

TOWN OF FORT SMITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2018 – 2022



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Executive Summary

The Economic Development Strategy for the Town of Fort Smith is set in the context of the community's vision, values and goals. We will seek to work with all possible partners to ensure success and development for everyone in our community and region. The Town of Fort Smith Vision, Values and Goals are as follows:

Vision

“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.”

Values

- 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

Goals

- 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

Economic Development Strategy Planning Process

The three main elements of economic development in Fort Smith:



The draft strategy required community feedback and input. It was handed out at the Thebacha Trade Show, emailed to all business license holders, and displayed on the main page of the Town of Fort Smith website and Facebook pages with links to the actual document. Requests for feedback were also made directly via emails and phone calls to key individuals or organizations who have been actively involved in the business community of Fort Smith.

The feedback form was provided in a way for submissions to be anonymous. Individuals providing feedback did not grant permission for the names to be used in any public document.

Feedback was provided by local business owners from a variety of business areas, former politicians, employees from government agencies and members of the municipal advisory boards. See Appendix A, for a copy of the Feedback Summary.

In creating this strategy, a literature review was completed of the following documents:

- Town of Fort Smith Community Plan, Bylaw 935
- Town of Fort Smith Community Services Master Plan
- Town of Fort Smith's Sustainability Plan
- Town of Fort Smith's Tourism Branding & Marketing Strategy
- Smith Landing First Nation Environmental Scan Report
- Smith Landing First Nation Economic Survey Results
- The Town of Hay River's Integrated Sustainability Plan
- GNWT Tourism 2020 Plan
- GNWT Economic Opportunities Strategy
- Yellowknife 2014-2019 Economic Strategy
- Community Economic Development Strategy – City of Whitehorse

Economic Development Strategic Plan – Introduction

The role of Municipal Government in Economic Development is to influence the atmosphere of the community to make it conducive for growth. The Town of Fort Smith will focus on areas of greatest possible growth and opportunities which may include areas of manufacturing, agriculture, biomass, and harvesting. Factors such as land availability, cost of living, territorial and federal legislation as well as local and global economies will also play an important role in the Fort Smith economy.

The items and actions outlined in this document will serve as the foundation on which the Town of Fort Smith will base our Economic Development activity. The lead partners and scheduling of tasks are dependant upon the availability and approval of partners and outside organizations.

The funding for many of the projects described in this document will be solicited from the department of Industry, Tourism and Investment with the Government of the Northwest Territories. The Town of Fort Smith contribution will be funded through the Operations and Maintenance budget and funds outside of these contributions will be by request from the Town of Fort Smith reserves.

It is important to be aware that the nature of Economic Development and Community Development is ever-evolving. This document will be a living document and referenced often but remain a dynamic piece which can be updated as needs and opportunities require.

Town of Fort Smith - Economic Development Strategic Goals

Goal # 1

Foster and Encourage business and job creation and retention

Goal # 2

Increase Communication with and within the Business Community

Goal #3 - Diversify the Local Economy

Goal #4 - Attract residents to live in Fort Smith

Goal #5 - Enhance Liveability

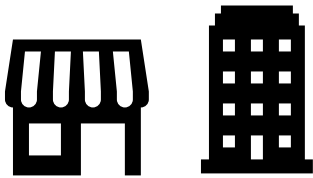
Goal #6 - Attract shoppers & visitors from the region into our community

Goal #7 - Champion and Assist with Tourism product development and packaging

Goal #8 - Increase number of Festivals, sporting events and conferences hosted in Fort Smith

Goal #9 - Work with regional partners to market Fort Smith: (Hay River, Fort McMurray, Yellowknife and Edmonton)

Goal # 1: Foster and Encourage Business and Job Creation and Retention



Strategies

- A. Opportunities Assessment
- B. Develop Land & Business Inventory
- C. Gather input from Business Community
- D. Identify Investment Objectives & Strategies
- E. Implement Investment Strategy
- F. Strengthen Government Positions in Fort Smith

A. Opportunities Assessment

Purpose: Taking stock of our current situation allows for better planning. This step helps us gather information and list the assets available to us.

Possible Lead/Partners: Economic Development Officer, GNWT - Industry, Tourism, and Investment.

Activities:

- Do an opportunities assessment of all current business license holders in Fort Smith.
- Identify gaps where services or goods are not available in Fort Smith but potentially could be.
- Compare 3-5 other regional communities of similar size.
- Business interviews: What new services/ stores would increase their spending? Are they seeking partners? Does their business need a complimentary business or service? Are they looking to retire soon? What are the plans to grow or maintain business?
- Complete a SWOT Analysis – Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats including areas of business, manufacturing, industry and tourism.

Inputs/Budget:

- 20-40 hours staff time

Outputs: Develop a shortlist of 10-15 investment attraction opportunities

Desired Outcomes: Establish a clear vision of current business conditions.

Metric:

- List of potential opportunities/investments

Description: This list will identify what has worked well in Fort Smith and areas that can be targeted as opportunities to investigate. What new stores, industries, or manufacturing would benefit the Fort Smith economy? Ensure input from local business owners and government agencies to work collaboratively with the community.

Priority: High

2018				2019				2020				2021				2022			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4

B. Develop Land and Business Inventory

Purpose: Taking stock of our current situation allows for better planning. This step helps us gather information and list the assets available to us.

Possible Lead/Partners: Economic Development Officer

Activities:

- Identify and list land and businesses that are available for purchase as commercial/ retail space.
- Interview current land owners regarding their interest in subdividing land to use/create office/retail space. Do they have current plans for vacant land (especially those located in Town Centre zone)? What would be an incentive for them to build on that land?
- Explore options for land availability or residential development.

Inputs/Budget:

- 20 – 60 hours staff time

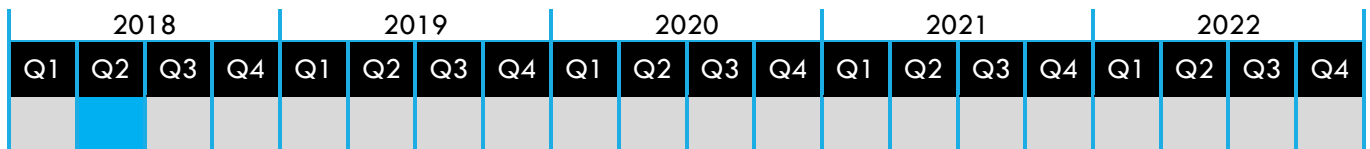
Outputs: Clearly defined investment locations in Fort Smith. Up to date list of zoned and serviced commercial and industrial lands and buildings, readily accessible on the Town of Fort Smith website.

Desired Outcomes: Establish a clear vision of current business conditions.

Metric: Inventory list of available commercial/retail space, with updated information on price, size, buildings, etc.

Description: If investors or potential business owners are looking for an ideal space for their organization where do they go to seek that information? The Town of Fort Smith wants to be ready to help people find an area quickly and easily with all the information at our finger tips.

Priority: Medium - High



C. Gather input from Business Community

Purpose: Taking stock of our current situation allows for better planning. This step helps us gather information and list the assets available to us.

Possible Lead/Partners: Economic Development Officer, Chamber of Commerce, GNWT - Industry, Tourism and Investment

Activities:

- Survey all business license holders to assess what are the impediments and opportunities to doing business in Fort Smith (including home occupation businesses).
- What incentives would help them to consider new investment opportunities, for example: reduced power costs.

Inputs/Budget:

- 40 – 80 hours staff time.

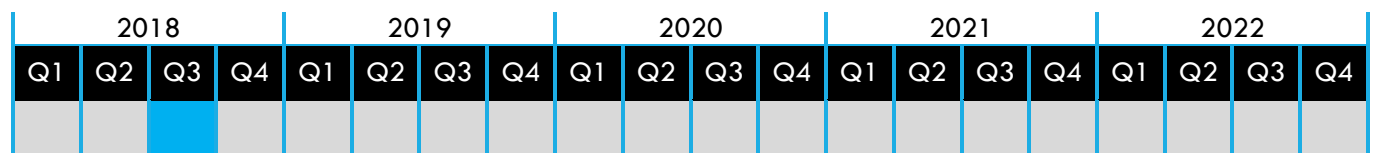
Outputs: List of barriers and opportunities identified by the business community.

Desired Outcomes: To have excellent communication with the business community. Gain practical ideas to assist with growth in the business community to ensure Fort Smith is a business-friendly community.

