

Economic Development & Tourism Strategy 2023 - 2027



Background – Who Is Lake Country?

The District of Lake Country, situated between Kelowna and Vernon, has three lakes within the municipal boundaries. With several recreational trails and abundant outdoor activities, the area is a picturesque landscape that is popular for all ages, making Lake Country not just a beautiful home, but a perfect place to visit, work and do business.

Since 2014 the District has experienced tremendous growth, changing the traditional demographics and make up of the community, including new businesses and industry types. Lake Country continues to be a destination for visitors who enjoy all the Okanagan has to offer including pristine beaches, Okanagan Rail Trail, farm to table local produce along with award winning wineries and restaurants. Almost half of Lake Country's land base is within the Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR) making farming an important industry within the District.

Early in 2020 Council established the following vision and mission statements that are to be incorporated and supported throughout the Economic Development strategy.

Vision statement:

Lake Country, Living the Okanagan Way. Embracing our Histories and Nurturing our Future.

Mission statement:

To nurture a healthy natural environment, strong rural character and urban core, sustainable infrastructure, economic opportunities, an inclusive community with involved citizens, through respectful, transparent government, focused on balanced strategic decision-making.

Implementing a vision and mission statement helps establish the overarching theme for how the District supports businesses and tourism in Lake Country.

Economic Development & Tourism Purpose:

The purpose of the plan is to support Council's strategic goal in line and supporting the Official Community Plan (OCP) Section 6 - to build a strong and vibrant community by attracting, supporting, and retaining businesses, agriculture and diversifying Lake Country's tax base. The plan aims to assist local businesses to successfully provide a diverse range of goods and services to Lake Country residents and visitors. Lake Country's popularity as a visitor destination is rapidly growing, making it important to create and implement a strategy on how to attract visitors and identify what resources are required to ensure visitors have what they need to make their time in Lake Country positive and memorable. Being mindful of not detracting from and looking for opportunities to enhance the quality of life of permanent Lake Country residents.

Economic Development & Tourism Framework:

The following rules of engagement guide the framework:

- **Inclusiveness:** involve and enable the participation of all local businesses.
- **Transparency:** decision making processes are accessible, honest, and understandable. Roles and responsibilities are clearly communicated. Feedback will be provided on what stakeholders say and how their opinion was considered by decision makers.
- **Clear and Accessible:** accurate information and reporting is made available to the community in an accessible manner. Implementing mechanisms for community feedback, and simple ways to have questions answered.
- **Respect:** engagement requires mutual respect of all participants including Council and staff. Listening with an open mind will show consideration and value for the business community and their point of view. Staff will always strive to choose appropriate language that reflects a positive attitude and respect for the variety of businesses and tourism stakeholder groups that make up Lake Country.
- **Honesty:** being truthful and reliable by following through on commitments and acting in a trustworthy manner regardless of the situation or subject.

SCOT Analysis:

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established diverse business community that continues to grow. • Tourism and agriculture are a large part of the business community. • Several long-term businesses continue to succeed over several decades. • Majority of goods and services are available locally. • Local Chamber of Commerce that supports local businesses. • Established popular and well attended community events. 	<p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certain services (primarily medical) are unavailable locally. • Cost of shopping local at times is unrealistic when compared to big box stores in neighbouring communities and shopping on-line. • Online shopping and services gaining popularity and are more convenient. • Community members might be in the habit of going North or South for goods and services when they are available locally. • Educating community members on the importance of shopping local can be lost due to apathy. • Community lack of understanding of why main street hasn't been developed or why there is a lack of commercial/industrial businesses within the District. • Landowners with undeveloped properties cannot be mandated to begin the development/building process. • Lack of commercial space.
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing community creates markets and opportunity for new goods and services to be offered locally. • Diverse community with various needs and buying habits. • Investors see Lake Country as a place to do business and thrive. • To live, work, build in a sustainable green environment. 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information overload. • Important information not reaching intended audience in a timely manner. • Community rumours circulate that are not factual or true. • Lack of understanding of jurisdictional oversight (e.g. Kelowna/Lake Country boundary – Beaver Lake Rd)

Economic Development & Tourism Roles:

Role	Primary responsibility to support the strategy:
<i>Economic Development Specialist – Staff</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement Economic Development & Tourism strategy. • Continuously look for opportunities and ways to assist and promote business in Lake Country. • Apply for funding as it comes available to apply to local programs that align with the strategy. • Develop relationships with developers, try to influence development to suit the community. • Manage District’s relationship with business owners and oversee issues and challenges as they emerge. • Conduit between Economic Development & Tourism Committee, Council, CAO and leadership team to ensure that District goals and strategies are being met and implemented within reason. • Representative at local and provincial committees and roundtables. • Liaison with the Lake Country Chamber of Commerce working towards synergies and partnerships to assist local businesses.
<i>Economic Development & Tourism Committee</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide and assist implementation of the Economic Development & Tourism strategy. • Influence and use network of contacts to be in the “know” and able to read the pulse of the community. • Advocate for existing businesses and what they require to be successful. • Sounding board for new ideas and concepts.
<i>Council</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduit for accurate and truthful information being dispersed throughout the community. • Contact for constituents to relay concerns and opportunities to be considered. • Ambassadors for Council decisions and District programs and projects.

