

Economic Development Strategy

for



November 30, 2024

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A. Executive Summary

Introduction

Starland County 2021-2031 Strategic Plan lists Economic Growth as its first priority. The County has taken the initial steps of hiring an Economic Development Officer and is now embarking on an Economic Development Strategy to guide them.

Starland County recently purchased land with the intent to develop it for a commercial business park. This land will allow the County to grow local business, attract new businesses, and therefore grow their tax base. Consequently, the main objectives of this project are to prepare an Economic Development Strategy and an Action Plan which will encompass the following foundational priorities:

1. Development of a commercial business park
2. Investment attraction and marketing
3. Business retention and expansion

Several consultations were conducted with regional stakeholders accompanied by secondary research.

Situational Analysis

Regional Assets and Strengths	Challenges / Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture base • Oil and gas activity • Renewable energy (wind and solar) • Strong tourism base and assets (proximity to Drumheller, Badlands) • Highway 9 corridor (main highway between Calgary and Saskatoon) • Some motion picture and video production assets • Rural lifestyle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declining tax base / declining oil and gas activity • Small and stagnant population base • Rural depopulation and sustainability of communities within County boundaries • Limited employment opportunities • Limited services for residents • Limited agricultural services • No rail line • Drought conditions
Opportunities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture and value-added agriculture activities • Tourism and visitor economy • Business Park • Low carbon energy • Motion picture and video production 	

Strategies and Suggested Actions

Community Readiness
i. Assess community readiness (investment readiness toolkit/checklist).
ii. Pick one or two gaps to work on each quarter or year.
iii. Continue to work with regional partners, government, and the private sector to build capacity and market the region.
iv. Work with neighbouring communities to increase housing options.
Build Local Business Capacity (Business Retention and Expansion)
Liaise with existing business
i. Make a plan to liaise with businesses in Starland County (Business Retention and Expansion).
ii. Develop an updated business list / directory.
Help foster entrepreneurship
i. Support entrepreneurs and new business start-ups for business growth by hosting and sharing information.
ii. Consider hosting a farmers' market at Business Park once it reaches a minimum level of readiness.
Facilitate collaboration between education and business community
i. Facilitate, support and nurture the relationship between business and the school system.
Business Park Development
i. Begin to physically develop the business park to a level of "shovel-readiness."
ii. Develop a marketing strategy. This will include identifying marketing mix, target market, competitive analysis, brand, and promotion
iii. Determine list of potential prospects and begin investment attraction.
Tourism Development and Promotion
i. Identify key tourism assets to update and upgrade. This can include current campgrounds, Horsethief Canyon, regional signage, toilets, boardwalks/birding platforms.
ii. Continue to work with tourism partners e.g. Travel Drumheller, Travel Alberta, and neighbouring municipalities to market the region.
iii. Work with tourism partners to host and promote agri-tourism opportunities e.g. farmers' markets, Open Farms Days, and/or a long-table dinner.

Motion picture and video production	
i.	Partner and work with the Town of Drumheller on a motion picture and video production promotional strategy.
ii.	Identify local sites and landmarks, photograph them and upload them to Alberta Reel Scout.
iii.	Create a location package using updated pictures, video and web and outlining regional assets (e.g. local production assets) for producers and ad agencies.
iv.	Develop a comprehensive media asset inventory, with detailed information on locations, historic sites, special events, production services and performers to market to producers.
v.	Build industry relationships.
vi.	Consider hosting a regional film festival to showcase the region and bring connections to Drumheller / Starland County.
Explore and identify other target opportunities	
Value-added Agriculture Products	
i.	Share programs like Alberta's On-Farm Value-Added Grant Program with local producers.
ii.	Explore other Sustainable Canadian Agriculture Partnership programs to determine their suitability for Starland County.
iii.	Explore those opportunities that could be a good fit for the County (ones that don't require rail, high amounts of labour, or water).
iv.	Develop industry-specific promotional material that showcases the region's assets.
v.	Develop a list of potential leads.
Renewable and Low-Carbon Energy	
i.	Explore those opportunities that could be a good fit for the County (including what the industry needs are).
ii.	Develop industry-specific promotional material that showcases the region's assets.
iii.	Educate and inform the public to get their buy-in.
Marketing and Communications	
i.	Prepare marketing collateral for investment attraction (section on website, downloadable community profile and brochure).
ii.	Share investment attraction information with target markets.
iii.	Prepare marketing plan and marketing collateral for business park.
iv.	Administer an online marketing campaign to promote / showcase what you've got. Provide a steady stream of key messages and inspiring stories and make the most of social media.

B. Background

Starland County is a municipal district located in southern Alberta approximately two hours northeast of Calgary. It borders the Town of Drumheller¹, a community that sees over 800,000 visitors annually, and includes the villages of Delia, Morrin, and Munson along with the hamlets of Craigmyle, Michichi, Rowley and Rumsey.

The County has a population of about 2,000. Agriculture and oil and gas have been the primary economic drivers in the County, although oil and gas activity has slowed down in recent years.

The County recently adopted its Strategic Plan 2021-2031. Seven priority focus areas were identified in the Strategic Plan – the first being Economic Growth. Consequently, Starland County has taken the initial steps of hiring an Economic Development Officer and wishes to develop an Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan.

Starland County has also determined that there is a market need for a commercial business park development given limited commercial growth (land) opportunities in neighbouring Drumheller and wishes to pursue strategic actions for business development around this opportunity.

Consequently, the main objectives of this project are to prepare an Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan which will encompass the following foundational priorities:

1. Development of a commercial business park
2. Investment attraction and marketing
3. Business retention and expansion

The Strategy needs to support the Town's municipal development plan (MDP), and it will include the following **components**:

- An overarching vision, with values, and goals that guide the key decision-making parameters and help to future-proof the County.
- A strategy to improve the County's investment readiness and regional competitiveness.
- A strategy to bolster economic growth and diversify the County's economy.
- Reasonable recommendations within available resources (human resources, budget) for moving forward.
- Actions / tactics that can be prioritized and adapted as needed given annual budget allocations.

¹ The Town of Drumheller is Alberta's largest town in terms of land area at 107.93 square kilometres. The Town amalgamated with the Municipal District of Badlands No. 7 in 1998 and absorbed the following hamlets in the amalgamation: Cambria, East Coulee, Lehigh, Nacmine, Rosedale and Wayne.

It is anticipated that the following **outcomes** will emerge from the Strategy:

- Job creation for current and future County residents.
- Diversified tax base.
- Increased understanding, capacity and collaboration among County stakeholders.
- Clarity regarding the role of the economic development department's structure, roles, responsibilities and resources.

C. Methodology

Several consultations were completed for this project. The project kicked off with an in-person consultation with Starland County's Economic Development Committee members, the CAO, Reeve, and Economic Development Officer.

Many other stakeholders were identified, and either in-person or telephone/video-call consultations were held with them. This included other council members, staff, residents, Community Futures Big Country, Drumheller & District Chamber of Commerce, Travel Drumheller, Travel Alberta, the school principals, Drumheller's Manager of Economic Development, and some business owners / entrepreneurs.

Extensive secondary research was conducted. This included assessing the County's demographics, agricultural profile, and background documents plus reviewing appropriate industry trends and documents, and best practices.

D. Situational Analysis

D.1 About Starland County

Starland County has a land base of 2,608 square kilometres. The County lies in the transition zone between the Grassland and Parkland Natural Regions of Alberta. The southern portion of Starland is a northern type of mixed grassland while much of the rest is northern fescue grassland.

Starland County's neighbours are the Town of Drumheller along its southern border, Stettler County along its northern border, Special Areas No. 2 along its eastern border, and, separated by the Red Deer River, Kneehill County to the west. The County is located in Census Division No. 5.²

Starland County is known for its natural beauty. A key feature includes the Red Deer River Valley, which cuts through the Alberta Badlands. The Badlands make up unique landforms and contain some of the most important palaeontological areas in the world for the Cretaceous and late Cretaceous period. Horse Thief Canyon, north of Drumheller along Highway 838, is a popular attraction and provides an excellent public viewpoint of the Badlands.

² Communities located in Census Division No. 5 are listed in Appendix B.

Located on the southeastern edge of Starland County are the Hand Hills - a significant prairie hill system. Mother Mountain, with a height of 3,589 feet, is the highest point between Saskatoon and the Rocky Mountains. The hills themselves have a large gravel cap which protected the ground underneath from the erosion experienced by the rest of the prairie surrounding it.

Starland County also contains the southern portion of the Rumsey Natural Area. Along with the Rumsey Ecological Reserve to the north, this natural area protects the largest remaining undisturbed tract of non-sandy aspen parkland in Canada. The area is known for its knob and kettle topography which in wet years fill with water and become some of the most productive waterfowl habitat in North America.

Alberta Provincial Highway No. 9 traverses Starland County. Highway 9, together with Saskatchewan Highway 7, connects Calgary to Saskatoon via Drumheller. It is designated as a core route of the National Highway System, forming a portion of an interprovincial corridor.

Despite being located in the fast-growing province of Alberta, Starland County, like many rural areas, is experiencing a population decline.

According to the 2021 Census of Population, Starland County had a population of 1,821, down 11.9% (or 245 individuals) from 2016. The population was 2,057 in 2011.

Table 1: Regional Population 2016 to 2021 and Median Age

	Population percentage change, 2016 to 2021	2021 Population	2016 Population	2021 Median Age
Starland County	-11.9%	1,821	2,066	42.4
Morrin	-14.6%	205	240	58.4
Delia	-29.6%	152	216	51.2
Munson	-11.5%	170	192	48.4
Drumheller	-0.9%	7,909	7,982	44.0
Total	-2.25%	8,436	8,630	
Census Division No. 5	0.1%			42.0
Alberta	4.6%			38.4

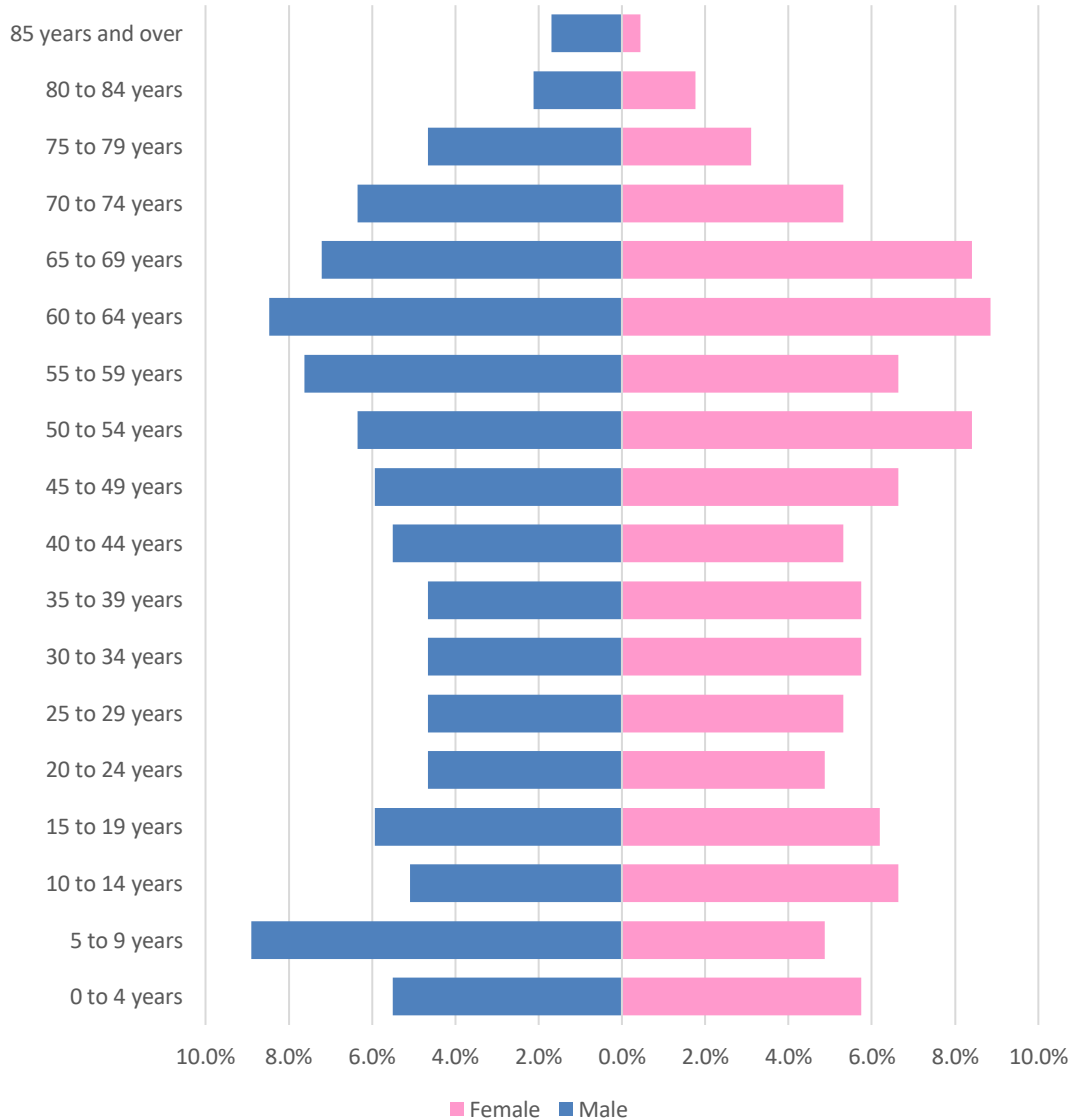
Statistics Canada. 2023. Census Profile. 2021 Census.

