other resources.**

Recognizing both that its own resources are limited and that many of the levers for promoting economic development lie beyond its direct control, the Town should place a high priority on working with key partners. These partners include Indigenous governments, leaders and development corporations, the GNWT, the federal government, industry, various associations, and others. Strong leadership from the Town will be required to develop effective partnerships and relationships, contribute to the voices and actions promoting development and working to attract visitors, residents, and businesses, and to promote the interests of Fort Smith. Some other key partners with whom Fort Smith could work in attracting visitors are outlined in the table below.

Partner	Overview
Northwest Territories Tourism (NWTT)	NWTT is the destination marketing organization for the Northwest Territories, which is funded primarily by the GNWT as well as by CanNor and fees provided by its two hundred member businesses connected to the tourism industry. The organization has a staff of 10 based in Yellowknife as well as an Agency of Record, a social media contractor, and representatives in key international markets including Australia, China, Germany, Japan, and South Korea.
NWT Conference Bureau	The role of the NWT Conference Bureau is to work to attract meetings and conferences to the NWT, through bidding for potential events, promoting the region in meetings, conferences, and incentive travel (MCIT) markets, hosting host site visits for event planners, and following up on sales leads
Destination Canada	Destination Canada promotes Canada internationally in collaboration with its industry partners, with a particular emphasis on China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Mexico, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
ITAC	The Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) promotes the development and marketing of authentic Indigenous experiences. It also provides training materials for Indigenous tourism suppliers and financial support for product development.
Parks Canada	There are also opportunities to partner with Parks Canada and the Wood Buffalo National Park with the intent of joint marketing, development of tour packages and featuring Fort Smith tourism products in promotions. Working with Parks Canada also offers opportunities to utilize their linkages with Alberta Tourism and coordinate efforts to market tourism in the Park.
Aurora College	Aurora College plays an important role as an employer, in attracting students to the community, and providing education and training to existing workers and those entering the workforce. The Town could work with the College on various initiatives such as resident attraction and student retention programs.
Yellowknife and Hay River	Fort Smith to work in association with other NWT communities, particularly on joint tourism (particularly the southern road touring market), resident attraction and business attraction initiatives. Each community benefits from increasing the profile of the NWT and awareness of what it has to offer tourists, residents, and businesses.
Local Operators	The Town of Fort Smith can work with Northwestern Air, Wood Buffalo National Park, accommodations, local and regional facilities including the new conference centre, event organizers, sports organizations, tour operators in the region, and other businesses to discuss ways to partner to grow tourism through marketing, product development, and other initiatives. Similarly, the Town can work with employers, developers, local realtors, business service

Partner	Overview
	organizations and others in creating the conditions for resident and business attraction and planning and implementing marketing programs.
First Nations Governments	The Town of Fort Smith can work with the local Indigenous government on the development and marketing of products and services, including potential development of new accommodation and other facilities. The NWTT has identified Indigenous tourism as a priority.
Southern Communities	Particularly in the touring markets, there may also be opportunities to work with southern communities such as High Level, Peace River and even Fort St. John and Dawson Creek. For example, sample itineraries could be developed in association with Hay River, Yellowknife, and northern Alberta communities.

5.3 PRIMARY TARGETS AND POSITIONING

Potential targets for the marketing activities are outlined in the table on the following page. The table summarizes the characteristics of these target groups, the primary motivations for action, and the value proposition of Fort Smith relative to each group. Appendix 5 provides a more detailed description of each segment including personas for the leading visitor, resident, and business segments (e.g., outdoor enthusiasts, job seekers, and relocating businesses).

Given the intent to coordinate marketing activities across these three groups (prospective visitors, residents, and businesses), it is useful to identify the characteristics that are common across the target groups and messages. These represent areas where it will be possible to leverage the varying marketing campaigns to raise awareness of Fort Smith and build a shared, recognized brand across the priority target groups.

- *Demographic characteristics:* Highest priority across the marketing campaigns will be attracting and retaining younger couples (particularly those aged 18-34 years of age, with young families), as a means to energize the community and ensure continuity.
- *Regional targets:* the priority targets will be prospective visitors, residents, and businesses from the NWT and neighbouring regions particularly Alberta, BC, and Saskatchewan.
- *Core attributes:* common attributes of importance to each segment include the unique setting and the range of outdoor adventure, historical and cultural experiences available, the welcoming nature of the community (e.g. an open and inclusive community), a high quality of life (e.g. a livable, safe, accessible & affordable community offering affordable housing and the ability to connect with the community and other residents who have shared interests), the local infrastructure (ranging from communication and energy to locations for business operations, co-working, meetings, and conferences) and access to support services.

Another key attribute will be the ability of Fort Smith, through its new website and other materials, to provide information and connections to resources that will assist prospective visitors in planning their trip, assist prospective residents in pursuing employment opportunities and preparing to move, and assist prospective businesses in identifying opportunities and starting-up, further developing, or relocating their business.

Market Segment	Leading Targets	Origin	Primary Motivation	Value Proposition
Visitors				
Outdoor Enthusiast	Aged 25-40 Single or young family	NWT and northern AB, BC, or SK (driving)	Looking for a quick getaway for an active holiday	Adventurous outdoor experiences in an authentic, unspoiled environment
Southern Road Touring	Boomers, married – traveling without children	Southern-based (longer haul but mostly AB, BC or SK)	Side trip on a larger tour, seeking natural, cultural and historically significant experiences	Accessible, unique and authentic natural, historical and cultural experiences
Digital Nomad	25-44, single or married (alone or with spouse /small group)	Location independent	Constantly exploring unfamiliar places and cultures while telecommuting for work	Authentic experiences supported by welcoming spaces & needed infrastructure
Sport, Events, Meetings and Conferences	Associations, organizations & event organizers	Primarily NWT and AB, BC or SK	Ability to convene in an accessible, interesting location with the necessary capacity and capabilities	An authentic and accessible setting that meets the needs of both the event and the participants
Residents				
Employment (Job Seekers)	25-40, married with a young family	NWT (most likely Yellowknife), AB, BC or SK	Opportunities for employment and advancement combined with an improved quality of life	Employment/advancement opportunities in an authentic, welcoming, accessible, family friendly & affordable community where one can connect with others and nature
Commuters	25-54, married or single, already working or soon to work in the region (e.g., mines)	Other NWT communities, western Canada, Atlantic Canada and central Canada	More accessible, affordable and attractive base to commute (fly-in, fly-out) to and from permanent employment	Easy access from an authentic, welcoming, affordable community where one can connect with others and nature
Remote Workers	25-54 single or married	Location independent	Looking to improve quality of life for themselves or family, new experiences, and outdoor adventure	Opportunity to work from a welcoming, connected, accessible & affordable community that provides opportunities for adventure and social networking
Students	18-34, recent graduates, single or married	NWT or western Canada	Opportunities for employment and advancement combined with a high quality of life	Employment/advancement opportunities in an authentic, welcoming, accessible & affordable community where one can connect with others and nature

Market Segment	Leading Targets	Origin	Primary Motivation	Value Proposition
Businesses				
Entrepreneurs	25-40, married with or without a young family	Community in NWT (most likely Yellowknife), Alberta, BC or Saskatchewan	Move may be motivated by existing connections to the community (spouse or family), limited employment prospects, and/or desire to experience higher quality of life in a clean, safe small-town community featuring outdoor activities	A welcoming, supportive environment for new businesses, in an authentic, welcoming, accessible & affordable community where one can connect with others and nature
Relocating Businesses	25-54, married with a preference for small, more remote centres	SMEs from an area where the economy is depressed, most likely in the NWT, AB, BC or SK	To relocate their business to a community where the economy and economic prospects are better, and where they can experience a higher quality of life	A welcoming, supportive environment for new businesses, in an authentic, welcoming, accessible & affordable community where one can connect with others and nature
Industrial Manufacturing	25-54, married. Fort Smith is undertaking a study to refine the opportunity, targets and potential value proposition	NWT, Alberta, BC or Saskatchewan	Opportunity to take advantage of low electricity costs with Northwest Territories Power Company programs and low-cost land	A welcoming community providing access to electricity and serviced industrial land as well as anticipated developments in areas such as mining, energy, communication, and transportation
Other New Investment	25-54, married	NWT, Alberta, BC or Saskatchewan	Opportunities to establish businesses in areas such as tourism, retail, personal services, and childcare	A welcoming, supportive environment for new businesses, in an authentic, welcoming, accessible & affordable community where one can connect with others and nature

5.4 KEY COMPONENTS

The key components of the marketing plan include a refreshed brand, a dedicated website, social media campaigns, and other marketing activities.

5.4.1 Refreshing the Brand

Fort Smith currently uses a brand incorporating the tagline “*UNEXPECTED, UNFORGETABLE*” which was designed to capture in two words, the surprising variety of sights and experiences offered along with their special, one-of-a-kind nature. The tagline works well for tourism but may be less appropriate for business or resident attraction.

We recommend that Fort Smith review and, if deemed necessary, update its brand, resulting in a brand that resonates with outsiders and newcomers to the area, and reflects the essence of the region. The process involved in developing a refreshed brand includes:

- Define the brand values and attributes. Potential elements of a brand that could be carried forward into campaigns include:
 - Active and adventurous
 - Wild, unspoiled, and remote
 - Authentic (not artificial)
 - Welcoming (friendly)
 - Accessible
 - Safe, affordable, and family friendly
- Develop the brand platform, visual identity, creative & colour palette, and guidelines.
- Launch the brand. The brand can be incorporated into the new website, social media, print materials and other brand collaterals.

