

BRETON • CALMAR
THORSBY • WARBURG

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Strength in Numbers

39/20 Alliance Economic Development Strategy

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Strength in Numbers

39/20 Alliance: Economic Development Strategy (2015)

Prepared by Keystone Strategies and uc communications



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Executive Summary

The 39/20 Alliance is an innovative collaboration of the communities of Thorsby, Breton, Calmar and Warburg, that recognizes the value of working together to promote growth, reduce costs and increase efficiency for residents and businesses.

The Alliance, with financial support of a Regional Collaboration Grant provided by Alberta Municipal Affairs in 2014, created the *39/20 Alliance Strategic Plan 2014-2015* to provide direction in achieving its vision.

39/20 Alliance Vision

By merging regionally, the 39/20 Alliance is an economic leader, providing increased levels of service while realizing the cost-benefits achieved through partnership. The plan identifies two priorities: **1) enhance economic development activities, 2) build organizational sustainability.**

The creation of *Strength in Numbers: 39/20 Alliance Economic Development Strategy* will play an important role in achieving the economic development priority, and will support a number of the goals identified in the Alliance's strategic plan.

Recommendations for the 39/20 Alliance:

1. Ensure mechanisms are in place to support local businesses
2. Be business ready
3. Formalize regional collaboration for economic development
4. Develop a regional web site
5. Develop regional business license/business directory
6. Develop community/regional Vision and/or branding
7. Develop a plan for clear and consistent communication
8. Find new ways to listen and empower citizens

In order to develop this economic development strategy for the region, member communities first undertook a comprehensive community engagement effort to garner a high level of buy-in from residents and business leaders. The development of this strategy comprised numerous community engagement activities, and sought the input from stakeholders throughout the development of the plan.

In order to provide clear insight to Alliance member communities what can be expected from economic development efforts, a comprehensive review of economic development principles was undertaken in developing this plan.

Through the public engagement process and a thorough review of statutory plans from each member community, common themes emerged that serve as the basis for this strategy.

Based on extensive research, and internationally-recognized economic development best practices from across North America, this strategy not only recommends simply what to do, but also how to do it.

The 39/20 Alliance acknowledges the efforts of elected officials and administrative staff who have contributed to the success in developing this strategy. The Alliance would also like to thank the many citizens and business leaders who participated in the creation of *Strength in Numbers*. With the support of all these contributors, the Alliance is confident that the strategy will support and nurture new growth in each of the member communities.



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Background

The 39/20 Alliance is an innovative collaboration of the communities of Thorsby, Breton, Calmar and Warburg, that recognizes the value of working together to promote growth, reduce costs and increase efficiency for residents and businesses.

Formed in 2008, the Alliance represents a population of 4,206 and an area of almost 13 square kilometers. Located south and west of Edmonton with three of the four members within the Capital Region Board's boundaries, the Alliance's economy is based in agriculture, manufacturing, oil and gas, and tourism.

The Alliance is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of the Mayor and one other elected official from each of the four member communities. Each community's Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is also an ex-officio board member. This dynamic and committed board embodies authenticity, fiscal responsibility, transparency, openness and equality in all of its important work.

The Alliance finds itself among larger, more urban municipalities that are experiencing rapid growth. As such, both ongoing annexation discussions that impact the communities and opportunities for economic development abound.

Leduc County and the City of Leduc are dealing with a significant annexation proposal from the City of Edmonton¹. If the annexation proposal is approved, Leduc County stands to lose almost twenty percent of its tax base. Although not directly within the proposed annexation area, this application could have long-term impacts on the 39/20 Alliance members, as Leduc County's ability to contribute financially to local projects is deeply impacted.

Seeking to better represent its own interests in this changing landscape, the 39/20 Alliance is undertaking a comprehensive economic development strategy for the entire region.

¹ — Most of the member communities of the 39/20 Alliance fall within the boundary of Leduc County, and as such, are members of the Capital Region Board. The only exception is the Village of Breton, who is contained within Brazeau County and is not a member of the Capital Region Board.



Co-operating for Prosperity

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The 39/20 Alliance

Vision

By merging regionally, the 39/20 Alliance is an economic leader, providing increased levels of service while realizing the cost-benefits achieved through partnership.

39/20 Alliance Values

Authenticity

The 39/20 Alliance members act in the best interests of the Alliance and its residents in a genuine effort to make improvements

Fiscal Responsibility

Alliance members take the spending of public dollars with great responsibility and strive to achieve the greatest return for dollars spent

Transparency

The Alliance understands the need for communicating its activities and their results, and for ongoing dialogue with stakeholders

Openness

The Alliance values honesty and openness in the conduct of its activities

Equality

All Alliance members are equal in the decision-making process

One of the primary aims of the Alliance is to promote economic development opportunities within the region and to provide support to the existing business community in order to create wealth and improve quality of life for the region's residents.

With regard to the priority for economic development, the 39/20 Alliance Strategic Plan outlined a set of goals and outcomes to be achieved in the next couple of years.

1. Create a business directory for the 39/20 Alliance communities
2. Investigate the feasibility of regional business licenses
3. Using RCP funding, complete a regional economic development strategy that defines economic development, provides funding options for ongoing regional economic development work, and inventories the region's strengths and advantages
4. Complete a collaborative regional economic development model study
5. Choose a regional development model that best suits the Alliance's needs and is fiscally sustainable
6. Develop a cohesive marketing strategy and approaches for industrial and commercial developers
7. Provide economic development information, including an available land inventory and business directory, to site selection decision-makers using the Alliance's website and social media tools
8. Align standard development information such as land-use definitions and building codes to simplify economic development efforts.

The creation of this economic development strategy directly addresses Goal 3, and critically supports the other seven economic development goals contained within the strategic plan.

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Principles of Economic Development

Simple, Complicated and Complex

Economic development activities tackle simple, complicated and complex problems. In “Getting to Maybe”, authors Frances Westley, Brenda Zimmerman, and Michael Quinn Patton define simple, complicated, and complex using the following analogies which apply directly to economic development challenges:

- Simple problems are like baking a cake. They can be tackled using a tried and true recipe that if followed yields consistent results.
- Complicated problems are like sending a rocket to the moon. They require a high level of expertise and effort, though once achieved, the likelihood of achieving success again is increased.
- Complex problems are like raising a child. Expertise helps but responsiveness to an always changing situation is crucial, and no recipe has the same impact on two different children.

Economic development efforts tackle a range of problems; sometimes a simple, tried and true program will yield immediate benefit and sometimes a complex, innovative and responsive program is required.

Economic Development is a complex, multi-dimensional process. There are a number of definitions of economic development but no one definition encompasses all of the various aspects of the profession. Basically, there is no single policy, program, strategy or template for achieving economic success in a community or region because each has different strengths and weaknesses and will therefore have various challenges.

Economic Development is a process that influences the growth and well-being of a community through such means as job creation, job retention, improved tax base and a reasonable life quality.

