

Final Report

December 9, 2019

**With updates
as of November 17, 2020**



Background

The 2018 Economic Development Strategic Plan identified Priority #2: “Focusing on Business Retention and Expansion” was the top priority.

Statistically 80% of new job growth comes from existing businesses and it is easier and less expensive to retain businesses rather than attract new ones. Ensuring a smooth business permitting process within the Town will provide the “welcome mat”, which the business community has indicated is lacking.

To ensure that existing businesses, who hold a stake in Okotoks, continue to survive and grow, and that a healthy economic environment attracts future investment, Economic Development hosted six sector-specific, in-person roundtable meetings and one online survey from July to November, 2019. The purpose of the roundtables was to facilitate discussion of issues, challenges and solutions relevant to each sector. The information gathered validates activities and priorities for the Town of Okotoks and helps foster improved communication between the Town and the business community.

ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

This section details the engagement activities, how the Town communicated with businesses.

Public Engagement

Roundtable meetings were held with the following business sectors:

- Commercial Developers and Commercial Realtors
- Home Based Businesses
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Businesses
- Health Businesses
- Retail Businesses
- Construction and Manufacturing

An online survey was provided for

- Restaurants and Pubs



A roundtable for restaurant and pubs was scheduled for the end of October. With a low number of responses to the invitation, the team decided to offer an online survey instead. It was hoped that this modification would allow business owners the opportunity to provide feedback when it was most convenient for them but only three responses were received.

What We Asked

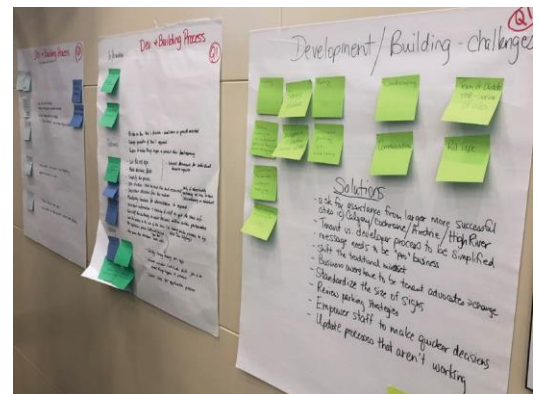
There were several key topic areas identified for feedback:

- Development and building permit process
- Land Use Bylaw
- Infrastructure
- Costs
- Training and workforce
- Innovation and change

The goal was to understand what is working, what is not, what barriers exist and identify possible solutions.

Participants were also asked to share the kind of support they want from the Economic Development team.

Participants who had worked in other municipalities were encouraged to share their experiences and detail how processes differed from Okotoks.



How We Communicated

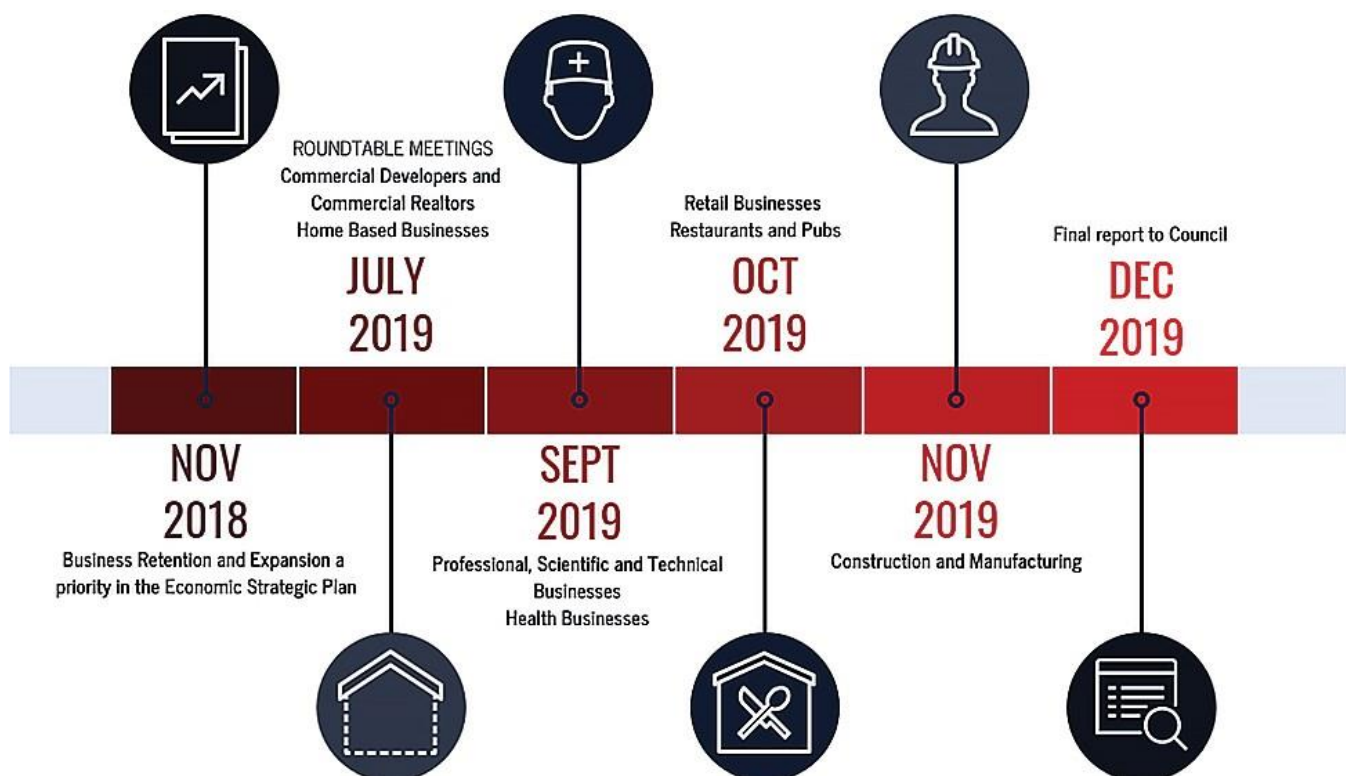
The following methods were utilized to advertise and promote the roundtable meetings:

- Instagram
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Email invites
- Phone calls

Participation

- 87 people attended 6 roundtable meetings and 8 people completed online surveys.
- While participant numbers were low, a diversity of the business community was represented and provided meaningful input for the Town to consider

Project timeline



Transcribing and Feedback

- In-person roundtable meeting notes were transcribed verbatim and included in all summary reports
- Analysis and theming of data
- Interpretation of engagement results
- Development of summary reports for stakeholder review and reporting to Council

Businesses were very responsive in offering suggestions and solutions to current challenges and issues, and appreciated the opportunity to meet with the Town and their respective peers within their industry sector. They all voiced the hope that the Town of Okotoks would recognize their concerns and provide constructive action to overcome those barriers they believe create a perception of not being “open for business.”

