

Economic Development Plan

Executive Summary

- District of Hope -

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1 Plan Inception

In June 2009, the District of Hope and the Economic Development Strategy Steering Committee (EDSSC) invited proposals to develop a comprehensive economic development strategic plan for the community. In August, 2009 a consulting team led by Lions Gate Consulting Inc. was commissioned to undertake the study.

The work plan for the project consisted of three phases:

- In September, a preliminary report of demographic, economic and sector trends in the community was prepared;
- In October, a community consultation program including two surveys¹ (community and high school), focus groups and personal interviews was carried out, involving a total of 727 residents; and
- In November, the plan itself was formulated based on the results of the first two work phases.

The resulting plan was delivered and approved by the EDSSC in December, 2009.

2 Why Undertake Economic Development?

Community economic development is premised on the concept of local action aimed at enhancing the economic base and building a healthy and stable community. It calls for a mobilization of internal community resources to pursue local visions such as that articulated in Hope's Official Community Plan:

To be a vibrant and active community based on sustainable and environmentally friendly economic growth .

The economy of the region has changed significantly over the last decade and continues to evolve. With the traditional economic base faltering, small communities like Hope can no longer rely on chance as their future source of jobs and wealth. They will have to be more proactive encouraging and shaping change to keep themselves relevant and viable.

“Hope could grow and prosper if people wanted it to.”

¹ All margin quotes are taken from either the community or high school survey.

3 What Principles Guide This Plan?

The preparation of this plan, and its recommendations, has followed these guiding principles:

“I’d like to see Hope become a community working together, from all levels, less judgemental, more tolerant of people, helping them to improve their lives.”

- **Leadership** – create an environment in which people in the community can contribute to making Hope a better place: by articulating goals without forcing them on others, by setting the agenda and not simply responding to current events, by initiating rather than by managing change, by encouraging community dialogue and finally by having transparent decision-making that will encourage results;
- **Participation** – encourage community participation in different forms and use the results of that process to inform the plan and set its priorities;
- **Equity** – seek all views and accord respect to all those who participate in the process;
- **Sustainability** – encourage the responsible use of natural and built resources and economic development that seeks the long-term maintenance of community wellbeing;
- **Partnerships** – seek out partnerships that improve access to resources, encourage innovation and empower the community as it adapts to change; and
- **Integrated planning** – incorporate the spirit and direction set by other local planning initiatives, especially those built around significant public involvement.

4 What Was the Plan Process?



The plan is built around three major components, the analytical component describing the current situation, the underlying vision and goals of the plan drawn from the consultation process and finally the core of the plan outlining strategies and actions for achieving the goals.

Where are we now?

“Resource extraction work (forestry and mining) is down. Provincial money left town when the courthouse closed and the toll booths closed. Emil Anderson is leaving town after sixty years. It seems that cycles are the economic reality. Looking to the future rather than the past seems to be the only answer. There are no saviours going to ride in from elsewhere flinging millions to save us. The ideas will originate locally from people who care about the community.”

Hope is not growing and is not projected to grow in the near future

Younger people are not staying and remain doubtful about local job opportunities

The economic base is fragile as resource industries decline

Indicators of well-being are not improving

But Hope has distinctive location and natural assets

It also has weaknesses in infrastructure, built facilities and a poor business climate

Residents remain optimistic about the community

Yet they would like to see a culture of positive change

Where do we want to go?

The goals of the economic development process in Hope embody economic, social and quality of life values.

“I would like to see more businesses that can provide a dependable job base for our young people, with liveable wages.”

“We need to see economic development as one piece of sustainability. It is impossible to develop a vital economy without a healthy society and a supported environment..”

Population growth that is able to sustain the service needs of residents and the labour market needs of the economy

A base of sustainable jobs that will allow residents to earn a reasonable living within the community

Protection of the quality of life attributes that have made Hope an attractive place to live

A diversified economic base that is able to balance the local tax load and improve District finances

A market-ready supply of infrastructure and employment land that is responsive to future community needs

A viable economic development office with broad community support

How will we get there?

The economic development plan has 11 main components with a total of 48 strategic initiatives. Another six recommendations outline procedures for setting up and mobilizing the economic development function.

A. Business Climate

- A.1 Replace the existing “Developing in Hope” guide with a more comprehensive “How to Invest in Hope” guide.
- A.2 Establish reasonable benchmarks for the industrial and commercial development fees (permits, hook-ups, improvements), development approval times and mill rates.
- A.3 Investigate the feasibility of voluntary and/or mandatory green building policies to incentivize new building development, including downtown.
- A.4 Establish a business visitation program for gathering industry, market and economic intelligence.

B. Land and Infrastructure Services

- B.1 Explore servicing of industrial lands in the Flood Hope area with the appropriate property owners to make them more attractive to prospective businesses.
- B.2 Update the industrial property database and prepare a site location assistance program to assist with all property enquiries.
- B.3 In cooperation with local property owners, prepare design concepts for key properties that could be used in marketing programs.
- B.4 Create a development and marketing program to increase awareness of, and absorption of, Hope industrial and commercial properties.
- B.5 Prepare a community waste and energy plan that will enhance environmental practices and contribute revenues to the municipality.
- B.6 Consolidate a research record of business zoning, service, infrastructure and permitting issues that would benefit economic development for consideration in the next Official Community Plan (OCP) process.