Metric: Survey report.

Description: By forming an integrated approach to community economic development and engaging stakeholders, we will hope to build relationships and maximize value of economic development information that can be utilized by the business community.

Priority: High



D. Identify Investment Objectives and Strategies

Purpose: Identify investment objectives.

Possible Lead/Partners: Economic Development Officer, GNWT - Industry, Tourism and Investment, Chamber of Commerce.

Activities:

- Identify target sector (from Opportunities Assessment).
- Define number of new businesses and/or number of employees Fort Smith would like to attract within a set time frame.
- Define opportunities for development or expansion in the community.
- Use above information to create an investment strategy.

Inputs/Budget:

- 40 – 100 hours staff time
- \$5000 professional services for studies (potential opportunities to leverage funds)

Outputs:

- Report and Studies that evaluate potential opportunities.
- Investment Strategy created.

Desired Outcomes: To understand better the opportunities for business and potential industry development in Fort Smith, and to use that data to promote investment in Fort Smith.

Metric: Various reports, studies, report to SAO/council, investment strategy.

Description: The reports, feasibility studies and investment strategy will evaluate the opportunities for potential business and industry development in Fort Smith such as agriculture, biomass, wild game and plant harvesting, and ideas for manufacturing. The information will be available not only locally, but at various networking events. The reports and studies will be a valuable tool to economic development in Fort Smith.

Priority: High

2018				2019				2020				2021				2022			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4

E. Implement Investment Strategy

Purpose: To assist with the development of business and growth in Fort Smith.

Possible Lead/Partners: Economic Development Officer, Tourism and Trade Advisory Board, Chamber of Commerce, GNWT – Industry, Tourism and Investment, Aurora College.

Activities:

- Speak to potential partners.
- Regular meetings to create and implement investment strategy.

Inputs/Budget:

- 100 - 200 hours staff time

Outputs: Investment Strategy

Desired Outcomes:

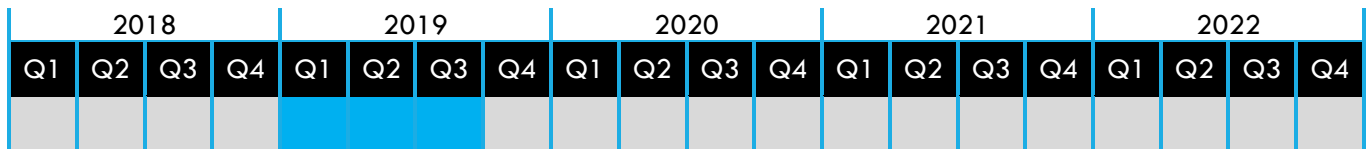
- Identify number of new businesses and/or number of new employees Fort Smith would like to attract over a set time.
- Strategy implementation.

Metric:

- Number of businesses licenses.
- Number of new employees/jobs.

Description: The strategy will clearly identify what are the areas for growth in the community and steps that can be taken to encourage that development. The Town will investigate the appetite for a committee to form and implement this strategy. The investment strategy will be a valuable tool for economic development in Fort Smith.

Priority: High



F. Strengthen Government Positions in Fort Smith

Purpose: Identify current staffing for all government employees in Fort Smith including Federal, Territorial and Municipal. Establish strategies to strengthen positions and departments in Fort Smith.

Possible Lead/Partners: Senior Administration Officer, Mayor, Council, Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Officer, Aurora College, GNWT - Industry, Tourism and Investment.

Activities:

- Inventory current government positions.
- Advocate to maintain positions in Fort Smith.
- Research past levels and where positions went.

Inputs/Budget:
TBD

Outputs: List of government positions and strategies to maintain them.

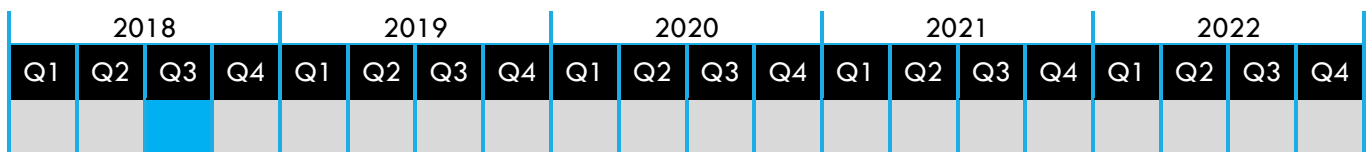
Desired Outcomes: Work with government organizations to encourage and strengthen government positions and labour force in Fort Smith.

Metric:

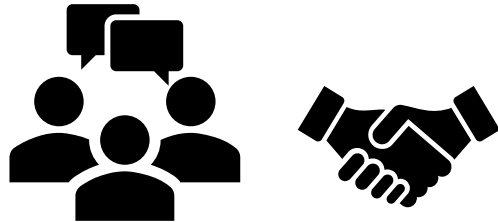
- Inventory of Government positions
- Report on past and current positions
- Number of actions taken to advocate for government jobs in Fort Smith

Description: The Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories play an important role in the economy of Fort Smith. The Town would like to investigate ways to support, maintain and/or grow the government labour force in Fort Smith. This goal attempts to ensure that the Town is actively participating in, and advocating for the continued role these employers play in the Fort Smith economy.

Priority: High



Goal # 2: Increase Communication with and within the Business Community



Strategies

- A. Assess Local Business Climate
- B. Provide Educational & Networking Opportunities
- C. Regular Communication with Business Community
- D. Support Chamber of Commerce with Shop Local Campaign

A. Assess Local Business Climate

Purpose: To ensure that communication is open, transparent and responsive.

Possible Lead/Partners: Economic Development Officer, Chamber of Commerce, GNWT - Industry, Tourism and Investment.

Activities:

- Host "Business Walks" - Quarterly meetings to businesses asking 3-5 questions.

Inputs/Budget:

- 10-20 hours staff time, annually

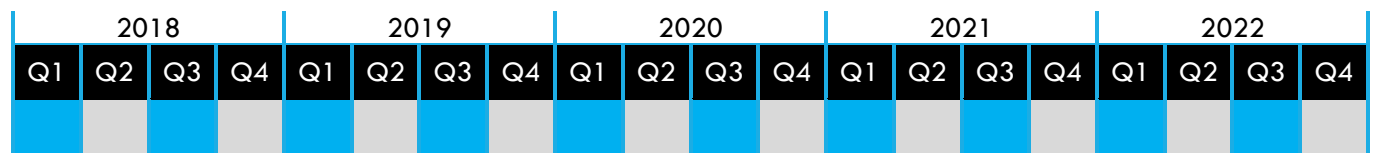
Outputs: Survey Report.

Desired Outcomes: To be informed of emerging opportunities and be responsive to business needs.

Metric: Quarterly reports based on surveys.

Description: To improve communication between the local business community and local leadership, we will reach out to local businesses. As the local business environment is varied, this initiative will assist in the collection and distribution of information to all types of businesses. It will also allow the Town of Fort Smith and local government agencies to better understand the needs of the business community.

Priority: Medium



B. Provide Educational & Networking Opportunities

Purpose: Increased collaboration to address business opportunities and threats.

Possible Lead/Partners: Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Officer, Trade & Tourism Advisory Board, Aurora College

Activities:

- Host business education series (i.e.: Business After Hours, Business Breakfast, or Lunch & Learn, on relevant topics such as marketing, Lunch with the Mayor, social media, financing, etc.).

Inputs/Budget:

- 10-20 hours staff time

Outputs: TBD

Desired Outcomes: To have a strong, creative and growing business community.

Metric:

- Events attended/created.
- Number of interactions with Business Community.
- Business Satisfaction Survey.

Description: Supporting each other starts here, with businesses and organizations getting to know each other and making sure all organizations and businesses are supporting each other.

Priority: Medium



C. Regular Communication with Business Community

Purpose: To ensure consistent avenues of communication that are open, transparent, and responsive.

Possible Lead/Partners: Economic Development Officer, Chamber of Commerce

Activities:

- Town of Fort Smith representative to regularly attend Chamber of Commerce meetings.
- Designate a lead person or system to communicate the Town's capital plans and local investments with the business community, ex.: business newsletter.

Inputs/Budget:

- 20 – 40 hours staff time

Outputs:

- Improved communication of capital plans to business community.
- Focus on communicating Town expenditures as investments in the local economy.