There were four themes which were consistently heard at every roundtable session for the Town to consider:

- Make the development process easier
- Review signage policies
- Review parking policies
- Communicate clear and updated information to businesses about anything that affects them. Feedback is arranged in the following manner, with applicable action items and dates attached to each action:
 - Policy
 - Process
 - People/Relationships
 - Council Considerations

2020 UPDATE

Follow-up sessions have been scheduled to update the business community on initiatives undertaken or in progress to address the feedback provided during the 2019 Industry Roundtables.

For those who could not attend, the final report and spreadsheet will be available on the Town's website at okotoks.ca.

Due to covid restrictions, follow-up sessions could not be held in-person in 2020. Three online follow-up meetings have been scheduled with:

1. Home based businesses
2. Commercial developers, builders and commercial realtors
3. Professional, scientific and technical/health/retail and restaurants/manufacturing/business services

How we communicated: email invitations, social media, Town website

Timeline: all sessions are being held the week of November 16, 2020

POLICY

There are two large planning documents currently being reviewed that will affect Town Policy:

Municipal Development Plan (MDP) Rewrite:

The MDP is a framework adopted by Council to address long-term community development, land use, and growth in a sustainable manner. It contains policies that represent a vision for how Okotoks will grow and develop over the next 60 years. It was created based on input from the public, including stakeholders such as businesses, developers and property owners. Opportunities for input on the final draft were advertised on the Okotoks website and in the Western Wheel.

The final round of revisions is tentatively scheduled for February, 2020; consultation on the final draft is tentatively scheduled for March, 2020; and first reading is tentatively scheduled for April, 2020.

2020 UPDATE

The MDP is the Town's principal Planning Policy document, used by Council & staff to make decisions about land use, infrastructure investment and community service priorities. The MDP will guide future planning decisions.

Among other matters, the new MDP contains language to prioritize non-residential growth, enabling planning and development of new commercial/industrial areas for business development and expansion and thereby creating local jobs and expanding the non-residential tax base to the benefit of residential and non-residential property owners alike.

The bylaw adopting the MDP received second reading by Council on September 24, 2020 after a public hearing. Third and final reading (adoption) is expected prior to year-end 2020.

Land Use Bylaw (LUB) Rewrite:

The LUB is a planning tool that regulates development within the Town and implements the principles and policies of the MDP. It includes regulations such as, but not limited to:

- Where different types of businesses can locate
- Whether permits are needed
- The number of parking spaces required
- How sites are illuminated (i.e. site lighting)
- Standards for building exteriors
- Distances from buildings to property lines



The projected timeline includes public consultation in January and February, 2020 with the first draft to be written in October, 2020 and the final Land Use Bylaw completed in January, 2021.

At every roundtable session, the message was reinforced that businesses have the opportunity to be involved in the Land Use Bylaw process and suggest new ways to help Council shape regulations that will affect where their businesses can locate, how parking and signage should look in the future, permits that are needed and the standards that will apply.

The participants shared opinions on how the Town engages with the business community. They felt that:

- online surveys or information in the local paper are not successful ways to engage them.
- that open houses were more of a social endeavour than an actual way of generating feedback.

Many suggestions for the Land Use Bylaw were gathered during the roundtable discussions.

As the Town moves forward with this major review, this feedback becomes instrumental in developing the document which will direct where businesses locate and in the creation of policies surrounding their location.

The following feedback gathered from the roundtables should be considered as the review of this major document progresses:

Review of Discretionary/Permitted Uses

- Review bylaws and regulations on a regular basis
- Categorize industrial as Light, Commercial or Mixed use
- Focus downtown on retail and restaurants (with professionals on upper level - chiropractor, dentist, etc.)
- Expand permitted and discretionary uses in each zone
- Less discretionary uses as this takes longer for approval

Review for Fewer Zones

Review Parking Strategies:

- Allow developers/businesses to determine their own needs
- Consider allowing a commercial vehicle(s) at the residence of Home Based Businesses
- Base parking on area vs type of business
- Create dedicated bike lanes and traffic circles
- Encourage walkable/bikeable space downtown
- Transit may resolve parking
- Review of parking strategies and road closures in the downtown
 - ◇ During event days, enforcement should mark tires
 - ◇ Designated parking permits at specific locations



Specific Suggestions:

- Change the south side of Elma Street to angle parking,
- Create an easement of 4.5 M on the north side of Crescent Road for parking,
- Turn the alleyway by the tracks into a one way street to all parking on the south side

Signage Regulation Feedback

There were a number of suggestions including:

- Consider allowing extra space for standardized signage at the entrance to neighbourhoods for Home Occupations (HO)
- Consider allowing more temporary signage within parameters
- Less restriction on signage
- Wayfinding Signage - specific suggestions: Northridge Drive, Highway 7 and Southridge Drive, North Railway, Highway 7 and 32 St., Along 32 St to businesses in downtown and public buildings
- Lower restrictions on for sale/for lease signage

- Temporary signage for Home Based businesses with parameters
- Preapproved templates with dimensions/lighting
- Visually appealing, standardized and cohesive look
- At strategic locations, display boards (electronic) would help
- Easier process to obtain permit to install signage higher than currently approved height
- Electronic signage on the highway

Cowork, Incubation, Satellite Offices (LUB)

- Create an incubator space to assist start-up businesses
- Create and allow for more coworking space and space for satellite offices

Home Based Business

- Ease operating hours restrictions
- Consider one Home Based Occupation commercial vehicle at the residence
- Consider the delivery of products outside of the business visitor limit
- Differentiate between a Home Based business and a mobile business

Building Strategies

- Blend business and living spaces
- Architectural control in the downtown area
- Parkade in downtown
- Build up and not out - allow for taller structures

2020 UPDATE

Initial public consultation was undertaken in January and February, 2020.

The first draft of the new Land Use Bylaw is now available for public participation. Following each roundtable update meeting, scheduled for November 17-19, 2020, a presentation will be made regarding proposed changes to the Land Use Bylaw affecting businesses, including the topics outlined above:

- permitted and discretionary uses
- fewer land use districts ("zones")
- parking strategies and relaxed parking requirements
- sign regulations
- enabling co-work, incubation, satellite offices
- home-based business
- building strategies such as increased density and higher buildings

Feedback provided during these sessions will be incorporated into the "What we Heard" reports and taken into consideration as revisions are undertaken.

Businesses and residents are encouraged to participate in the online survey, available on the Town website until the end of November, 2020. For those who would rather provide their comments directly to the project team, there is a "contact us" link at the bottom of the Land Use Bylaw project page at <https://www.okotoks.ca/publicparticipation/land-use-bylaw-rewrite>. Be sure to include "Land Use Bylaw Rewrite" in the subject line and indicate whether you would like a response to your submission.

A second draft will be made available on the Town website following incorporation of any changes arising from public engagement. Businesses and residents will have an opportunity to comment on the second draft before it goes to Council for first reading. The public hearing and final reading (adoption) are tentatively planned for March, 2021.

PROCESS

At each roundtable session, concerns were voiced in regards to the business development process. One of the most common statements made was that time is money to an entrepreneur.