5.4.2 Developing a Dedicated Website

While the community currently has a website, it is advisable to develop a new website specifically designed to support the attraction program. This would involve separating the visitor, resident, and business attraction components from the existing Town of Fort Smith website. This dedicated and optimized website will present detailed information on opportunities related to visiting, residing, and investing in the community with clear calls to action including who to contact for more detailed information. Key features of the website would include:

- A section providing detailed information on the tourism attractions, packages, and accommodation options (preferably with links to booking options).

- A section specific to targeting residents whom the Town wants to attract (e.g., “Living in Fort Smith”). The section should highlight advantages of living in Fort Smith and connect current and potential residents with resources within the community.
- A dedicated section on economic development and investment attraction.

The objective is to enable users to quickly find the digital information they need to research, plan, and implement their visit, move, or business development. Websites designed for this purpose commonly include a detailed profile of the community and a description of lifestyles, natural and environmental assets, community amenities, business environment, and investment opportunities (including a building inventory). Many municipalities also include an economic dashboard as part of the website, reporting on economic activities metrics such as jobs, incomes, investments, and development activity.

The economic development dashboards by the City of Abbotsford and Alberta Economic Development can be considered as best practice.⁵¹ Both websites provide a snapshot of current economic conditions with the aim of informing potential residents about the local economy and helping both locals and outside investors in making business decisions. The website should also include a section with access to content marketing materials where visitors can sign up to receive new materials.

We propose separating the elements (Visit – Live – Invest) into three color-coded segments. A preliminary structure for the website is provided in the table below.

Elements	Main Pages
Home Page	Visit – Live – Invest
Visiting Fort Smith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 reasons to Visit Fort Smith (including postings and a travel video) • What to Do (e.g., providing an overview of key attractions including Wood Buffalo Park, Mission Historic Park, Aurora Lights, Northern Life Museum, Events Calendar, Meeting and Conferences, and Sport Tourism) • Where to Stay (Hotels and Motels, B&Bs, Campgrounds) • Planning Your Trip (Itineraries, Before You Go, Getting Here, Getting Around, Visitor Information Centre, Business Directory, Maps, Accessibility, Weather, and Climate) • Our Visitors (visitor profiles and testimonials, including video testimonials) • Call to Action (contact information, connection to the Visitor Information Centre) • Blogs
Living in Fort Smith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 reasons to move to Fort Smith • Our Residents (videos of existing residents, particularly recent arrivals, complemented with articles/profiles) • Job Opportunities (Job Board providing information on current openings and links to supporting resources) • Remote Working (page of how to “Live in Fort Smith, Work Anywhere”) • Living in Fort Smith (descriptions of Attractions, Amenities, Education, Health Care, and Housing) • Community Profile (location, demographics, labour force, infrastructure, utilities, economy, life balance, government)

⁵¹ The City of Abbotsford at <https://caed.abbotsford.ca/about-abbotsford/economic-dashboard/> and Alberta Economic Development at <https://economicdashboard.alberta.ca>

Elements	Main Pages
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call to Action (who to contact for more information) • Blogs
Investing in Fort Smith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 reasons to build a business in Fort Smith • Our Businesses (videos of a sample of existing businesses, articles/profiles and business directory) • Business Opportunities (Buying and Selling a Business with links to businesses currently for sale as well investment sheets on potential opportunities such as accommodation, light industrial, childcare, tourism, distribution, etc.) • Remote Working (Live in Fort Smith, Work Anywhere) • Business Services (Thebacha, Chamber, GNWT, CanNor, Fort Smith Economic Development, etc.) • Doing Business in Fort Smith (Transportation, Development Approval, Taxes, Incentives, Immigration & Visas, BizPal) • Call to Action (who to contact for more information) • Blogs
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push to mailing list • Links to other relevant sites (e.g., InvestNWT.com, SpectacularNWT.com) • Publications • Direct contact information

The process involved in developing a dedicated website includes:

- Determining the hosting and domain name details.
- Mapping out the website and developing the sitemap and home page.
- Developing strategic, SEO-driven content for the main website, including metadata. This will be the 'evergreen' content that is a repertoire of go-to information about the town. The content should be user-centric, easy to read, optimized for organic searches and include best practices of visual communication.
- Auditing the existing website content, identifying content gaps, and defining the approach for adding additional materials (e.g., blogs, articles and videos) to the site and managing the user experience over time.
- Connecting with businesses, employers and others who will provide business and job postings.
- Testing on different browsers and mobile devices.
- Obtaining Content Management System (CMS) training and manual.

5.4.3 Implementing Social Media Campaigns

The social media campaigns would incorporate content marketing materials targeted at one or more of the target groups (i.e., potential visitors, residents, or businesses). The process involved in the developing of the social media campaigns includes:

- *Creating dedicated social media accounts* (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter) targeted specifically at those whom the community wants to attract. An overview of the primary targets and roles of the accounts is provided in the table on the following page.

Media	Key Target Groups	Overview/Core Objectives	Types of Messages/Materials
Facebook	All segments (primary social media tool for people aged 18 – 34, used extensively by people aged 35 – 54 years, and even by those 55 years and over). 2.7 billion users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of Fort Smith • Drive users to the website • Share content marketing pieces with prospective visitors, residents, and businesses • Share other content from stakeholders, local employers, and others • Promote Fort Smith's upcoming events and weekly updates 	Can be used on a weekly or biweekly basis to create awareness and drive users to the Fort Smith website and to promote other content including news releases, videos, other materials. It also highlights upcoming events and other activities.
Twitter	Targeted primarily at groups aged 18-34, and, to a lesser extent, 35-54 years. 350 million active users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of Fort Smith opportunities, resources, and news • Feature complementary news media and earned media pieces highlighting the region • Help target audiences connect with the region, its residents and community events, and local initiatives • Connect with businesses, brands, news, and trends 	Regular tweets targeted at news items, recent developments, upcoming events and new releases (e.g. publications, videos, other content). Focus on creating a dialogue through which people will share information and discuss important matters.
LinkedIn	Influencers, key opinion leaders, and members of key target groups. 740 million users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of Fort Smith and its opportunities, resources, news, and job opportunities • Connect with local and region-specific influencers and specific targets to share materials, owned properties, and support marketing of the brand 	Can be used to create awareness of added content marketing pieces, drive users to the Fort Smith website, and promote other content, upcoming events, and other activities.
Instagram	Targeted primarily at groups aged 18-34, and, to a lesser extent, 35-54 years. One billion monthly users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing images of the region, adventure tourism, other key attractions and features, and residents of Fort Smith • Raising awareness of Fort Smith and promoting the brand. 	Instagram can be used to share visual images which can be used to create greater awareness and appreciation of life in Fort Smith.

- *Develop quarterly content calendars for the campaigns.* Major content pieces can be developed on a monthly or quarterly basis while simpler content on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram can be posted on a weekly basis.
- *Develop plans and content marketing pieces for each campaign.* The campaigns will make extensive use of storytelling and authentic content, particularly short videos (2 to 3 minutes) that describe the experiences of new residents, businesses, and visitors to Fort Smith. These materials can be developed inexpensively in-house. The Town can develop a series of videos that:
 - Tell the stories of people who have moved to the community for work
 - Tell the stories of people who have set up businesses in the community
 - Outline why Fort Smith is a great place to live
 - Describe life in Fort Smith (e.g., featuring young families, outdoor adventure activities, the Spring Market, sports, and other community-based activities)
 - Explore what it means to be from Fort Smith (e.g., the values of the community)

Other content will include articles or news about the town, images, and other materials demonstrating the benefits and advantages of Fort Smith. That could include materials on local families, the Spring Market, sports, and other community-based activities, and what it means to be from Fort Smith (sense of pride, work ethic, connection to the community, sense of pride, resilience, etc.). The focus is on explaining why Fort Smith is a great place to live, visit, and operate a business. Major content pieces could be developed on a monthly or quarterly basis while simpler content on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram could be posted on a weekly basis.

- *Share content from other social media accounts.* This would include, for example, content posted by local employers, community groups, businesses, and events.
- *Complement the pieces with social media advertising* targeted at specific target segments and geographic markets. The purpose of the targeted social media advertising campaigns is to increase the number of users, boost content, and better reach priority targets (defined in terms of segment, region, and demographics).
- *Create a contest or event* to encourage target audiences to engage with the brand and content. The contest could, for example, focus on the development a new brand or social media campaign and provide a trip to Fort Smith as a prize. Alternatively, Fort Smith could stage a community event encouraging past residents to return for a reunion.
- *Encouraging residents to spread the message* by sharing content on their social media accounts and contributing their own content (e.g., pictures, videos and lifestyle, etc.). The social media campaigns can be leveraged by local businesses and residents using their personal social media networks to get the message out.

- *Monitoring the results*, including both social media analytics as well as user comments, questions, and opinions.

5.4.4 Other Complementary Activities

Over time, there may be opportunities to place more of an emphasis on:

- **Earned media.**

A public and media relations program should be undertaken to encourage news articles about Fort Smith, the campaigns, and opportunities. To support this, the Town can issue press releases on planned activities, upcoming events and contests, recent developments (e.g., launch of a new brand and website), and local success stories. The Town can also reach out directly to the media about potential story ideas such as the experiences of residents or businesses that relocated to Fort Smith. Potential topics include:

- Launch of the new brand and website.
- Feature stories about new businesses that have been established.
- Feature stories about residents who have moved to the community from target communities.
- Contests that feature appropriate prizes such as a trip to the community or support for a digital nomad who will be visiting the community.
- A review of business opportunities in the region.
- Local attractions particularly Wood Buffalo National Park.
- Upcoming events.