“Instead of saying ‘no, we can’t do that’, how about ‘how do we work together to make that happen’.”

Hope could be a “nerve centre for transportation.”

C. Transportation Service Opportunities

- C.1 Monitor key transportation trends.
- C.2 Develop strategic partnerships for defining and marketing Hope’s strategic advantages for warehousing and logistics.

D. Downtown Development

- D.1 Investigate the feasibility of a downtown shopping niche(s) in Hope.
- D.2 Work with downtown landlords on a targeted recruitment program.
- D.3 Encourage the establishment of a Business Improvement Area for dealing with ongoing downtown issues and solutions.
- D.4 Consider property tax deferrals for merchants and landlords involved in upgrading projects.
- D.5 Prepare a downtown concept plan as part of the next OCP.
- D.6 Establish quality visitor amenities in the downtown core including public washrooms (open late, 12 months of the year), and free wireless internet plus good timely information directing visitors to these services and facilities.

“I believe Hope has great potential, the downtown core especially we need to beautify...”

E. Multi-use Arts and Culture Centre

- E.1 Establish an alliance with the Hope and District Arts Council (artists guild, arts council, little theatre, music/dance, visitor centre).
- E.2 Conduct research on case studies or best practices.
- E.3 Move forward by initiating a Memorandum of Understanding with user groups.
- E.4 Explore options for a preferred development site.
- E.5 Prepare a development concept and feasibility analysis.

F. Community Forest

- F.1 Provide staffing assistance for completing legal documentation, business and forest plans and new board member recruitment.
- F.2 Complete research on the commercial potential of non-timber forest products on the proposed land base.

“Make Hope a tourist destination, not just a highway stop.”

G. Tourism Development Plan

- G.1 Establish a Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC) to oversee the tourism development and marketing role of the Hope Economic Development Commission (HEDC).
- G.2 Prepare an Additional Hotel Room Tax (AHRT) contingency plan and immediately engage tourism stakeholders to proceed with organizing support for implementation.
- G.3 Align visitor services with the HEDC.
- G.4 Maximize uptake of Community Tourism Opportunity Funds.
- G.5 Prepare a plan for new highway entrance signage to Hope so travellers are more aware of community attractions and activities.
- G.6 Implement priority recommendations in the Tourism Development Plan.

H. Data Repository and Information Management

- H.1 Assemble statistical data and development resources.
- H.2 Create a Hope web portal so residents, businesses, investors and visitors have better, more convenient access to the information they are seeking.

“We live in an excellent location with all the amenities of a large city. A perfect setting to raise a family if we can just find a way to import/create small high-tech manufacturing jobs..”

I. Marketing and Business Attraction

- I.1 Assemble a Marketing Action Team (MAT) to oversee marketing activities.
- I.2 Prepare a community marketing plan that outlines the products, the markets and the delivery systems for all marketing activities.
- I.3 Develop a leads and enquiries prospects database that formally tracks all business and development enquiries.
- I.4 Establish basic business attraction services.
- I.5 Prepare marketing materials that could be used to support marketing and promotion activities.
- I.6 Execute a real estate sector marketing and communications program.
- I.7 Pilot a direct recruitment campaign in the Lower Mainland to generate more investor interest in Hope.

“I love what I hear about our Hope Mountain School. Let’s do more with that. Become “known” for something.”

“Encourage a university to come to Hope.... A full fledge university campus offering courses in mining, forestry, hotel management, fisheries, environmental studies. Offer the land for free, with private investors and provincial and federal backing, it could bring in a lot of extra people, and offer employment for the community..”

J. Trail Development and Marketing

- J.1 Complete the trail inventory as recommended in the Tourism Development Plan.
- J.2 Develop a trail plan for maintaining existing trails, adding future trails the local network, installing infrastructure to facilitate trail use and identifying closer links between tourism service providers and trail users.
- J.3 Produce a new trail map for distribution to trail users and for display on the web portal.
- J.4 Establish information kiosks to raise awareness of the trails in and near the community and prepare and implement a systematic trail use marketing strategy linked to accommodation and local transportation providers.

K. Pre-development Planning for Projects

- K.1 **Truck stop**—location, large traffic volumes, availability of services, available zoned land with highway access are all assets. Lack of services to Flood Hope would be a barrier.
- K.2 **Conference Centre and hotel**—proximity to Lower Mainland and Interior, outdoor recreation amenities, ability to bring clients from multiple directions could be foundation for small meeting and convention opportunity.
- K.3 **Education and training facility**—location, available land, deficit in post secondary seats in the province, presence of specialized institutions (e.g. Hope Mountain Centre), potential for small campus extension among existing institutions (e.g. Fraser Valley University) could mean opportunities for niche facilities. Socio-economic conditions in Hope are very similar to those in Squamish before the establishment of Quest University.
- K.4 **Alternative energy**— some investigation of wind power in Hope has occurred while two small-scale Hydro works (Berkey and Hunter creeks) have received electricity purchase agreements from BC Hydro but are not yet operating. Micro hydro opportunities for short, steep non-fish baring streams that also double as potable water sources may have potential, possibly in the community forest (similar projects have been established in Lake Country and Nakusp).