One Stop Shop(Deadline: March 30/20)

The Town of Okotoks has been working towards a one stop shop for Business Development. This includes:

- One point of contact to determine permits/licensing requirements, and referrals to Development Services staff when required. As part of the one stop shop, work has begun to improve the pre-application process.
- Change of Home Occupation form to opt out of business directory rather than opt in
- Ensure businesses update all contact information by adjusting the business license renewal process
- Provide new businesses with a list of resources and business organizations with their business licenses
- Internal changes to ensure businesses are in the proper place in the directory

Businesses are expected to keep their contact information up to date. This is especially important as the businesses expressed a need to be updated with relevant information.

Business start-ups may require a range of municipal approvals, depending upon a number of factors. These may include a Development Permit, Building Permit and other Safety Codes Permits (Gas, Plumbing, Electrical) and a Fire Inspection and will require a Business License. Licensing Services compiles a list of the approvals required for the applicant, who then needs to apply separately to the various departments. It can involve multiple application forms, supporting documentation and fees.

Administration is currently working on the **Commercial Change of Use process Improvement**, which involves developing a single online intake form to reduce the number of staff the applicant needs to work with. Businesses can provide information regarding their business proposals, whether new, relocating or expanding, which will then be referred internally to the necessary business centres. The applicant will receive a single response outlining the approvals required, the timelines, the supporting documentation, and the fees so the applicant has all the information in one place and knows what to expect at the outset.

After the combined Commercial Change of Use intake form and process have been tested internally and externally, the template will be continually improved upon and will be used to create similar intake forms for other combined processes involving more than one municipal business centre, such as Home Occupation approvals and residential suites.

A checklist is also being constructed for the frontline staff to assist with correct referrals and information being provided to the client.

These process improvements address the following suggestions provided during the roundtables:

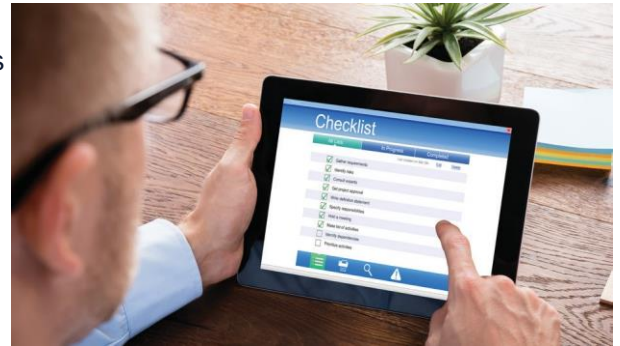
- Provide more information for the application process for seasonal licenses
- Provide clarity for the application process
- Additional training of frontline staff

To assist with the one stop shop, an online portal for business development permits and licensing would assist the business owner and staff.

A review of both external software solutions and internal models using current in-house software has been undertaken to determine an online option. This must meet the needs of Development Services and provide an easy, straightforward process for the applicant, and account for the support required through the Town's 2020 budget.

This will address the following feedback:

- Secure portal for document submission and for applicants to see where they are in the process
- An easy-to-use online navigation system of the development process
- Checklist for new businesses
- Website update with online resources
- Review processes in other municipalities



2020 UPDATE

Okotoks Economic Development has for many years been the first point of contact/one-stop shop for businesses. That service will continue and be supplemented by the new online business intake form and an online, map-based e-permitting system, under construction starting in December, 2020 with a target completion of December 31, 2021. For personal service, you can still contact our team directly at 403-938-8052 or ecdevokotoks@okotoks.ca.

The process improvement project for storefront and home-based business start-ups was completed and the new business intake form was launched in June, 2020. Response times were reduced from an average of 3 business days to an average of less than 24 hours on most files. The intake form for storefronts and home occupations has improved ease of application by pre-filling all relevant application forms and reducing time spent on paperwork. It improves clarity for applicants by summarizing all permits, licenses and inspections needed in one email, accompanied by links to the relevant pre-filled forms, and online submission allows you to complete and submit it on your time without being bound by office hours. Combined with Land Use Bylaw amendments in 2019 and 2020 that increased the range of business types that are exempt from a development permit, approval processes for most business start-ups have been streamlined and shortened significantly.

Existing process checklists and flowcharts are under review with the current website refresh, and improvements are being undertaken on an ongoing basis. Information for existing and prospective businesses is also under review and will be improved in clarity and content on an ongoing basis. Feedback from businesses regarding additional potential improvements is always welcome. Contact our team at the phone number or email provided above to give your input.

Development Agreements and Performance Security (Deadline: March/2021)

Based on feedback received on performance security during the Industry Round Tables, administration will be researching alternative models used by other municipalities, to identify options that will balance considerations including risk management, process administration, and the interests of the Developer.

The purposes of Performance Security are to:

- ensure any requirement set out as a condition of approval for a development permit is completed; and
- secure completion of local improvements (site servicing, roadworks and boulevard landscaping) in accordance with the Town's General Design and Construction Specifications.

Infrastructure deficiencies that are not corrected by the Developer and not secured by Performance Security can become the financial responsibility of the Town and by extension, the ratepayers. The security serves as both an incentive to the Developer to complete the development in accordance with the approved plans and correct any deficiencies, and as security to the ratepayers that the Town will not be paying for works that are the contractual obligation of the Developer.

The use of performance security for the above purposes is consistent with legislation and industry standard practice.

Amounts are based on conservative valuation estimates.

2020 UPDATE

The Town is reviewing performance security requirements on an ongoing basis to seek efficiencies and risk reduction opportunities.

A more comprehensive review will be undertaken in conjunction with the E-Permitting project which is due to commence in December, 2020 with target completion in December, 2021.

Feedback and suggestions are welcome at ecdevokotoks@okotoks.ca.

Customer Service Process (Deadline: March 31/20):

- Review timelines for calls. Current expectation of Town of Okotoks staff is to acknowledge any inquiry within two business days.
- Every Development Permit is assigned a file manager. Cross-training and standard processes and procedures exist so other staff members in Development Services can continue to assist the customer during staff absences. An accredited agency is also retained on contract to support the permit process for inquiries, inspections and technical support.
- Timelines for the development permit will be provided at the initial meeting between the customer and staff, with a followup email. New process guides and flowcharts will be available in 2020 to ensure consistency and improved communication, both internally and externally.

Development Permit (DP) Timeline

Businesses are seeking certainty with the timelines, as every extension impacts the business's bottom line. Once an application for a commercial change of use, home occupation or suite (for example) has been deemed complete, there should always be certainty of the DP being issued within 62 days. That timeline can change if there are "prior to release" conditions of approval, where any additional processing time is the applicant's responsibility. Running internal processes concurrently (eg DP and BP) should assist in improving overall timelines. This does not apply to major development permits involving site development and building construction, which require additional plans and a development agreement and can be expected to take longer from complete application to permit issuance.

As well as improving the Commercial Change of Use process, administration is pursuing additional improvements in process and communication in 2020.

Safety Inspection Timelines

During the roundtables, businesses expressed their desire for a quicker turnaround for plumbing, gas and electrical inspections, which are currently offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Building inspections are offered five days a week.