The County's population has also become significantly older over the past 15 years, with its share of youth (ages 0-24) decreasing from 39.2% in 2006 to 29.9% in 2021.³ The population of

³ Starland County. "2022 Community Profile." Page 9.

older adults nearing or currently retired (55+) has increased from 22.8% in 2006 to 35.9% in 2021.

Figure 1: Population pyramid Starland County (2021)



Statistics Canada. 2023. Census Profile. 2021 Census.

Starland County has a labour force of approximately 1,530 individuals. Most of the residents of Starland County (approximately 68%) do not work in the County. The majority are commuting to the Town of Drumheller.⁴

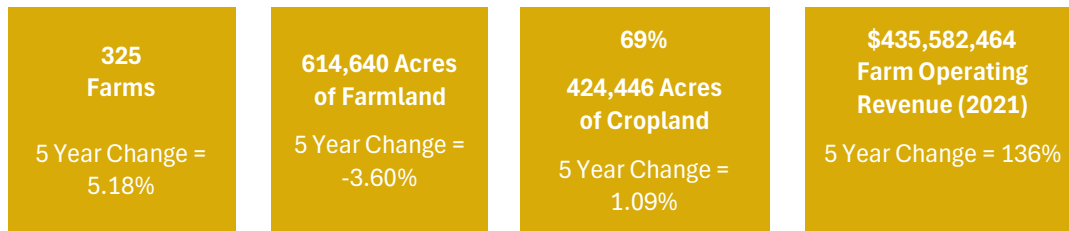
⁴ Starland County. 2022 Community Profile. Page 29. Sourced from McSweeney & Associates, Statistics Canada, 2016 Commuting Flow.

D.2 Regional Assets and Strengths

Starland County is known for its rich agricultural and oil and gas sectors along with a number of geographical and recreational assets.

D.2.a Agriculture

Agriculture is Starland County's largest employment sector with 'agriculture, forestry, fish and hunting' representing more than one-third (34.3%) of all employment.⁵ It is also the most common industry in Drumheller and Starland County according to Business Counts by Sector with 267 businesses (2020).⁶



Statistics Canada. Census of Agriculture, 2021.

According to Statistics Canada 2021 Census of Agriculture, Starland County has 614,640 acres of farmland, 69% of which is cropland (424,446 acres).

Starland County's climate is semi-arid. The County is primarily covered in Dark Brown Chernozemic Soil. These soils are associated with the Moist Mixed Grassland Ecoregion, which is cooler and somewhat wetter than the Mixed Grassland Ecoregion.

Starland County is located in Canadian Agricultural Census Region 2, which is composed of eight separate rural municipalities all of which have a broad set of similarities in regard to land-use.⁷ Census Agricultural Regions (CAR) Region 2 stands out as having stronger agricultural economic activity in a number of core activities, such as cattle and calves and operating farm revenues.⁸ Starland County has a higher proportion of larger acre farms (400 acres and over) compared to the provincial average. Proportionately, Starland County has twice as many farms 3,520 acres and over compared to the province.

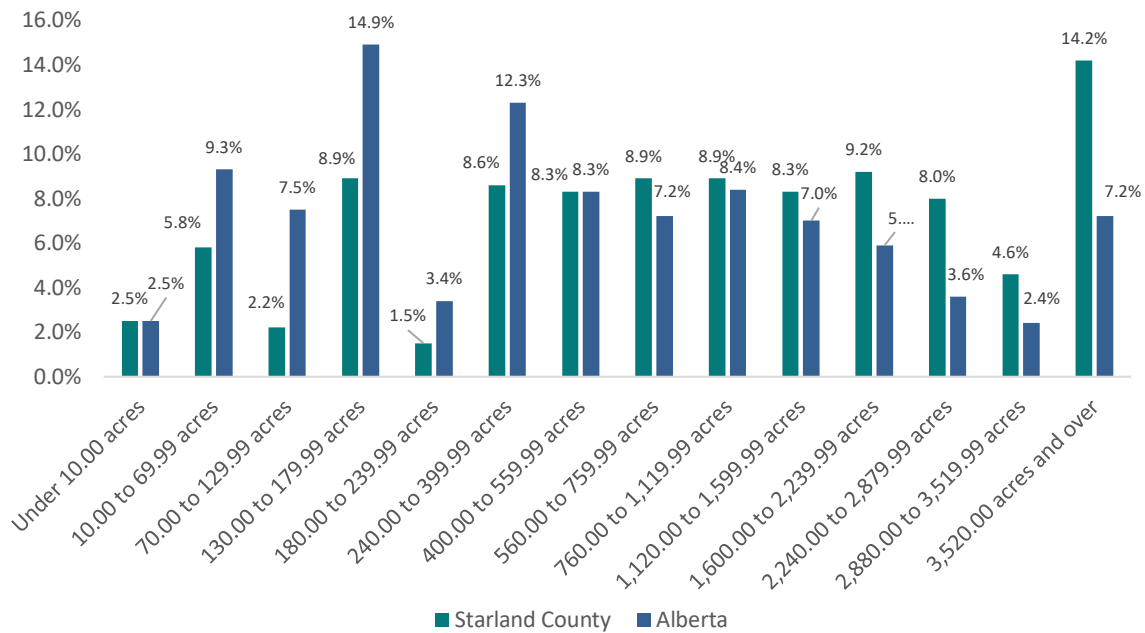
⁵ Starland County. 2022 Community Profile. Page 23. Sourced from McSweeney & Associates from Manifold Data Mining Inc. SuperDemographics 2022.

⁶ Community Futures Big Country. Drumheller and Region Business Survey Results and Analysis. April 2022. Prepared by McSweeney & Associates. Page 5. Sourced from EMSI Analyst 2021.1.

⁷ Starland County, Kneehill County, Wheatland County, Vulcan County, County of Newell, Municipal District of Taber, Lethbridge County, and County of Warner.

⁸ Lethbridge County. "Economic Impact of Agriculture in Lethbridge County." Prepared by Serecon Inc. March 2023.

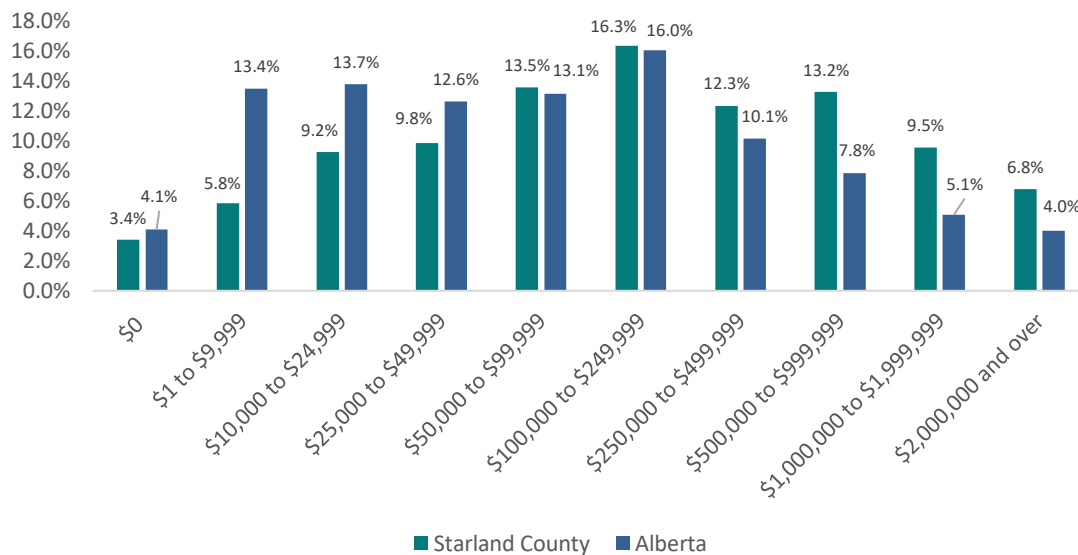
Figure 2: Total farm area distribution (2021)



Statistics Canada. Table 32-10-0232-01 Farms classified by total farm area, Census of Agriculture, 2021

Along with the larger acre farms comes higher operating revenues compared to the provincial average.

Figure 3: Farms classified by total operating revenues (2021)



Statistics Canada. Table 32-10-0239-01 Farms classified by total operating revenues, Census of Agriculture, 2021

It was observed that the soil in the eastern portion of the County is poorer and, drier, therefore more land is required to be profitable. Starland County is also home to seven Hutterite Colonies which, by nature, will also contribute to the larger farm operations.⁹

With 1.7% of the province's acres, Starland County punched above its weight in 2021 for acres of wheat, barley, dry field peas, flax, and more.

*Table 2: Starland County Top Field Crops by Acres (2021),
Top 10 Alberta Municipalities by Percentage*

	Number of Farms	Acres	% of Provincial Acres
Starland County	272	423,396	1.7%
Wheat	170	147,096	2.1%
Canola	151	111,193	1.7%
Barley	139	79,908	2.0%
Dry Field Peas	62	31,697	2.2%
Flax Seed	32	11,450	9.3%
Corn for Silage*	6	10,563	5.1%
Faba Beans*	5	1,780	3.6%
Canary Seed*	2	175	17.8%
*interpret with caution (based on small numbers)			

Statistics Canada. Table 32-10-0309-01 Field crops and hay, Census of Agriculture, 2021



⁹ For census purposes Hutterite colonies are classified as "institutional farms" and each colony is considered a single farm unit.

Livestock is also an important part of the County's agriculture industry, although much of the livestock data provided in Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture, 2021 is too small to present.

	Number of Farms	Number of animals	% of Provincial herd
Cattle	157	33,028	0.6%
Pigs	7	35,116	2.2%
Hens and chickens	27	136,677	0.9%
Honeybees, live colonies	2	7,202	2.2%
*interpret with caution (based on small numbers)			

Meijer Honey Farm is one of the County's largest private sector employers. Dynacrest Farms, a hog production barn, at Delia was also one the County's larger private sector employers. However, it was shuttered in 2023, along with four other barns, as Olymel reduced its hog production in Western Canada due to high feed costs. It is possible that the barns may reopen if and when market conditions improve.

Some local producers have successfully created direct-market operations with their livestock.



D.2.b Oil and Gas

The Western Canadian Sedimentary Basin (WCSB) which covers much of Alberta, including Starland County, contains one of the world's largest reserves of conventional oil and natural gas.

Mining and oil and gas extraction represents 6.6% of employment in Starland County, the fourth largest sector after agriculture, educational services, and health care and social assistance. This is comparable to the provincial rate of 6.3%.

Drumheller was once the largest coal producing city in Western Canada, with the Atlas Coal Mine. Coal mining has been replaced by natural gas and oil.