Economic Development in Canada offers a wide array of strategies to secure a healthy economy in communities, helping small business grow, leading major development projects, securing outside investments through business attraction, retaining existing opportunities, securing access to capital, and marketing and communication are just a few of the facets to further the goals of a community.

— Economic Developers Association of Canada

In order to better understand the 39/20 Alliance Economic Development Strategic Plan, it might be beneficial to firstly understand the concepts and practices for economic development at the municipal level.

Municipal economic development has been defined as:

“...a program, group of policies, or activity that seeks to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for a community, by creating and/or retaining jobs that facilitate growth and provide a stable tax base”.

— *The International Economic Development Council*

“It is a process by which public, business, and nongovernmental sector partners work collectively to create better conditions for economic growth and employment generation.”

— The World Bank

In its basic form economic development is a collaborative process to create jobs and wealth to improve quality of life.

From these definitions, it is clear that the fundamentals of economic development should include:

- wealth creation
- job creation
- economic multipliers
- import and export replacement
- community development
- collaboration
- entrepreneurship

Why is Economic Development Important?

It is becoming extremely difficult for municipalities to remain sustainable, even though they have experienced rapid growth in recent years. All too often, municipalities have had to resort to increased taxation, just to maintain services, let alone deal with the pressures of a growing population. On the other side of the coin, municipalities that have not experienced rapid growth are also facing the prospect of raising taxes just to maintain the level of services due to inflationary pressures. How can this be?

Across North America, a number of studies, commonly referred to as Cost of Community Services Studies (COCS) have shown that growth is not always contributing to the overall sustainability of a community, but balanced growth is a must in order to survive in today's economy. The premise for these studies suggests that residential taxation does not generate enough revenue to pay for all the services demanded by the residents. Residents move to a community and expect many urban services. They desire recreation facilities (pools, arenas, spray parks, etc.) They also expect good infrastructure such as sidewalks and walking paths, access to schools and libraries. The list of expectations from residents is long, and continues to grow annually. Providing all of these amenities for the residents in the community has a cost, not only a capital cost, but ongoing operational costs as well.

With commercial and industrial taxpayers, their needs are fewer. Yes, they expect good infrastructure such as roads and utilities, but often are not heavy users of community facilities. Many of these corporate citizens are often the go-to when community fund raisers are undertaken, supporting many local projects.

COCS have estimated the costs for providing the required services to residential and non-residential tax payers. Although they all arrive at a different set of numbers, ALL concur that the taxes collected from residential properties does not cover all the costs associated with providing the services.

Some examples from COCS studies suggest:

- Toronto estimates a 40% loss on residential taxes collected; and an 80% profit on industrial taxes collected
- Red Deer County COCS determined that for every \$1 collected in commercial taxes, it cost the County \$0.74 to provide the services; for every \$1 generated from industrial taxes, it costs \$0.09 in services; however, for every \$1 collected from residential properties, it cost the County \$1.81 to provide the services.
- The City of Spruce Grove Economic Development Strategy reports that, for every dollar generated from non-residential taxes, it costs the City between \$0.20-\$0.60 in expenditures, whereas for every \$1 collected from residential taxes cost the City \$1.10- \$1.25

In summary, a mix of commercial and industrial taxpayers subsidize the quality of life expected by the residents. (Both economic development definitions above include improvement to the quality of life, enhance the well-being of the community)

However, it should also be noted that residential development, and all the amenities required to keep citizens satisfied is extremely important to an economic development strategy. If a community is not a desirable place to live, it will be difficult to attract a labour force to support the businesses that are being sought after.

To be sustainable, it is important to find balanced growth, a good mix of residential and non-residential development.

Fundamentals of Economic Development

Business Attraction

Most economic development organizations spend the majority of their time and budget on Business Attraction activities. In the early days of economic development, emphasis was placed on foreign travel to potentially lure large corporations to the community. This was a very expensive and competitive approach to economic development, but usually supported by Provincial and/or Federal funding.

Business Retention

In recent years, economic development efforts have included Business Retention activities. A whole series of training programs have been developed around Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E). Under this function, economic development efforts are focused on meeting the needs of existing business in the community, exploring ways to assist these businesses become more sustainable, and ensure they remain in the community and not lured away by competitors offering incentives, etc. Often, local businesses can be a source of leads for other potential businesses that may be attracted to the community to further process by-products or be closer to markets, etc.

80/20 Rule

It has been determined that approximately 80% of economic development effort/expense is spent on Business Attraction activities, and only 20% is spent on Business Retention activities. However, it has also been shown that 80% of new growth in a community's business activity will come from businesses already located within the community/region, yet only 20% of effort and expense is placed within this activity.

Business Nurturing

New business may also be garnered through business nurturing (sometimes referred to as “economic development gardening”). This involves working in the community to identify potential business ideas and/or potential business owners, and assisting them in getting a business off the ground. Assistance may involve pathfinding, helping the new business navigate through the various permits and regulations (at a local or provincial level), or referrals to agencies that are set up to assist small business. Growing the business base from within the community is an excellent step in diversifying and growing the economic base of the community.

This is an important role for economic developers, as statistics show that 95% of new employment is gained from small business, usually with less than 5 employees. If started on the right path, these small businesses can grow to be a major employer within the community/region.

Rules supporting home-based business may contribute or hinder the business nurturing process.

Business Advocate

Another important role for economic development is to serve as a business advocate. Municipalities set various rules and policies for the betterment of the community, but decision makers often fail to consider the full impact these changes will have on small business. An effective economic development program will have a business advocate component, working within the municipal administration to ensure the voices of business are heard and considered when major plans are being developed/ revised.

Statistics show that 95% of new employment is gained from small business

Exports don't have to mean producing a product that is shipped around the world, but simply selling a product or service outside the region

Import/Export

Opportunities may exist by identifying the products or services being imported from outside the region by local business and determining if there is a way to reduce these imports and have them produced locally. Export of product and services is extremely important to the wealth creation in the community through economic development activities. Exports don't have to mean producing a product that is shipped around the world, but simply selling a product or service outside the region, and therefore importing new dollars into the local economy.

Typical retail services simply recirculate the dollars within the community. To expand the local economy, exporting goods and/or services outside the community will generate new dollars coming into the local economy, and then contribute to a larger pool of recirculating dollars.

Tourism is a great economic development tool, as it generally brings “new wealth” into the community. Tourism may also support the costs of providing recreational facilities, especially if they are used to attract tournaments and sporting events.

Community Development

Often economic development gets pulled into community development activities. These can range from organizing special events, to general community promotions, to organizing parade floats and general “community” promotions. In determining the best use of resources in an economic development program, the question should be asked “Is this activity contributing to the creation of wealth in the community?”

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Economic Development Is An Investment, Not An Expense

Economic development is a long-term process. Results are not usually visible in the first few years, it takes time and effort to build a solid economic development program.