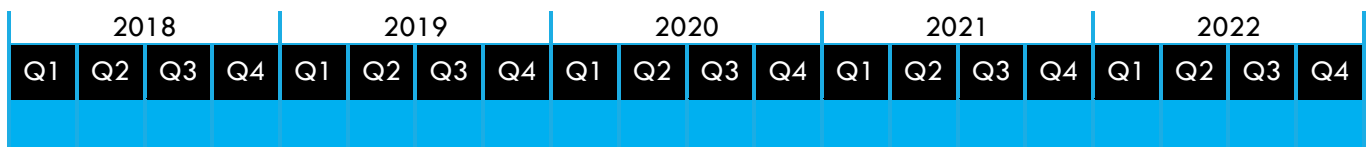
Desired Outcomes: To have excellent communication and a productive relationship with the business community.

Metric:

- Increase in joint projects between Town of Fort Smith and Chamber of Commerce
- Quarterly e-newsletter to the business community.

Description: Regular communication is key to developing a long-term business relationship, in line with the Town of Fort Smith communication plan.

Priority: High



D. Support Chamber of Commerce with Shop Local Campaign

Purpose: To ensure residents, businesses and government agencies understand the significance of buying locally and its impact on the community's economy.

Possible Lead/Partners: Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Officer.

Activities:

- Offer coordinated events, promotions and activities for local shopping by consumers and local purchasing by organizations.
- Create coordinated marketing and educational content.

Inputs/Budget:

- \$500 - \$1000/ year

Outputs: Annual Campaign and Review of internal spending of Government agencies in October/November

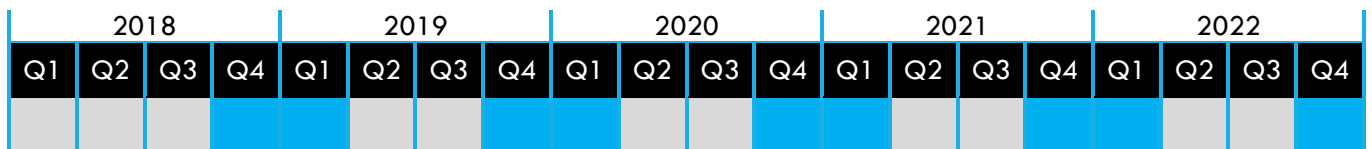
Desired Outcomes: To have a strong local economy based on supporting local businesses. To have residents and organizations understand the value of potentially paying a little more to have their dollars go farther in our community.

Metric:

- Survey businesses on effects of campaign.

Description: A "buy local" campaign that engages the local businesses, government agencies and citizens can be a powerful tool to help sustain small businesses. Working with the Chamber of Commerce to send out a strong message that we support and strongly encourage local spending can help to ensure the message reaches all citizens, businesses and all levels of government.

Priority: Medium



Goal # 3: Diversify the Local Economy



Strategies

- A. Create a Cooperative Planning Strategy with Community and Regional Partners
- B. Identify Areas of Economic "Leakage".
- C. Encourage Youth Entrepreneurs

A. Create a Cooperative Planning Strategy with Community and Regional Partners

Purpose: Create local action to address common regional goals and issues, working together with local First Nations, and other regional governments.

Possible Lead/Partners: Leadership representatives of First Nations and Municipalities

Activities:

- Investigate the possibility of a "Stronger Together" initiative through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. What are our common goals? How can we work together?
- Meet with regional governments (including other municipalities) to investigate ways to determine and work towards common goals.
- Host regular leadership meetings: Ministers, Town of Fort Smith, Fort Smith Metis Council, Smith Landing First Nation, Salt River First Nation, Thebacha Chamber of Commerce, and all major leadership, to find common ground and have a united front when voicing issues for the community and the region.

Inputs/Budget:

TBD

Outputs:

TBD

Desired Outcomes:

To begin discussion on how a stronger united voice can:

- Engage businesses and other governments.
- Increase access to funding.
- Save on joint programs.
- Increase opportunities for local business development and job creation.
- Develop opportunities for coordinated planning efforts.

Metric: Cooperative Strategy Created.

Description: Many municipalities and First Nations, and even neighbouring municipalities want to collaborate but do not know where to start. There may be big differences in the communities' demographics, cultures, and how they govern themselves. The *Stronger Together* Toolkit offers step-by-step suggestions on how to bridge differences, so partners can find new ways to work together for mutual prosperity.

Priority: Medium



B. Identify Areas of Economic Leakage and Areas to Recapture Spending

Purpose: Strengthen the local economy by capturing more local spending.

Possible Lead/Partners: EDO, Chamber of Commerce

Activities: Conduct an Economic Leakage Study: outlining areas where money is leaving the community.

Inputs/Budget:

- \$5000 hire outside contractor (Potential opportunity to leverage funds).
- Request assistance from Statistics NWT.
- Develop action plan to recapture spending.

Outputs:

- Community Economic Spending report.
- Strategy to recapture spending.

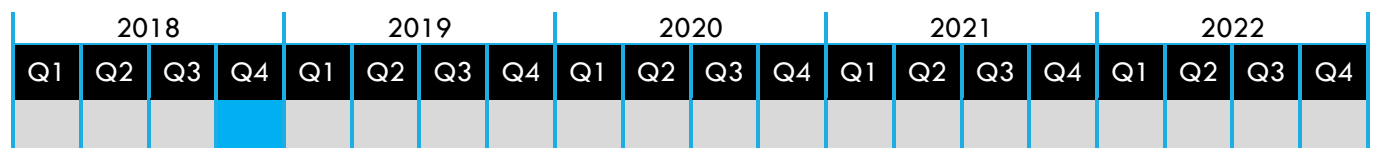
Desired Outcomes: To maximize local spending.

Metric:

- Report outlining specific spending habits of local households, businesses & government agencies.
- Percentage or amount of money spent outside of Fort Smith.
- Value of economic spending by households, businesses and government agencies.

Description: With easy access to online shopping, and large super stores available to people when they travel south, the opportunity for residents to spend money outside of Fort Smith is high. Identifying the main areas of spending outside the community will assist with creating a campaign to capture more of that spending locally.

Priority: High



C. Encourage Youth Entrepreneurs

Purpose: To support initiatives that give young people a chance to explore entrepreneurship in a fun and exciting way.

Possible Lead/Partners: Economic Development Officer, GNWT ITI, Chamber of Commerce, Aurora College, PWK High School, JBT Elementary School, Thebacha Business Development Services.

Activities: Create, organize, promote and host event.

Inputs/Budget:

- 10-20 hours of staff time.
- \$2,500 project fund (potential opportunities to leverage funds).

Outputs: Assist with creating, organizing, promoting and hosting an event.

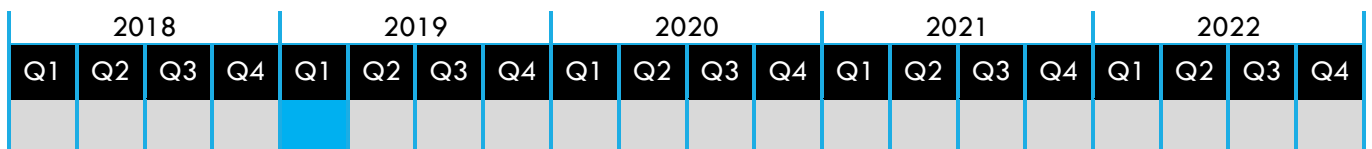
Desired Outcomes: To get youth thinking about business.

Metric:

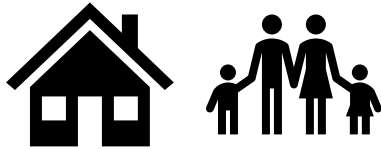
- Participation rate.
- Feedback via survey.

Description: Hosting an event of well recognized programs such as “Junior Achievement” and “Lemonade Day” or participating in a youth business challenge, introduces the concept of entrepreneurship at a young age. The goal is to get youth thinking about business.

Priority: High



Goal # 4: Attract and Retain Residents to live in Fort Smith



Strategies

- A. Identify the Current Situation
- B. Define Key Target Markets, Messaging & Strategy
- C. Develop a Marketing Strategy
- D. Increase Housing Options
- E. Create a Resident Ambassador Program

A. Identify the Current Situation

Purpose: Taking stock of our current housing situation allows for better planning. This step helps us gather information and list the assets available to us.

Possible Lead/Partners: Economic Development Officer.