In terms of business counts by sector (2020), mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction had 41 businesses, the fourth most common industry in the Drumheller and Starland County region.¹⁰

Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction have a large economic impact in Drumheller and Starland County. The two industries with the highest average wages are utilities (\$83,987) and mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (\$78,252).¹¹ In terms of total sales, mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction were the highest at \$134,072,154.



¹⁰ Community Futures Big Country. Drumheller and Region Business Survey Results and Analysis. April 2022. Prepared by McSweeney & Associates. Page 5. Sourced from EMSI Analyst 2021.1.

¹¹ Community Futures Big Country. Drumheller and Region Business Survey Results and Analysis. April 2022. Prepared by McSweeney & Associates. Page 8. Sourced from EMSI Analyst 2021.1.

D.2.a Renewable Energy



Starland County is becoming a solar energy leader in Alberta. They created the Starland Solar Initiative to support the community in adopting renewable energy through the installation of their own solar photovoltaic systems (45 kW) on its government buildings.

A number of private sector developments have also occurred in the region.

Table 3: Private Sector Renewable Developments

Project	Description
Hand Hills Wind Facility	Hand Hills Wind Facility is located over 12,000 acres of privately owned land in both Starland County and Special Areas 2, approximately 28 km northeast of Drumheller, near Delia. It is operated by BluEarth Renewables.
Fox Coulee	Fox Coulee, the first operating asset in Canada for world-leading renewable resource producer, Neoen, was officially launched in the County in June 2024. The 93 MWp solar farm will generate nearly 100 GWh of green electricity per year, equivalent to the consumption of more than 20,000 homes.
Michichi Solar Generation Facility	The Michichi Solar Generation Facility is a 25-megawatt solar generation facility located approximately one km northwest of Drumheller. The project construction commenced in 2022 and entered into commercial operation in March 2023. The project was developed by ATCO, Michichi Solar GP and Samsung Renewable Energy. It is now fully owned by Samsung C&T.
Drumheller Solar Farm and Battery Storage Project	While not part of Starland County, the Drumheller Solar Farm and Battery Storage Project, located near the Drumheller Water Treatment Plant ponds, comprises a 16.5-megawatt ground mounted solar facility combined with an 8-megawatt battery storage system connected to the local distribution network managed by ATCO Electric. The project is located on land owned by the Town of Drumheller with limited development opportunities, and so the project will unlock a significant revenue stream to the local community.

Alberta has the second highest potential to produce solar energy in all of Canada, receiving more solar irradiation than any other province or territory other than Saskatchewan. Central Alberta is one of Canada's sunniest and windiest places, making it the ideal location for renewable energy projects. The average solar power system in the region produces 1,330 kWh of energy.

Furthermore, farms in Starland County are proportionately strong users of renewable energy. Fifteen percent of farms in Starland County report using renewable energy production, one of the top ten percentages in Alberta. Eleven percent of renewable energy production is used for operations, and 6% is for sale (which is the highest proportion in Alberta). Fourteen percent of farms use solar (see Table 2) and 2% use wind (which is the 8th highest county in province).

Table 4: Farms Using Renewable Energy Production (2021), Top 10 Alberta Municipalities by Percentage

	Renewable energy production	
	Number of farms	Percentage of farms
Ranchland No. 66	9	21%
Paintearth County No. 18	78	18%
Greenview No. 16	79	16%
Willow Creek No. 26	128	15%
Starland County	49	15%
Northern Lights County	50	15%
Pincher Creek No. 9	67	15%
Calgary	17	14%
Mountain View County	215	14%
Brazeau County	28	14%

Statistics Canada. Table 32-10-0380-01 Renewable energy production, Census of Agriculture, 2021

Table 5: Farms Using Solar Renewable Energy (2021), Top 10 Alberta Municipalities by Percentage

	Renewable energy type, SOLAR	
	Number of farms	Percentage of farms
Ranchland No. 66	8	19%
Paintearth County No. 18	69	16%
Greenview No. 16	70	14%
Starland County	46	14%
Willow Creek No. 26	113	14%
Calgary	16	13%
Mountain View County	196	12%
Northern Lights County	42	12%
Pincher Creek No. 9	53	11%
Rocky View County	130	11%

Statistics Canada. Table 32-10-0380-01 Renewable energy production, Census of Agriculture, 2021

Despite the County's foray into renewable energy, there appears to be a lot of hesitation and resistance among citizens in terms of these forms of renewable energy.

D.2.b Tourism

The Drumheller Valley is one of Alberta's biggest tourism destinations outside of Banff and Jasper National Parks. The unique topography of the Badlands along the Red Deer River - which runs along the southern edge of Starland County and through Drumheller - attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors every year. Drumheller is the self-proclaimed "World Capital of Dinosaurs" because it's home to some of the most important fossil discoveries ever made. Regional tourism attractions include:

- Atlas Coal Mine
- Badlands Gallery
- Badlands Historical Centre
- Canadian Badlands Passion Play / Badlands Amphitheatre
- Dry Island Buffalo Jump
- Drumheller Rocks Geotourism
- East Coulee School Museum
- Homestead Museum
- Horseshoe Canyon
- Last Chance Saloon and Rosedeer Hotel in Wayne
- Midland Provincial Park
- Newcastle Beach and Recreation Area
- Orkney Viewpoint
- Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology
- Star Mine Suspension Bridge
- The Little Church
- The Sunny Spot
- Valley Brewing
- World's largest dinosaur

Starland County is also home to natural assets such as the Red Deer River Valley, badlands topography, and the Hand Hills. Other tourism assets in Starland County include:

- Barneys Adventure Park
- Bleriot Ferry
- Cactus Coulee Fun Park
- Handhills High-Country Getaway
- Hand Hills Rodeo
- Horse Thief Canyon
- Icebox Mobile Café and Bakery
- Michichi Creek Boardwalk
- Raptor Ridge Eco Resort
- Rowley Elevator
- Rowley "ghost town" and pizza night
- Springwater School Historical Site
- Summerhill Resorts Drumheller/Dinosaur Trail KOA

Starland County runs 5 campgrounds which are important assets in the County.

- Starland Recreation Area
- Michichi Dam Recreation Area
- McLaren Dam Recreation Area
- Tolman East (provincial park run by Starland County)
- Tolman West (located in Kneehill County, but Starland County operates via agreement)

Michichi has an interpretive trail consisting of raised decking, a shale path, and grassed walkway. The trail highlights the importance of the Red Deer River Watershed.

The Red Deer River is a prime nesting habitat for birds of prey including the Prairie Falcon, Turkey Vulture, Golden Eagle, Merlin, and Ferruginous Hawk.

According to the April 2022 report completed for Community Futures Big Country “Drumheller and Region Business Survey Results and Analysis” it was estimated that tourism-driven sales in the area approach \$70 million annually, creating upwards of 569 jobs which collectively earn over \$16 million in wages. This project also included a business survey, and while there are limitations in the survey results, 95.3% of respondents indicated that they consider tourism to be a positive for the Drumheller Region.¹²

D.2.c Highway 9 Corridor

Highway 9 sees over 2,000 vehicles average annual daily traffic (AADT). The main junction of Highways 9, 27, and 56 north of Drumheller and southeast of Morrin has a 2023 AADT of 4,110 vehicles entering the intersection.

Did you know?

The Wilf Gerlitz grave site is located in the County. Gerlitz was a legendary Canadian bullrider.

During the First World War, Munson was the site of a Ukrainian Canadian internment camp. The camp was opened in October, 1918, but was only open for a brief period of time before it was moved to Eaton, Saskatchewan early in 1919.

*Table 6: 2023 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) and Average Summer Daily Traffic (ASDT)
Estimates at Intersection of Highway 9 & 27 & 56, Southeast of Morrin*

Volume	North on 56	South on 9	East on 9	West on 27
AADT	1,420	2,420	2,570	1,840
ASDT	2,030	2,850	3,080	2,260
Vehicle Type	% of Volume			
	North on 56	South on 9	East on 9	West on 27
Passenger Vehicle	80.9%	83.4%	79.3%	80.9%
Recreational Vehicle	7.6%	4.9%	3.3%	3.2%
Bus	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Single Unit Truck	3.3%	2.9%	2.5%	2.7%
Tractor Trailer Unit	8.0%	8.8%	14.9%	13.3%

¹² Community Futures Big Country. “Drumheller and Region Business Survey Results and Analysis.” April 2022. Prepared by McSweeney & Associates.

D.2.d Motion Picture and Video Production

Over 75 feature films, major television productions, and commercials have been produced in Drumheller and the surrounding region. The exceptional landscape of the Drumheller Valley provides a versatile filming location that can be substituted for other parts of the world without having to go overseas.¹³ Regional scenery includes:

- Coulees and Canyons (including Horseshoe and Horse Thief Canyons)
- Desolate Deserts
- Hoodoo formations
- Prairies
- Prairie hill system (Hand Hills)
- Meandering Red Deer River
- Historic sites and downtown
- Ghost town (Rowley)

The region is close enough to Calgary, that it is easy for crews to fly into Calgary and then drive out.

Within Starland County is Starland Studios, a full-service media production company. The company's producer is connected to the industry, therefore can help promote the region as well as provide networking opportunities within the industry.

D.2.e Rural Communities, Lifestyle and People

Starland County's wide-open spaces, rural nature, and small communities are valuable lifestyle advantages to those that seek it. Values that were identified include:

- Lifestyle - small-town living, community spirit.
- "It was a great place to raise my family."
- Good schools. High rate of kids that go onto post-secondary.
- Two new schools (Morris and Delia). Both schools open to community opportunities.
- Affordable (although housing is limited).
- Talented people.
- Community amenities such as community halls, rinks/arena (perhaps under-utilized).
- Safe.
- Starland County has excellent community pride.
- Positively engaged community groups.

Community Future Big Country's Business Survey acknowledged that a significant draw for many respondents was the feeling of community including grassroots support for local businesses, and the "great people" that live in Drumheller and Starland County.¹⁴

¹³ <https://www.drumheller.ca/do-business/film-in-drumheller>

¹⁴ Community Futures Big Country. "Drumheller and Region Business Survey Results and Analysis." April 2022. Prepared by McSweeney & Associates.

Additionally, Travel Alberta conducted some research in which they found that the Drumheller area rates tourism stronger than other Alberta regions in terms of there are “things to do.”¹⁵ For example:

- 61% of respondents agree or strongly agree that “I have more recreational opportunities (places to go and things to do) because of tourism in this area” compared to 52% of other regions surveyed.
- 68% of respondents agree or strongly agree that “a strong tourism industry improves my quality of life” compared to 54% of other regions surveyed.



D.3 Challenges / Limitations

D.3.a Declining Tax Base

Currently, Starland County’s largest tax source is from linear¹⁶ assessment. It is the twelfth largest county in terms of percentage of linear equalized assessment. Its neighbour, Kneehill County is similar, but has a larger percentage of residential (26.8%) compared to Starland which has twice the farmland assessment tax base.

Table 7: Percentage of Tax Base for Starland and Kneehill Counties

MUNICIPALITY	Linear Subtotal	Mach & Equip Subtotal	Non Residential Subtotal	Residential Subtotal	Farmland
STARLAND COUNTY	43.6%	15.7%	6.6%	18.4%	15.6%
KNEEHILL COUNTY	43.7%	13.7%	8.0%	26.8%	7.8%

¹⁵ Travel Alberta. “Travel Alberta: 2023 Resident Sentiment. Summer 2023 Pulse Presentation -Drumheller.” December 2023.

¹⁶ Linear tax revenues are revenues collected by municipalities from companies that have linear property located in Starland County. They are items like oil and gas wells and pipelines, and power generation, power lines and utility lines.

Starland County's "A Roadmap Towards a Long-Term Tax Strategy," April 2022 notes that only 19% of County assessment is attributed to residential properties. This means 81% of taxation revenue comes from non-residential sources. This is very high compared to a typical rural municipal assessment mix. This is primarily due to Starland County having a relatively low residential population but still having a significant presence of pipe and power infrastructure running throughout the county.¹⁷

Because oil and gas tax revenues are dwindling, the County recognizes the importance of diversifying their tax base. Furthermore, collection of linear property taxes became problematic, particularly in Alberta, in 2017 when oil prices dropped. The number of oil and gas insolvencies rose sharply and linear property taxes on oil pipelines and wells began to go unpaid. Starland County was not immune to this trend and faced a major hit to their anticipated revenues due to insolvencies and unpaid taxes from the industry.