A Request For Proposal (RFP) was issued for inspection services as the current agency contract expires December 31, 2019. Negotiations for the new contract will include a conversation to determine flexibility of the accredited agency to provide safety code inspection services. The potential to increase the inspection frequency/availability, from two days per week will be explored based on permit activity, budget and the business case.

Businesses will be informed by email and through the website of any changes in the process.

Continued improvement to support the electronic development of the permit system is ongoing. 2020 will focus on implementing an online application, website information and customer accounts.

Considerations will also be given to the cost and process for complaints, based on the following comments during the roundtables:

- Standards are not being met - Town should monitor complaints and fine offenders
- Consider increasing fees for a faster turnaround

Fire Inspections

Feedback from the roundtable included:

- Fire Inspections for every tenant results in several inspections/year. Decrease this process.

As of June/19, a fire inspection is required for existing businesses that have:

- Changed occupancy classes (eg. mercantile is sold and is now opening as a restaurant)
- Made structural changes to the building (ie. building permit is issued)
- Businesses that add a tenant to an existing building occupying the same space as the original business do not require a separate fire inspection, as this would go under the umbrella of the primary occupant unless it is of a different occupancy class from the primary business.

More Authority for Decisions

Participants commented that staff should be given more authority for decisions. Staff is able to give some consideration to varying regulations based on a number of factors, including but not limited to effects on neighboring properties, safety, fit with surrounding developments and compliance with other affected bylaws and legislation.

However, staff cannot:

- vary the process (eg. a requirement that something has to be advertised)
- vary uses (eg. if a use is not listed in that district, it cannot be approved)
- vary definitions of uses (eg. when a use does not meet the definition)

Administration already has a significant amount of authority in decision-making. For change-of-use (going from one business type to another, as defined in the Land Use Bylaw) the exception would be a Direct Control district where Council or MPC (Municipal Planning Commission) is the development authority. The question of what authority lies with administration and what lies with MPC or Council will be further reviewed and discussed through the upcoming new Land Use Bylaw process (deadline: Dec 30/20).

2020 UPDATE

Organizational standards require acknowledgment of calls within one business day. This is subject to ongoing monitoring and improvement.

Land Use Bylaw amendments approved in 2019 and 2020 had the effect of eliminating the need for a development permit for most business start-ups in existing buildings, saving 4 to 6 weeks in approval timelines. Where a development permit is needed, most can be completed within 4 weeks of receiving a complete application. Staff were also given more authority over approvals to reduce referral requirements to other bodies including the Municipal Planning Commission and Council, further improving timelines.

Development Permits, Building Permits and Inspections, and Fire Inspections are subject not only to municipal bylaws, but also to the requirements of provincial legislation. Where a development permit is needed, it must be advertised and kept open for appeal for 3 weeks, which represents the bulk of the processing time. Although the Town administers the Building Code, it does not have jurisdiction to waive life/safety requirements of that provincial statute.

Inspection schedules were reviewed during contract negotiations, and demand outside of the current Tuesday/Thursday schedule was limited. Demand will be continuously monitored going forward in order that additional inspection days can be added when warranted by activity. Process changes will be largely associated with the E-Permitting system, which is in progress and expected to be complete by end of December 2021. Businesses will be notified of process changes as they arise. Complaints are monitored and followed up where relevant. Increased fees are not the solution to faster service. At present the business model is meeting the majority of the construction activity/demand in the municipality and applicants are accustomed to the inspection cycle. This will be regularly reviewed to work with the industry and address increases in demand arising from increases in construction activity.

Wherever possible, permits are run concurrently to reduce overall timelines. The E-Permitting project, which will commence with a process improvement exercise, is expected to further reduce timelines and create efficiencies in process to the greatest extent possible within the limitations of provincial legislation.

Costs Associated with Business Development

The following suggestions regarding costs were received from the roundtable sessions:

- One flat fee for development permit, building permit and signage
- Consistent fee schedule
- Don't charge tax on bays which are empty
- No additional cost for signage if the Town provides guidelines and they are followed
- Base cost on the size, scale and type of business, or area, demographic and zone
- Higher permit costs for out-of-town businesses - would help support local business
- Permit fees for daily - weekly tradespeople - reduce as they may only be in town 1-2 times
- Fee structure amendments to reduce the permit fees for new businesses and signs were made in 2019

Suggested municipalities that have easier process for business development

Some developers suggested the Town review the following municipalities in order to compare and learn about their development processes.

Municipality	Process
High River	Development permits are easier to obtain
Calgary	Development permits are easier to obtain Process is more streamlined One contact to work with
Cochrane	Online portal Transparency with timelines Town communicates monthly with developers
Edmonton	Council meetings where developers are invited to a specific time during the meeting instead of having to stay for the whole meeting, to address land use changes
Grande Prairie	Easier process Municipality is similar size to Okotoks
Kelowna	Mayor personally calls developers
Saskatoon	No development permits

Red Deer and Airdrie were other municipalities mentioned but did not include specific examples of how the process was easier.

2020 UPDATE

The Land Use Bylaw rewrite project and the new E-Permitting system, when completed, will address the bulk of the suggestions in this section including regulatory changes and process improvement.

Okotoks' assessment and taxation process already takes vacancies into account. The property assessment, which is the property value on which taxes are based, includes a long-term vacancy allowance. In Okotoks, for investment buildings with leasable bays, the vacancy allowance projects that over their lifespan, such buildings will be 100% vacant for three full years. That allowance is reflected in the assessed value of the property, which in turn is reflected in lower property taxes than would be expected if no vacancy allowance were applied to the value.

The Business License Bylaw, and the associated Rates and Fees structure, will receive comprehensive review in 2021.

The Land Use Bylaw Rewrite is also expected to improve efficiencies, and business input is strongly encouraged.

Industry best practices, and the regulations and practices of other communities, will be taken into account as the Land Use Bylaw and Business License Bylaw rewrites, the Rates and Fees review, and the E-Permitting project are undertaken.

Bylaw Changes in 2019 (see Appendix A)

The Town undertook the following initiatives in 2019 to reduce red tape and improve ease of doing business in Okotoks:

- Land Use Bylaw amendments to Commercial use:
 - ◊ increase the range of allowable business uses and reduce regulation in three zones I3 (Seaman Stadium area) amendments are being introduced for first reading in December. I1S (Costco area) and CCB (downtown) have been completed.
 - ◊ to broaden the parameters for exemption from Development Permits for business start-ups
- Fee structure amendments to reduce the permit fees for new businesses and signs
- Encroachment Policy amendment to simplify encroachment agreements for projecting signs in the CCB district
- Negotiated agreement changes with CNOOC International (formerly Nexen) to increase the range of allowable uses in the Industrial area surrounding Seaman Stadium
- Process changes to simplify the permit requirements and processes for business start-ups and relocations (to be launched at the end of 2019)
- Land Use Bylaw amendments to increase the range of allowable business uses in the Industrial area surrounding Seaman Stadium
- Bylaw 29-19 Business License Amendment – To allow the use of mobile vending units to support, attract and enhance businesses' day-to-day operations and sales. This will provide the opportunity for increases in business activity, foot traffic and ultimately business revenues.