- **Hosting familiarization (FAM) trips with visiting travel media and travel trade.**

There will be opportunities for Fort Smith to participate in FAM tours hosted by NWT Tourism. The representatives can get a tour of the community and see the amenities and services available in Fort Smith.

- **Attending tradeshows.**

In the short-term, the primary focus would be to provide support materials and collateral to partner organizations such as NWTT who are attending shows. For example, NWTT commonly attends trade shows in Toronto, Montreal, Calgary, and Vancouver. Depending on the resources available, the interest of local industry, and the relative emphasis to be placed on various markets, there will also be opportunities for Fort Smith to participate in various tradeshows in communities such as Yellowknife (e.g., the annual tradeshow put on by the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce), Edmonton, Calgary, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, High Level, Peace River, Fort St. John, and Dawson Creek. Attending these events would likely require investments in display banners, smaller tabletop displays, and print

materials such as flat sheets focused on specific market segments, opportunities, or feature attractions.

- **Establish an ambassador program.**

Ambassadors can play a significant role in attracting businesses and residents to the community. Ambassadors are local residents who are available to promote the community and its brand through their existing networks and communicate directly with prospects they have identified or who have been referred by the Town. Ambassadors promote the community as a place in which to live and invest, share their own experiences and success stories, answer questions, and provide referrals to further sources of information and support. Establishing an ambassador program involves identifying and recruiting candidates, providing them with tools, resources and information related to their roles, and providing referrals.

- **Track prospects, inquiries, and leads.**

Consideration could be given to using a CRM in order to be able to better track contacts, relationships, and expanding networks, and to facilitate quick operational decision making. The general function is to help streamline sales and development activities, anything from organizing and storing important contact information for prospects, all the way to creating and automating strategic marketing campaigns. A CRM software tool would allow the Town to track communications and facilitate prospecting and reporting activities.

- **Provide site location services.**

It is also important to provide site location services to potential new residents as well as prospective investors from inside and outside the community (by providing information and referrals to the local realtor). Outside investors especially may need assistance identifying potential sites and navigating the development approval process. Coordinated site location assistance can create a positive influence on the investment decision-making process.

6. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



6.1 STRATEGIC PILLARS AND ACTIONS

Through the field research and data analysis, six key strategic pillars were identified on which the plan should focus. These pillars and accompanying strategy statements are provided in the table below.

Strategic Pillar	Strategy
Governance	Establish an effective governance structure to guide, coordinate and oversee implementation of the marketing plan
Readiness	Improve the readiness of Fort Smith to attract, support and service tourists, residents and businesses
Tourism Products	Broaden the base of events, products, services and packages available to be actively marketed to attract to tourists
Common Resources	Create common tools and content that can be used to increase awareness of Fort Smith as an attractive place to visit, live, and invest
Campaigns	Implement two to three direct campaigns annually targeted at priority markets.
Monitoring and Reporting	Monitor conditions and the report the progress made on an ongoing basis

6.1.1 Governance

Strategy #1: Establish an effective governance structure to guide, coordinate and oversee implementation of the plan.

The Town of Fort Smith will serve primarily as a convener, facilitator and financial contributor to attraction efforts. While there are some initiatives that will be driven by the Town (e.g., development of the website), most initiatives will be championed by others such as the private sector, the GNWT or Indigenous governments. As a general rule, the Town will only get involved in those types of initiatives when there is a clear champion or group of champions who have stepped forward to lead implementation. In other words, if the intended beneficiaries (e.g., local tourist accommodation) are not committed to a particular initiative, the Town of Fort Smith should not be either.

An important mechanism for ensuring the involvement of those organizations is to establish an Advisory Committee to guide implementation of the attraction efforts. In a larger community, separate advisory committees might be established for tourist attraction, resident attraction and

business attraction. However, given the desire to coordinate marketing activities across the three initiatives, we recommend that only one committee be established (at least initially).

A variety of organizations should be recruited to participate in the Committee. That could include representatives of the Town of Fort Smith, Wood Buffalo National Park, GNWT ITI, the NWTT, CanNor, Northwestern Air, local Indigenous governments, accommodation operators, tourist operators and businesses, major employers, business services and support organizations, local realtor, organizers of major local events, and other stakeholders.

The Economic Development Officer will recruit stakeholders to serve on the Committee. The process of recruiting potential members will also provide an opportunity to determine the level of interest of each stakeholder in tourism, resident and business attraction activities as well as in participating in the Advisory Committee. The role of the Advisory Committee will be to assist in

- Establishing priorities, developing and implementing annual plans
- Accessing funding and other support
- Facilitating connections with businesses and other key stakeholders.

Development of the annual implementation plan will be led by Economic Development Officer. The plan will first be reviewed by the Advisory Committee and then submitted for approval to the Town Council. The plan will outline the priority actions for the upcoming year and specific steps, allocate responsibilities and identify partner organizations. It will also provide a budget.

The following table summarizes key initiatives, actions and proposed timing associated with the governance strategic pillar.

Strategy #1: Establish an effective government structure to guide, coordinate and oversee implementation of the plan.		
Initiatives	Actions	Timing
Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop draft Terms of Reference which define the roles and responsibilities, membership, and meeting schedule for the Advisory Committee • Meet with potential members to determine their level of interest in participating in the Advisory Committee as well as specific initiatives • Confirm the membership and terms of reference with the Town Council 	Year 1
Annual plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet the Advisory Committee to establish priorities for the upcoming year in terms of segments, target groups, products, and packages • Meet with potential champions and partners to discuss the roles and contributions of the various parties in the priority initiatives • Prepare a draft annual plan for review by Advisory Committee • Obtain approval of the plan from the Advisory Committee and the Town Council 	Annual
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain on-going core funding from the Town • Work with partners and key stakeholders to secure financial and in-kind contributions, partnerships and program funding from the 	Annual

Strategy #1: Establish an effective government structure to guide, coordinate and oversee implementation of the plan.		
Initiatives	Actions	Timing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GNWT, CanNor and other available sources 	

6.1.2 Readiness

Strategy #2: Improve the readiness of Fort Smith to attract, support and service tourists, residents and businesses.

As noted in the report, various issues are constraining the ability of Fort Smith to attract tourists, residents and businesses. As such, an important first step is to ease these constraints. We recommend that the Town of Fort Smith work to:

- Increase access to affordable housing.* Increasing access to affordable housing, particularly smaller rental units for singles and couples, is critical to improving the attractiveness of the community to prospective permanent and temporary residents (including remote workers and digital nomads). Increasing the supply of housing can also expand the tourist accommodation base, through Airbnb and other short-term rentals. To increase access to housing, we recommend that a formal housing strategy be developed. This will involve reviewing the existing mix of housing, the current and projected housing demand, factors slowing the rate of new home construction, and potential strategies. The Town will then work with developers, builders and other stakeholders to accelerate construction.
- Increase employer access to workers, including skilled workers and managers.* In the survey, businesses identified attracting and retaining staff as a major constraint to development. A labour market study should be conducted to review the demand for and supply of workers, identify critical skills and labour shortages, assess key constraints to accessing needed staff, outline strategies to fill the identified gaps, and develop a plan through which employers can coordinate recruitment activities and work together to address the major constraints. The potential strategies could include education and training, employee and resident attraction initiatives, student retention programs (i.e., encouraging a higher percentage of Aurora College students to remain in the community post-completion), and use of foreign worker and immigrant employment (e.g., PNP) programs. The results will help to inform employee development and attraction programs and decisions regarding the future operations of Aurora College in Fort Smith.
- Increase access to business development training and services.* The Town needs to create more of an entrepreneurial culture and an environment that is supportive to business development. Fort Smith should pursue opportunities to lever the innovation strategy currently being developed by the GNWT to increase access to entrepreneurial training, co-working spaces, early-stage capital, and other business support services.

- *Improve access to reliable and affordable connectivity.* The GNWT has identified connectivity as a high priority and is actively working with telecom suppliers to improve access. Given the importance of the reliable, affordable connectivity to competitiveness, the Town should continue to advocate with the GNWT, Northwestel, and other telecom providers for system improvements. There is also a need to facilitate access to training and other support that will assist local businesses in digitizing their operations as well as in using social media and other platforms to operate and promote their businesses.
- *Improve the regulatory environment.* The regulatory environment, including licensing, and permitting and zoning issues, serves to slow the level of investment and business development. In particular, the Town will advocate for streamlining the process and reduce the costs associated with tourism licenses.

The following table summarizes key initiatives, actions and proposed timing associated with the attraction readiness strategic pillar.

Strategy #2: Improve the readiness of Fort Smith to attract, support and service visitors, residents and businesses.		
Initiatives	Actions	Timing
Housing strategy	• Develop a housing strategy for Fort Smith, focusing on the strategies and incentives needed to expand housing stock that is consistent with the needs of current and potential residents	Year 1
	• Work with developers, builders and other stakeholders to accelerate construction	Year 2
Labour market strategy	• Review labour market demand and supply of workers, identify critical skills and labour shortages, assess key constraints, and outline strategies to fill identified gaps	Year 1
	• Work with employers, Aurora College, GNWT and others to implement the labour market strategy including education and training, coordinated recruitment and worker attraction programs, and student retention initiatives	Year 2
Business development	• Work with GNWT ITI to facilitate increased access to entrepreneurial training, co-working spaces, early-stage capital, and other business support services	Ongoing
Connectivity	• Advocate with the GNWT, Northwest Tel and other potential providers to accelerate continuing deployment of high-speed internet, the building in of redundancies, and more affordable data packages. • Facilitate access to training and other support to assist businesses digitize operations and effectively use social media and other platforms	Ongoing
Regulatory environment	• Advocate to streamline the regulatory and licensing processes and reduce the costs associated with tourism licenses	Ongoing

6.1.3 Tourism Products

Strategy #3: Broaden the base of events, products, services and packages available to be actively marketed to attract to tourists.