These revenues typically help the County with infrastructure projects like road and bridge maintenance. Starland County has responded with increased property taxes.

In addition to increased costs, some landowners are undercompensated or going unpaid for wells on their land. Furthermore, a number of job losses have been incurred in the region with shuttered oil and gas companies – an industry which has the second highest average wage in Drumheller and Starland County.



¹⁷ Starland County. "A Roadmap Towards a Long-Term Tax Strategy," April 2022.

D.3.b Small Population Base

One of the main drawbacks identified in Drumheller and Starland County from the business survey that was commissioned by Community Futures Big County was a lack of population growth. This had a couple implications for businesses:

1. The consumer base is not growing.
2. The labour pool is not large enough, which limits an organization's ability to grow.

0.7

Population
density per
square
kilometre

Farms are getting larger, and families are getting smaller. Starland County and its communities are also facing the same challenge as many other communities in Alberta whereby a lack of housing options limits a community's ability to retain residents and to attract new people.

A small or declining population leads to a decline in basic services and infrastructure. If the GDP of a community declines, then there is less demand for basic services such as restaurants and shops. The employment in these sectors subsequently suffers.

At present, there are relatively limited employment opportunities in the County, which makes it difficult to retain young people or attract them back.

A lack of critical mass, and specific skills, makes it more challenging to provide certain training options or specialized activities. For example, rural education providers often struggle to provide specialized programming.

D.3.c Sustainability of Communities within the County

With only 3 villages, Starland County is one of only a handful of rural municipalities with no large population centre within its boundaries. The villages within Starland County are also facing struggles common to rural depopulation. A declining tax base along with dated infrastructure, and increased costs associated with providing services to local citizens results in these communities struggling to remain viable.

Counties like for the communities within their boundaries to be successful, otherwise, villages can dissolve into hamlets and the receiving County becomes responsible for providing services to the citizens of the former village.

D.3.d Limited Employment Opportunities

"We have highly educated people that can't stay because there is nothing for them."

Other than the County itself, there are very few, if any large employers in the County. It appears that most businesses within County boundaries are small businesses, and self-employed individuals.

According to Starland County's 2022 Community Profile, the largest private sector employers in the County include: Meijer Honey Farm and Barney's Adventure Park, both of which are highly seasonal, and Bitfury / Hut 8 Mining, a cryptocurrency mine, which is expected to cease operations in the County in the near future. 3D Patch Work LTD. at Rumsey was also identified as a larger private sector employer within the County.

Other important public sector employers include Prairie Land Public School Division (with schools in Morrin and Delia), Alberta Health Services (in Drumheller), Correction Services Canada (Drumheller Institution), and Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology.

D.3.e Limited Services

Along with a small population base, comes limited services for residents in Starland County's rural areas. Many of these services are ones that other rural communities face like:

- Broadband availability
- Lack of housing options
- Lack of daycare (although Delia has a daycare opening)
- Critical mass of students to offer specialty programming (or lack of teacher to provide)
- Limited grocery, fuel, eating places

As is the nature of rural and/or remote locations, goods and services can cost more at a local level. Freight charges due to not having the local shipping economies of scale associated with larger urban centres can cause items to cost more. General operating costs and property tax rates can be higher due a lower tax base covering the cost of these services.¹⁸

Starland County's geographic location is noted as being good, however, it was also acknowledged that it can be "too easy" to travel to Calgary and shop in the "big city."¹⁹

¹⁸ Community Futures Big Country. "Drumheller and Region Business Survey Results and Analysis." April 2022. Prepared by McSweeney & Associates.

¹⁹ Ibid.

D.3.f Agriculture Challenges

D.3.f.i Rail Lines

There are no rail lines in Starland County, which can be a challenge when it comes to moving agricultural products. The nearest rail line is the CN Three Hills subdivision, which runs from Calgary to Mirror where it joins the CN Camrose subdivision. The nearest grain terminals include:

- Viterro in Trochu
- G3 in Erskine
- Grains Connect in Huxley
- Cargill at Equity near Three Hills
- Louis Dryfus by Delacour
- Richardson at Gleichen

One of the main limitations of having no rail is that the County cannot attract operations like grain terminals and fertilizer plants that rely on rail for moving product. Consequently, producers leave the County to sell their grain and little external money is brought into the region.

There may be an opportunity for rail in the future, as the province, in cooperation with Oyen Regional Rail Company, is exploring reopening a railway network between Oyen and Strathmore, which would transverse some of Starland County. Track would have to be rebuilt on the abandoned CN Rail right-of-way. The new line could be operated by a short-line rail company.

D.3.f.ii Limited Agricultural Services

Similar to a lack of a grain terminal, agricultural services are relatively limited in the County and even in Drumheller. Once again, many producers are travelling out of the County to purchase goods and services.

D.3.f.iii Limited Water and Drought

Like many other parts of the province, several individuals consulted indicated concern about drought conditions in Alberta. Starland County declared a State of Agricultural Disaster on August 18, 2021, and again on August 1, 2023.

The Canadian Drought Monitor as of December 31, 2023, indicated that most of Alberta was “abnormally dry.” Starland County had a drought intensity of D3 “extreme drought.”²⁰

²⁰ <https://albertawater.com/history-of-drought-in-alberta/drought-in-21st-century-alberta/>

D.4 Opportunities

D.4.a Agriculture and Value-Added Agriculture Products

Given that agriculture is foundational to Starland County, and agricultural services are currently very limited, it has been identified that there may be many opportunities to further develop the agricultural supply chain.

Opportunities that have been suggested include:

- Agriculture-related wholesale and retail businesses (e.g. agro centre, crop inputs, agricultural equipment dealerships, farm and ranch retailers, bulk fuel, feed supplier)
- Value-added processing (e.g. food and beverage processing including livestock feed, butcher / abattoir)
- Agricultural manufacturing (e.g. agricultural buildings, grain storage, equipment)
- Greenhouse development. Alberta's greenhouse sector is growing. Alberta's relatively warm climate, consistent sunlight, low-cost natural gas, availability of water and reasonably priced land makes it an ideal location for greenhouses
- Agri-tourism (e.g. on-farm experiences, culinary experiences)
- Direct sales (e.g. farmer markets, on-site farm stores, stands, kiosks, U-pick or farm gate sales, direct deliveries to consumers)
- Agriculture supply chain – provide local products to restaurants (e.g. Valley Brewing, etc.)

The Starland Seed Cleaning Plant Co-operative opened a new Starland Seed Cleaning Plant near Delia in 2023. The new facility can accommodate larger trailers as well as freight containers. The expansion can serve more customers, from further away. The Co-operative has identified that a value-added component could be cleaning grains for intermodal hauling and export. This may add a couple more employment opportunities.

D.4.b Tourism and the Visitor Economy

The Drumheller Valley welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors each year anchored primarily by the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology, the World's Largest Dinosaur, and the Badlands.

Remote and rural tourism in Canada presents a burgeoning opportunity for startups, as the world looks for open spaces and vast wilderness.

The more there is to do in and around Drumheller, the further visitors will come, and the longer they will stay, consequently spending more money.

Starland County is well-positioned to capitalize on these additional experiences, given its proximity to Drumheller, and its regional assets, the Highway 9 corridor. Furthermore, neighbours like Hanna, are looking to diversify their economy with the phasing out of coal, and Kneehill County are looking to develop their tourism offerings by piggybacking to an extent on Drumheller's visitors.

Travel Drumheller, a not-for-profit destination marketing organization (DMO), recently completed a Destination Development Plan.

VISION:

To develop the next most visited destination in Alberta –
beyond Alberta's two major cities and the Rockies.

MISSION:

Driving significant economic and social value for Drumheller
residents, businesses, and visitors through destination development.





The province has prioritized tourism and has plans to double tourism revenues by 2035. To achieve its 2035 tourism objectives, the Canadian Badlands Tourism Destination Zone (TDZ) needs to attract new public and private investments.²¹ They have identified as challenges: seasonality, a shortage of upscale and unique accommodation options, a limited range of products and experiences, and the perception among travellers that the zone is primarily for day trips.

Travel Alberta can help support communities or businesses. More accommodations are needed in the province. Travel Alberta has a number of Tourism Investment Programs to help grow tourism businesses by supporting the development of unique experiences, accommodations, rural development and promotion, and events and festivals.

Comments and observations regarding Starland County tourism assets that could be further developed and leveraged are listed in the table below.

²¹ Travel Alberta. "Tourism Development Zone Canadian Badlands. Discovery Report 2023." P. 33.

Table 8: Opportunities to Further Develop Starland County's Tourism Assets

Asset	Observations and comments
Horse Thief Canyon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great view. Right now, it's a parking lot with a view. • Gem, of a location, but it's not managed. It's just a viewpoint. There's no vision for it. • No toilets. • Opportunity to provide more interpretative signage. The canola signage needs to be refreshed/updated. • Room for a campground. • Tried to create a food vendor with a seacan in partnership with Community Futures. Opportunity to better develop this. • Hiking opportunities, but they are on private land so it's challenging to develop and promote.
Michichi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huge potential. • Needs some upgrading and investment. • Travel Alberta is focusing on birding – a niche target market. The boardwalk at Michichi is a great birding asset. Other birding sites could be identified and then develop platforms and other infrastructure for them.
Starland Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Goldmine we've been squandering."</i> • 3 ball diamonds • 30 marked sites with pull in camping.
Hand Hills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an opportunity for someone to set up a hunting / outfitting operation here? This can help offset peak tourism seasons. • Birding: The Hand Hills Ecological Reserve (Special Areas No. 2) features more than 130 bird species.
Red Deer River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is potential for more river use and for opportunities along the river. • Currently, there is not a lot of great access to the river. There's an opportunity to create proper access to the river with egresses. • Opportunities could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Soft adventure activities like kayaking, rafting. - Zipline across the river. - Guided tours on the river. This can also work for the birding target market as you'll see birds along the river valley.
Agri-tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are lots of agricultural producers in the area that might consider diversifying their income streams with agri-tourism activities (on-farm experiences like u-picks, farm stays, and tours, petting zoos, farmers markets, local food, and culinary opportunities). Culinary tourism is on the rise in Alberta.

Other potential opportunities identified include:

- **Destination retailers.** These are businesses that attract customers from far and wide due to their unique offerings, exceptional customer experience, and innovative strategies. These retailers have become a destination in themselves, drawing shoppers who are looking for more than just products or services. This can include food and drink experiences. Mother Mountain Tea House and Restaurant in Delia is an example of a destination retailer.
- **Accommodations.** Visitors are increasingly looking for unique accommodations to be part of their “experience.” Travel Alberta’s “Tourism Development Zone Canadian Badlands, Discovery Report 2023.” recommends prioritizing “glamping” options and hotel development in the upscale to upper-upscale categories, which currently aren’t well-represented in the Drumheller Tourism Destination Zone (TDZ).²²
- **Sustainable / ecotourism.** Travellers are seeking out eco-friendly places to stay and activities and locations with a sustainability element. E.g. Health and wellness resorts.
- **Guided tours.** Nature and “ecotours” are trending and in high demand. Locally, Drumheller Rocks is providing a unique form of geotourism – a version of ecotourism where the focus is on the geology of an area.
- **Film tourism / “set-jetting.”** Film tourism, or “set-jetting,” is becoming a big asset and driver for economic development. “Set-jetting” was a top travel trend for 2023 and continues into 2024 . This is when travelers visit destinations primarily because they were featured in a popular movie, TV show, or book. Already, Travel Drumheller is promoting, via their website, local spots that have been featured in movies.
- **More year round.** Businesses felt that Drumheller was marketed as a summer destination and would like to see more winter activities.²³



²² Travel Alberta. “Tourism Development Zone Canadian Badlands. Discovery Report 2023.” P. 22.