Economic development is not just one person's responsibility, everyone has a role to play in support of economic growth in a community/region.

Elected Officials

Elected officials (at all levels of government) set the policies and regulations that are supportive of balanced growth

Municipal staff

Municipal staff are responsible for enacting the policies and regulations, and are the first line of contact with the business (new or existing). A positive first impression will go a long way in helping the prospective business choose the best community. Municipal staff are responsible for gathering and disseminating statistical information that is vital for the business owners in determining best opportunities.

Business groups and organizations

Business groups and organizations can not only support new business through mentoring, but may also serve as an excellent resource in supporting the economic development efforts through testimonials, referrals, etc.

Community members

Residents of the community can serve as potential employees and/or customers for a new business. They can also be used to help promote the excellent quality of life that the community offers.

Results are not usually visible in the first few years, it takes time and effort to build a solid economic development program

What do we need to get started?

Statistical information

If a business is seeking a new location, they will need to access some very important information prior to making a final decision. New businesses typically need to know population trends, education levels of potential workforce, availability and costs of utilities (and who provides the utilities), access to post-secondary education, health care facilities, and the cost of doing business in the community (taxes, time and cost of development application approvals, etc).

Instead of making contact with the local economic development office, companies will often initiate a site search through the web site. Having relevant, current information on an easy to find web site will be of invaluable assistance to a prospective business. If information is not readily available, the community may be passed over for someone who has the required information readily available.

Land and/or buildings

In today's competitive environment, it is important that communities have "shovel ready" land or existing buildings in place. Industry doesn't have the time or patience to go through a long process of acquiring land, zoning, etc. Time is money, and business will locate where conditions are ready for them to begin operations as soon as possible.

It is important for the community to have a listing of all land and buildings available, and ensure the list is current.

Business Friendly Process/Policies

In the corporate world, time is money. Prospective businesses want to know that they are playing on a fair and equitable playing field, and that processes are timely.

It is also very important to provide fair and consistent rules to existing businesses. Remember, as much as 80% of growth will come from within. Communities should ensure they have policies in place that support business expansion.

Community support

Communities must ensure that the community as a whole is on side with the decision making process. It makes no sense to target industry for relocation if the community residents are not supportive. There must be clear a understanding what is and what is not acceptable development in the resident's eyes.



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It is important that economic development goals complement, not compromise the aspirations of the community and its residents. To get this input, some kind of community engagement is required.

Spectrum of Public Participation

While methods and budgets vary, there are basic principles of community engagement that municipalities can implement to increase both the quality and quantity of public input. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), has developed a spectrum that municipalities can measure themselves against:

Inform

The base standard of public engagement; it a promise to keep citizens and businesses informed.

Consult

Beyond providing information, consulting implies at least listening to and even encouraging public feedback

Involve

This is a promise to work directly with the public to ensure that their “concerns and aspirations” are understood and influence policy

Collaborate

Partnering with the public is each aspect of decision making and incorporating this advice to the “maximum extent possible”

Empower

The ultimate goal of community engagement: a public that feels that the decision making power is in their hands

In short, effective community engagement goes beyond providing basic information (one-way monologue). It is an authentic two-way conversation that gives each citizen an opportunity to have an impact on the future of their community.

Our Approach to Engagement

The goal in developing this strategy was to reach collaboration: trying to partner with community members so that they were involved in each recommendation.

To accomplish this, a variety of tactics were used to connect with local residents and businesses. These included:

Public Open Houses

A public open house was conducted within each member community. The events were structured informally, with no presentations, only large sheets of paper with four simple questions. Participants were given no time limit and encouraged to speak with the facilitators and other attendees.

Business Visitations

Random businesses were visited within each community. Informal interviews were conducted with owners and staff to find out what they thought about their community.

On the Street Interviews/Conversations

Random citizens, on the street, in coffee shops, and other locations were interviewed. The interviews were more structured as conversations, trying to determine individual perceptions of the community.

Paper Surveys/Local Media

Links to electronic surveys were published in the local media and paper copies of the survey were made available in each community.

What do you like about your community?

What don't you like about your community?

Where would you like to see your community in 10 years?

What needs to happen to see this happen?



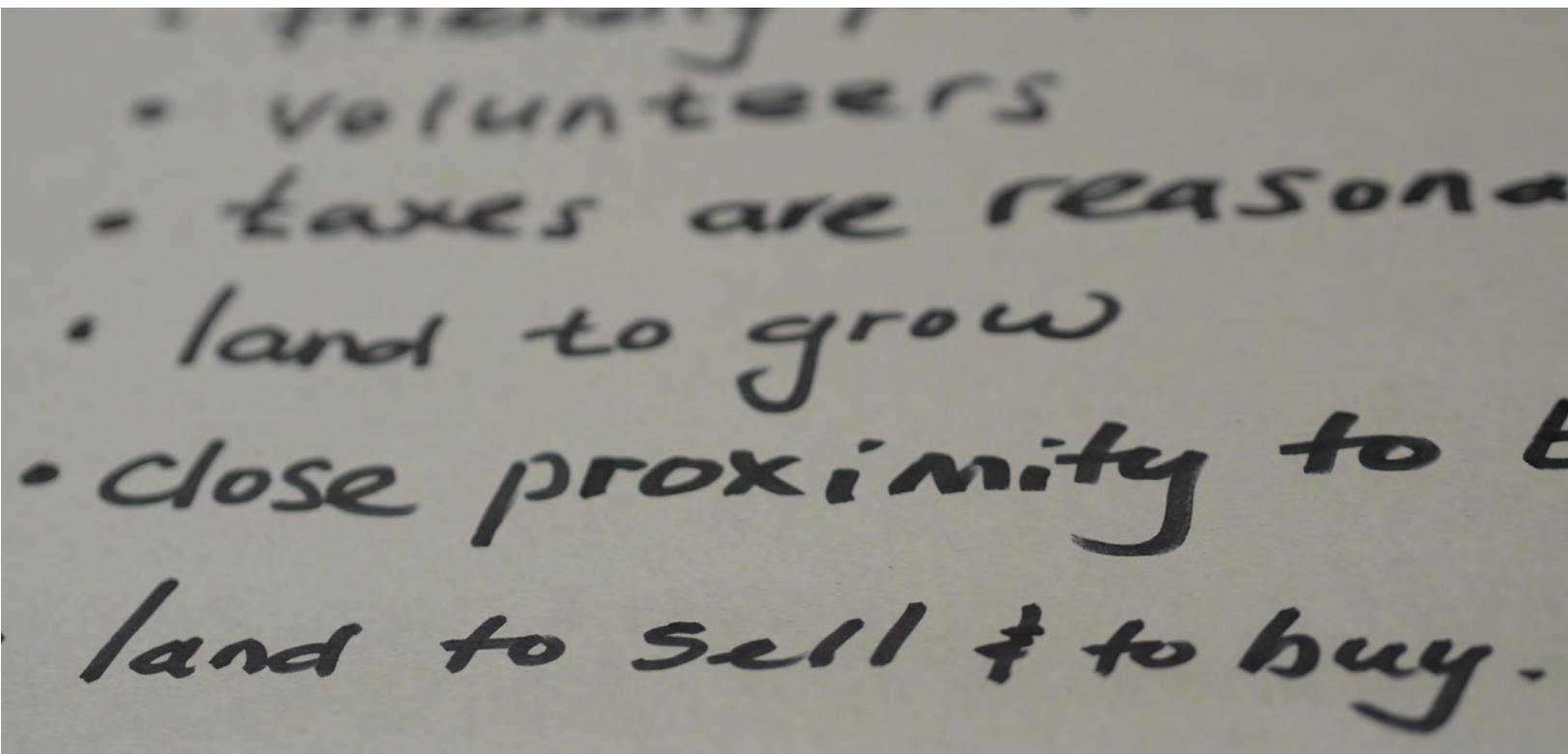
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Research & Results