2020 UPDATE

Bylaw 17-20, adopted in 2020, amended the land use bylaw by, among other things:

- Further expanding the types of businesses that are exempt from a development permit
- Simplifying and reducing the documentation requirements to accompany a development permit application
- Changing advertising requirements from weekly newspaper to Town website to reduce waiting time for permit release
- Adding to Administration's approval authority to speed up process

In response to Covid-related challenges faced by businesses in 2020 and top needs arising from a survey conducted by the Town:

- Up-to-date information regarding Covid resources and funding sources are provided on the Town's website and social media. New programs are shared as they arise.
- Sign rules were relaxed for Covid-related announcements (open for business, curbside pickup, online orders, etc.). Longer-term, sign regulations will be reviewed in-depth during the current Land Use Bylaw rewrite project, and business input is essential.
- Outdoor Patios Pilot project was launched, with relaxed regulations and a simplified registration process, at no charge.
- Council amended the Rates and Fees Bylaw in 2020 to waive the majority of development permit and certificate of compliance fees over the summer months.
- The Town contributed financially to mental health support programs offered by business support agencies in Okotoks.

PEOPLE/RELATIONSHIPS

Website

The Town of Okotoks is currently undertaking a website refresh that will enhance the overall aesthetic of the site and improve user experience with easier-to-locate information, simple navigation and quick links. The website will also provide an appealing first impression for potential businesses and investors, supporting economic growth. Additionally, it will appeal to potential visitors or individuals wanting to relocate to the community.



The first phase of the project requires that it be updated to the newest version of the web platform. This is a significant upgrade, requiring several weeks to complete. While this is occurring, the Town's web designer will be working with key internal staff to reorganize the framework (menu structure) so the website is much easier to navigate. The site will also incorporate new elements for the home page with visually appealing graphics that highlight Okotoks as a desirable place to work and set down roots. The upgraded site is scheduled for relaunch in March, 2020.

The Economic Development Business Center is incorporating the following suggestions from the roundtables into the Doing Business portion of the website:

- Visuals showing development process, including information easily accessible by the developer, including legislation which must be adhered to (discretionary or variances - must advertise and allow for 21 day appeal period)
- Available land for sale/lease
- One page dedicated to Home Based businesses and differences between minor and major
- Calendar of business events – this is currently up and running. Organizations can add information through the designated place on the website. It is hoped that the content will build and this becomes “the place” for business information
- Business-specific news
- One stop shop information – planning, permitting and licensing information
- Business Resource List
- A list of positions and contact information
- Inclusion of up-to-date information on the LUB review in 2020

The business community wants regular, clear, information in regards to changes in regulation and any business news that affects them.

The following tactics would be helpful to businesses, based on the feedback received.

- Social Media - promotion of feature stories for local business; push notifications to businesses with latest news
- Newsletter/one pager – information on current processes, including:
- Current Town projects on the website

Subjects/topics of Interest to the business community:

- Development Services acronyms
- Provide information to developers regarding current process
- Performance security guidelines
- Provide Land Use Bylaw updates - I3, CCB etc
- LUB published on website in layman's terms
- Ensure that completed roundtable action items are communicated to the business community
- Current development opportunities (i.e. mixed use development (business and living space) is already allowed in several districts including the various mixed use districts and the CCB district but uptake is limited).
- Bylaw information for secondary suites above garages; signage, blade signage, sandwich boards
- Regulations/bylaws regarding transfer of approvals to new business where pre-existing signs have been approved and displayed
- Information regarding Appeal Board Process
- Parameters for creating and membership on the Appeal Board.
- Town of Okotoks Procurement Policy
- Plans for charging station(s) accessibility
- Water situation - Clarify the Town's direction for water. Define water capacity vs permits. Mitigate fear of a 2-3 year availability.
- Cost sharing between the Town and business for joint marketing efforts

2020 UPDATE

Soft launch of the website upgrade started in October with a beta test. New and updated material is under development and is expected to be complete by end-of-year. The site will be subject to continuous updates and improvements over time to address the needs of businesses and the broader community.

Information on Town projects is available on the website, as is a link to the Public Tenders website. Planning is underway for an information campaign to educate businesses on the public procurement process and how they can participate in opportunities.

A marketing strategy and social media strategy have recently been completed, resulting in increased online and social media information and engagement.

Relationships with the newly formed Okotoks Entrepreneurial Ecosystem and River District Business Association have created opportunities for enhanced communication and collaboration on projects of mutual interest and benefit.

Appeal information is published on the website, and information has been provided via the website and social media to educate the public about water allocation, partnerships and planning for water into the future.

Engaging Business (Deadline: January 31/20):

The Town uses a variety of methods to inform the Okotoks community about events, initiatives and upcoming public participation opportunities. These include:

- A dedicated Public Participation Page on the Town's website
- Posts on the Town's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts
- Local media advertising (radio, Western Wheel etc)
- Mayor's video - after every Council meeting
- LED signs - located along Southridge Drive and 32 Ave
- Bi-Monthly Town eNewsletter
- Direct emails - when appropriate
- The Town is planning to use more videos in 2020 to share information and updates
- Pop-up information sessions at Town facilities
- Participation in the Chamber of Commerce's annual Trade Show

As the Town moves to 2020 with major revisions to the MDP and the LUB, research is being done to determine innovative ways to engage the business community in the process, based on the following feedback:

- Open houses are more of a social than business event
- Provide information sessions for businesses once LUB is complete
- Surveys - not a great way to reach businesses
- Newspaper - many do not get their information this way
- Develop partnerships to brand signs and logos

2020 UPDATE

Through ongoing conversations with business support organizations, the Town is working toward improvements in both the format and the content of engagement.

Specific feedback from businesses regarding their preferred methods and formats for engagement would be helpful to improve effectiveness of public participation campaigns. Social media is routinely used to share information, however it is not an official feedback channel. Solution-focused suggestions and discussion are always welcome by contacting Okotoks Economic Development directly. Project-related feedback can be provided via the opportunities provided on the website – e.g. webinars or surveys – or by phoning the number provided or sending an email to the project manager via the contact link at the bottom of each project page. The public participation page can be found under Your Community/Living in Okotoks/Have your say!

Covid-19 has affected the way we do business, forcing most engagement online in 2020. In response, the Town has worked with its partners on solutions including webinars, online meetings and increased use of videos in messaging.

The monthly Economic Development newsletter will be reinstated in 2021, and will be emailed to businesses that have given their consent to receive emails of interest from Okotoks Economic Development. If you'd like to receive the newsletter and are not sure whether you have provided consent, contact our office at ecdevokotoks@okotoks.ca.

See Your Community/Living in Okotoks/Community Events Calendar on the Town website for opportunities to promote your event for free. Marketing of the opportunity will be undertaken in the coming weeks, and suggestions for improvement are welcome.

Assisting Business Community

Suggestions were made on how the Economic Development Office could help the business community.