²³ Community Futures Big Country. “Drumheller and Region Business Survey Results and Analysis.” April 2022. Prepared by McSweeney & Associates.

Why Tourism?

Tourism is the front door to all economic development.

Tourism draws visitors and brings external dollars to your community. Visitors inject money into your destinations, retail shops, restaurants, and accommodations and help to make them more prosperous. Furthermore, if people like what they see and experience, they:

- a. Will tell their friends and family via social media (free marketing, third-party endorsement)
- b. May come back as permanent residents or business owners.

The province is committed to growing the tourism industry in the province. It is Alberta's #1 service export and has been identified as a way to diversify Alberta's economy to ensure long-term sustainability and resilience.

Tourism promotes cultural depth and the "best of" what you have to offer. Tourism lets communities share their local pride and provides an opportunity for residents to share what makes their communities unique.

Over 50% of Albertans recognize that they have more recreational opportunities in their area because of tourism. As more tourism experiences pop up in an area, family and friends will have something cool to do nearby!

Tourism leads to improved infrastructure and facilities. When sustainability is front of mind, focus is placed on ensuring the infrastructure and facilities can handle the increased traffic from out-of-town visitors. The improved amenities are a natural benefit for permanent residents. For rural areas, this could look like better roads or improved utilities, such as cell service or water supply.

Tourism can help preserve the natural environment. Alberta's wildlife and unique landscape is a point of pride among operators.

D.4.c Business Park

Starland County recently purchased land, known informally as Morrin Corner, along Highway 9. They intend to use this land for a commercial and/or light industrial development business park.

This is an important first step in terms of investment readiness – to have land available for development. Ideally the land would be “shovel-ready,” but Starland County is embarking on that.

Ultimately, the business park will help to grow the tax base and to provide amenities for the tax base.

Figure 4: GIS photo of the location of the proposed development for the business park



The location has been identified as an ideal location for some variation of a food / rest stop for traffic (place for fuel, convenience store, and a potential full or limited-service eating place) and would help capture some revenue from the vast amounts of traffic that travel through the County on Highway 9 (and 27).

Additionally, a number of locals have noted that they would like to be able to purchase fuel without having to drive into the valley. They have also indicated that they would like access to a car wash without having to go into Drumheller.

Passenger vehicles, and in particular, commercial transport units travelling between Saskatoon and Calgary have limited options when it comes to stopping, refueling, and meeting other needs. On the Alberta side of the border, a couple of travel centres have emerged in the past two decades and have proven to be highly successful.

As previously highlighted in Section D.2.e. the AADT for the intersection of highways 9, 27, and 56 is 4,110, which is higher than the AADT at these other travel centres.

Furthermore, it has been noted that commercial traffic would prefer to bypass driving through Drumheller for reasons including:

- to avoid the winding, grade and elevation of the highway through the valley
- to avoid passenger and recreational vehicle traffic, particularly during peak tourism seasons
- there is not good parking for commercial traffic in Drumheller
- lack of trucking amenities like showers, laundry
- Alberta Transportation's Morrin Vehicle Inspection Station is located along highway 9 prior to entering/exiting the valley

Another reason traffic might prefer to avoid travelling through Drumheller is that construction on the bridge in 2024-25 has created backlogs and bottlenecks

Other potential opportunities that may exist for this business park include the potential expansion / relocation of agricultural implement dealerships. Two dealerships currently exist in the town of Drumheller. It is understood that their current space is quite limited and there is little capacity for them to grow. With the increase in size of equipment, the need to transport this equipment, and the overall growth in agriculture, dealerships tend to develop their new operations outside of more urban centres, usually in rural municipalities and counties.

If Starland County tries to attract other agricultural operations like a feed supplier or a crop input operation, having shovel-ready land will make attracting such an operation much more feasible.

While there are some concerns that the distance of the business park from communities may make it a challenge to attract labour (particularly high school labour), it hasn't really stopped other centres from being successful, e.g. Cactus Corner.

D.4.d Low Carbon Energy

As previously outlined, Starland County is well situated for renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power, however there is a reasonable amount of public skepticism and resistance regarding these sources of energy. There is a legitimate desire to preserve farmland. A study commissioned by the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC), released in mid-March of this year, found the following, after doing a comprehensive review on the agricultural impact: there were no significant concerns for agriculture or the environment from renewables, and existing protections are enough to ensure that agricultural land is protected.²⁴

D.4.e Motion picture and video production

Alberta is Canada's fourth-largest production jurisdiction when it comes to film and television. Investment in the film and television industry is at an all-time high according to the province.²⁵ There is an enormous opportunity to make Alberta a choice location for hundreds of millions of dollars of film and television production. The Alberta government announced changes to the Alberta Film and Television Tax Credit (FTTC) program to help more producers make Alberta their location of choice.²⁶

The FTTC is now easier to navigate and tax credits can be accessed earlier. The updated program also makes it more attractive than ever to film in rural, remote, and underused areas of the province, and an expanded criteria means game shows and reality television are now eligible under the program.

Streaming services like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video have experienced tremendous growth. These services are all looking for new and fresh content including locations, people, infrastructure, and stories.

²⁴ Alberta Utilities Commission. "AUC inquiry into the ongoing economic, orderly and efficient development of electricity generation in Alberta Module A Report." January 31, 2024.

²⁵ Fortner Cole. "Alberta promotes its film industry as minister meets Hollywood execs in L.A." CityNews Edmonton. January 9, 2024.

<https://edmonton.citynews.ca/2024/01/09/alberta-hollywood-film-industry/>

²⁶ Playback™ "New productions continue to flock to Alberta."

<https://playbackonline.ca/2024/01/01/alberta/#ixzz8k9OjOa00>

Mountain View Film Regional Film Office (MVRFO)

The Mountain View Film Regional Film Office (MVRFO), a partnership between the towns of Didsbury and Sundre and Mountain View County, is the only regional and rural film office in Alberta. The film office helps bring in film companies to use Mountain View as their filming location. Representatives from the MVRFO identified the following benefits of this industry:

- Puts us on the map.
- Film tourism is becoming a big asset and driver for economic development.
- People are visiting Didsbury and want to see where the show, Wynonna Earp, was actually filmed. **Earpptopia** in Calgary is expected to attract 500 people from across the world. The “Day in Didsbury” is expecting 200 visitors, which is a great opportunity to showcase Didsbury and Alberta.
- The film office is a catalyst for investment and business expansion. There’s an entrepreneur in Didsbury who is expanding his facility and building an events centre to cater to the film industry. Didsbury has also attracted an IT company.
- The presence of film crews was instantly felt in communities: i.e. people visiting and using coffee shops, restaurants, retail shops, and hardware stores. Note: unionized staff stay in Calgary so this likely will not have an impact on accommodations.
- The industry will tap into local tradespeople if they need to build a set.
- “Under the Banner of Heaven” left about \$600,000 in Didsbury.
- Film can pay very well. They’ll pay fees for daily parking (and they typically need lots of it), rental of municipally owned buildings, and will pay residents and businesses if they are impacted (e.g. to keep your car off the street or temporarily close your business). The industry knows that they can be very taxing on municipal staff with things like road closures, traffic control, and use of amenities; consequently production companies prefer to pay some kind of fee.

Opportunities exist for communities and regions to have certain niches. For example, Sundre has become more of a niche destination for indie productions. Indie films are more likely to stay at local hotels.

E. Strategy

“Economic development,” in its purest form, is the process of improving the quality of life for citizens by increasing the local tax base and economic well-being of the community.

~Roger Brooks, Placemaking Expert, Destination Development Association

E.1 Community Readiness

Rationale: Investments are more likely to come to a community that is prepared. Table 8 below outlines some components of municipal economic readiness and why they are important.

Table 9: Municipal Economic Readiness Components

Knowledge and Expertise	
Contacts	Having designated points of contact for prospective investors is essential to successfully attract and secure business investment.
Land Use Planning	Having a land use planning process in place that is clearly defined and adheres to reasonable timeframes for straightforward applications is another important element of being “investment ready” as it provides investors with predictability regarding time and costs.
Liaising with Existing Business in your Community	It is important to engage with existing businesses in your community to understand and stay up-to-date on issues that could affect the attraction of new businesses and /or the retention and expansion of existing businesses.
Information Sources	Having good contacts and easy access to utility representatives, and government programs and agencies is beneficial for directing business inquiries.
Resources	
Industrial Land Inventory	Having an up-to-date inventory of available industrial lands for potential new developments is an important consideration in investment attraction.
Joint Ventures	Joint ventures and partnerships can contribute greatly to a community’s success in attracting investment.
Economic Development Capacity	A community focus on economic development is essential to investment readiness. This refers to a proactive effort by a governing body to support, enhance and expand the local economy.
Communications	
Community and Site Selection Profiles	Having processes in place for proactive business and economic development related communications is another important part of being “investment ready”.
Website	An economic development website is an important tool in attracting investment and should be considered a priority if not already in place.
Other Communications Considerations	Having an established process for communicating economic development issues, priorities, and good access to media representatives helps levitate the message that Starland County is open for business.

Suggested Actions:

1. Conduct a community readiness analysis. There are a number of investment readiness toolkits and checklists that can be used to help the County assess its investment readiness. We have compiled a sample checklist based on reviewing both the Economic Developers of Alberta (EDA) "Investment Readiness Toolkit" and British Columbia's Economic Development Association (BCEDA) investment readiness self-assessment scorecard. See Appendix A.

These toolkits typically focus on areas such as:

- expertise
 - basic community information
 - land inventory
 - land use planning and infrastructure
 - resources and capacity
 - marketing and communications
2. Some of the gaps might feel overwhelming, but Starland County should pick a few easy items to work on each quarter or year. The table below highlights those sections that can be easily covered off by the Economic Development Officer and/or Economic Development Committee and those sections that will require support and leadership from Administration and/or Council.

Administration and council will need to take the lead on items like land inventory, land use planning and infrastructure; some of these items may require longer term plans and investment.

Starland County may find it beneficial to also review its community readiness through a lens of people attraction and think about how they can be more investment ready and friendly for housing options.

Table 10: Primary Responsibility for Community Readiness

Section	Primary Responsibility
A. Basic Community Information and Profile	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee
B. Land Inventory	Compiled by Economic Development Officer, but actual inventory needs to be supported by Administration and Council
C. Investment Marketing and Toolbox	Led by Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee, but requires strategic and budget support from Administration and Council.
D. Land Use Planning and Infrastructure	Administration with strategic and budget support from Council. Ensure that voice of Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee is included.
E. Economic Development Capacity	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee will lead this, but it requires strategic and budget support from Administration and Council. E.g. Administration and Council need to be supportive of collaborative partnership and joint initiatives.
F. Site Selection Process	Economic Development Officer, CAO, Reeve will be primary contacts for site selection.

3. Continue to work with regional partners, government, and the private sector to build capacity and market the region.
4. Work with neighbouring communities to increase housing options.

Success Measures:

- Overall community readiness score
- Completion of actions completed quarterly / annually
- Number of investment inquiries received

E.2 Build Local Business Capacity (Business Retention and Expansion)**E.2.a Liaise with Existing Business**

Rationale: About 80 percent of new jobs and capital investment comes from companies that already exist in the community. Local businesses employ local people, and they recirculate a greater share of every dollar in the local economy as they create locally owned supply chains.

Businesses are the key to understanding and stimulating your local economy. The EDO has already started reaching out to and connecting with local businesses to learn about their needs and challenges. This process may be long as it takes time to build relationships and businesses may initially be skeptical about having the municipality reach out and/or may carry forward a previous negative experience.

Liaising with existing businesses may also help to generate favorable word of mouth and potential leads for the proposed business park.

Seeking input from your tourism-related businesses about their tourism clientele will also help with tourism marketing efforts and related infrastructure.

Suggested Actions:

1. Make a plan to liaise with individual businesses in Starland County (Business Retention and Expansion).

Because Starland County has a small business base, it is feasible to create a plan whereby the EDO connects with all local businesses.

Having Council members accompany the EDO can also have a very positive impact on local businesses. Council attention lets the business know that Council recognizes the business and cares about the business.