What We Heard: Trends

Each community was different in identifying the likes and challenges, however many common themes emerged from the public consultation sessions:

- many stakeholders agreed that, although the small town feel was important, they also understood and embraced the need for growth in order to be sustainable and to provide additional services they wanted to see in the 10 year vision
- lack of shovel ready land for growth was identified as a barrier to reaching their 10 year vision. This included lack of a variety in the housing choices, as well as the need to accommodate additional commercial and industrial firms
- many stakeholders cited a lack of communication within their respective communities as a challenge. They desired more communication about how and why certain municipal decisions were being made. They desired more connection with the community, not just Council and Administration, but also with what others are doing in the community to improve the quality of life. Although apathy and lack of engagement were identified as concerns, much of this could be caused by a breakdown in communication. Most participants expressed a desire to get involved “for the right vision/ project.”
- It will be important to keep community stakeholders informed and aware of the progress being made as the economic development strategy is implemented. Many will take a “wait and see approach”, but will likely quickly jump on board if they see progress being made. Stakeholders were eager to celebrate success.





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Breton

In March, 2015, the Village of Breton adopted a new Strategic Plan (On the Move 2015-2020) Within this new plan, the Village identified a new Vision: “Breton, a high quality, sustainable forever home, with amenities for all.” To achieve this vision, the Strategic Plan identified four goals to address; Sustainability; Infrastructure and Maintenance; Communications; and Planning for the Future.

The new Breton Strategic Plan addresses economic development priorities in several of its goals and objectives, including:

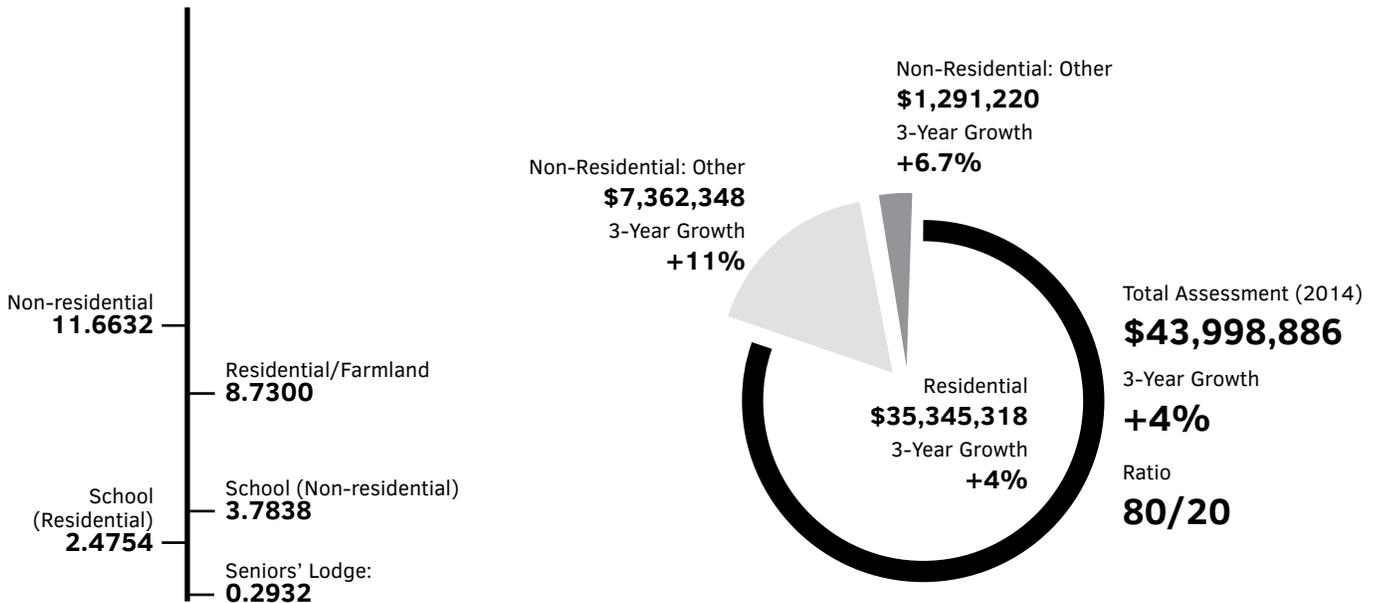
- support and encourage economic development that is compatible in the Village by participating in regional economic development opportunities arising from the 39/20 Alliance and through identifying and exploring internal development opportunities within the village
- identify future growth areas for both residential and non-residential growth into the future
- develop an external marketing plan that promotes Breton’s specific attributes and assets to a wide audience that includes new residents, employees and businesses
- develop an internal communications plan to enhance communications between staff and council and between the Village Office and community residents.

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Breton By-the-Numbers (2014)



Assessment (2014)



What We Heard in Breton

During public consultation, residents and businesses in Breton indicated that they liked the small, friendly atmosphere of the village and were proud of new developments. Most identified a desire to see more employment opportunities, and the attraction of more businesses and residents. This could be achieved through development of highway frontage lands and diversification from oil and gas industries. However, participants in the interviews also identified the lack of transportation for medical appointments in the City as a challenge, especially for the seniors living in the Village. Other challenges identified were typical to most rural communities; lack of community involvement and aging volunteer base.

Industry was attracted to Breton because of proximity to labour force, cost and the availability of industrial zoned land, and that no other suitable location was available in neighbouring communities. However, it was noted that the land was not "shovel ready", requiring time and money to install the necessary utilities. Industry suggested that there is an opportunity to construct rental office and warehouse space to meet existing demands. Like most of Alberta, industry was having difficulty in attracting a labour force to the rural/small town areas.

Distinct Advantages

- Access to both Highway 39 and Highway 20
- Unique cultural history
- Furthest distance from a major commercial centre



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Calmar

The Town of Calmar is utilizing a Municipal Development Plan (MDP) adopted in 2001 and amended in 2007. Within this plan, they identified 85 acres within the Town committed to future industrial uses, and a further 140 acres that were to begin servicing in 2008.