- Assist in promoting Home Occupations
- Educate businesses about Economic Development's value proposition
- More coworking space, community rental space, create incubator space for start-up businesses
- Host meet and greets to foster relationships between the Town and the business community
- Regular online newsletter to all licensed businesses
- Host a business information evening - hard for businesses to get to daytime events.
- Send potential lease prospects to anyone who has space
- Resource day - include Alberta government trade missions
- Provide information to Home Occupation businesses on local resources and business organizations
- Motivating youth and millennial entrepreneurs in the business community

2020 UPDATE

The Town will continue to work with local business support agencies to provide support to the business community within its mandate. Where better delivered by a support agency or business, suggestions will be referred for consideration and information resources will be shared.

The majority of the suggestions in this report that fit within the Town's mandate will be addressed through one or more of the major projects: Municipal Development Plan, Land Use Bylaw Rewrite, Business Intake Form, E-Permitting System or Website Refresh.

Current Economic Development Projects

Feedback included the need for more coworking spaces and increased involvement in business by youth.

There are 714 licensed Home Based Businesses, and there has been an expressed need for more coworking spaces to alleviate the feeling of isolation, to be more connected to the business community, and have an opportunity to build skills that could be transferred to their business operation.

A grassroots, six month pilot cowork project (November 1/19 – March 31/20) has begun which will bring home-based businesses to the current store-front business community & encourage positive working, collaborative & mentorship focused relationships. The hope is that this becomes a self sustainable endeavour, and will lead to a strengthened Home Based business community.

As well, there is an important untapped market in the younger generation (17-25) that could help the future growth of our community. Engagement with local schools and this unique demographic during this project will hopefully help them find business roots in the community and possible mentorship from established business owners.

2020 UPDATE

The establishment of co-working spaces, and business mentorship programs for youth, have proven most effective when driven by business. Co-working spaces have been established by and at Community Futures Highwood, StudioMe, and Miles Display. Listings are available on the Town's website.

The Land Use Bylaw Rewrite project creates an opportunity to consider more permissive land use regulation to accommodate greater uptake in co-working spaces. Businesses are strongly encouraged to participate in engagement opportunities including the engagement session accompanying this update, the survey available online until the end of November, and opportunities for review and comment on the second draft as they arise.

Virtual Reality Project

During the Commercial/Real Estate Developers roundtable, it was suggested that drones be used to capture visuals that could be used in social media to market the community.

An opportunity arose to use another technology, virtual reality, to provide a tool for promotion and investment for empty lands for sale/development, within the Town of Okotoks. This tool can be used internally, or by developers, and can be included as a 2D version on the Town website. This project is currently ongoing, with a final product provided by December 31, 2019.



2020 UPDATE

Internal drone training has been undertaken, creating new options for promotional visuals in 2021.

A video and VR experience for the Okotoks Business Park is now available to view on the Okotoks website. The full VR experience will be offered by appointment at the Municipal Centre for business prospects once Covid restrictions have been lifted.

Business Stakeholder Opportunities (Deadline: Dec 15/19):

During the roundtables, representatives from Community Futures, Bow Valley College, Okotoks Chamber of Commerce and MCG Careers, acted as notetakers. They were able to share information about their services to the participants. These stakeholders, as well as others, provide many resources to the business community to build skills and knowledge. The following information will be relayed to stakeholders so they may choose to incorporate it into their planning for 2020.

Education/Project suggestions

- Provision of a Mentor program
- Research the creation of a Home Based business discount to keep B2B shopping local
- Shop Local Initiative
- Park and ride options for events (park at the schools and rec center and shuttle attendees- OnDemand Transit is an option for this)
- A plan to share employees among businesses

Education Topics

- Growing a business
- Target market data and understanding demographics to market better
- Pitches Proposals and Bids
- Point of sale systems and what the best options are
- Product market knowledge and how to buy, business advisor guidance
- Social media
- How to start/grow a business
- Trades training for procurement
- Training for subcontractors to be prepared for larger contracts
- Financials – Accounting and Bookkeeping
- Retirement planning
- Technology workshops
- Food Sanitation and Safety classes
- Merchandising (including packaging and labelling)
- Organizing crosstraining between companies.
- Listing of local service/education providers (eg. local first aid trainers)
- Organize a “health day” where local health professionals could provide health information to the community.

As well, businesses are able to share their knowledge with other businesses or organizations within Okotoks.

COUNCIL CONSIDERATIONS

Okotoks Town Council

There are many requests to improve the available tools to achieve the business community's desire to make the business development process easier.



Additional suggestions from the roundtables that Town Council can consider as they review their current bylaws include:

- Development should be focused where services currently exist
- Regular meetings with Developers – creation of an Okotoks Development Liaison group
- To attract business – create infrastructure that supports the goals/direction of the Town. Research innovation in water use, solar energy on commercial buildings etc.
- Prepare for future businesses
- Incentives for new business - taxes/licenses/permits/building
- Town should support local when purchasing
- Charging stations should not be reserved for only electric cars - first come, first served - until the uptake for electric vehicles increases

Infrastructure

Participants were asked for suggestions in regards to infrastructure they thought should be considered by the Town of Okotoks in the future.

- Traffic circles to improve traffic flow
- More lights at schools and commercial areas
- 32 street twinned - bridge needs to be widened
- New buildings suggested - arts center, learning campus for post secondary, bigger recreation facility, additional high school
- Visitor Information Center at town entrance
- Expansion of public transit
- Work with CP Rail to remove the tracks
- Get rid of trees on Elizabeth St to reconfigure and allow for angle parking
- Build toward Highway 2

2020 UPDATE

All suggestions were shared with Council via this report in 2019. Progress to date includes:

Identification of a supplementary water solution with associated public education/information on the website
Commencement of learning campus construction

Identification of the lands adjacent to Highway 2 and 338 Street as future employment lands in the new MDP

On-demand transit in Okotoks launched on December 2, 2019. The service currently runs Monday through Saturday from 6:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. A detailed survey planned for March, 2020 to determine demand for possible Sunday service was delayed due to Covid and will be pursued in the coming months.

Design of a Wayfinding system is in progress, and the project will be introduced via the Town's website and social media in the coming weeks. The design and analysis of signage types and locations will help to inform improvements to assist visitors and residents to find key facilities in town, including the Visitor Information Centre.

Information on Town projects is available on the website, as is a link to the Public Tenders website. Planning is underway for an information campaign to educate businesses on the public procurement process and how they can participate in opportunities.

Event Feedback

Overall, the majority of people that attended the roundtable meetings felt the Town did a good job providing people opportunities for input. Here are some of the learnings from the event and suggestions for improvement for future engagement activities.