To attract more visitors, Fort Smith needs to broaden the base of events, products, services and packages that it is able to market to attract to tourists. In some cases, this may involve developing or attracting new capabilities (e.g., an outdoor adventure tour operator). More commonly, it will involve further defining available resources and experiences, which can then be actively marketed to various target groups and incorporated into packages.

The research identified opportunities to market:

- *Meetings and conferences.* The new Salt River First Nation Business & Conference Centre offers opportunities to stage meetings and conferences in a unique northern environment. NWTT has identified the meeting and conference market as a priority segment. The first step in further towards actively marketing meeting and conferences is to determine if and how the Centre and other facilities are interested in working with the Town and other partners in promoting Fort Smith as a host community for conferences and meetings. If there is interest, the focus shifts to preparing to market those opportunities by developing bid packages, bid response templates, flat sheets, on-line guides, and welcome packages for participants.
- *Sports and cultural events.* The region can build on existing events such as the Dark Sky Festival, Slave River Paddlefest, and various sporting events and music festivals. The sport and event market has been one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry, The next step is to review available capacity and interest, determine which events represent opportunities to attract visitors from outside of the region, work with local organizations and others to develop/attract new events and expand existing events which can serve as draws, and then develop resource materials that can help to market the events.
- *Outdoor adventure.* The outdoor adventure market can be advanced by creating self-guided itineraries and work to attract tour operators who can package and promote outdoor adventure products such as from aurora viewing, ecotourism, hiking, paddling, wildlife viewing, camping, fishing, hunting, dogsledding, and snowmobiling.

These opportunities can also be packaged along with transportation (e.g., reduced fares for Northwest Air), accommodation, dining and other options.

Strategy #4: Broaden the base of events, products, services and packages in place to attract to tourists.		
Initiatives	Actions	Timing
Conference and meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with the new conference centre in Fort Smith and other facilities to explore the opportunity to market the facility, develop packages and promote the staging of conferences and events in Fort Smith 	Year 1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop bid packages, bid response templates, flat sheets, and an on-line guide highlighting the appeal of Fort Smith, hosting, accommodation and catering options, floor plans and capacity, accessibility, costing and booking options/feature the capabilities on the website 	Year 2

Strategy #4: Broaden the base of events, products, services and packages in place to attract to tourists.		
Initiatives	Actions	Timing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop participant and attendee welcome packages that outline available pre and post activities, dining, and shopping options that can extend length of stay and increase spending 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the NWT Conference Bureau and other partners to market the packages to government, territorial and national Indigenous groups, health care groups, business groups, professional societies, meeting planners and other organizations that stage conferences. 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing infrastructure and facilities to determine the capacity to develop or attract new events, and expand or upgrade existing events 	Year 1
Sports and cultural events and festivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with local and territorial sports clubs and organizations, associations, festival coordinators and local facilities to encourage development, attraction or expansion of sport and cultural events in and around Fort Smith Use municipal funding to create an event hosting program which will incentivize development of new events and expansion of existing events that attract visitors from outside of Fort Smith / explore potential to attract increased government funding, including municipal funding, and sponsorships for the events Facilitate sharing of tools and resources across events Develop bid packages, bid response templates, flat sheets, and an on-line guide highlighting the appeal of Fort Smith, available facilities and resources, hosting and accommodation capacity, accessibility, costing and booking options/feature the capabilities on the website Develop participant and attendee welcome packages Work with NWT Tourism and other partners to promote the sporting and other events to potential participants and audience members 	Year 2 and Ongoing
Outdoor adventure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approach regional tourism operators to discuss opportunities to extend their products and service operations (e.g., Aurora viewing or wildlife viewing) and have Fort Smith tourism products included in larger tour packages Develop and promote self-guided itineraries involving Fort Smith for visitors to the NWT, including half-day, day, and multi-day activities 	Year 1
Packages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with local tourism businesses, Northwest Air, accommodation facilities, tourism operators and other suppliers to discuss ideas and formulate packages featuring day trip and multi-day activities. Feature the packages on the website and in social media promotions 	Ongoing

6.1.4 Common Resources

Strategy #4: Create common tools and content that can be used to increase awareness of Fort Smith as an attractive place to visit, live, and invest.

While Fort Smith is considered by its residents as a great place to visit, live, and work, awareness of the community among others is very low. This is particularly true for people who live outside of the

NWT. Efforts to increase awareness of the community will require both campaigns targeted at specific markets as well as development of common resource materials which will be used more generally by visitors, residents, and investors in learning more about Fort Smith and the opportunities it provides.

This strategy focuses on the development of common resource materials while Strategy #5 focuses on targeted campaigns. The resource materials will present a profile of the community, provide users with descriptions of opportunities and information that will help them in considering Fort Smith as a potential destination or place to invest, and then link them to information and resources that will assist them in acting on the decision (e.g., providing links to accommodation, real estate, and business support services).

The steps that should be taken to develop these resources include first reviewing and then, if deemed necessary, refreshing the Town’s brand, developing a dedicated website, developing standard marketing content, tools and resources, establishing social media channels, and upgrading signage.

The following table summarizes the actions and proposed timing of key initiatives that can be taken to create the resource materials and increase the profile of the Fort Smith as an attractive place to visit, live, and invest.

Strategy #4: Create common tools and content used to increase awareness of Fort Smith as an attractive place to visit, live, and invest.		
Initiatives	Actions	Timing
Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the need to update or refresh the brand (if the decision is made to refresh the brand) Engage a brand development consultant to work closely with the Town and Advisory Committee to define the brand personality, values and attributes, platform, visual identity, creative, palette, and guidelines Integrate the brand into marketing and development activities Share brand identity with key stakeholders (e.g., tourism operators to ensure an understanding of brand positioning and how they can align their efforts) 	Year 1
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a dedicated website with three components that connect prospective tourists, residents, and investors to opportunities, information, and supporting resources Determine hosting and domain name details Map out the website, develop sitemap, and home page Develop strategic, SEO-driven content for the main website Test on different browsers and mobile devices. Define the approach for adding additional materials Obtain Content Management System (CMS) training and manual 	Year 1/2
Marketing content, tools and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure imagery and videography content and curate for use in the website and social media channels Engage residents and influencers in sharing their images 	Ongoing

Strategy #4: Create common tools and content used to increase awareness of Fort Smith as an attractive place to visit, live, and invest.		
Initiatives	Actions	Timing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop content market pieces highlighting the benefits of visiting, living and investing in Fort Smith (e.g., 8 reasons) targeted at key decision-makers • Utilize the personal accounts of local residents and others (in video and brochure form) describing the appeal of visiting, living and investing in Fort Smith • Develop pages and product information sheets (flat sheets) that showcase available resources, opportunities, potential itineraries, etc. 	
Social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create dedicated social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter) • Develop quarterly content calendars to grow the social media audiences • Develop social media content (developments, news, blog stories, vignettes, events, etc.) on an ongoing basis to keep followers engaged • Engage with social media influencers in each target market • Shared content related to Fort Smith from the social media pages of local employers, community groups and others 	Ongoing
Wayfinding signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing, identify opportunities and improve highway and local signage to raise the profile of the community, and draw and guide travelers 	Year 2

Chapter 5 provided a more detailed discussion of brand refreshment, key features to be incorporated into the website, content marketing pieces, and social media channels.

6.1.5 Campaigns

Strategy #5: Implement two to three direct campaigns annually targeted at priority markets.

Initially, the expectation is that two to three campaigns will be implemented annually, likely beginning in Year 2. The number of campaigns will increase over time, taking advantage of opportunities to build on established relationships, packages, and marketing materials.

Each campaign will involve:

- Meeting with local businesses, potential champions and others to determine the level of interest and support for the campaign
- Developing any packages (which may include attraction, accommodation, air and/or dining, itineraries, etc.), contests and information sheets to be promoted as part of the campaign.
- Planning the campaign strategy and components
- Implementing the campaign components. The components will vary depending upon the focus but may, for example, involve social media posts and advertising, direct marketing,

and trade show attendance. The primary role of the Town of Fort Smith should generally be to facilitate and support the campaigns, not lead them.

The priority markets and segments should be defined in association with the Advisory Committee and reflect the level of interest of potential beneficiaries, champions and funding partners in contributing time and resources to the campaign. Suggested priorities are outlined in the table, which also highlights potential partners and summarizes some of the steps that would be required to improve readiness. It also suggests possible campaign components.