Calmar describes itself as a local service centre and bedroom community: “a safe, welcoming community, striving to be self reliant and offering a healthy and balanced lifestyle.”

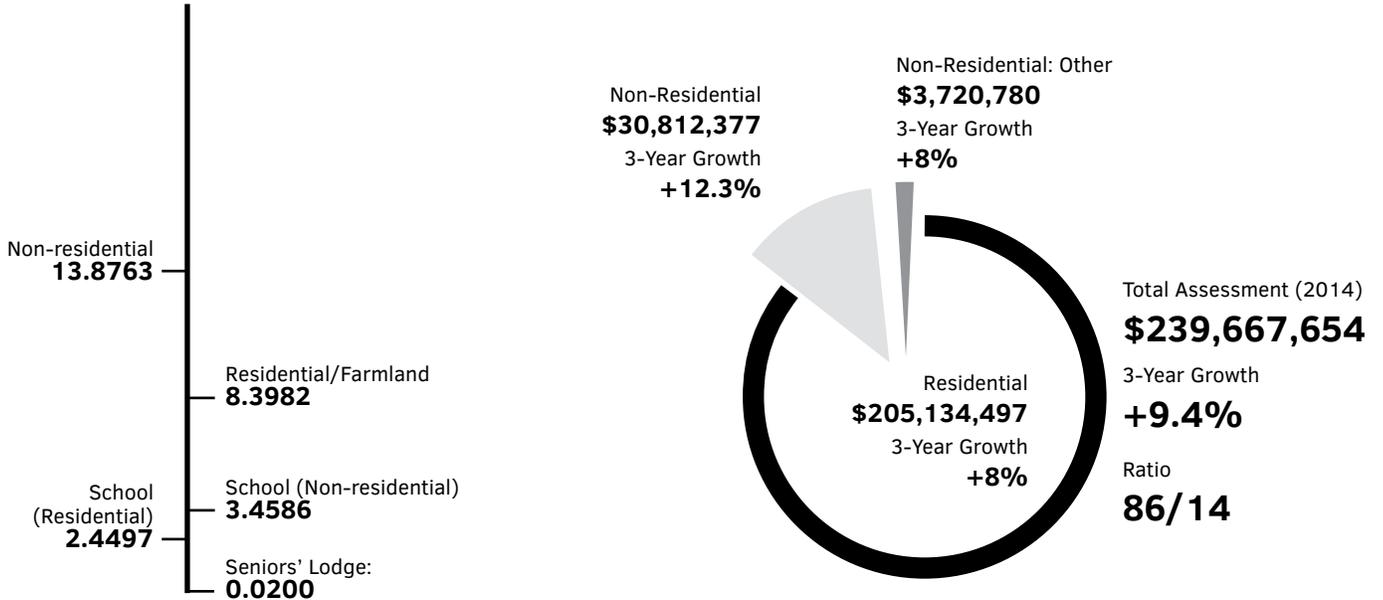
By 2015, the Town of Calmar aspires to promote economic growth through:

- main street with a distinctive identity that invites travelers to stop
- growing commercial sector that serves the Town residents, surrounding population, and tourists using facilities in the area
 - concentrating commercial development along 50th Ave. towards the east
 - redevelopment and new development will be encouraged with a view to improving the appearance of the commercial core area
 - improve the commercial core by building out sidewalks, encouraging murals, antique machinery displays, common parking areas
- growing number of industrial enterprises in Calmar provides local employment opportunities and broadens the assessment base
 - increase employment and balance the industrial assessment
 - maintain a supply of serviced industrial land
- new development meets rigorous environmental standards

Calmar By-the-Numbers (2014)



Assessment (2014)



What We Heard in Calmar

During the public consultation process in the Town of Calmar, both one-on-one interviews with local business and a public open house were used. Participants felt:

- The small town feel and the schools made Calmar a great place to live. Participants were divided, some thinking there was a positive energy in the community, while others felt strongly that there was a lack of community involvement/engagement.
- There was a lack of understanding about what and how the decisions were made at the municipal level, and suggested improved communication would assist in building a stronger community. Some felt the Town lacked a clear vision or focus, and offered to get involved in specific projects.

Overall, participants generally supported growth in the community, and identified the need for more land to achieve balanced growth. Main Street revitalization was high on the list of things participants wanted to see over the next 10 years. Some pointed to derelict properties along the main street that needed to be addressed in the very near future in order to revitalize the main thoroughfare.

Vandalism and petty crime was identified as a concern, with some suggesting improved policing as a necessity for the Town.

Distinct Advantages

- The Town has identified land for future residential and industrial developments
- Proximity to International Airport and the Leduc/Nisku Business Parks
- Proximity to Wizard and Pigeon Lake (recreation)
- Highway 39 visibility



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Thorsby

The Thorsby MSP (2009) “Planting Seeds for Future Generations” defines the village as “a secure, friendly residential and business community, offering an enviable quality of life, diverse leisure activities and opportunities for all.” The MSP suggests to address economic issues by supporting business and development with the lowest tax rates possible, and to develop future industry and land use infrastructure.

The 2014-2017 MSP added “Scandinavian roots” as part of the Vision Statement. This plan added that Council’s primary focus was built around “establishing and maintaining an environment of growth for the Village and region that will result in it, and the rest of the region being comprised of sustainable communities.”

With respect to the economic development of Thorsby, the MSP identified several actions

- market the water treatment plant to municipalities, companies and individuals
- seek out new ways of attracting new business to the Village and region
- belong to economic development organizations as individuals or as a Village
- market the Village to prospective new residents