“I am retired and not looking for a job. I like Hope very much. I am not thinking for myself, but for the younger generation. Hope is a wonderful place to raise a family, with its mountains and rivers, but families need jobs..”

L. Setting Up for Implementation

- L.1 The District of Hope should allocate sufficient resources to push ahead with the very early stages of this plan (i.e. L.2—L.4).
- L.2 Establish the HEDC as a society responsible for delivering economic development services to the District of Hope.
- L.3 Create a policies and procedures manual outlining the legal structure of HEDC, administration guidelines and staffing guidelines.
- L.4 Approve a core budget of not less than \$150,000 annually for a minimum of five years.
- L.5 Set up an evaluation and monitoring program with transparency and accountability to the District and citizens of Hope.
- L.6 Institute a communications program to keep the community informed of socio-economic events and plan progress.
- L.7 Explore opportunities for a regional service area.

5 Timelines

Year 1 - 5	2010				2011				2012 - 2014
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
A. Improved business climate		Business visitation Investment guide				Benchmarks			Green policies
B. Enhanced infrastructure and land availability		Flood Hope services, OCP research			and design concepts Database				Land marketing Energy Plan
C. Expansion of transportation opportunities		Monitor trends, develop partnerships							
D. New downtown development		Tax policy	Amenities		BIA	Niches	Recruitment		Downtown Plan
E. Multi-use Arts and Culture Centre		Alliance	MOU		Research, site options				Development concept
F. Viable community forest corporation		Planning			Research				
G. Renewed Tourism Development Plan		TAC	AHRT plan	CTO funding access	and TDP projects	Visitor services			Signage
H. Effective information management			Data assembly			Web portal			
I. Targeted marketing and business attraction		Marketing, site location services Leads and enquiry system			MAT	Market plan			Marketing materials Recruitment pilot
J. Continued trail development and marketing			Information kiosks Inventory	Maintenance plan		Trail map			
K. Pre-development plans for best opportunities		Alternative energy research Truck stop			Hotel, convention centre				Education and training facility

Year 1 (2010)	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Setup tasks	████████████████████											
Community forest planning	████████████████████											
Tourism Advisory Committee			████████████████████									
AHRT plan			████████████████████									
Arts, culture centre alliance						████████████████████						
Trail inventory						████████████████████						
Leads and enquiries system						████████████████						
Truck stop research							████████████████████					
Data assembly							████████████████████					
Arts, culture centre MOU								████████				
“How to Invest in Hope” guide								████████████████████				
Downtown tax policies								████████████████████				
Downtown amenities									████████████████████			
Trail maintenance plan									████████████████████			
Ongoing:												
• Business visitation program												
• Flood Hope services, OCP research												
• Monitoring transportation trends							████████████████████					
• CTO funding access												
• Real estate marketing												
• Site location services												
• Trail kiosks												
• Alternative energy research												

6 Budget

The proposed budget for the economic development office would be \$310,000 annually, with \$150,000 core budget coming from the municipality, \$100,000 leveraged funds from federal and provincial programs and \$60,000 from the additional hotel room tax, which would be used for tourism marketing.

Funding	Annual
District of Hope	150,000
Grants for Special Projects	100,000
Add. Hotel Room Tax	60,000
Total	\$310,000
Expenditures	
Salaries & Admin.	120,000
Occupancy expenses	15,000
Telecomm	2,000
Office supplies	8,000
Travel	5,000
Special projects	100,000
Tourism marketing	60,000
Total	\$310,000
Special Projects in Year 1	
"How to Invest in Hope" guide	\$25,000
Industrial land inventory	\$10,000
Downtown amenities (public internet)	\$20,000
Tourism marketing	\$15,000
Information assembly, research	\$15,000
Trail kiosks	\$10,000
Leadership training	\$5,000
Total	\$100,000

7 Anticipated Costs and Benefits

The purpose of the economic development plan is to generate benefits in excess of the costs that the District has to commit to the process. These have been clearly articulated in the plan and measures proposed for making sure the function remains connected and accountable to the community. The costs are considered necessary because experience has proven that volunteer efforts alone cannot produce the expected results.

The benefits anticipated are those prioritized during the community consultation program, namely business climate, infrastructure, downtown, business development, employment opportunities, a diversified tax base and sustainable population growth the community is willing to live with.

The current trends suggest that without a new approach, the community will be unlikely to achieve these goals and may in fact experience a continued decline in population, labour force and services.

This plan does not purport to address all issues related to building a sustainable, healthy community—there are social, housing and environmental concerns that also require action. In time, it is hoped an integrated economic development plan can be expanded to incorporate these broader objectives.