What participants liked at the roundtable meetings:

- Sharing of relevant information
- Open discussion about the challenges the business community faces
- Opportunity to network
- The Economic Development team was responsive and approachable
- Small group work was well received
- Positive feedback on the format and structure of the sessions
- Questions discussed were interesting and inspiring

What the Town could do better:

- Continued engagement with the business community
- Follow through on the items discussed
- Participants want to see a connection between input and actions
- Communicate back to participants where their input is being used in decision making
- Provide rationale for the feedback used and considered
- Close the feedback loop

Moving Forward

Thank you to the participants and to the business service organizations who provided facilitation support. Participants shared experiences, ideas and solutions, which helped deepen the understanding of the complexities of business development in the Town of Okotoks. The Town is committed to honouring the voices of those who participated and using their input to shape future decisions in 2020 where possible and practical.

2020 UPDATE

The updates contained in this report address how the Town is responding to the feedback received from the 2019 Industry Roundtables. The majority of the feedback herein has been or is being actioned through various projects. Infrastructure suggestions are subject to engineering and budget considerations, among others, and they have been provided to the respective departments for their consideration during capital and budget priority planning.

Opportunities for input into Town projects can be found at okotoks.ca/public-participation. Participate in webinars, meetings and surveys or send your feedback directly to the project manager using the phone number or email link provided at the bottom of each project page.

Let's continue the conversation.

Questions, discussion, and solution-focused suggestions are always welcome!

Contact Economic Development at ecdevokotoks@okotoks.ca or 403-938-8052

Appendix A

Acronyms

Source: Alberta Municipal Affairs

AAMDCALBERTA ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPAL DISTRICTS AND COUNTIES

- An association of elected rural councils representing the interests of rural Albertans.
www.aamdc.com

AGM.....ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

- A major meeting held by an organization or business once a year to report on the year's events, hold elections, etc. Generally required by the organization's constitution bylaws.

AIALBERTA INNOVATES

- Reporting to the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology, this agency develops and commercializes technology to give users a competitive advantage. AI agencies – Bio Solutions, Energy and Environment Solutions, Health Solutions, Technology Futures, and Alberta Research and Innovation Authority.
www.albertainnovates.ca

APC.....ALBERTA PURCHASING CONNECTION

- Alberta's official electronic tendering system to advertise and distribute related solicitation documents from Government of Alberta and Alberta MASH sector purchasing opportunities.
www.purchasingconnection.ca/

AUMA.....ALBERTA URBAN MUNICIPALITIES ASSOCIATION

- An association of elected officials that works towards the general improvement of urban municipal government and administration in Alberta.
www.munilink.net

BRZ.....BUSINESS REVITALIZATION ZONE

- A council can establish a BRZ to improve, beautify and maintain property; develop, improve or maintain public parking and/or promote the zone as a business or shopping area.

CAOCHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

- The top administrative official in a municipality, whose responsibilities include ensuring that the municipality's policies and programs are implemented, advising and informing the council on the operation of the municipality, performing other duties assigned by the council and ensuring staffing is in place

FCM.....FEDERATION OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES

- A non-profit group that represents the national interest of local governments in Canada and acts as the voice for Canadian cities, towns and municipal authorities.
www.fcm.ca/

FOIP.....FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY ACT

- An act providing information about the conditions and obligations that public bodies must meet to provide access to information and protect the privacy of personal information.
www.foip.alberta.ca/

IDP.....INTERMUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- A plan adopted by two or more municipalities to address land-use and development issues in an area of mutual concern.

LUB.....LAND USE BYLAW

- A legislatively required municipal bylaw that divides the municipality into districts, provides for permitted and discretionary uses in each district, and includes a system for issuing development permits

MDPMUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- All municipalities in Alberta with a population of 3,500 persons or more are required to adopt an MDP to guide the future growth and development of the community

MGA.....MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT ACT

- The legislation that governs how municipal government operates in Alberta.
www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/m26.pdf

MOUMEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

- A formal written document used to promote communication and understanding between parties.

MPC.....MUNICIPAL PLANNING COMMISSION

- A commission established by bylaw to provide planning advice and make decisions on subdivision and development applications and other planning matters within a municipality.

NGO.....Non-Governmental Organization

- Any professional, business, non-profit or public interest organization that is neither affiliated with, nor under the direction of, any government.

NWPNEW WEST PARTNERSHIP TRADE AGREEMENT

- An accord between the Governments of British Columbia (B.C.), Alberta and Saskatchewan that creates Canada's largest, barrier-free, interprovincial market. Under the NWPTA, B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan are the first jurisdictions to commit to full mutual recognition or reconciliation of rules that hinder the free movement of goods, services, investment, and people within Canada. The NWPTA builds on the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement between B.C. and Alberta and has the clarity Saskatchewan was seeking on public ownership of Crown land and the ability of municipalities to support economic development. The NWPTA came into effect July 1, 2010, and will be fully implemented on July 1, 2013.
www.newwestpartnershiptrade.ca/

RFI.....REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

- A procurement procedure whereby vendors are provided with a general or preliminary description of a problem or need and are requested to provide information or advice about how to better define the problem, need, or find alternative solutions.
- A property assessment procedure whereby Municipal Affairs' designated linear assessor or delegate (Assessment Services Branch) requests from companies linear property information required for the preparation of linear property assessments.

RFP.....REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

- A competitive method for acquiring supplies or services

RFQREQUEST FOR QUOTE

- A competitive method for acquiring supplies and services

SCA.....SAFETY CODES ACT

- Legislation that governs safety in ten disciplines: Building; Fire; Electrical; Plumbing; Gas; Boilers and Pressure Vessels; Elevators; Amusement Rides; Passenger Ropeways; and Private Sewage.
www.qp.gov.ab.ca/documents/Acts/SO1.html

SDABSUBDIVISION AND DEVELOPMENT APPEAL BOARD

- The board that hears appeals from persons affected by a decision of the development authority and the subdivision authority.
www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/am_subdivison_appeals_board_manual.cfm

Town of Okotoks
Follow-up Report on Recommendations of 2019 Industry Roundtables
November, 2020

	ACTION PLAN ITEM	ACTION(S)	COMPLETION OR TARGET
REGULATION	Review of Permitted/Discretionary Uses Review for fewer zones Review of parking strategies Dedicated bike lanes and traffic circles More mixed-use development Greater residential density Architectural controls in downtown Review sign regulations Co-work, incubation, satellite offices Give administration more authority for approvals	Land Use Bylaw Rewrite First draft is available for review at: https://www.okotoks.ca/municipal-government/public-participation/land-use-bylaw-rewrite The project is in engagement stage and business input is strongly encouraged. Survey now open for public input at the same link. Comments can be provided directly to the project team by calling 403-995-2760 or emailing planning@okotoks.ca .	Survey closes December 7, 2020. Phone and email comments welcome by the same deadline. Public hearing targeted for Spring 2021, will be advertised on local media, Town website and Town social media
PROCESS	Review Major DP requirements; research alternative models (agreements, performance security) Improvement of pre-application process and timelines for commercial approvals Cross-training / process improvement for front line and support staff Review of larger-scale development prioritization Educate developers regarding current process Improve safety inspection timelines Combine development permits, building permits, licensing where practical Undertake a broad review of Development Permit timelines Investigate an online permit system Implement an online permit system Create a checklist for new businesses Consider offering reduced timelines for increased fees where practical Review opt-in/opt-out of business	Business Intake Form Collects business information for new storefront or home occupation businesses and streamlines the related communications and application submission	Launched in June, 2020
		Land Use Bylaw Amendments Bylaws 22-19, 23-19 and 32-19 adopted by Council in 2019 amended the Land Use Bylaw by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adding to the list of commercial and industrial business types allowed in the downtown commercial district and two industrial districts - Increasing the number of business start-ups exempt from a development permit 	Adopted in August, 2019 and January, 2020
		Bylaw 17-20, adopted in 2020, amended the bylaw by, among other things: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further expanding the types of businesses that are exempt from a development permit - Simplifying and reducing the documentation requirements to accompany a development permit application - Changing advertising requirements from weekly newspaper to Town website to reduce waiting time for permit release - Adding to Administration's approval authority to speed up process 	Adopted in June, 2020