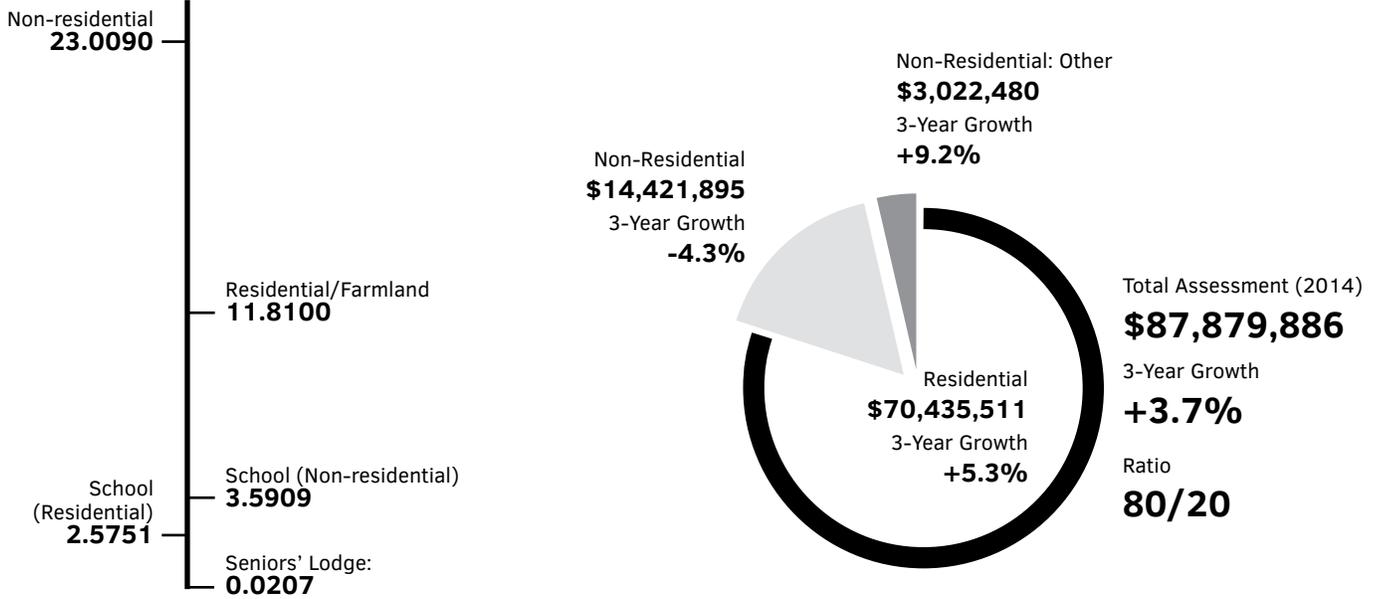
Tourism has been identified as a separate entity within the MSP. It might be suggested that Tourism is in fact a part of any economic development activity. Under the Tourism section within the MSP, Thorsby Village Council had identified:

- working with regional partners to take advantage of natural tourist attractions
- continue to host and promote Haymaker Rodeo
- provide services that tourists require in conjunction with local business and advocacy groups
- promote tourism potential of the Village to the wider region

Thorsby By-the-Numbers (2014)



Assessment (2014)



What We Heard in Thorsby

Public consultation and one-on-one interviews with business and community leaders found that the residents like the small, safe community and acknowledged the strong community spirit in Thorsby. Challenges identified included the need for a variety of housing options to accommodate growth and employment opportunities. Many expressed concerns over high taxation and utility rates as a deterrent to attracting new residents and business. More police presence and poor infrastructure (roads not paved) were also identified as challenges. Improved communication was identified as a means to improve relations with business and residents. Participants were eager for more opportunities to work with Council and Village staff, and amongst themselves, to improve the community.

Business owners/operators chose to locate in Thorsby because of affordability and availability of land, access to labour force, and low turnover rate with local employees. However, they did note the difficulty in recruiting additional staff with limited housing options currently available in the Village. Business leaders were asking for clear, concise and easy to understand rules and policies, that are applied evenly to all. Other business leaders suggested it was difficult to find “shovel ready” commercial and industrial properties to support their expansion plans.

Although Thorsby has been aggressive in pursuing non-residential growth, some participants in the public consultation process felt the Village had offered too many incentives, for too long a period.

Distinct Advantages

- Abundant water supply from new water treatment plant
- Proximity to Pigeon Lake (recreation)



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Warburg

The Village of Warburg Municipal Development Plan (MDP) identified that the growth in the Village could be driven by small scale manufacturing and industrial services sectors.

The Warburg MDP addressed the policies for creating aesthetic appeal in all new and redevelopment opportunities, and the higher utilization of existing infrastructure would be encouraged through appropriate infill development.

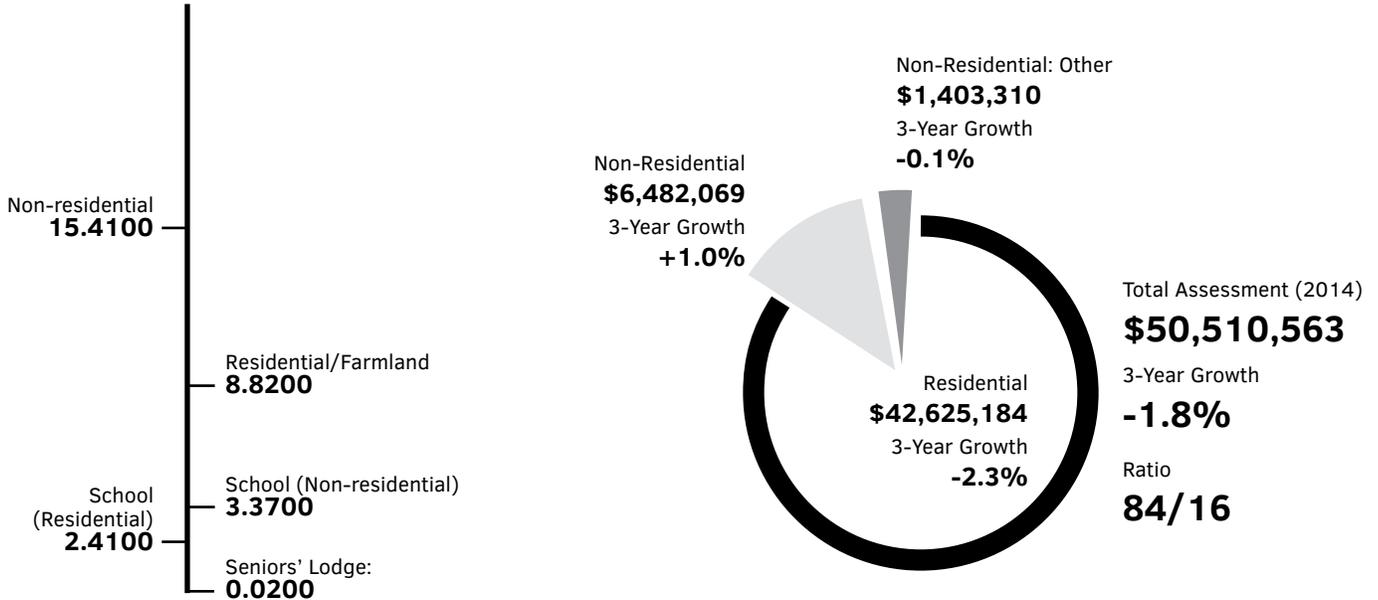
The MDP identified the need to:

- further the economic vitality and sustainability of the local and area economy, and to develop a strong tourism sector.
 - the Village would support, in principle, private economic development initiatives, whether on its own or in partnership with the private sector. The Village supports, wherever possible, joint economic development initiatives with Leduc County and other municipalities in the region
- the Village and/or related agency should develop and maintain a registry of local businesses and services in order to identify and then actively seek to fill gaps
- ensure orderly, complimentary, contiguous and efficient development of the physical environment within Warburg
- plan for future growth needs and directions, and endeavour to ensure an adequate supply of developable/serviceable land. The Village may assume a role in land development, including acquisition, servicing and subdivision in order to ensure an adequate supply of land.
- undertake community consultation to identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities, and a community visioning session
- promote and encourage the provision of a full range of goods and services for citizens of the Village
- encourage aesthetically pleasing commercial development, where external design and finish will be of high quality and complement existing development
- accommodate a broad range of industrial development, while minimizing potential conflicts between industrial and non-industrial land uses