2. Create an updated inventory of existing businesses.

Some municipalities, if they haven't already, are exploring the implementation of a business license. For a nominal fee, a business license inventory helps municipalities to know which businesses are located in their boundaries, plus it is becoming increasingly important with respect to emergency planning and management.

Table 11: Primary Responsibility for Liaising with Local Businesses

Action	Primary Responsibility
1. Develop BRE plan / visit businesses	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee Council members are encouraged to do some visitations
2. Compile business directory	Economic Development Officer (with assistance from tax roll and other parties)

Success Measures:

- Number of businesses visited
- Number of business concerns identified and addressed
- Growth in number of businesses (licenses)

E.2.b Help Foster Entrepreneurship

Rationale: Once again, most ideas are going to come from within the local population. Promotion of agri-value opportunities, agri-tourism opportunities, destination retail concepts, and other ideas help to foster and share an entrepreneurial mind-set.

Suggested Actions:

1. Support entrepreneurs and new business start-ups for business growth.

The County does not need to necessarily do this on their own, but can partner with organizations to share learning opportunities, and provide workshops and information sessions. The role of an Economic Development Officer is to provide concierge services and direct businesses to information sources.

Organizations who are currently providing information sessions and maybe even funding include:

- Community Futures Big Country, who already has a mandate to do this
- Travel Alberta, who has a number of programs to help with tourism investment
- Drumheller & District Chamber of Commerce
- Neighbouring municipalities looking to promote the same concepts

Concentrate on local tourism product development.

2. Consider providing market space for a farmers' market at the Morrin Corner, a highly visible location.

Farmers' markets are economic drivers for communities as they bring people together to spend money within their local economy. Farmers' Markets also act as business incubators, serving as a low-risk entry point into the marketplace for farmers, ranchers, food

entrepreneurs, and artisans. Farmers' Markets are also a great place for engagement and participation with Hutterite Colonies.

Table 12: Primary Responsibility for Actions Regarding Fostering Entrepreneurship

Action	Primary Responsibility
1. Support entrepreneurs and new business start-ups	Economic Development Officer
2. Farmers' market	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee, Agriculture Service Board

Success Measures:

- Number of information sessions provided / shared (again, do this in conjunction with strategic partners who are already hosting)
- Number of vendors / artisans at Farmers' Market
- Number of attendees at Farmers' Market
- Number of new business openings and expansions in county

E.2.c Facilitate Collaboration between Education and Business Community

Rationale: Availability of labour is one of the top issues affecting today's workforce. Connecting business and education (K to 12 schools) is an important opportunity to grow and attract jobs in the region plus attract and retain people.

Suggested Actions:

1. Facilitate, support and nurture the relationship between business and education.

These two groups should collaborate on early childhood leadership programs, internships, apprenticeships, and work-integrated learning opportunities so that businesses can better understand how to support schools, and schools can better understand what the business community needs in terms of workforce. One interviewee indicated that trades are promoted at the high school, but they cannot always find businesses / journeymen to take on the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) students.

This action will lead to a stronger local workforce as students see the opportunities that exist in their community. Some connections can be nurtured through the BRE process.

Table 13: Primary Responsibility for Actions Regarding Building Relationship between Business and Education

Action	Primary Responsibility
1. Facilitate, support and nurture the relationship between business and education	Economic Development Officer

Success Measures:

- Number of business / education partnerships
- Number of students who receive work-integrated learning opportunities, internships, and apprenticeships
- Number of graduates who find employment in the region or return to the region

E.3 Business Park Development

Rationale: “Shovel-ready” land is among the top business location decision factors. Growing local businesses are also more likely to expand if land is available. The very existence of a shovel-ready site signals to investors and businesses the County’s commitment to growth and development. “Shovel-ready” sites allow businesses to break ground and become operational in record time; this can be particularly important for businesses where speed to market is crucial.

Furthermore, these sites contribute significantly to the well-being of the community. The ripple effects of this accelerated development can lead to enhanced tax revenues, improved quality of life, and a robust local economy.²⁷

Suggested Actions:

1. Begin to physically develop the business park to a level of “shovel-readiness.”
2. Develop and execute a marketing strategy for the business park.
A marketing strategy will address overall objectives which might include:
 - a. Inform the public of the benefits of the Morrin Corner.
 - b. Attract businesses to purchase and develop in Morrin Corner.

The marketing plan should identify the marketing mix.

²⁷ Berta Scott. “The Essential Role of Shovel-Ready Sites in Economic Development.” Location Georgia. March 20, 2024. <https://www.locationgeorgia.com/essential-role-of-shovel-ready-sites-march-2024/>

Table 14: Marketing Mix Considerations

Marketing Mix	Considerations
Product Strategy	Number of lots and size. Land uses. Services (type of roads, water, wastewater management, power, etc.). Traffic counts.
Pricing Strategy	Identify sale price and how this compares to other options (e.g. above, similar, below).
Distribution Strategy	Determine how the lots will be sold. E.g. Will the County contract sales to a realtor?
Promotion Strategy	Develop marketing collateral (logo/brand, folders, brochures, website). Identify how and where the business park will be promoted. Billboard / site signage (very visible location). Public relations campaign: media releases, groundbreaking ceremony, public unveiling of sign, ribbon cutting / grand openings.

Identify the target market(s). All marketing strategies should directly target and focus on the target market (see Table 12).

3. Determine the list of potential prospects and begin investment attraction.

Alberta Site Selector Tool

In 2024, the Alberta Site Selector Tool was launched. It is a self-serve digital platform that helps businesses and investors find and evaluate suitable properties to expand or locate their business in communities across Alberta.

The tool offers many benefits to municipalities, including:

- Increased visibility into properties in communities and their connections to nearby infrastructure.
- Ability to upload properties for free through SpaceList to be included within the Alberta Site Selector Tool.
- Ability quickly pull together critical information on nearby infrastructure to support investment requests.

<https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/#/site-selector>

Table 15: Target Market Considerations

Target Market Category	Considerations
The types of businesses we want to attract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fuel and convenience stops (e.g. Co-op, UFA, Parkland Industries); travel centre. Car wash. Accommodations (e.g. campground, hotel/motel). Agricultural services (e.g. crop inputs, agricultural dealership, bulk fuel, other wholesale). Automotive parts and services (e.g. mechanical services, tire shop). Retail (e.g. lumber yard, farm and ranch retail (e.g. Peavy Mart, UFA), hardware). Light industrial e.g. construction, electrical, plumbing, manufacturing, oil and gas operations. Logistics and transportation
The people we want to target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific businesses, local business owners, entrepreneurs, and intermediaries such as agents, property developers, investors, bankers, economic development officials, partners, and stakeholders.
Where the target market lives and works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starland County (Morris, Delia, Munson), Drumheller, and Hanna. Eastern / Central Alberta. Western Saskatchewan (Kindersley, Rosetown).
Purchase Buying Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Third parties are often involved such as real estate agents, developers, investors, site selection consultants. Marketing that targets that group is critical. Gaining a strategic business advantage is a key decision-making point. Cost and location advantages (proximity to highway corridors, suppliers / consumers / staff) are the most important factors in this decision. Process is relatively complex for the buyer as it will include starting or relocating a business, staffing changes, expansion, etc. Complex business decisions require detailed facts and statistics regarding the new location. Online resources are used first in nearly all searches for potential land. An online presence and online marketing activity is the highest marketing priority.

Table 16: Primary Responsibility for Actions Regarding Business Park

Action	Primary Responsibility
1. Physically develop the business park to a level of “shovel-readiness”	CAO, Development Office Ensure input obtained from Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee so land and strategic priorities for investment attraction align
2. Marketing strategy for the business park	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee May wish to broker components out to third parties
3. List of potential prospects / investment attraction	Economic Development Officer

Success Measures:

- Number of leads generated (and, if possible, from where)
- Sales, e.g. number of sales by dates (year 2, year 5, year 8)
- Online metrics

E.4 Develop and Promote Tourism Opportunities

Rationale: Tourism is about importing new cash into your community; it offsets the export of locally earned money spent elsewhere. Tourism amenities and activities are also a natural benefit for permanent residents and help to attract potential new residents.

Suggested Actions:

1. Invest in County-owned and operated tourism infrastructure. Simple things like signage can provide a better experience.
Investing in tourism infrastructure is important because it drives economic growth, attracts visitors, and enhances the quality of life for residents. Well-maintained infrastructure can elevate the area’s appeal, making it more competitive as a travel destination. These investments also help preserve natural and cultural assets, ensuring that the region remains attractive to future generations of tourists and residents alike.
Furthermore, when the County invests in local projects like infrastructure, campground development, and river access, it signals to other tourism stakeholders that their investments are supported as well.
2. Continue to work with tourism partners like Travel Drumheller, and Travel Alberta to promote tourism offerings in the region.

When asked what additional tourism advocacy efforts local businesses would like to see supported, additional marketing was one of the key themes.²⁸ Businesses are often unable to afford marketing campaigns themselves, and would be supportive of more centralized marketing of the area. This includes drawing people for extended stays rather than just encouraging day trips to the main attractions.

3. Work with regional partners to host agri-tourism activities such as:

- Alberta Open Farms Days, an incubator for agri-tourism and rural sustainability.
- A “farm to table” or “long table” dinner. These dinners provide visitors and residents an opportunity to connect with local agriculture, taste chef-inspired cuisine, and sample products unique to their region.

Table 17: Primary Responsibility for Actions Regarding Promoting and Developing Tourism Opportunities

Action	Primary Responsibility
1. Invest in County-owned and operated tourism infrastructure	CAO, Development Office, Council
2. Work with tourism partners	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee Needs support from Administration and Council.
3. Partner to host agri-tourism activities	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee, Agriculture Service Board

Success Measures:

- Number of visitors
- Increased length of stay of visitors
- Increased quality of life for permanent residents
- Improved infrastructure
- Increased number of tourism offerings

E.5 Motion Picture and Video Production

Rationale: Local productions bring in money from out of the province to local vendors. They can create jobs and give businesses a boost in revenue. Mayor Rhonda Hunter of Didsbury says, “The Hollywood and Canadian Film Industries let us showcase our landscapes and landmarks on a global stage. This invokes community pride and creates community spirit.” Tourism comes with an elevated profile of the region.

²⁸ Community Futures Big Country. Drumheller and Region Business Survey Results and Analysis. April 2022. Prepared by McSweeney & Associates.

Motion picture and video production supports a creative economy. “Creative industries” a relatively new term that signals the growing importance of creativity and innovation in the knowledge economy. The knowledge economy is a system where growth is driven primarily by the production and management of knowledge and information, rather than physical goods. This shift is especially important for rural communities because it helps to diversify the local economy. With advancements in technology, knowledge-based jobs can often be done remotely which allows rural communities to attract professionals who seek a quieter, lower-cost lifestyle while maintaining high-value employment.

Suggested Actions:

1. Partner and work with the Town of Drumheller on a motion picture and video production promotional strategy.
2. Identify local sites and landmarks, photograph them, and upload them to Alberta Reel Scout (<https://alberta.reel-scout.com>), locationshub (<https://www.locationshub.com/>), etc.
3. Create a location package using updated pictures, video and web to for producers and ad agencies.
4. Develop a comprehensive media asset inventory, with detailed information on locations, historic sites, special events, production services and performers to market to producers.
5. Build relationships with:
 - Various guilds, e.g. the producers guild, directors guild, locations guild.
 - Target and attend appropriate film festivals, trade shows, and media events.
 - Calgary Economic Development / Calgary Film Commission.
 - Alberta Film Commission.
 - Local studios, e.g. Starland Studios, Rocky Mountain Film Studio, Northern Gateway Films
 - Keep Alberta Rolling (Brock Skretting).
 - Mountain View Regional Film Office; there may be opportunities to piggyback off each other.
6. At some point in the future, the region may want to consider holding a film festival to showcase the region and to bring connections to Drumheller / Starland County.