Strategy #5: Implement two to three direct campaigns annually targeted at priority markets				
Potential Focus	Suggested Priority	Improving Readiness	Examples of Potential Partners	Campaign Components
Visitors				
Meetings and Conferences	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting resource materials (e.g., bid packages, templates, flat sheets, guides and welcome package) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conference Centre Accommodation and dining Northwest Air NWT Conference Bureau 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email lists/database and direct email Yellowknife Trade Show Social media posts MCIT trade shows and promotions (with NWT Conference Bureau) Bid submissions
Sport and Events	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New/expanded events capable of drawing non-residents Supporting resource materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event organizers Accommodation and dining Northwest Air NWTT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email lists/database and direct email Yellowknife Trade Show Cooperative promotions with NWTT
Outdoor Enthusiast	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation of tour operators Self-guided itineraries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tour operators Wood Buffalo National Park and ITI Parks Accommodation and dining Northwest Air NWTT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yellowknifer Yellowknife Trade Show Other consumer shows (in association with NWT Conference Bureau) Social media posts FAM tours Cooperative promotions with NWTT
Southern Road Touring	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Itineraries/guides Wayfinding signage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attractions, accommodation and dining Other communities along the road NWTT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperative marketing programs with communities along the road and NWTT Tradeshows/consumer shows in southern communities Social media posts Direct email (RV/touring clubs)
Digital Nomad	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connectivity, access to accommodation and co-working spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation Co-working spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media posts Influencers and social media ads
Residents				

Strategy #5: Implement two to three direct campaigns annually targeted at priority markets				
Potential Focus	Suggested Priority	Improving Readiness	Examples of Potential Partners	Campaign Components
Employment (Job Seekers)	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to employment and range of affordable housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major employers Realtor and property owners Foreign worker and immigrant programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job board Job fairs Social media posts and advertising Links to housing
Commuters	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to housing Development of major projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major developments Employers Realtor, developers and property owners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yellowknife Trade Show Email lists/database and direct email (targeting employees and employers) Industry events Links to housing
Remote Workers	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements to connectivity, housing and co-working spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-working spaces Realtor and property owners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media posts Influencers and social media ads Links to housing
Students	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student attraction and retention program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aurora College Employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct email and events Local job fairs Internships and coops
Businesses				
Entrepreneurs	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entrepreneurial training, co-working spaces, and early capital and stage business support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business services Education and training programs Entrepreneur immigration programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email lists/database and direct email Business fairs Social media posts and advertising
Relocating Businesses	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to housing, workers (including skilled workers), education & training, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major developments Realtor and property owners Entrepreneur immigration programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email lists/database and direct email Social media posts Site location services
Industrial Manufacturing	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serviced land and developing business opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major developments Developers and property owners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email lists/database and direct email Social media posts Site location services

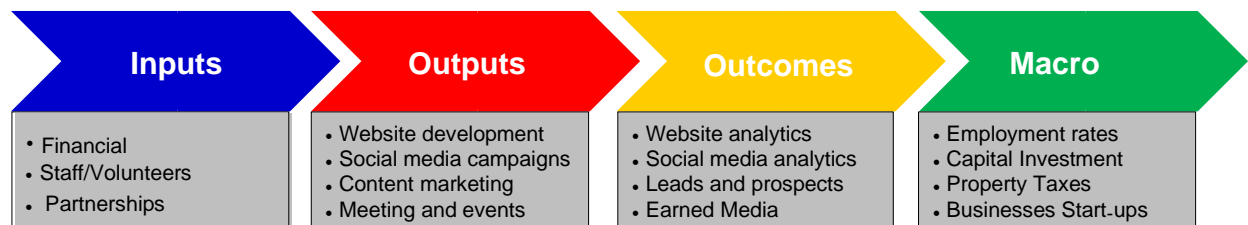
6.1.6 Monitoring and Reporting

Goal #6: Monitor conditions and the progress made on ongoing basis.

The progress made in implementing the marketing plan should be tracked and reported annually to the Advisory Committee and the Town Council. There are four types of indicators, including indicators related to inputs, outputs and outcomes and macro-economic conditions:

- Inputs incorporate the key resources that went into implementation of the marketing plan in the current year.
- Outputs from the activities which were implemented during the year.
- Outcome indicators report on the immediate or shorter-term results that are generated by the marketing outputs; and
- Macro indicators that report on changes in the community. It should be noted that the marketing activities are only one of many factors that may influence these outcomes.

The following graphic illustrates the types of indicators which can be included within each category.



The recommended performance measures and data sources are outlined in the table below.

Goal #8: Monitor conditions and the progress made on ongoing basis.		
Type	Indicators	Data Sources
Inputs	• Staff time	• Reports by economic development staff
	• Marketing expenditures	• Municipal financial data
	• Funding accessed from other sources e.g., GNWT, CanNor, partners, etc.)	• Municipal financial data
	• Volunteer time	• Reports by economic development staff
	• Partnerships	• Reports by economic development staff
Outputs	• Participation in meetings, presentations, trade shows, and events	• Tracked and reported by economic development staff
	• Content marketing pieces developed	
	• Campaigns implemented	
	• Events and conferences developed/attracted	
	• Social media postings	

Goal #8: Monitor conditions and the progress made on ongoing basis.		
Type	Indicators	Data Sources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Packages developed • Press releases and articles • Jobs and business postings 	
Immediate Outcomes	• Media coverage (number of articles and circulation)	• Media tracking
	• Website analytics (site visits, demographics, page analytics and bounce rates)	• Website analytics
	• Social media analytics (follower counts, demographics, engagement rates, likes)	• Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram analytics
	• Direct e-mail and newsletters (open and click through rates, bounce rate unsubscribe rates)	• Email analytics
	• Numbers of prospects, inquiries, and leads generated	• CRM data
	• Numbers and characteristics of visitors and trips (demographics, purpose of trip, sources of awareness and assistance)	• Tourist intercept surveys
	• Surveys of businesses in the community	• Business surveys/BRE program
	• Survey of new and existing residents	• Resident surveys
Macro Indicators	• Visitor and tourist expenditure data	• GNWT
	• Investment attraction and employment creation	• CRM data and follow-up surveys
	• Community economic indicators (population, housing units, employment, building permits, business licenses,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWT Bureau of Statistics • Statistics Canada • Building permit data
	• Number of operating businesses	• Building license data
	Growth in tourism (visitors, sources, expenditures, hotel occupancy, park attendance, use of campgrounds, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWT Bureau of Statistics • Visitor Centre

6.2 SUMMARY AND BUDGET

A summary of the proposed activities for each of the first three years are outlined in the following table.

Major Actions	Estimated Costs
Year 1	
• Meet with key stakeholders to recruit committee members and explore joint development and marketing opportunities	Staff time
• Establish the Advisory Committee	Staff time
• Work with the committee to develop the annual plan for Year 1	Staff time
• Obtain implementation funding from the Town, partners, and other levels of government	Staff time
• Prepare a housing strategy to increase access to an appropriate mix of housing	\$30,000
• Develop a labour market to assess gaps and develop coordinated attraction strategies	\$30,000
• Develop the branding	\$20,000
• Work with key stakeholders (e.g., conference centre, sports clubs and event organizers, regional tourism operators, operators, Northwest Air, parks, etc.) to explore opportunities to broaden the base in place to attract tourists	Staff time
• Develop the website structure	\$20,000
• Development initial marketing content, tools and resources for the website	\$10,000
• Establish social media channels and calendars	Staff time
• Track and report the results	Staff time
Year 2	
• Work with the committee to develop the annual plan for Year 1	Staff time
• Obtain implementation funding from the Town, partners, and other levels of government	Staff time
• Work with developers, builders and other stakeholders to accelerate construction	Staff time
• Work with employers, Aurora College, GNWT and others to implement the labour market strategy	Staff time
• Formally launch the website and content	\$10,000
• Work with the committee to develop the annual plan for Year 1	Staff time
• Obtain implementation funding from the Town, partners, and other levels of government	Staff time
• Upgrade the wayfinding signage	\$25,000
• Design, development and implement 2 to 3 campaigns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recruit participating champions and supporters ○ Develop packages, contests and information sheets ○ Plan the marketing campaigns ○ Implement (social media postings, cooperative marketing programs, direct e-mail, advertising, tradeshow and events, etc.) 	Average of \$10,000 per campaign
• Tracking and report resulting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ BRE Survey ○ Tourist intercept survey 	\$15,000
Year 3	
• Work with the committee to develop the annual plan for Year 1	Staff time
• Obtain implementation funding from the Town, partners, and other levels of government	Staff time
• Design, development and implement 3 to 4 campaigns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recruit participating champions and supporters ○ Develop packages, contests and information sheets ○ Plan the marketing campaigns 	Average of \$15,000 per campaign

Major Actions	Estimated Costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implement (social media postings, cooperative marketing programs, direct e-mail, advertising, tradeshow and events, etc.) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track and report the results 	Staff time
Ongoing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional website content development 	Staff time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media posting 	Staff time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy and government relations (business development services, connectivity, regulatory environment, etc. 	Staff time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with key stakeholders to explore opportunities to broaden the base in place to attract tourists 	Staff time

A preliminary budget for the three years is outlined in the table below.

Budget Items	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Development Costs			
Refreshing the brand	\$20,000		
Developing the website	\$20,000	\$5,000	
Initial content development	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Housing strategy	\$20,000	\$10,000	
Labour marketing strategy	\$15,000	\$15,000	
Wayfinding signage		\$25,000	
Sub-total	\$85,000	\$60,000	\$10,000
Campaign Costs (budgeted at \$10,000 per campaigns – distribution will vary by year)			
Social media advertising / digital ads		\$8,000	\$16,000
Trade and consumer shows		\$4,000	\$8,000
Cooperative advertising programs		\$4,000	\$8,000
Contests		\$2,000	\$4,000
Other expenses		\$2,000	\$4,000
Total		\$20,000	\$40,000
Total Budget			
Total	\$85,000	\$80,000	\$50,000