Warburg By-the-Numbers (2014)



Assessment (2014)



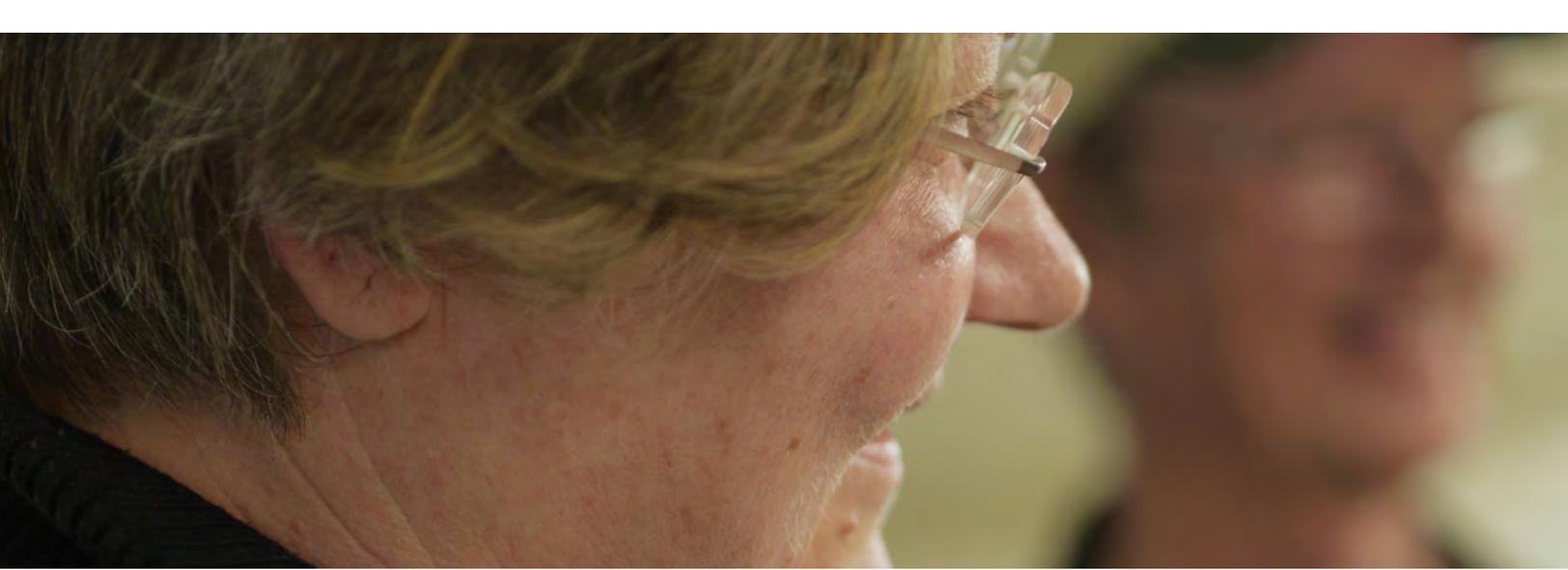
What We Heard in Warburg

Community participants in the consultation process within the Village of Warburg were very proud of their community, its diversity of people and the cost of living/doing business in the Village. Those interviewed showed a high regard for emergency services that are provided (fire and ambulance). Residents and business agreed that the Village was well positioned for growth, with available land, business friendly council and reasonable taxes and housing costs.

Participants cited a lack of a shared vision as one of the challenges. They felt a common vision would garner more buy-in from residents and volunteers of all ages. It was suggested that more marketing and promotion was needed to attract additional growth.

Distinct Advantages

- Proximity to Genesee
- Availability of affordable land
- Proximity to Pigeon Lake (recreation)



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What to do (& how to do it)

Ensure Mechanisms Are In Place To Support Local Business

As indicated in this report, most new business opportunities will come from businesses and residents already in the community/region.

How to do it:

- Develop ongoing communications with local business community/organizations
- Ensure business leaders have a voice in the community
- Maintain inventory of business information/contacts (i.e. Business Link, Productivity Alberta, Travel Alberta, etc.) to support small business growth
- Appoint one economic development point of contact (no wrong-window approach)

Be Business Ready

Business will choose the path of least resistance, and will often locate where land/buildings, and other infrastructure are already in place. Remember, time is money, so business will want to get moving as quickly as possible. You can't sell from an empty basket!

How to do it:

- Ensure adequate supply of “shovel ready” land is available at all times
- Ensure future zoning/development land is available to handle local business expansions
- Develop housing alternatives to accommodate workforce attraction
- Clear, concise and fair rules/policies are in place to accommodate new development
- Apply bylaws evenly and consistently
- Create zoning/permit applications that are easily understood and processed in a timely manner

Formalize Regional Collaboration For Economic Development

The 39/20 Alliance has adopted a preferred model for regional economic development. Additional work needs to be completed in order to move forward with regional economic development activities.

How to do it:

- Pursue shared services for processing development permits and other mandatory development forms
- Develop SMART goals and measures for 2015-2017
- Identify potential opportunities (Genesee expansion, Warburg Hutterite Colony, etc.)
- Identify unique opportunities for tourism
- Identify/secure funding sources to support economic development activities

Creating specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely (SMART) goals works hand-in-hand with your larger community plans. Think of them as the stepping stones to reaching your long-term vision for your community.

Develop A Regional Web Site

It is important to communicate with stakeholders, both local and external to the region. An informative and accurate web site will serve both existing business and potential new business enterprises looking to locate within the region.

How to do it:

- Develop regional community profile (sample attached)
- Assign one person responsible for update and accuracy of the information
- Utilize shared IT platform (Shared Services Study)
- Institute One Calendar, or similar application to promote local and regional events and activities (may also be used for identifying available facilities)

Develop Regional Business License/Business Directory

One means of supporting local business is to promote regional businesses to residents and other businesses alike. The creation of a regional business license will facilitate ease of doing business in all member communities. The regional business license will form the basis of a regional business directory to be included on the regional website.

How to do it:

- Develop a regional business license program (add-on to existing license at nominal fee)
- Gather data on all businesses and publish on the web site



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Develop Community/Region Vision and/or Branding

Stakeholders in the public consultation process identified the need to rally around a project/theme. Creating a regional vision/brand will give everyone an opportunity to buy-in to the region's future aspirations.