Table 18: Primary Responsibility for Actions Regarding Motion Picture and Video Development

Action	Primary Responsibility
1. Partner with Drumheller for a motion picture and video production promotional strategy	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee
2. Identify local sites and landmarks, photograph them, and upload them to Alberta Reel Scout	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee
3. Create a location package for producers and ad agencies	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee
4. Develop a media asset inventory	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee
5. Build industry relationships	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee
6. Consider holding a film festival in partnership with Drumheller	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee Good opportunity for Council to show their support by participating

Success Measures:

- Promotional material developed
- Number of location items distributed
- Number of sites identified and uploaded
- Number of industry contacts made
- Number of productions attracted to the region

E.6 Explore and Identify Other Target Opportunities

Starland County has expressed interest in value-added agriculture products, and renewable and low-carbon energy opportunities. These options are very plausible for the County and would help to diversify the tax base. Further exploration and analysis should be conducted to assess these options.

E.6.a Value-added Agriculture Products

Rationale: Starland County has a strong agricultural base, but limited valued-added agricultural products.

Suggested Actions:

1. Make sure your local producers know about programs like **Alberta's On-Farm Value-Added Grant Program**. This program supports primary producers in adding value to their agricultural products to grow sales, expand production capacity, explore market opportunities, and create jobs in Alberta.
2. Explore other Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP) to determine their suitability for Starland County and/or any of its producers / operators.
3. Explore those opportunities that could be a good fit for the County. They will need to be operations that do not require rail, do not require large workforce, and probably do not require heavy water usage.
4. Develop promotional materials targeted for the industry that showcase the region's assets and unique selling points.
5. Develop a list of potential leads. The timing of prospecting to these leads might best coincide with the development of the business park. Many Alberta counties and municipalities are trying to attract value-added agriculture opportunities right now and are much more ready to attract that investment (they have developed clusters, "shovel-ready" land, developed business cases, etc.). Starland County will need to find their niche and unique selling points to attract these operations.

Table 19: Primary Responsibility for Actions Regarding Expanding Value-added Agricultural Products

Action	Primary Responsibility
1. Make sure your local producers know about programs like Alberta's On-Farm Value-Added Grant Program	Economic Development Officer, Agriculture Service Board
2. Explore Sustainable CAP to determine their suitability for Starland County and/or any of its producers / operators	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee, Agriculture Service Board
3. Explore opportunities that could be a good fit for the County	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee May require a third party to identify and vet opportunities.
4. Develop promotional materials	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee
5. Develop a list of potential leads and prospect	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee May require a third party to identify and vet opportunities.

Success Measures:

- Information shared with local producers about opportunities like Alberta's On-Farm Value-Added Grant Program
- Industry specific promotional materials developed (industry profile)
- Number of leads contacted
- Number of leads expressing interest

E.6.b Renewable and Low-Carbon Energy

Rationale: Starland County's council and administration appear to be quite open to alternative energy projects such as renewables like wind, solar, or biogas (bio-digester, gasification), as well as other emerging opportunities. Wind and solar are already present in Starland County. The need for energy is increasing and new, diverse sources of energy are being sought. Additionally, the trend is to bring more sources of low-carbon energy to market.

Suggested Actions:

1. Explore those opportunities that could be a good fit for the County. Learn what the industry needs are.
2. Develop promotional materials targeted for the industry that showcase the region's assets and unique selling points.
3. Educate and inform the public. Hold public information sessions and provide correspondence to ratepayers.

These options all provide good tax bases, however, there can be a lot of resistance from the public.

Often the resistance is a result of misinformation or lack of information. Consequently, it would be prudent for the County to educate citizens regarding the perceived risks and the actual benefits so that citizens are more open to these opportunities.

Education could take the form of both in-person and online information sessions where questions can be asked and answered. Information can be shared in County newsletters, utility bill slips, and on social media platforms.

Table 20: Primary Responsibility for Actions Regarding Expanding Renewal and Low-Carbon Energy

Action	Primary Responsibility
1. Explore opportunities that could be a good fit for the County. Understand needs.	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee
2. Develop promotional materials	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee
3. Educate and inform the public	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee Administration Council

Success Measures:

- Identify potential community alignment
- Industry specific promotional materials developed (industry profile)
- Number of information sessions held
- Number of education pieces distributed



E.7 Marketing – tell your story!

Rationale: Marketing and promoting a particular region or community to attract business investment, tourism and residents involves showcasing its special qualities.

Suggested Actions:

1. Prepare marketing collateral for investment attraction including:
 - Section on website
 - Downloadable community profile
 - Small printed / downloadable brochure
 - Ensure EDO/point person name and contact information on all marketing material
2. Share investment attraction information with target markets. This can include:
 - Business / investment attraction prospects
 - Provincial counterparts and strategic partners, e.g. Invest Alberta, CAEP Ltd., your Regional Economic Development Specialist (REDS) rep - East Central Alberta, your MLA
3. Prepare a marketing plan and marketing collateral for business park
 - Section on website
 - Downloadable business park brochure
 - Small printed / downloadable brochure
 - Ensure EDO/point person name (e.g. realtor) and contact information on all marketing material
4. Administer an online marketing campaign to promote / showcase what you've got. Provide a steady stream of key messages and inspiring stories and make the most of social media.
 - Include success stories. Starland County does have successful businesses and entrepreneurs that can be highlighted.
 - Showcase vistas, campgrounds, amenities, and events / activities. Encourage people to visit these areas or live in communities with these vistas in their backyard.

- Despite the trend towards rural depopulation, some people are moving to a lifestyle community. These people are looking for connections, caring places where people take care of one another. Rural communities have great untapped opportunities in this regard.
- Starland County can brand and showcase their lifestyle communities. Include the fact that there are two new schools in the jurisdiction! These schools have changed the level of education. They offer smaller class sizes and are community oriented. Delia is opening a new daycare which will help attract young families.

Table 21: Primary Responsibility for Actions Regarding Expanding Renewal and Low-Carbon Energy

Action	Primary Responsibility
1. Prepare marketing collateral	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee
2. Share investment attraction information with target markets.	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee
3. Prepare a marketing plan and marketing collateral for business park	Economic Development Officer / Economic Development Committee May wish to broker components out to third parties
4. Online marketing campaign to showcase regional assets	Economic Development Officer May wish to broker components out to third party

Success Measures:

- Targeted marketing materials developed
- Number of visits to economic development page
- Social media reach including # of new followers and ad campaign metrics



F. Prioritization of Strategic Actions

Community Readiness	Priority
i. Assess community readiness (community or investment readiness toolkit/checklist)	Short term
ii. Pick one or two gaps to work on each quarter or year.	Ongoing
iii. Continue to work with regional partners, government, and the private sector.	Ongoing
iv. Work with neighbouring communities to increase housing options.	Short term / ongoing
Build local business capacity (Business Retention and Expansion)	Priority
Liaise with existing business	
i. Make a plan to liaise with businesses in Starland County (Business Retention and Expansion).	Short term (in progress)
ii. Develop an updated business list / directory.	Short term (in progress)
Help foster entrepreneurship	
i. Support entrepreneurs and new business start-ups for business growth by hosting and sharing information.	Short to medium term
ii. Consider hosting a farmers' market at Business Park once it reaches a minimum level of readiness.	Medium term
Facilitate collaboration between education and business community	
i. Facilitate, support and nurture the relationship between business and the school system.	Medium term
Business Park Development	Priority
i. Begin to physically develop the business park to a level of "shovel-readiness."	Short term (in progress)
ii. Develop a marketing strategy. This will include identifying marketing mix, target market, competitive analysis, brand, and promotion	Medium term
iii. Determine list of potential prospects and begin investment attraction.	Short to medium term (in progress)
Tourism Development and Promotion	Priority
i. Identify key tourism assets to update and upgrade. This can include current campgrounds, Horsethief Canyon, regional signage, toilets, boardwalks/birding platforms.	Medium term
ii. Continue to work with tourism partners, e.g. Travel Drumheller, Travel Alberta, neighbouring municipalities to market the region.	Ongoing
iii. Work with tourism partners to host and promote agri-tourism opportunities, e.g. farmers' market, Open Farms Days, and/or a long-table dinner.	Medium term

Motion picture and video production		Priority
i.	Partner and work with the Town of Drumheller on a motion picture and video production promotional strategy.	Medium term (start discussions)
ii.	Identify local sites and landmarks, photograph them, and upload them to Alberta Reel Scout.	Medium term
iii.	Create a location package using updated pictures, video, and web content that outlines regional assets (e.g. local production assets) for producers and ad agencies.	Medium term
iv.	Develop a comprehensive media asset inventory with detailed information on locations, historic sites, special events, production services and performers to market to producers.	Medium term
v.	Build industry relationships.	Medium term
vi.	Consider hosting a regional film festival to showcase the region and bring connections to Drumheller / Starland County.	Long term
Explore and identify other target opportunities		Priority
Value-added Agriculture Products		
i.	Share programs like Alberta's On-Farm Value-Added Grant Program with local producers.	Short term
ii.	Explore other Sustainable Canadian Agriculture Partnership programs to determine their suitability for Starland County.	Short to medium term
iii.	Explore those opportunities that could be a good fit for the County.	Short to medium term
iv.	Develop industry-specific promotional material that showcases the region's assets.	Medium term
v.	Develop a list of potential leads.	Medium term
Renewable and Low-Carbon Energy		
i.	Explore those opportunities that could be a good fit for the County (including what the industry needs are).	Medium to long term
ii.	Develop industry-specific promotional material that showcases the region's assets.	Medium to long term
iii.	Educate and inform the public in order to get their buy-in.	Ongoing

Marketing and Communications		Priority
i.	Prepare marketing collateral for investment attraction (section on website, downloadable community profile and brochure).	Ongoing
ii.	Share investment attraction information with target markets.	Medium to long term
iii.	Prepare marketing plan and marketing collateral for business park.	Medium term
iv.	Administer an online marketing campaign to promote / showcase what you've got. Provide a steady stream of key messages and inspiring stories and make the most of social media.	Short to medium term

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Appendix A: Community Readiness Self-Assessment

Part 1: Basic Level

Section A: Basic Community Information and Profile	Yes	No	Yes, but needs improvement	No, but in progress
1. Does your community have a designated person for economic development?				
2. If yes, does this person have an understanding of the site selection process? (i.e. responding to inquiries, data collection, site visit, etc.)?				
3. Does your municipality have a community profile?				
4. Is your community profile reviewed and updated regularly? (i.e. every three to six months)?				
5. Does your community profile use the latest census data?				
6. Does your website contain an easily downloadable copy of your community profile?				
7. Does your website list key contacts?				
8. Does your community profile include:				
8.1 Your community's vision statement?				
8.2 Name, address, phone number and e-mail address of the local economic development professional or office?				
8.3 Table of contents?				
8.4 Map reference of your community's location?				
9. Does your community profile include the following population and demographic information:				
9.1 Population growth and forecast?				
9.2 Population by age and gender?				
9.3 Migration data and trends?				
10. Does your community profile include the following labour market characteristics information:				
10.1 Labour force size?				
10.2 Labour force by industry?				
10.3 Labour force by occupation?				
10.4 Unemployment rate?				
10.5 Participation rate?				
10.6 Availability of skilled labour?				
10.7 Educational attainment levels?				
10.8 List of major private and public sector employees? (name, services/products, number of employees, union)				

Section A (continued): Basic Community Information and Profile	Yes	No	Yes, but needs improvement	No, but in progress
11. Does your community profile include the following information regarding sites and buildings:				
11.1 Summary of local, industrial, commercial and residential real estate market costs?				
11.2 Summary of all application fees and changes, including the cost of building permits per square foot?				
11.3 Summary of industrial and commercial land including costs (per hectare or acre) and available services?				
11.4 Summary of utilities including water and sewage capacities, waste disposal facilities, gas and electrical?				
12. Transportation and Infrastructure:				
12.1 Information on local and regional transportation networks? (i.e. airports, highways, railways, intermodal, ports)				
12.2 Overview of telecommunications services and infrastructure?				
12.3 Capacity restrictions such as high load, weight and height limitations?				
12.4 Information on distances to major urban markets and border crossings in both kilometres and miles?				
12.5 Growth projections and initiatives related to upgrading existing power, water, sewer, road and other hard services?				
13. Industry and key economic indicators:				
13.1 Overview of target industries				
13.2 Building permit values				
13.3 Major projects list				
13.4 News of recent business expansions and new business locating / Summary of recent private and public sector investments				
13.5 Summary of local R&D institutions, initiatives and innovative products				
14. List of attractions				