Activities: Assess and inventory available housing, rental properties, land and future housing possibilities.

Inputs/Budget:

- 40 - 60 hours staff time.

Outputs:

- Up to date list of available houses for sale and rent, with prices.
- Up to date list of available lots for sale, with prices.

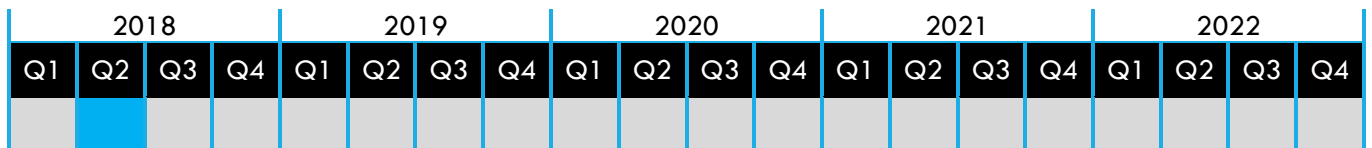
Desired Outcomes: Establish clear outlook of housing market.

Metric:

- List and descriptions of available lots, houses, rental properties and costs, readily accessible on the Town of Fort Smith website

Description: Attracting new employees and businesses to our community means having available and affordable housing for them. Without a strong real estate presence, it is important to have a good understanding of the housing market to asses where and how we can grow.

Priority: High



B. Define Target Markets

Purpose: To attract and retain residents who will contribute to the economic growth and diversification of Fort Smith.

Possible Lead/Partners: Economic Development Officer, GNWT – Industry, Tourism and Investment, Chamber of Commerce, Aurora College.

Activities:

- Identify current and targeted demographics – Age, gender, income, education, occupation.
- Identify employers hiring in Fort Smith and the NWT.
- Compare cost of living to other NWT communities.
- Identify Fort Smith’s “story” or “brand” and how it fits with the type of people who are currently living in Fort Smith and how it can help identify a target market for Fort Smith.

Inputs/Budget:

- 40 -60 hrs of staff time

Outputs:

- Report defining target markets

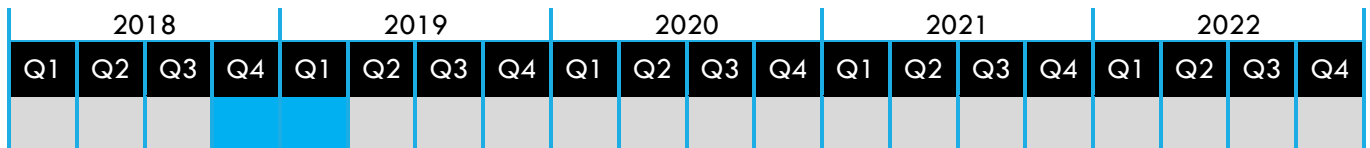
Desired Outcomes: To define Fort Smith’s story or brand and ideal target markets.

Metric:

- Report identifying key markets

Description: The Town of Fort Smith has an important role to play in the promotion of Fort Smith as a community in which to live, work and play. Fort Smith offers a variety of recreational, educational, cultural and economic opportunities and we will seek to promote these attributes to grow our population. Fort Smith also looks to retain the current population such as university aged students returning from school, and retiring long-term workers.

Priority: Medium



C. Develop Marketing Strategy

Purpose: To attract residents who will contribute to the economic growth and diversification of Fort Smith

Possible Lead/Partners: Economic Development Officer, Tourism and Trade Advisory Board, Aurora College, Thebacha Chamber of Commerce.

Activities:

- Create marketing strategy.

Inputs/Budget:

- 40 – 100 hours staff time.
- \$2500 for professional photos (Possibility to leverage funds).
- \$2500 for printed material (Possibility to leverage funds).

Outputs:

- Community Marketing Strategy.

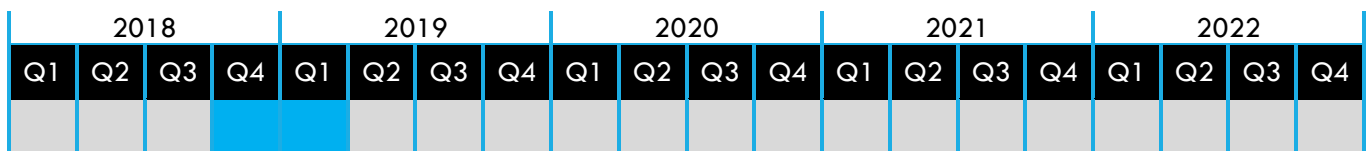
Desired Outcomes: To create a marketing strategy with a strong focus on the digital component that targets key markets (mine workers, young families, seniors, etc.) to come and visit, live, work and play in Fort Smith!

Metric:

- Market Strategy
- Number of residents
- Number of houses
- Digital Metrics report

Description: A marketing strategy is important to provide focus and step-by-step actions on the how and why of attracting new people into our community. An important aspect to the Marketing Plan will be marketing the community digitally. With so many people on computers, phones and tablets as well as social media sites, digital marketing is key to Fort Smith's success in attracting people to live, work and play.

Priority: Medium



D. Increase Housing Options

Purpose: Ensure growth through available and affordable housing.

Possible Lead/Partners: Sustainable Development Advisory Board, Director of Municipal Services, Economic Development Officer, Salt River First Nation, Smith Landing First Nation, Fort Smith Metis Council, Aurora College, Local developers.

Activities:

- Work with landowners to develop affordable housing through programs and policies.
- 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

Inputs/Budget:

- 20 – 40 hours staff time.

Outputs:

- TBD

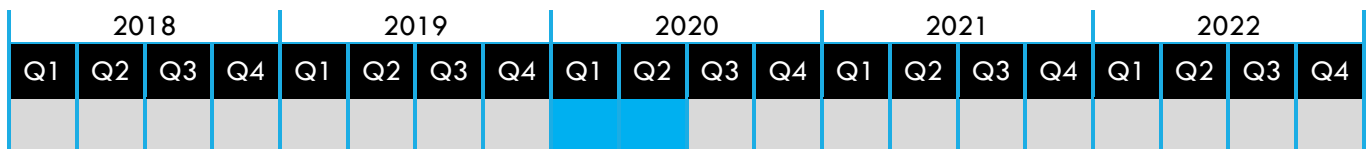
Desired Outcomes: Strong and affordable housing market in Fort Smith.

Metric:

- Number of homes available for rent or sale.

Description: A key factor in a good quality of life, is living in good neighbourhoods with affordable housing. Attracting new employees and businesses to our community means having housing that suits their needs whether they are seniors, young professionals, or families.

Priority: High



E. Create a Resident Ambassador Program

Purpose: Improve visitor experience with exceptional service and knowledge of community.

Possible Lead/Partners: Chamber of Commerce, GNWT- Industry, Tourism and Investment, Thebacha Chamber of Commerce, Aurora College, Economic Development Officer.

Activities:

- Train community members as Community Ambassadors with the Northern Most Host program especially:
 - All front-line Town of Fort Smith staff.
 - Front line retail staff as hosts of the community.
 - All employees / service providers involved in the Tourism sector.

Inputs/Budget:

- 40-80 hours staff time.

Outputs:

- Organize training events.

Desired Outcomes: Fort Smith business and tourism sectors recognized for their outstanding service and attention to their clients. Fort Smith recognized as a great place to live and do business.

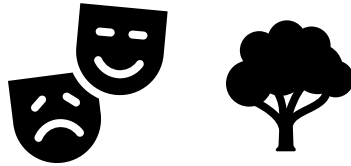
Metric: Number of employees that have completed the program.

Description: Fort Smith is already viewed as a welcoming community. The Northern Most Host program provides them with a few more tools and broader understanding of the types of visitors that come to Fort Smith and why it is important to exceed their expectations.

Priority: Medium - High

2018				2019				2020				2021				2022			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Goal # 5: Enhance Liveability



Strategies

- A. Identify Areas Needing Improvement
- B. Strengthen Public Engagement
- C. Community Improvement Plan/Guidelines
- D. Create Municipal Funding Program
- E. Identify Transportation Concerns
- F. Grow Culture and Arts Sector

A. Identify Areas Needing Improvement

Purpose: To attract residents who will contribute to economic growth and diversification.