How to do it:

- Adopt and promote the recommended branding/vision undertaken by 39/20 Alliance
- Use the branding and associated tag lines in local and regional communications
- Develop collateral materials (stationery, business cards, banners and displays) with the new brand, and utilize the branding collateral materials on the web site, by participating in local and regional events and celebrations

Develop a Plan for Clear and Consistent Communication

Communication between Council, Administration, residents and businesses was identified as a concern in each community consultation. Stakeholders want to know what is going on, why things are done the way they are, and how they can be informed better so they can understand the inner workings of running a municipality.

How to do it:

- Enact the recommendations contained within the 39/20 Alliance Internal Communications Strategy (Strategem Plus Report)

Find New Ways to Listen to and Empower Citizens

Stakeholders want to know that their voices were being heard, and that their advice was being considered by the respective Councils and staff. Council and staff have to find new ways to “listen” to the stakeholders and not immediately defend their positions, but try to understand the issues from a business point of view.

How to do it:

- Provide ample opportunity to network and “listen” to business and community leaders
- Engage with community groups and organizations to better understand the wants and needs of the community
- Actively partner and attend community events to engage with citizens and to promote the values of the 39/20 Alliance



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Regional Opportunities

Although it is recommended that the 39/20 Alliance concentrate its economic development efforts in “getting ready and supporting existing businesses in the region” it is also important to identify some regional opportunities that will significantly impact the economy of the 39/20 Alliance.

Genesee Generating Plant

The Genesee deposit is Canada's third largest thermal coal mine, with an estimated 305 million tonnes of mineable coal within the existing 7,250 hectare permit area. In January 2015, Leduc County Council approved another 10,111 acre expansion to the coal mine area.

About 160 people work at Genesee mine, with another 225 working at the generation station. It is now expected the mining operation could last until 2055.

Capital Power and its partners have planned a \$1.4Billion expansion for Genesee 3 and 4, with construction anticipated to start in 2015.

It is important for the 39/20 Alliance to develop and maintain relationships with Genesee. At present, the majority of the workforce, and likely the bulk of purchasing comes straight out of Edmonton, even though Genesee lists its current address as Warburg. Improving relationships with Genesee may identify opportunities for the region to supply employment, housing and the purchase of goods and services from local businesses.

Genesee is also an important contributor to the 39/20 Alliance communities. Their contributions include:

- Warburg School (welding program)
- Warburg Canada Day/Heritage Day celebrations
- Warburg FCSS
- Thorsby Community Fit
- Thorsby Minor Hockey

Alberta Oil and Gas Industry

Recent changes in the oil and gas industry has softened the Alberta economy. However, according to the ATB Business Beat (April 2015), "despite the doom and gloom, the majority of Alberta business owners remain optimistic about their business' future."

Small and medium sized businesses (SME) represent 99.9% of businesses in Alberta. They are usually small enough to remain resilient, and can adapt quickly to changing markets.

Suppliers to the oil and gas industry have been known to shift their focus during slow times, and diversified their products and services to meet other demands. This ability to innovate will help small and medium sized enterprises survive and thrive in rural areas like the 39/20 Alliance.

Tourism

Tourism has been identified as a priority by several communities within the 39/20 Alliance. Tourism is typically an industry where businesses can enter the field with minimal investment, and employs a significant number of workers. Tourism opportunities for the 39/20 Alliance could include:

- agri-tourism (i.e. Alberta Open Farm days)
- festivals and events
- sport tourism
- nature based tourism
- culinary tourism
- cultural tourism

Alberta Ministry of Culture and Tourism may provide an excellent resource in developing and supporting tourism development in the region. Previous programs and documents have included:

- Alberta's Tourism Framework
- Highway signage program
- Research and statistics to assist entrepreneurs interested in tourism focused developments
- Product development
- Visitor Services
- Regional Investment Services
- *Setting the Stage*; a community based festival and events planning manual
- *Visitor Friendly Alberta*; a guide to welcoming tourists to the community



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Appendix & Sample Tools

Creating SMARTer Goals

SMART goals describe the specific and measurable ways you would like things to be. SMART guidelines help you to create (and refine) action items. To work, they need to be achievable with your resources, relevant to the community and be time specific (eg. short- vs. long-term). Linked together, your goals will help you realize your overall vision.

Identified Priorities

- 1.
2. *Focus on your highest priorities first, and then as you gain momentum, play to the strengths, size and commitment of your group.*
- 3.
- 4.

Goal #1.

The first priority.

Action Item(s)	Success Indicator(s)
<i>A specific action to help reach your goal.</i>	<i>How you know the action is complete or is successful</i>
—	—
Resources Required	
<i>Capital & Physical Resources</i>	<i>Human Resources</i>
Time line	

Month/year — Action item / milestone

+ Repeat and expand as required

Engaging the public

There is no magic bullet to getting information to or opinions from your citizens and business leaders. The best advice is to be open, consistent, and collaborative. Remember, if you always do the same thing when it comes to communications, you will always get the same results.

Be regular

Implement an adequately resourced function for regular communications with the public through avenues such as the Internet, media releases, and accessible public meetings. Consider issuing progress reports to your stakeholders on a yearly basis.

Work in public

Conduct regular information sessions, community coffees, formal and information sessions for the public on the strategies being used to support current and attract new business. Not only will this inform your citizens, it will also help you to identify community leaders and issues requiring attention.

Reach out(side your comfort zone)

Conduct outreach into specific communities such as youth and other marginalized/overlooked groups to ensure they are informed about your work, and ways in which they can either get more information or become involved.

Who should we work with?

There is no complete list of groups that should be considered when trying to engage your community. Even if you are not looking for their input, such groups and organizations are great ways of distributing information to audiences you might not have access to.

Some groups and organizations to consider working with are:

- Provincial & Federal Government
- County/MD
- Neighbouring municipalities
- Employers, business and labour organizations
- Aboriginal groups
- Landlords/housing companies
- Immigrant community groups
- Libraries
- Sports teams
- School board, schools
- Recent newcomers
- Chamber of Commerce
- Health agencies
- Social planning and other advocacy groups
- Religious communities
- Media (not just local)
- Youth groups
- Senior organizations
- LGBTQ groups/organizations
- Community service providers

What can we do?

Depending on your resources, the options for community engagement are truly limitless. Consider the following examples for some inspiration:

- Social listening
- Presentations
- Town Halls
- Online surveys
- Local television
- Facebook community
- Twitter
- Q&A session
- Brochures/leaflets
- Task force
- Charette
- Citizens' Advocacy Committee
- Conference
- Wiki
- Focus groups
- Referendum
- Telephone survey
- Participatory theatre
- Suggestion box
- Community leagues
- Direct mail



39/20
ALLIANCE

BRETON • CALMAR
THORSBY • WARBURG

Strength in Numbers

The 39/20 Alliance is an innovative collaboration of the communities of Thorsby, Breton, Calmar and Warburg, that recognizes the value of working together to promote growth, reduce costs and increase efficiency for residents and businesses.

Seeking to better represent its own interests in a changing and challenging landscape, the 39/20 Alliance is undertaking a comprehensive regional economic development strategy.