Section A (continued): Basic Community Information and Profile	Yes	No	Yes, but needs improvement	No, but in progress
15. Quality of life:				
15.1 Cost of living data				
15.2 Information on housing (i.e. average price, availability, rentals)				
15.3 Personal income and property tax				
15.4 List of local and regional health care facilities, as well as access to telemedicine services				
15.5 List of local business groups (chambers of commerce, Indigenous business organizations, industry associations, etc.)				
15.6 List of education institutions and training facilities				
15.7 List of local financial institutions				
15.8 Summary of police and fire protection services				
15.9 Crime rate				
15.10 Overview of quality of life, including summary of climate, cultural, recreational and entertainment attractions and retail services.				
16. Other:				
16.1 Overview of economic development strategies and services				
16.2 Testimonials from local business leaders				
16.3 Information or contacts regarding the local, provincial and federal tax systems				
16.4 Photos or other graphics to support written information				
Total Points for Basic Community Information and Profile Out of (50)				

Section B: Land Inventory	Yes	No	Yes, but needs improvement	No, but in progress
1. Does your municipality maintain any of the following inventories on available serviced land?				
1.1 Residential				
1.2 Commercial				
1.3 Industrial				
2. Does your community maintain any of the following inventories on readily serviceable land?				
2.1 Residential				
2.2 Commercial				
2.3 Industrial				
3. Does your community maintain any of the following inventories on available non-serviced lands?				
3.1 Residential				
3.2 Commercial				
3.3 Industrial				
Total Points for Land Inventory Out of (18)				

Go to Part 2, Section H for Advanced Level Land Inventory

Section C: Investment Marketing and Toolbox	Yes	No	Yes, but needs improvement	No, but in progress
1. Has your community established, or is it part of, and investment marketing team (i.e. regional group)?				
2. Has your community prepared an investment/marketing plan that identifies goals and target markets/industries?				
3. If yes, is the investment/marketing plan a separate document from your community's strategic plan?				
4. Has your community developed key messages for targeted sectors or industries?				
5. Does your community maintain regular contact with local, regional, and national media representatives?				
6. Does your community use the services offered by an external marketing group or other sources (i.e. provincial marketing rep/Invest Alberta, trade commissions, etc.) to market itself?				
Total Points for Investment Marketing and Toolbox Out of (12)				

Go to Part 2, Section I for Additional Considerations Regarding Investment Marketing and Toolbox

Section D: Land Use Planning and Infrastructure	Yes	No	Yes, but needs improvement	No, but in progress
1. Is your Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and zoning bylaws current (e.g. updated every five years) and do they reflect your goals and objectives for today and the future?				
2. Is the MDP and zoning information available on the community's website?				
3. Are the policies and designations in your community office plan general enough to accommodate most development proposals without the need for plan amendment?				
4. Are the definitions/provisions in your zoning by-laws easy to understand?				
5. Does your municipality list the policy intention, regulations and permitted uses in each land use designation?				
6. Does your community have information on how long it takes for a typical planning or development application/proposal in your community to be approved?				
7. Do you have information on application fees, levies, and other associated charges imposed on applicants/developers in your community?				
8. Does your municipality have an effective information system that you use to provide official plans and zoning information to prospective investors/developers (e.g. air photos, series of neighbourhood charts, or wall maps)?				
9. Is the establishment of new "home occupations" allowed in most areas of the community, without the need for an official plan amendment and/or zoning bylaw change?				
10. Where they are allowed, are a wide range of businesses permitted, as well as outdoor signage/advertising and on-site customer parking?				
11. Is your key municipal contact person knowledgeable about the upper-tier official plan as well as neighbouring municipalities' plans, and how these policies and land use designations may affect proposed development in your community?				
12. Is economic development addressed in the official plan's policies?				

Section D (continued): Land Use Planning and Infrastructure	Yes	No	Yes, but needs improvement	No, but in progress
13. Do your municipal planning staff discuss / coordinate their work with economic development staff?				
14. Does your municipality have any materials for internal or external use that quickly and easily illustrate in layperson's language how development approvals and land use planning work, as well as time guidelines and costs in your municipality (e.g. flow charts that outline the steps in the land use planning and developments approval process)?				
15. Does your municipality have a designated individual to guide the proponent through the approvals process?				
16. When a development application has been successfully completed, is there a review of the process with the proponent as part of your customer service?				
17. In cases where planning and development approvals are not administered in your community, are you aware of who is responsible for planning and who are the immediate contacts?				
18. If applicant/developer needs information or advice on any aspect of their planning or development proposal, do you know to which community department or ministry to refer to them?				
19. Are you aware of the environmental regulations that may affect investors considering your community?				
20. Does your community have a growth plan?				
21. Does your community have a water resource study and master plan?				
22. Does your community have a wastewater study and master plan?				
23. Is there sufficient capacity in the sewage and water systems to accommodate growth?				
24. Does your community have a solid waste study and master plan?				
25. Are businesses able to access to high-speed internet in your community?				
26. Is there fibre-optic network serving your community?				
Total Points for Land Planning and Infrastructure Out of (52)				

Section E: Economic Development Capacity	Yes	No	Yes, but needs improvement	No, but in progress
1. Does your community have a dedicated contact for economic development related matters? (Bonus points if individual has a CECD or Ec.D. Designation)				
2. If yes, is the person for economic development familiar with the planning and development processes in your community?				
3. If yes, is this person provided annual opportunities for professional development?				
4. Economic Development Committee or Board				
4.1 Does your community have an economic development committee or board?				
4.2 If yes, does the committee meet on a regular basis? (i.e. quarterly, monthly)				
4.3 Does the committee or board have municipal representation from the planning department?				
4.4 Does the committee or board have municipal representation from council?				
4.5 Does the committee or board have representation from the private sector?				
4.6 Does the committee or board have representation from your target industries or sectors?				
4.7 Is your committee or board involved in the strategic planning process for economic development?				
5. Does your community have a formal strategic plan for economic development?				
6. Does your community work with the following economic/business support organizations on a regular basis:				
6.1 Local Chamber of Commerce				
6.2 Industry associations (i.e. Tourism)				
6.3 Community Futures				
6.4 Educational institutions				
6.5 Regional economic development association				
6.6 Provincial marketing representatives				
6.7 Provincial ministry responsible for economic development				
6.8 Canadian Trade Offices				
7. Is your community aware of existing federal and provincial development policies, programs and services?				

Section E (continued): Economic Development Capacity	Yes	No	Yes, but needs improvement	No, but in progress
8. Does your community maintain a list of local business leaders to whom site selectors can be confidently referred for testimonials about the community?				
9. Does your community work cooperatively with neighbouring communities to pool resources and information on economic development?				
10. Does your community jointly fund economic development initiatives/programs with private sector companies and other levels of government?				
11. Do your community leaders support economic development initiatives?				
12. Are you aware of the businesses or individuals who have left your community, but may be interested in returning or investing locally?				
13. Does your community have an active Business Retention and Expansion program?				
14. Do your Reeve, CAO, Economic Development Officer and/or planning staff meet with local business people, including the chamber of commerce on a regular basis to talk about their business needs and future plans (e.g. once every six months for a breakfast meeting)?				
15. Is there a budget for economic development activity in your municipality?				
Total Points for Land Planning and Infrastructure Out of (57)				

Section F: Site Selection Process	Yes	No	Yes, but needs improvement	No, but in progress
1. Does your community have a set of procedures for dealing with site selectors?				
2. Can your primary contact respond quickly and appropriately to queries (i.e. demographics, sites and buildings)?				
3. Is your primary contact aware of the site selection requirements of your community's specific target industries?				
4. Is your contact familiar with appropriate protocols dealing with site selectors?				
5. Is your contact familiar with how to host a community visit with site selectors?				
6. Does your community have a true understanding of what first impression it makes to site selectors or investors?				
Total Points for Site Selection Process Out of (12)				

Go to Part 2, Section G for Monitoring Investment Inquiries

Scoring

Yes = 2 points
 Yes, but needs improvement = 1 point
 No, but in progress = 1 point
 No = 0 Points

Category	Total Points Possible	Your Score	Percentage
Part 1: Basic Level			
A. Basic Community Information and Profile	50		
B. Land Inventory	18		
C. Investment Marketing and Toolbox	12		
D. Land Use Planning and Infrastructure	52		
E. Economic Development Capacity	57		
F. Site Selection Process	12		
	201		
Part 2: Advanced Level			
G. Monitoring Investment Inquiries	8		
H. Additional Considerations Regarding Land Inventory	58		
I. Additional Considerations Regarding Investment Marketing and Toolbox	14		
	80		

Part 2: Advanced Level

Section G: Monitoring Investment Inquiries	Yes	No	Yes, but needs improvement	No, but in progress
1. Does your community have a system for monitoring investment inquiries?				
2. If yes, does your community track missed opportunities and work to improve ways in which it deals with potential investors?				
3. Does your community maintain an investment aftercare program?				
4. Are you aware of investment going on elsewhere as a result of your community's failure to meet the needs of an investor?				
Total Points for Monitoring Investment Inquires Out of 8				

Section H: Additional Considerations Regarding Land Inventory	Yes	No	Yes, but needs improvement	No, but in progress
1. Does the inventory provide the following site information for each property?				
1.1 Allowable uses				
1.2 Lease or purchase price				
1.3 Location				
1.4 Size, indicating minimum and maximum land available				
1.5 Zoning (type and category)				
1.6 Taxes				
1.7 Electricity provider and capacity				
1.8 Water and sewer providers with details				
1.9 Gas provider with details				
1.10 Information regarding site contamination				
1.11 Telecommunications provider with details				
1.12 Access to transportations networks				
1.13 Owner or contact information				
1.14 Contact names for the community's planning and building officials				
2. When a property has an existing building, does the inventory provide the following information:				
2.1 Total square feet / metres				
2.2 Dimensions in feet / metres				
2.3 Ceiling height in feet / metres				
2.4 General condition				
2.5 Record of site condition (i.e. contamination)				
2.6 Age				
2.7 Number of stories				
2.8 Number of truck docks and drive-in doors				
2.9 Floor, wall and roof type				
2.10 Heating costs				
2.11 Other features (i.e. sprinkler system, crane, parking)				
3. Is the inventory available in an electronic searchable database?				
4. Is the inventory tied into your community's Geographic Information System?				
5. Does the inventory include both publicly and privately owed property?				
6. Does the inventory include maps or pictures of each property?				
Total Points for Additional Considerations Regarding Land Inventory Out of 58				

Section I: Additional Considerations Regarding Investment Marketing and Toolbox	Yes	No	Yes, but needs improvement	No, but in progress
1. What form of investment marketing does your community participate in? (Note: Only pursue options that are deemed strategic; otherwise they are a waste of resources)				
1.1 Personal visits to site selectors or target industries				
1.2 Specific investment promotional website				
1.3 Conferences or trade shows				
1.4 Direct email marketing or newsletter				
1.5 Familiarization tours				
1.6 Investment marketing specific brochures (i.e. target industries)				
1.7 Advertise in trade magazines or journals				
Total Points for Additional Considerations Regarding Investment Marketing and Tools Out of 14				

Appendix B: Census Division No. 5

Municipal Districts

Kneehill County
Starland County
Vulcan County
Wheatland County

Indian Reserves

Siksika 146

Towns

Drumheller
Strathmore
Three Hills
Trochu
Vulcan

Villages

Acme
Arrowwood
Carbon
Carmangay
Champion
Delia
Hussar
Linden
Lomond
Milo
Morrin
Munson
Rockyford
Standard

Hamlets

Ardenode
Bircham
Brant
Carseland
Chancellor
Cheadle
Cluny
Craigmyle
Ensign
Gleichen
Herronton
Hesketh
Huxley
Kirkcaldy
Lyalta
Michichi
Mossleigh
Namaka
Nightingale
Queenstown
Rosebud
Rowley
Rumsey
Shouldice
Sunnyslope
Swalwell
Torrington
Travers
Wimborne