Possible Lead/Partners: Economic Development Officer, Trade & Tourism Advisory Board, Thebacha Chamber of Commerce, GNWT ITI, Wood Buffalo National Park, Fort Smith Seniors Society, Smith Landing First Nation, Salt River First Nation, Fort Smith Metis Council, Aurora College, Northwestern Air Lease

Activities:

- Community Survey: Identify community infrastructure (buildings, commercial, residential) that need improvement or are lacking in some capacity.

Inputs/Budget:

- 60 – 100 hours staff time.

Outputs:

- Community Survey.
- Survey Report.

Desired Outcomes: To ensure that current residents and visitors' first and/or current impressions of Fort Smith are extremely positive.

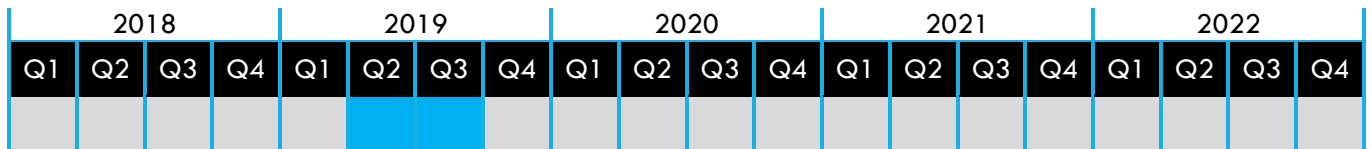
Metric:

- Survey report.

Description:

The economic infrastructure of Fort Smith can be defined as the facilities and infrastructure of the community that make business activity possible. This goal attempts to ensure that the Town is actively participating in, and advocating for the continued development of this infrastructure.

Priority: High



B. Strengthen Public Engagement

Purpose: To attract residents who will contribute to economic growth and diversification.

Possible Lead/Partners: Economic Development Officer, Trade & Tourism Advisory Board, Thebacha Chamber of Commerce, GNWT ITI, Wood Buffalo National Park, Fort Smith Seniors Society, Smith Landing First Nation, Salt River First Nation, Fort Smith Metis Council, Aurora College, Northwestern Air Lease.

Activities:

- Develop an internal communications plan (Town of Fort Smith – How to communicate internally and to the public).
- Identify external communication options – How local news is reported directly to the citizens of Fort Smith focusing on the people, places and things that make Fort Smith unique and special.

Inputs/Budget:

- TBD

Outputs:

- Communications Strategy.

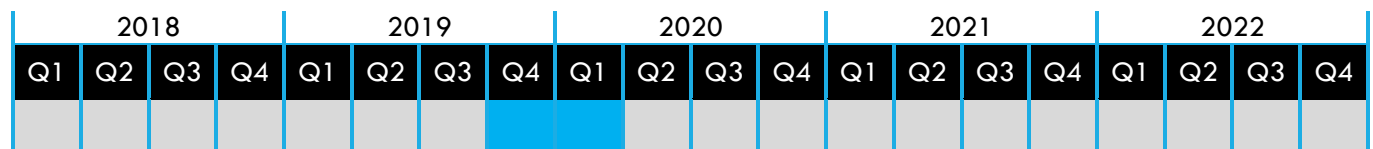
Desired Outcomes: To ensure all citizens feel informed about policies, bylaws and decisions being made and have the opportunity and a forum to voice their opinions.

Metric:

- Communications Strategy.
- Communication Report.

Description: When residents become involved and informed with community decision making, they begin to see themselves as having an influence to create the kind of community they want to live in, and to shape and change the future. The residents of Fort Smith are key to informing policy makers on what is important to them and through engagement people often are more supportive and help strengthen decisions and policies that have been made.

Priority: Medium



C. Create a Community Improvement Plan/Program

Purpose: To stimulate investment in the downtown core.

Possible Lead/Partners: Economic Development Officer, Senior Administrative Officer, Director of Municipal Services, Sustainable Advisory Board, Trade and Tourism Advisory Board, Chamber of Commerce, GNWT Industry, Tourism and Investment.

Activities:

- Create overall plan for downtown development.

Inputs/Budget:

- 100 – 150 hours staff time

Outputs:

- Set framework for areas identified in need of revitalization, redevelopment or renewal in Fort Smith’s downtown core. Specify areas that would be most beneficial for economic development.

Desired Outcomes:

- To have a visually pleasing and compact Town Centre that reflects Fort Smith’s scenic small-town character.
- To reduce the number of vacant lots and buildings in the Town Centre zone.

Metric: Community Improvement Program (CIP).

- **Description:** The character and quality of the community is partially reflected in the aesthetic appeal of the main street and downtown area. The buildings and landscape which front onto McDougal Road and the river side trails are key components to the character of Fort Smith. A Community Improvement Program is intended to improve the appearance of commercial and residential buildings to improve the overall aesthetics and character of the community. Development in the Town Centre contributes to its role as the Town’s central hub of activity.

Priority: High



D. Create Municipal Funding Program

Purpose: To stimulate investment in the downtown core.

Possible Lead/Partners: Economic Development Officer, SAO, Director of Municipal Services, Sustainable Advisory Board, Trade and Tourism Advisory Board, Chamber of Commerce.

Activities:

- Create a funding program for businesses to improve the look of their business, based on Community Improvement Plan, for example: landscaping, building façade, building signage, etc.

Inputs/Budget:

- \$10,000 – \$30,000 (potential opportunity to leverage funds).

Outputs:

- Municipal Funding Programs.

Desired Outcomes: Increase attention to areas in the downtown core in need of repair or redevelopment. Private sector and government investment in the downtown core.

Metric: Stimulate private sector investments through municipal incentives.

Description:

The format of a municipal funding program could consist of either a grant or loan for a portion of the defined eligible costs. Eligible improvements could include restoration of architectural details, window and door repair, building façade, entryway modifications, lighting, sign improvements, landscaping etc.

Priority: High



E. Identify Transportation Concerns

Purpose: To facilitate easy access for travel to northern and southern destinations and present Fort Smith as a desirable and affordable place to live.

Possible Lead/Partners: Economic Development Officer, GNWT ITI, Chamber of Commerce, Northwestern Air Lease, transportation companies.

Activities:

- Identify opportunities for reduced rate travel.

Inputs/Budget:

- 20 – 40 hours staff time.

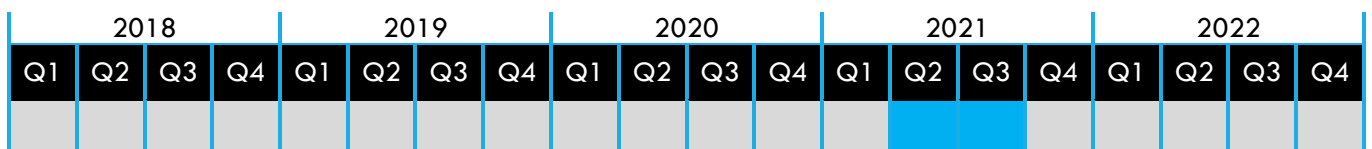
Outputs: Report on travel and transportation options.

Desired Outcomes: Begin the discussion of reduced rate travel that supports local businesses while benefitting residents.

Metric: Reduced Rate Travel options identified.

Description: Fort Smith's location as a remote northern community means that transportation in and out of the community involves long drives to reach southern destinations or flights, which are more expensive because of the smaller market. Are there creative ways to reduce costs of travel while still supporting important transport businesses?

Priority: High



F. Grow Culture and Arts Sector

Purpose: To support the arts and cultural sector and create a venue for fun, dynamic arts and entertainment.

Possible Lead/Partners: Smith’s Landing First Nation, Salt River First Nation, Fort Smith Metis Council, Northern Life Museum & Cultural Centre, Advisory Board on Culture, Trade and Tourism Advisory Board, Aurora College, Economic Development Officer

Activities:

- Identify: user groups, costs, community support.

Inputs/Budget:

- TBD

Outputs:

- Admin Report.
- “What was heard” discussion report.

Desired Outcomes: To have a thriving arts and culture sector which is fundamental to a diverse, interesting and vibrant community.

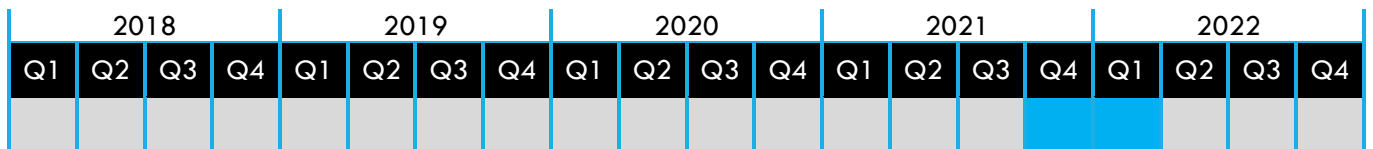
Metric:

- Report NWT Arts Facility – user groups, plans, funding options.
- Number of arts performances, workshops, and training programs.