APPENDICES



APPENDIX 1. LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Document Title	Source
Fort Smith Community Profile Statistics	NWT Bureau of Statistics
Community Labour Force Activity 1986-2019	NWT Bureau of Statistics
2018 Engaged in Traditional Activities	NWT Bureau of Statistics
2018 Indigenous Engaged in Traditional Activities	NWT Bureau of Statistics
2018 Indigenous Frequency of Hunting and Fishing	NWT Bureau of Statistics
2018 Food Insecurity	NWT Bureau of Statistics
2018 Country Foods	NWT Bureau of Statistics
Households with Six or More People by Community, 1981 to 2019	NWT Bureau of Statistics
Home Ownership by Community, 1981 to 2019	NWT Bureau of Statistics
Households Needing Major Repairs by Community, 1981 to 2019	NWT Bureau of Statistics
2019 Housing Problems by Community	NWT Bureau of Statistics
Housing Problems and Core Need by Community, 2014	NWT Bureau of Statistics
2018 Handling of Day to Day Expenses	NWT Bureau of Statistics
2018 Impact of Rent or Mortgage Increases	NWT Bureau of Statistics
2019 General Financial Insecurity	NWT Bureau of Statistics
2019 Highest Level of Schooling	NWT Bureau of Statistics
Work Activity 2011 & 2016	NWT Bureau of Statistics
2019 Labour Supply	NWT Bureau of Statistics
2019 NWT Community Survey Housing Indicators	NWT Bureau of Statistics
Tourism Visitation and Expenditures (2019-2020)	NWT Bureau of Statistics
Living Cost Differentials	NWT Bureau of Statistics
Community Services Master Plan	Town of Fort Smith
2018 Economic Development Strategy	Town of Fort Smith
2018 Fort Smith Strategic Plan	Town of Fort Smith
Business License 2019 - 2020	Town of Fort Smith
Empty Buildings	Town of Fort Smith
Indicator NWT Territorial Parks 2014 - 2018	GNWT
2016 Summary of NWT Road Visitor Survey Findings	GNWT
NWT Visitation and Spending	GNWT

Document Title	Source
Fort Smith - Housing Affordability	Town of Fort Smith
Development Permits Issued 2019, 2020	Town of Fort Smith
2018 Business Visits Report	Town of Fort Smith
Fort Smith Citizen Satisfaction Survey	Town of Fort Smith
Economic Development Baseline	Town of Fort Smith
Fort Smith Community Profile	Town of Fort Smith
Fort Smith rebranding and marketing strategy 2011	Town of Fort Smith
Census Profile 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016	Statistics Canada
Estimates of interprovincial migrants by province or territory of origin	Statistics Canada
Town of Fort Smith Official Website	https://www.fortsmith.ca/
2018 Socio-Economic Agreement Report	GNWT
Gahcho Kué Mine Socio-Economic Report Building Forever: 2019	De Beers Group
Ekati Diamond Mine 2019 Socio-Economic Agreement Report	Dominion Diamond
Diavik Diamond Mine 2018 Sustainable Development Report	Rio Tinto

Noted Selected News Articles and Websites

<https://www.gov.nt.ca/careers/en/fort-smith>

<https://www.iti.gov.nt.ca/en/tourism-research>

<https://spectacularnwt.com/directory/accommodations>

<https://www.manascisaac.com/work/salt-river-first-nation-multipurpose-facility>

<https://cabinradio.ca/14906/news/south-slave/salt-river-first-nation-opens-new-building-in-fort-smith/>

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/501659/visitors-to-wood-buffalo-national-park/>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/wood-buffalo-national-park-money-unesco-plan-1.5850362>

<https://www.ntpc.com/customer-service/residential-service/what-is-my-power-rate>

https://www.iti.gov.nt.ca/sites/iti/files/indicator_-_yellowknife_hotel_occupancy_july_2020.pdf

<https://cabinradio.ca/56024/news/environment/pine-point-mine-project-enters-environmental-assessment/>

<https://home.kpmg/xx/en/home/insights/2020/08/global-ceo-outlook-2020.html>

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCerD3_JDe4nO-UMSK2ZTd8w

<https://moveupprincegeorge.ca/>

The City of Abbotsford at <https://caed.abbotsford.ca/about-abbotsford/economic-dashboard>

<https://economicdashboard.alberta.ca>

APPENDIX 2. LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

- Altaf Lakhani, Former Manager, Canadian Northern Econ Dev Agency
- Alyssa Etsell, Economic Development Officer, Parks Canada
- Brian Harrold, Northwestern Airlines
- Cam Zimmer, Site Superintendent, Parks Canada
- Camilla MacEachern, GNWT Dept of Industry, Tourism and Investment
- Cathie Bolstad, CEO, NWT Tourism
- Cheryl Keats, Regional Director, Canadian Northern Econ Dev Agency
- Chris Westwell, Town Councillors
- Claudette Kant, Manager, Trade & Investment, Industry, Tourism and Investment, GNWT
- Curtis Brown, Superintendent, South Slave Divisional Education Council
- Cynthia White, Director of Community Services, Town of Fort Smith
- Dan Wong, Owner, Jackpine Paddle
- Dana Fergusson, Owner, Pelican Rapids Inn
- Denise Yuhas, President, Thebacha Chamber of Commerce
- Diane Seals, Economic Development Officer, Fort Smith
- Eric Chalker, Regional Tourism Officer, GNWT - ITI
- Helena Katz, Owner, Katz Communications
- Janie Hobart, Former Mayor of Fort Smith
- Jay Macdonald, Manager, Forest Office, Department of ENR, GNWT
- Jeffrey O'Keefe, Vice President Student Affairs, Aurora College
- Jeri Miltenberger, Executive Director, Northern Life Museum & Cultural Centre
- Jessica Cox, Town Councillors
- Jonah Mitchell, Field Unit Superintendent, Wood Buffalo National Park
- Kathy Lepine, Thebacha Real Estate
- Keith Morrison, Senior Administrative Officer, Fort Smith
- Kevin Antoniak, Chair, Tourism and Trade Advisory Board, Town of Fort Smith
- Kevin Smith, Deputy Mayor, Town of Fort Smith
- Kevin Weidlich, President & CEO, Wood Buffalo Economic Development Corporation
- Linda Martin, Manager, Thebacha Business Development Services
- Matt Belliveau, Director, NWT & Nunavut Construction Association
- Melisa Zimmer, Visitor Experience Manager, Wood Buffalo National Park, Parks Canada
- Michael Browne, CAB Construction
- Mike Couvrette, Town Councillors
- Mike Keizer, Former Staff, Wood Buffalo National Park, Parks Canada
- Obrian Kydd, Director of Corporate Services, Town of Fort Smith
- Peter MacGill, Tourism & Economic Development Coordinator, Hay River
- Renee Comeau, Executive Director, NWT Chamber of Commerce
- Tim Gauthier, External Relations Manager, Parks Canada
- Tom Hoefer, Executive Director, NWT & Nunavut Chamber of Mines
- Tracey St. Denis, ADM, Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment

APPENDIX 3: VISION, VALUES AND GOALS

The Marketing Strategy must be consistent with the Town of Fort Smith's community's vision, values and goals. The vision for the community is as follows:

"The Town of Fort Smith will work with its partners to enhance our excellent quality of life by respecting values, traditions, and healthy lifestyles. We will continue to advance as a unified, active and prosperous community."

The values are as follows:

- We value an open, transparent, effective government.
- We value our natural environment.
- We value a safe and hospitable community for our residents and visitors.
- We value education.
- We value the use of sustainable energy sources.
- We value active living, health and wellness.
- We value effective communication.
- We value community unity through partnerships.
- We value the passion and commitment of our volunteers.

The goals of the Town are as follows:

- Operate an open, transparent and effective government.
- Operate the Town of Fort Smith in a fiscally responsible manner.
- Provide excellent municipal programs and services to the citizens.
- Continue as a responsible employer.
- Preserve, advocate and enhance the natural environment in the Town.
- Maintain a safe community.
- Support all educational opportunities within the community.
- Be a leader in sustainable environmental practices in our community.
- Foster a strong cohesive community spirit.
- Maintain a healthy, active community.
- Grow our residential and business community.
- Promote Fort Smith as a desirable destination.

The marketing activities should contribute to this vision and these values and goals, particularly with respect to the growing of the residential and business community and promoting Fort Smith as a desirable destination.

APPENDIX 4: OVERVIEW OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Strategic Goals	Strategies and Actions	Lead Partners
Goal #1: Foster and Encourage Business and Job Creation and Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunities Assessment ▪ Develop Land & Business Inventory ▪ Gather input from Business Community ▪ Identify Investment Objectives & Strategies ▪ Implement Investment Strategy ▪ Strengthen Government Positions in Fort Smith 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EDO ▪ GNWT - ITI ▪ COC ▪ Aurora College ▪ Council
Goal #2: Increase Communication with and within the Business Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assess Local Business Climate ▪ Provide Educational & Networking Opportunities ▪ Regular Communication with Business Community ▪ Support Chamber of Commerce with Shop Local Campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EDO ▪ GNWT - ITI ▪ COC ▪ Aurora College ▪ TTA Board
Goal #3: Diversify the Local Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a Cooperative Planning Strategy with Community and Regional Partners ▪ Identify Areas of Economic "Leakage" ▪ Encourage Youth Entrepreneurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leaderships of FNs and Municipalities ▪ EDO ▪ COC ▪ GNWT - ITI ▪ Aurora College ▪ Thebacha BDS
Goal #4: Attract and Retain Residents to live in Fort Smith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify the Current Situation ▪ Define Key Target Markets, Messaging & Strategy ▪ Develop a Marketing Strategy ▪ Increase Housing Options ▪ Create a Resident Ambassador Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EDO ▪ COC ▪ GNWT - ITI ▪ Aurora College ▪ TTA Board ▪ Salt River FN ▪ Smith Landing FN ▪ Fort Smith Metis Council ▪ SDA Board ▪ Municipal Services ▪ Thebacha COC
Goal #5: Enhance Liveability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify Areas Needing Improvement ▪ Strengthen Public Engagement ▪ Community Improvement Plan/Guidelines ▪ Create Municipal Funding Program ▪ Identify Transportation Concerns ▪ Grow Culture and Arts Sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wood Buffalo National Park ▪ Fort Smith Seniors Society ▪ Northwestern Air Lease ▪ EDO ▪ GNWT - ITI ▪ Aurora College ▪ TTA Board ▪ Salt River FN ▪ Smith Landing FN ▪ Fort Smith Metis Council ▪ Thebacha ▪ Municipal Services