	ACTION PLAN ITEM	ACTION(S)	COMPLETION OR TARGET
PROCESS CONT'D	Directory	E-Permitting System Consultant has been engaged and project will commence in 2020 with software install and process mapping including process improvement/streamlining analysis. Anticipated to roll out in phases, with completion by end of 2021: Phase 1 - Development Permits Phase 2 - Building Permits & Fire Inspections Phase 3 - Business Licenses The project is intended to streamline all aspects of permitting and inspections, and improve communication, convenience for users, and clarity.	Commencement December, 2020 Target Completion December, 2021
		Schedule of Fees Development permit fees for signs and small-scale storefront and home-based start-ups were reduced by \$175 In response to Covid, development permit and certificate of compliance fees were waived for summer, 2020.	2019 Summer, 2020
		Safety Codes Inspection demand outside current Tues/Thurs schedule is limited. Demand to be continuously monitored, additional inspection days added when warranted by construction activity. Process changes are part of E-Permitting project, target completion end of December 2021. Complaints are monitored and followed up where specific and relevant.	Ongoing
	Improve clarity on website for commercial change of use including discretionary uses and variances Create an online organizational chart with responsibilities/contacts	Website Refresh Improved flow and ease of use. Permit information to be arranged by project type, not by department. Organizational Chart with departmental contact info will be included as part of the upgrades.	Target Completion December 31, 2020
	Review timeline for return phone calls – 2 days	Organizational Customer Service Standards call for acknowledgment of phone calls within one business day, even where answers to the inquiry are not yet available.	Ongoing
	Review snow clearing and removal processes affecting businesses	The downtown, and arterials and collectors that provide access to commercial areas, are classified as “Priority 1”: Sanding and snow clearing starts within 4 hours of 4 cm accumulation; all routes within this category are to be cleared of ice and snow within 24 hours after a snow event ceases.	Ongoing; a meeting with Transportation Services can be scheduled with affected business groups (Chamber of Commerce, RDBA). Contact Economic Development to arrange.

	ACTION PLAN ITEM	ACTION(S)	COMPLETION OR TARGET
PEOPLE/ RELATIONSHIPS	Train front-line staff regarding process for referrals; Creation of “cheat sheet” for front-line; Shadowing of Planners	Front-line training complete	Complete June, 2020
	Send potential lease prospects to all who have space	Connect with realtors and business owners to obtain up-to-date marketing packages and make available on website and to prospects	November/December, 2020
	Create drone footage of communities and commercial districts (VR Project)	Drone training is in progress. Virtual Reality project has been completed and video is available on website. Full VR experience for Okotoks Business Park lots to be available at Municipal Centre after Covid restrictions are lifted.	Commence planning March, 2021 for summer, 2021 drone footage
	Review of cost-sharing opportunities in joint marketing initiatives	Work with formal and informal business supports (OEE, RDBA, Chamber, etc.) to identify and pursue opportunities.	Ongoing
	Procurement training for contractors and subs Town should support local when purchasing	Public Tenders are available on okotoks.ca under Your Business/Investing and Projects. A public information campaign is in the planning stages to outline the Town’s purchasing policy, legislation affecting public purchasing, and how local companies can compete for opportunities.	Targeted winter 2020/21
	Business engagement review	Roundtable follow-up Formation of RDBA and OEE Collaboration framework established Ongoing engagement improvement efforts in collaboration with business supports	November, 2020 February and May 2020 October 2020 Ongoing
	“Made in Okotoks” co-work model	Largely business-driven: currently there are locations at Community Futures Highwood, StudioMe and Miles Display. Land Use Bylaw rewrite will further enable co-working with more flexible regulation	Ongoing Targeted Spring, 2021
COMMUNICATION	Website refresh: development permit process, available land for sale/lease, home occupation page, business news, one-stop shop information, business resource list, organizational chart, business vs. homeowner information, parking requirements	See Website Refresh , above	Target Completion December 31, 2020
	Learning opportunities for Roundtable participants to be referred to stakeholders	Referred to business support stakeholders as outlined in report	December, 2019

	ACTION PLAN ITEM	ACTION(S)	COMPLETION OR TARGET
COMMUNICATION CONT'D	Motivate youth and millennial activity in the business community	Function of business support partners, e.g. OEE members: BVC, C of C, CFH, MCG, etc. Town will share information on opportunities as they arise.	Ongoing
	Provision of information to the business community regarding Subdivision and Development Appeal Board process ; Review cost of development appeals; Review who can appeal	Subdivision and Development appeals are provincially legislated. Information regarding process is available on the Town's website. Fees are reviewed annually under the Rates and Fees Bylaw.	Ongoing
	One Stop Shop for Business	Businesses can contact Economic Development directly for assistance in navigating Town requirements and services. Online Business Intake Form serves as one-stop for business approval requirements. E-Permitting will enhance online services for business.	Ongoing June 2021 December 2022
	Provide regular communication to business sector	Working to improve social media strategy to get more information out faster.	Ongoing
		Monthly Ec Dev newsletters will be resumed starting in 2021 and will be available on the website with notification by social media and by email to businesses who have consented to receive emails from Economic Development.	2021
		Economic Development meets regularly with Okotoks Entrepreneurial Ecosystem, Chamber of Commerce, and River District Business Association to share information and promote ongoing collaboration.	Ongoing
	Business engagement	Opportunities for input into Town projects are provided via social media and the Town website, as well as direct notification to OEE and RDBA. Go to okotoks.ca/publicparticipation and select the project. Participate in webinars, meetings or surveys, or send your feedback directly to the project manager using the phone number or email link provided at the bottom of each project page. Suggestions for improvements to how the Town engages with business are always welcome.	Ongoing

	ACTION PLAN ITEM	ACTION(S)	COMPLETION OR TARGET
OTHER	Parkade in downtown	Downtown <u>parking lot</u> was included in grant funding application for Province of Alberta Municipal Stimulus Program funding: \$1.2M	Submission September, 2020; Construction 2021 if approved
	Water Supply	A sub-regional water project has been approved and design work is in progress to bring a water pipeline from the Bow River. See okotoks.ca/your-government/newsroom . See also Town and Foothills County Regional Water Q&A on Town of Okotoks youtube channel.	Construction 2024