Description:

Focusing a sector of the Fort Smith downtown area to the Arts will bring people together and foster a sense of community. The Town will seek to work with everyone to create a place where people can gather, learn and have fun.

Priority: High



Goal # 6: Attract Shoppers and Visitors from the Region into our Community



Strategies

- A. Direct Marketing Campaign
- B. Improve Visitor Experience

A. Direct Marketing Campaign

Purpose: Capture a larger segment of the regional tourist market

Possible Lead/Partners: Economic Development Officer, Chamber of Commerce, Trade and Tourism Advisory Board, Wood Buffalo National Park, Northwestern Air Lease.

Activities:

- Identify key marketing strategies (activities, events, festivals, etc.) for each region/community.
- Employ marketing strategy for Yellowknife, Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, Fort Resolution, Hay River, High Level and Peace River regarding events, festivals, and seasonal shopping.
- Test use of shopping passport, discount coupons and coupon booklets.

Inputs/Budget:

- 50 – 80 hours staff time.

Outputs:

- Visitor Surveys.
- Direct Marketing Strategy.

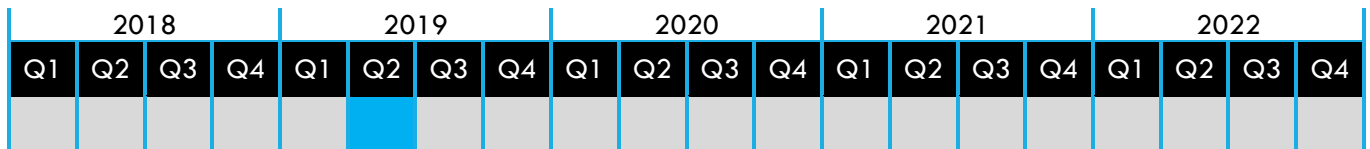
Desired Outcomes: Develop a clearly defined market strategy with a heavy emphasis on digital marketing

Metric:

- Number of regional visitors – measured by Visitor Information Centre, hotels, coupons.

Description: The largest number of visitors to Fort Smith are from Alberta and the NWT. How can Fort Smith attract a larger segment of this market? What activities or experiences do they look for? What can Fort Smith offer that others in our region can't get or do in their own community? Why should they make the trip?

Priority: High



B. Improve Visitor Experience

Purpose: To attract visitors and residents by providing an excellent customer experience in all aspects of business and tourism.

Possible Lead/Partners: Economic Development Officer, GNWT ITI, Wood Buffalo National Park, Northwestern Air Lease, Thebacha Chamber of Commerce

Activities:

- Identify points of contact for visitors.
- Identify if improvements are needed through visitor surveys at key areas i.e.: airport, restaurants, VIC, hotels, museum, rec. centre, trails, etc.
- Ensure strong customer service skills through the Northern Most Host program.
- Provide support for front-line staff to become familiar with local tourism products.
- Review existing models of service delivery at tourism related organizations and support service improvements.

Inputs/Budget:

- 60 – 80 hours staff time.
- Printed materials - \$1500.

Outputs: Visitor satisfaction survey.

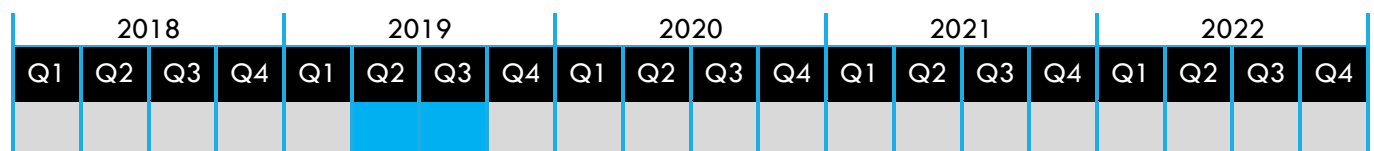
Desired Outcomes: Fort Smith tourism and service sector exceed visitor expectations.

Metric:

- Visitor satisfaction survey.
- Number of participants in Northern Most Host.

Description: Word of mouth advertising is still the most valuable type of advertising, especially in the digital age. People are considerably more likely to listen to the advice of a friend than that of an advertisement. Great attention to customer experience and customer service will create a large group of people championing our community. How do we want people to feel when they think of our community?

Priority: High



Goal # 7: Champion and Assist with Tourism Product Development



Strategies

- A. Champion New Development
- B. Identify the Barriers to Tourism Development
- C. Encourage Cultural Aspects to Tourism Development

A. Champion New Development

Purpose: Grow tourism opportunities in Fort Smith.

Possible Lead/Partners: GNWT ITI, Wood Buffalo National Park, Fort Smith Metis Council, Smith's Landing First Nation, Salt River First Nation, Economic Development Officer, Aurora College, Chamber of Commerce, Northwestern Air Lease.

Activities:

- Research protentional areas of growth in tourism.
- Identify opportunities for tourism operators and First Nations organizations to partner with museums, NWT Territorial Parks and Parks Canada to deliver guided tours and programs.
- Encourage the development of tours that showcase the culture, land, people and services in the region.

Inputs/Budget:

60 – 100 hours staff time.

Outputs:

- TBD

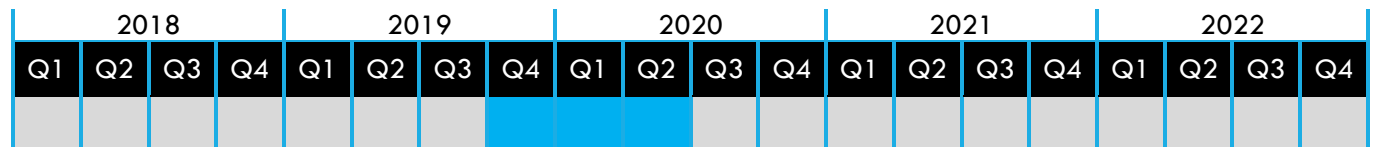
Desired Outcomes: New tourism products identified.

Metric:

- New Tourism Product opportunities outlined.
- Strategies to develop new tourism products.

Description: The Fort Smith tourism sector has great potential and opportunities to grow over the next five years with Baby Boomers moving into retirement and more youth travelling globally. Both tourism sectors have an interest in active adventure and cultural experiences, ideal for Fort Smith's setting.

Priority: Medium



B. Identify the Barriers to Tourism Development

Purpose: Grow tourism opportunities in Fort Smith, especially for guides and outfitters

Possible Lead/Partners: GNWT ITI, Economic Development Officer, Tourism and Trade Advisory Board, Thebacha Chamber of Commerce, Wood Buffalo National Park, Northwestern Air Lease.

Activities: Work with local tourism organizations, individuals and tourism agencies to review tourism product/operator process.

Inputs/Budget:

- 40 – 60 hours staff time.

Outputs:

- Report for Town of Fort Smith administration.

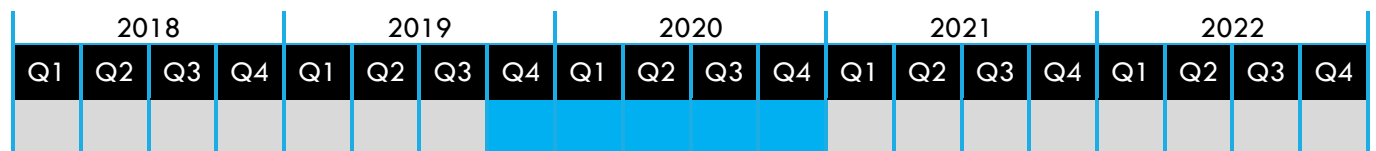
Desired Outcomes: Fort Smith is a popular tourism destination with a choice of guides and outfitters who provide high quality experiences

Metric:

- Report of barriers and possible solutions identified.

Description: Licensed tourism operators and local guides are extremely limited in Fort Smith. Identifying some of the barriers associated will help encourage operators to develop new tourism opportunities. What are the associated costs and licencing requirements to operate a tourism business in Fort Smith? Are the steps challenging to navigate? Can the Town of Fort Smith or other local organizations help to facilitate the process?