Strategic Goals	Strategies and Actions	Lead Partners
<p>Goal #6: Attract Shoppers and Visitors from the Region into our Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Direct Marketing Campaign ▪ Improve Visitor Experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NL Museum & Cultural Centre ▪ EDO ▪ COC ▪ TTA Board ▪ Wood Buffalo National Park ▪ Northwestern Air Lease ▪ Thebacha COC
<p>Goal #7: Champion and Assist with Tourism Product Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Champion New Development ▪ Identify the Barriers to Tourism Development ▪ Encourage Cultural Aspects to Tourism Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EDO ▪ COC ▪ Wood Buffalo National Park ▪ Northwestern Air Lease ▪ GNWT ITI ▪ Smith Landing FN ▪ Fort Smith Metis Council ▪ Salt River FN ▪ Aurora College ▪ Thebacha COC ▪ Cree Language Program
<p>Goal #8: Increase number of Festivals, Sporting Events and Conferences held in Fort Smith</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create and Maintain Active Volunteer Base ▪ Collaborate with Local Organizations to Host and Market Events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EDO ▪ Arctic Winter Games Society ▪ Recreation Coordinator ▪ Aurora College ▪ Visitor Information Centre ▪ NL Museum & Cultural Centre ▪ Northwestern Air Lease ▪ GNWT ITI ▪ Smith Landing FN ▪ Fort Smith Metis Council ▪ Salt River FN ▪ Wood Buffalo National Park ▪ TTA Board
<p>Goal #9: Work with Regional Partners to Market Fort Smith (Hay River, Fort McMurray, Yellowknife, Edmonton)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Market Fort Smith regionally, nationally and internationally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EDO ▪ TTA Board ▪ COC ▪ Wood Buffalo National Park ▪ GNWT ITI

APPENDIX 5: MARKETING PERSONAS AND KEY TARGET GROUPS

A5.1 Job Seeker with a Young Family



Neil is looking for change to advance his career and improve the quality of life for his family in a clean, safe small-town community with plenty of outdoor activities.

Characteristics	
Age	25-40
Gender	Male or female
Family Status	Married with a young family
Current Home Location	A smaller city, town or rural area in NWT (most likely Yellowknife), Alberta, BC or Saskatchewan.
Education	College or trade school- could be focused on either business admin (for government jobs) or a trade revolving around heavy equipment operation.
Job Status	Early on in career, either unemployed and looking for work or seeking a way to get to the next level in their career to increase income or quality of life.
Cultural Background	Target residents have likely been in Canada for long enough to have done their schooling here and some initial work experience, which also encompasses indigenous families (whereas new immigrants are likely to move to a larger Canadian city before considering more rural locations).
Personality	Family-oriented, hard-working but appreciates work/life balance, prefers the small-town lifestyle where most people know each other, and loves nature and outdoor activities.
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide family with a better lifestyle due to opportunities to work in an area with a low cost of living. • Live and work in a supportive community with similar family values. • Enjoy life and partake in outdoor hobbies like fishing, hunting, paddling.
Pain Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployed or seeking opportunities to advance in career.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently working in a higher cost of living area with less work/life balance and less time for family. • May feel disconnected from their current community and seeking a fresh start.
Influencers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spouse: Can they afford to stay home with kids or are there other job opportunities in town? • Kids: What are the schools and programs like for kids? Are there lots of other kids in the community? • Extended family: How far away are they?

Moving Decision Factors

Benefits		Risk
Personal		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower cost of living- possibly higher quality of life • Better work/life balance • Close to nature/outdoors • Safe and community oriented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding a fit within the community • Seeing family and friends in other locations less due to high cost of travel • Handling the cold and the elements 	
Professional		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance career, gain experience • Make more money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having to move again if something happens to job • Is there enough growth opportunity? 	

Decision-Making Process

Mindset	Actions	Key Messages
Awareness - Becoming aware of a need or problem		
I need to advance my career and improve quality of life for my family.	Researches employment options and potential salaries. Researches cost of living in other places.	Improve your quality of life- make incomes that goes farther in Fort Smith
Interest- Making a shortlist of solutions		
Where can I find employment?	Researches towns with job postings online- looks at website, social media, news articles, reaches out to people living there to see what it's like. Researches companies online Looks at job posting and applies for positions. Follows companies and towns on social media.	Testimonials from people who live in the towns What is life like in Fort Smith? What's new in Fort Smith? What is the future outlook?
Consideration- Evaluating the options in order to make a decision		
Which job should I take? Where would my family live and go to school?	Negotiates job offer. Potentially visits Fort Smith. Looks at houses and schools to see what options are like. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Googles housing market • Googles schools and looks at online presence/social media 	What are the top things to see and do in Fort Smith? What housing is available? What are schools like? What other programs and clubs are there?

	Looks at other job openings to see if there are opportunities for spouse. • Googles other businesses in town and looks at their social media	What other industries and job potential does Forth Smith offer?
Success Criteria		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get the job • Find a nice house to live in • Enroll family in school and programs • Support spouse in integrating into community • Feel secure and a sense of belonging • Relax and have fun 		

A.5.2 Tourist – Outdoor Enthusiast



Willow and her friends are outdoor adventurers who want to make great memories, get off the beaten path and explore what Canada has to offer.

Characteristics		
Age	25-40	
Gender	Male or female	
Family Status	Single or young family	
Current Home Location	Lives in the NWT (particularly Yellowknife for a short haul getaway), northern Alberta, BC or Saskatchewan.	
Income Level	Higher income households, likely government workers or business managers/administrators (sales, project management, accounting, small business management) from towns in the general area.	
Personality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor adventure enthusiasts • Wilderness seekers who enjoy outdoor adventure and natural beauty • Enjoys spending time with friends and family on road trips and/or camping trips (potentially RV renters/owners). • Likes to go off the beaten path for authentic experiences • Does not need to be pampered 	
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience something new- potentially new terrain or adventure (aurora, type of fishing or hunting) • Create stories to tell, great photos • Get out into nature- but still close enough to amenities like food, gas, either hotel or place to plug in RV. 	
Pain Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long hours of driving to arrive • Lack of services/things to do outside of nature • Very weather dependent 	
Influencers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends and family (fellow travelers) 	
Decision-Making Process		
Mindset	Actions	Key Messages
Awareness - Becoming aware of a need or problem		
need to plan my next getaway.	Ask friends and family for thoughts on what to do.	Fort Smith is a top destination for: camping, fishing, hunting, paddling, hiking etc.

	<p>Think of an outdoor activity and research top places for it.</p> <p>Sees a display ad for the desired activity online and clicks on it</p> <p>Sees a sponsored social media post about the desired activity and clicks on it.</p> <p>Sees someone share a social media post of the activity</p>	
Interest- Making a shortlist of solutions		
Where should we go?	<p>Asks friends and family if they have been to Fort Smith.</p> <p>Researches potential destinations that have desired activities.</p> <p>Sees a sponsored social media post about someone’s vacation at the location.</p> <p>Sees someone share a social media post about activities at the locations.</p> <p>Sees an ad for destination in travel magazine.</p> <p>Sees an ad on a highway sign or at the airport for destination.</p>	<p>Photos and stories about people who have vacationed in Fort Smith.</p>
Consideration- Evaluating the options in order to make a decision		
Where should I go and how do I plan the details of the trip?	<p>Researches hotels and campsites around Fort Smith</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looks at social media, photo galleries. • Looks at town and business websites • Clicks on an ad from a local business <p>Reads recent articles about the town.</p> <p>Researches other amenities, things to do in the area, how to get there.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clicks on blog or article with tips <p>Compares and contrasts costs to other areas.</p>	<p>What are the top things to see and do in Fort Smith? Top photo spots?</p> <p>What accommodations are available?</p> <p>Tips for traveling to Fort Smith (maps, airlines, etc.).</p> <p>Trip planner with price estimations.</p>
Success Criteria		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New experiences • Great memories and photos • Trip went smoothly- no unexpected challenges or expenses • On budget 		

A.5.3 Business – Entrepreneurs & Relocating Businesses



Omar and his wife are interested moving to a welcoming, accessible & affordable community where she can obtain good employment, he can set up a business, and they can enjoy a high quality of life and in a safe, small-town community with plenty of outdoor activities

Characteristics	
Age	25-40
Gender	Male
Family Status	Married with a young family
Current Home	A smaller city, town or rural area in NWT (most likely Yellowknife), Alberta, BC or Saskatchewan.
Education	College or university
Job Status	Currently operating or has experience in operating a business. Motivated to find a home that offers stability, an opportunity to establish or build a business while also representing a great place to live.
Background	Has completed his or her schooling and has some experience in business
Personality	Family-oriented, hard-working but appreciates work/life balance, prefers the small-town lifestyle where most people know each other, and loves nature and outdoor activities.
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic stability – want to relocate or establish his or her businesses in a community with a stable economy Good opportunities for both spouses (Fort Smith may be on the considered list because of the employment prospects for their spouse) Live and work in a supportive, connected community with similar family values. Enjoy life and partake in outdoor hobbies like fishing, hunting, paddling.
Pain Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerned about economic cycles and his or her ability to build a business in their current community Currently working in a higher cost of living area with less work/life balance and less time for family. May feel disconnected from their current community and seeking a fresh start.
Influencers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spouse: Are their business or employment opportunities for each of them? Kids: What are the schools and programs like for kids? Are there lots of other kids in the community? Extended family: How far away are they?
Moving Decision Factors	
Benefits	Risk
Personal	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower cost of living- possibly higher quality of life Better work/life balance Close to nature/outdoors Safe and community oriented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding a fit within the community Seeing family and friends in other locations less due to high cost of travel Handling the cold and the elements