Priority: High (as it relates to guides and outfitters)



C. Encourage Cultural Aspects of Tourism Products

Purpose: Grow tourism opportunities in Fort Smith

Possible Lead/Partners: Smith Landing First Nation, Salt River First Nation, Fort Smith Metis Council, Cree Language Program, Chamber of Commerce, Northern Life Museum & Cultural Centre, Wood Buffalo National Park, GNWT ITI, Trade and Tourism Advisory Board, Economic Development Officer, Northwestern Air Lease.

Activities: Work with local First Nations and tourism/business operators to respectfully incorporate traditional languages into their operations. Investigate other opportunities to respectfully incorporate local culture into business/tourist experiences.

Inputs/Budget: TBD

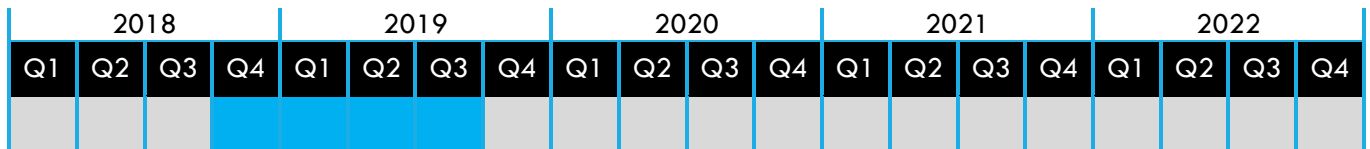
Outputs: Report to Town of Fort Smith administration.

Desired Outcomes: Increase in the development, expansion, celebration and support of authentic Indigenous tourism experiences.

Metric: Report outlining unique cultural components that can be a part of Fort Smith business and Tourism products or experiences.

Description: Tourists are seeking authentic cultural experiences. Cultural events such as hand games, drumming, jigging, and hide tanning workshops are often held during large events and celebrations that bring people together. When visitors are invited to take part in these cultural events they experience and appreciate the rich history, traditions and people of the area. Whether it is exposure to some of the traditional languages or a fully immersed experience, visitors value first hand interaction with local culture.

Priority: High



Goal # 8: Increase number of Festivals, Sporting Events and Conferences held in Fort Smith

Strategies



A. Create and Maintain Active Volunteer Base

B. Collaborate with Local Organizations to Host and Market Events

A. Create/Maintain Active Volunteer Base

Purpose: To ensure events in Fort Smith are successful based on experienced and knowledgeable volunteers.

Possible Lead/Partners: Arctic Winter Games Society, Town of Fort Smith Recreation Coordinator, Economic Development Officer, Aurora College, Visitor Information Centre Staff, local sports clubs, Northern Life Museum & Cultural Centre, Northwestern Air Lease.

Activities:

- Attain volunteer list.
- Work with Arctic Winter Games Society in development of volunteer base in key sectors and volunteer programs.
- Provide volunteers with skills training opportunities.

Inputs/Budget:

- 10 – 20 hours

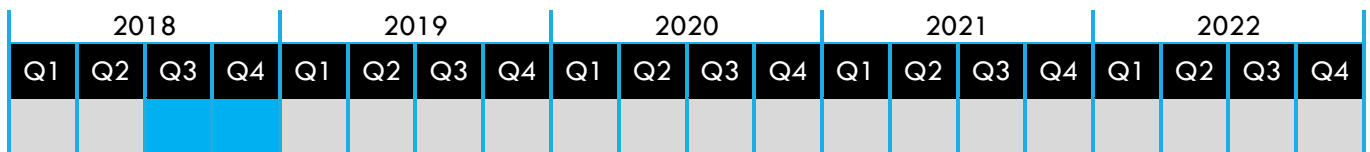
Outputs: Volunteer list

Desired Outcomes: Detailed database of experienced volunteers that can be called upon to ensure the organization of successful events in sports, tourism programs, conferences and festivals.

Metric: Detailed volunteer list outlining areas of experience and expertise.

Description: Volunteers are the most important resource community and event organizers have. The ability to have a list of experienced, skilled volunteers who are willing to donate their time will help ensure the success of many future community events.

Priority: Low



B. Collaborate with Local Organizations to Host and Market Events

Purpose: Grow tourism opportunities in Fort Smith.

Possible Lead/Partners: Tourism and Trade Advisory Board, Chamber of Commerce, GNWT ITI, Smith Landing First Nation, Salt River First Nation, Fort Smith Metis Council, Wood Buffalo National Park, Northwestern Air Lease, Aurora College, Local Festival Organizations, Local Sports Organizations, Regional sport and cultural organizations.

Activities:

- Identify events with most potential.
- Create a one-page list of sports facilities in Fort Smith and relevant information for marketing.
- Modify and implement the Good Sports Campaign, in the Fort Smith Tourism & Marketing Plan.
- Assist in hosting sporting events, training camps, tournaments, conferences and festivals.

Inputs/Budget:

- 60-150 hours staff time.
- \$10,000 (potential to leverage funds).

Outputs:

- One-page facility outline brochure
- Good Sports Campaign overview

Desired Outcomes: Fort Smith recognized as a desirable location to host and attend sporting events and training, smaller conferences, and regional meetings.

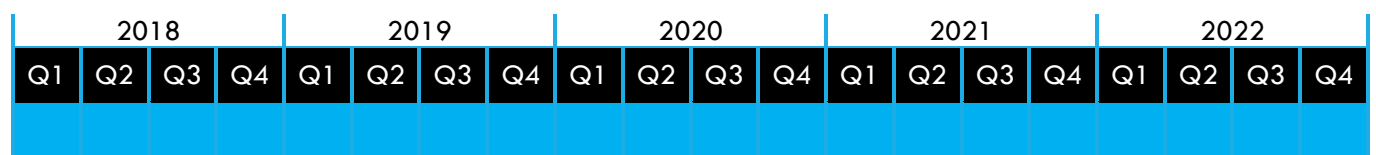
Metric:

- Number of events hosted.
- Number of participants.

Description:

The draw for sports can be for both competition and coaching/training seminars. Having attracted enthusiasts of sports that can be played in many places, we will structure programs to expose them to the facilities in Fort Smith, as well as other unique offerings of the region.

Priority: High



Goal # 9: Work with Regional Partners to Market Fort Smith (Hay River, Fort McMurray, Yellowknife, Edmonton)

Strategies



A. Market Fort Smith regionally, nationally and internationally

A. Market Fort Smith Regionally, Nationally and Internationally

Purpose: Grow tourism in Fort Smith.

Possible Lead/Partners: Economic Development Officer, Trade & Tourism Advisory Board, Chamber of Commerce, Wood Buffalo National Park, GNWT ITI.

Activities: Update Tourism Marketing Strategy. Prioritize and implement marketing campaigns.

Inputs/Budget:

- 40 – 60 hours staff time.

Outputs: Updated tourism marketing strategy.

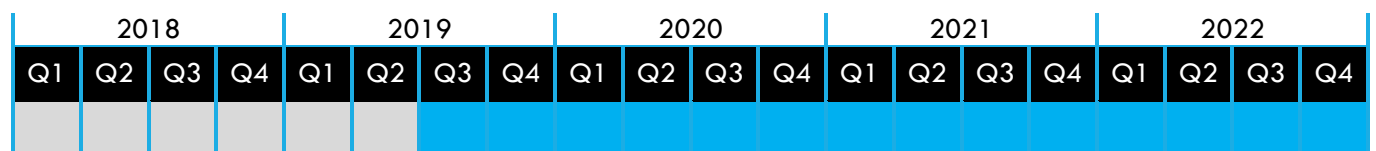
Desired Outcomes: To create a marketing strategy that targets regional areas, as well as national and international visitors.

Metric: Based on Visitor Survey, VIC stats, retail survey

- Number of visitors.
- Type of travel.
- Length of stay.
- Average amount of money spent.

Description: Most visitors to Fort Smith come from Alberta and the Northwest Territories, for this reason there will be a stronger emphasis on attracting regional visitors, while still leveraging marketing opportunities to international markets. International visitors to the Northwest Territories tend to stay longer and spend more money than regional visitors, so looking at opportunities to invite international audiences is crucial.

Priority: Medium



Appendix A: Feedback Summary Results

DRAFT Economic Development Strategy Feedback Summary



Overview

The DRAFT copy of the Fort Smith Economic Development Strategy was completed in April 2017, and presented to numerous groups, organizations and to the public at community events. The draft format requested community feedback and input. It was also handed out at the Thebacha Trade Show, emailed to all business license holders, and displayed on the main page of the Town of Fort Smith website and Facebook pages with links to the actual document. Requests for feedback were also made directly via emails and phone calls to key individuals or organizations who have been actively involved in the business community of Fort Smith.

The feedback form was provided in a way for submissions to be anonymous. Individuals providing feedback did not grant permission for the names to be used in any a public document.

Feedback was provided by local business owners from a variety of business areas, former politicians, employees from government agencies and members of the municipal advisory boards.

The feedback overview is outlined based on the sectors that have the highest amount of comments. The sectors include:

- General Feedback
- Events, Conferences, Festivals
- Local Buying
- Chamber of Commerce
- Tourism
- Business Development and Job Creation
- Attract Residents

General Comments

- The plan lacks focus on where it is we are and where we can best position ourselves. Be specific, what are the actions that need to be taken.
- Each sector needs to have more specific goals: are we a town of young professionals, families, or seniors? Ask this for each sector (Business, Tourism, Residents). We need diversity but with a core majority to focus on.
- What is Fort Smith's uniqueness? What can we offer that is different from other small Northern communities? Why should someone move here?
- Add to Mayor & Council Goals – "Supporting the development of indigenous land owners – to encourage and build good relationships with First Nation Governments"
- Don't make items too broad – be specific, define the action that needs to be taken. People can get behind focused action items
- Look to work with partners who have the expertise in areas we are seeking. The Town cannot do it all nor should it. A community works best when it works together.
- Add regular leadership meetings: ministers, ToFS, Metis, SLFN, SRFN, Chamber of Commerce, and all major leadership to find common ground, have a united front when voicing issues for the

community/region, “stop the bleeding” out of the community with loss of jobs. Decipher the GNWT plan, is it for Hay River to become the regional centre for all departments?

Events / Conferences / Festivals

- Bring teams in with funding programs such as Mackenzie Recreation Association.
- Provide a package for athletes that can be given to the host organizations to send out when sending out invitations: Where to stay, what to do, where to eat, get gas, etc.
- Town needs to allocate staff to assist with the development and advertising of hosting sporting events, and hosting participants while they are here. How much do we spend on Rec Staff payroll? Are the Town Rec staff being used to their best capacity?
- How do we attract teams from YK, HR, High Level to come to an event in Fort Smith when the more efficient use of their dollars (more competition, bigger centre for shopping opportunities, etc.) are down south? Competing with return flights YK to Calgary for \$400.
- Form a multi-sports society representing: soccer, track, cross-country running and baseball. To leverage greater volunteer power for events and training.
- Make bids to host Territorial AGM's and conferences – e.g. NWT Associations of Communities, NWT Tourism, etc.
- Conference retreats – no cell phones, just focus on meeting on a specific topic, intense focus, away from distractions, immersed in nature but still have every day luxuries. Identify facilities available and capacity.
- The Track is an unused resource: Olympic quality. How can we work with Hay River for Track & Field competitions? What kind of training programs and courses can we provide.
- Host NWT Associations of Communities, NWT Tourism, ask if we can use Aurora College for extra accommodations.
- Create a meeting/conference package outlining what Fort Smith has to offer.

Local Buying

- Ensure all government agencies have and enforce a local purchasing policy.
- Assist local businesses to make it easy for government to shop with them.
- Review policies to ensure local businesses are at the forefront (e.g. for new development needing supplies and equipment, ask local suppliers first).
- Government departments need to review their spending budgets and see if more items can be purchased locally.

- How can local businesses and government agencies all support the local businesses? How can we support each other? (Business to business).

Chamber of Commerce

- Chamber needs support from the Town and the Chamber needs to support all businesses and prioritize what is best for Fort Smith
- Facilitate a stronger Chamber, ask NWT Chamber to come and help develop policies and direction, and set goals with the Chamber. Define common goals for the business community?
- Chamber (or Town) should create a commercial website and/or FB page where local businesses can post flyers, sales, ads, etc. Also include a site or page that keeps business owners up to date on community initiatives, training, youth business, etc. (as opposed to quarterly meetings).
- Work with Chamber to host a Town of Fort Smith AGM, State of Address from the Mayor. Open to the public and allows all citizens to have their say with an open mic.

Tourism

- Fund a position like a Tourist Broker, who will create and sell packages and tourism products, take bookings and make necessary arrangements for clients amongst inter-agencies.
- Signage: Raise profile of Fort Smith along the highway, especially at Buffalo Junction. Have one or two large signs somewhere between Edmonton and 60th parallel.
- Work with Hay River to promote a trip/itinerary from Hay River to Fort Smith, which would benefit both communities.
- Promote highway upgrades. Could tie this in with a homecoming event. "Drive to Fort Smith on the beautiful new highway!"
- Work with Alberta Tourism to promote Fort Smith
- Aurora / Northern Lights Tours – Fort Smith is in the centre of the Auroral Arc. We have the clearest nights in the world of aurora destinations.
- Whooping Crane Visitation – WBNP was willing to do it, how can we begin to proceed with that possibility and with proper consultation.
- Use of coupons is a way to measure visitors and sales
- Analyze current tourism events/festivals for SWOT – how can we nurture current products before we develop new ones.
- Artist workshops – create a list of artists willing and able to provide half-day or full day workshops to visitors – can be an addition to a current festival

- Work with Parks Canada and ITI to develop itinerary packages for travellers
- What are some strategies to encourage more knowledgeable tourism champions in the community? Can we do more during Tourism Week?
- Develop a strategy for destination awareness
- Develop some trip planning tools that make it easier for people to get here, take some of the work out of arranging your trip if itineraries are already planned.
- Tourism needs regional representation
- Northern Most Host – Currently run by ITI, need to ensure it is offered at convenient times for businesses. ToFS could ensure its staff have completed the course.
- Truck Rodeo with Aurora College Heavy Equipment Operators
- Road Rally
- Spa using Slave River Clay

Business Development and Job Creation

- Need a newspaper source providing information for Fort Smith or something equally or more efficient at communicating issues that face the community.
- GNWT MACA School of Community Government – Should be attached to Aurora College. Currently the program is very limited
- Biomass – combine fire prevention with biomass harvesting. Create a Forest Management Strategy that could be run by a local business versus GNWT, to encourage long term efforts for the program
- Have a portable saw mill for a micro business to process wood on site as it is cut
- Morel mushroom picking
- Climate Change should be on everyone's mind. Install electric charging spots so residents could run electric cars - ToFS should buy an electric car
- Aurora College programming – programs for tourism guiding, interpretation and outfitting – working with WBNP and ITI – could add these as courses to the ENRTP course. It opens up job options.
- Lobby government and NTPC to supply reasonable cost power to the businesses and residences in Fort Smith
- Include partner champions with areas of responsibility, implementation strategies and deadlines.
- Aurora College could be the Centre for Excellence for Water. Territory wide program for water quality, water governance, water use and water resources/ecology. (May need to choose between an NWT Arts Centre or NWT Water Centre to invest in).
- Aurora College only outsource of income, increase number of college students from 300 to 600
- College needs to remain the regional centre. Who is the community voice for advising the College?
- Bring in foreign workers who are already trained (outside money coming in)
- Sell Leather from hides taken by local hunters
- Water from across the river that is pure and can be sent south?
- Drift wood furniture, or drift wood processed and sent south

- Barge items to Fort Chip?
- Diamond Willow – collect and sell, or make furniture to sell
- Bulk food supply of hard to get items – partner with trucking company
- More funding for Adult Education opportunities – look at demographics in a realistic way to decipher needs of the community

Attract Residents

- Focus on attracting professionals who have clients that live in all parts of the country or professionals who can do their job and live anywhere: Mining, engineering, technology based. They will be attracted by low cost of living, good lifestyle, and good services.
- GNWT staffing: Ensure employees designated to live in Fort Smith are living in Fort Smith.
- Need permanent doctors
- Need a bus for transporting seniors
- Need good low-cost housing
- Need more rental accommodations – condo style with good security, bottom level commercial – close to downtown
- People would use electricity for heat, a sustainable fuel, if affordable. We need to do our share to market it positively.
- Need 500 – 1000 more people to build a new business that is sustainable
- New residents welcome package: This should include new babies, find out how they heard about Fort Smith.