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economically stable 		
Professional		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advance career, gain experience Make more money 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having to move again if there are not opportunities for both Is there enough growth opportunity?
Decision-Making Process		
Mindset	Actions	Key Messages
Awareness - Becoming aware of a need or problem		
We need to advance our careers and improve our quality of life	Researches business and employment options Researches cost of living in other places.	Improve your quality of life- make incomes that goes farther in Fort Smith
Interest- Making a shortlist of solutions		
Are there opportunities for both of us?	Researches towns with business opportunities and job postings online- looks at website, social media, news articles, reaches out to people living there to see what it is like. Researches the community online Looks at community profiles, business and job posting and applies for positions. Follows companies and towns on social media.	Testimonials from people who live in the towns What is life like in Fort Smith? What is new in Fort Smith? What is the future outlook?
Consideration- Evaluating the options in order to make a decision		
Which opportunities should we take? Where would my family live and go to school?	Assesses what businesses, locations, and business support services are available Potentially visits Fort Smith. Looks at houses and schools to see what options are like. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Googles housing market Googles schools and looks at online presence/social media Review what opportunities are available for their spouse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Googles businesses and employers in town and looks at their social media 	What are the top things to see and do in Fort Smith? What housing is available? What are schools like? What other programs and clubs are there? What other opportunities potential does Fort Smith offer?
Success Criteria		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fine opportunities for both of them Find a nice house to live in Enroll family in school and programs Feel secure and a sense of belonging Relax and have fun 		

5.4 Other Leading Segments

Tourist Personas	Outdoor Enthusiast	Southern Road Touring	Digital Nomad	Sports & Events/Meetings & Conferences
Age	25-40	Boomers	25-44	Associations, organizations & event organizers
Family Status	Single or young family	Married – traveling without children	Single or married (travelling alone or with spouse /small group but not children)	
Origin	NWT or northern Alberta, BC or Saskatchewan (driving distance)	Southern (longer haul but mostly Alberta, BC or Saskatchewan)	Location independent	Northern Canada, Alberta, BC or Saskatchewan
Status	Looking for a quick getaway	Travelling by car or RV	Telecommuting for work (e.g., software, writers, consultants, freelance workers)	Mix of first-time and repeat events and groups/diverse mix of smaller and larger events
Primary Reason Why Coming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whenever possible, get away on active holidays Interested in both new experiences (e.g., aurora, wildlife viewing, fishing) and favorite activities Enjoys time with friends and family on road trips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looking for new experiences, including natural, cultural and historically significant experiences Side trip on larger tour. Like to go off the beaten path for authentic experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constantly exploring unfamiliar places and cultures Choice is a function of lifestyle, work-life balance and love of travel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capabilities Location (accessible destination for participants) Setting Welcoming to participants/visitor services Support for event planners/champion
Priorities and Pain Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of hours of driving to arrive Access to services/things to do outside of nature Experiences tend to be very weather dependent Does not need to be pampered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to support services Access to packaged tours and group activities Well planned trip requires significant advance information (prefer stories from locals/visitors, inside advice on where to visit, and other in-depth, unique content) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to a welcoming space shared with like-minded people (coworking spaces, coffee shops, space in accommodation, library) Reliable wi-fi Affordable accommodation (cost sensitive relative to their ability to earn on the road) Convenience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilities must meet space and capacity requirements Ease of setup/responsiveness to requests for information and services Coordinating activities among key stakeholders Promotion to participants
Key Messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unique experiences Great destination for camping, fishing, hunting, paddling, hiking etc. Feature photos and stories about people who have vacationed in Fort Smith Authentic, unspoiled environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessible, unique and authentic natural experiences Feature photos and stories about people who have vacationed in Fort Smith Information on what to do and see, where to stay, and trip planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authentic (accessible, pristine outdoors and wilderness, cultural and historically significant experiences) Access to internet, workspaces and accommodation Welcoming Affordable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An authentic and accessible setting that meets the needs of both the event and the participants Quality of the experience Feature photos and stories from past events

Resident Personas	Employment (Job Seekers)	Commuters	Remote Workers	Students
Age	25-40	25-54	25-54	18-34
Family Status	Married with a young family	Married	Single or married (travelling with spouse or alone)	Married or single
Origin	Smaller city, town or rural area in NWT (most likely Yellowknife), Alberta, BC or Saskatchewan	Other NWT communities, western Canada, Atlantic Canada and central Canada	Location independent	NWT or western Canada
Status	Prospective employees or ones who were just offered a job in Fort Smith	Commuting to work in the region (e.g., mines)	Professionals or staff members able to work remotely (e.g., employer allowing for permanent remote work arrangements post COVID-19)	Attended College in Fort Smith or just graduated from another college and open for relocation
Primary Reason Why Moving	Motivated to move by the need for (better) employment and to improve the quality of life for his or her family in a clean, safe small-town community with plenty of outdoor activities.	Look for an accessible, affordable and attractive base to commute to and from permanent employment	Looking for a change to improve the quality of life for themselves or family, enjoy new experiences, and participate in outdoor activities	Motivated primarily by opportunities for employment, combined with being in a welcoming community featuring social and outdoor activities
Priorities and Pain Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployed or seeking opportunities for advancement • Access to affordable housing • Desire to strike better work-life balance and form closer connections to community with similar values • Access to outdoor adventure opportunities (e.g., outdoor hobbies like fishing, hiking and paddling) • Transportation access (get out to see family/family to see them) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation access/commuting times (ready access to employment) • May feel disconnected from their current community and seeking a fresh start • Need for social networking opportunities/can be difficult to form relationships because of temporary status • Cost of living/access to affordable housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable, high-speed digital connectivity and infrastructure • Access to co-working spaces shared with like-minded people • Cost of living/affordable housing • Opportunities for outdoor adventure • Lifestyle and work/life balance • Social networking opportunities • Accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for employment and career advancement • Flexible work lifestyle • Access to outdoor activities • Vibrant social scene and social network • Strong community of young professionals • Concerns about equality social justice, and health)
Key Messaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment and advancement opportunities • Close to nature/outdoors • Lower cost of living and higher quality of life • Better work/life balance • Safe, welcoming, family-oriented community where neighbours know each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility and affordability • Opportunities for outdoor adventure • Lifestyle and work/life balance • Opportunity to connect/social networking opportunities • Authentic, welcoming, affordable community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation access/commuting times (ready access to employment) • Opportunities for outdoor adventure • Lifestyle and work/life balance • Opportunity to connect/social networking opportunities • Affordability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment and advancement opportunities • Contribute to development of a forward-thinking community • Employment and advancement opportunities • Healthy lifestyle

Business Personas	Entrepreneurs	Relocating Businesses	Industrial Development	Other Investments
Age	25-40	25-54	25-54	25-54
Family Status	Married with or without a young family	Married	Married	Married
Origin	Smaller city, town or rural area in NWT (most likely Yellowknife), Alberta, BC or Saskatchewan	Area where the economy is depressed, most likely in the in NWT, Alberta, BC or Saskatchewan	NWT, Alberta, BC or Saskatchewan	NWT, Alberta, BC or Saskatchewan
Status	Prospective entrepreneurs, spouses of relocating workers, and other interested in starting a local business	Currently operating business that is facing economic hardship because of a regional economic downturn	May already be located in the region or considering moving there and investing	May already be located in the region or considering moving there and investing
Primary Reason Why Moving/ Investing	Move may be motivated by existing connections to community (spouse or family), limited employment prospects, and/or a improve the quality of life for his or her family in a clean, safe small-town community with plenty of outdoor activities	To relocate their business to a community where the economy and economic prospects are better, and where they could improve the quality of life for his or her family. Preference for small, more remote centres	Opportunity to taken advantage of low electricity costs with Northwest Territories Power Company programs and the low-cost land	Opportunities to establish businesses in areas such as tourism, retail, personal services and childcare
Priorities and Pain Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relocated to the region for employment or with spouse Found limited access to employment or opportunities for advancement Have a desire/recognition of an opportunity to start a business Require access to entrepreneurial development and business support services Access to co-working spaces shared with like-minded people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns about the prospects for their business Access to affordable housing Desire to strike better work-life balance and form closer connections to community with similar values Access to outdoor adventure opportunities (e.g., outdoor hobbies like fishing, hiking and paddling) Transportation access (get out to see family/family to see them) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industrial development will also be impacted by the cost of labour, the cost of shipping products to market and accessed to serviced land. A study is planned that will focus specifically on the opportunities to promote investment in industrial development and light manufacturing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a desire/recognition of an opportunity to start a business Require access to entrepreneurial development a business support services Access to co-working spaces shared with like-minded people Access to various incentives
Key Messaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A pro start-up environment/a welcoming community for new businesses Support, direction and assistance in identifying and assessing business development opportunities Access to businesses development resources Access to needed communications and transportation infrastructures, and workspaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A welcoming community for new businesses Access to businesses development resources Accessibility and affordability of the community Opportunities for outdoor adventure Lifestyle and work/life balance Opportunity to connect/social networking opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A welcoming community for new businesses Access to electricity and serviced industrial land Anticipated developments (e.g., major projects in areas such as mining, energy, communication and transportation) Quality of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A pro start-up environment/a welcoming community for business Support, direction and assistance in identifying and assessing opportunities Access to businesses development resources Access to supporting infrastructure