Economic Development & Tourism Objectives:

The following four objectives are meant to be evaluated and implemented (pending budget, grants, etc.) between 2023 to 2027 (five years). The plan will continually be monitored and revised as the District grows and evolves.

1. Strengthen Existing Businesses & Foster Diversification:

- ❖ **Challenge:** *Assist Lake Country businesses to be successful and continue to remain open to the community. Provide diverse choice and options as the community grows and expects more locally.*
 - ✓ Development of programs and campaigns to encourage community members to recognize the importance of shopping local.
 - ✓ Better understand business needs and what supports are required from the District.
 - ✓ Twice per year conduct business walks with Council.
 - ✓ Advocate and participate in regional initiatives for foreign worker programs - to allow for the continuation of supporting local business in the community.
 - ✓ Refinement of the Farm Gate Trail and Scenic Sip Wine Trail – continuing to define and evolve brand recognition.
 - ✓ Support implementation of the [Agriculture plan](#) and assist Lake Country farmers to help achieve community goals.
 - ✓ Continued community education on the importance to support local for all business sectors within the community.



2. Diversify Lake Country’s Tax Base:

- ❖ **Challenge:** *Zoning of a business park that would attract commercial and light industrial businesses to Lake Country.*
 - ✓ *Support and advocate for rezoning of ALR lands that could make up a future Lake Country Business Park.*
 - ✓ *Promote Lake Country Business Park concept to businesses who are considering relocating or starting up.*
 - ✓ *Support development of main street and recruitment of new businesses.*
 - ✓ *Work towards increasing the tax base resulting in less tax burden for residential property owners.*
 - *Tax base improvements could be realized by 2028 or shortly thereafter:*

2022:	2028 Target:
Residential – 87.34%	Residential – 78%
Utilities – 1.34%	Utilities – 1.53%
Light Industry – 2.12%	Light Industry – 9.86%
Business- 8.63%	Business – 10%
Recreational – 0.51%	Recreational – 0.55%
Farm – 0.06%	Farm – 0.06%

3. Review and Update Current Permitting Processes to Support New and Existing Businesses:

- ❖ **Challenge:** *Businesses applying to develop, or grow are experiencing long wait times (2 plus years). As per the Official Community Plan 6.1.9 the application and permitting process should be modernized to reflect the current size of the community and provide a more efficient and reliable timeline and transparency of the process.*
 - ✓ *Support the planning department options for addressing the current backlog of permit applications and new streamline approach to the application process.*
 - ✓ *Support an increase in the 2023 budget for resources to the planning department to action recommendations.*
 - ✓ *Support the creation of a full time Economic Development officer and additional budget allocation to execute a detailed 2–3-year plan to communicate new processes and stimulate business growth (2023/2024 budget).*

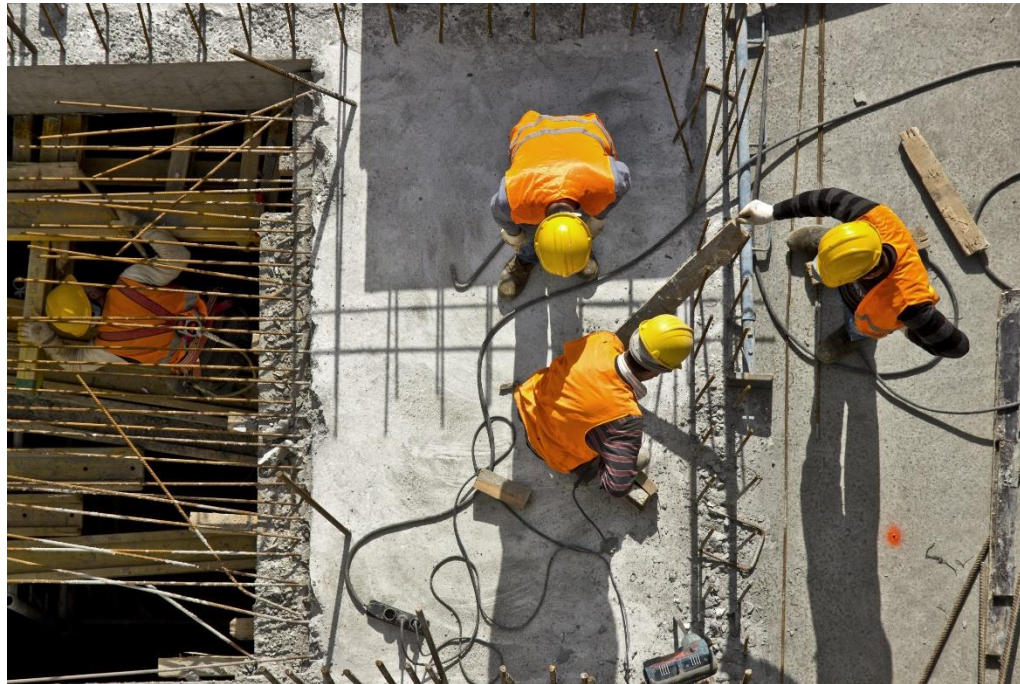
4. Foster Environmental & Sustainability Initiatives:

- ❖ **Challenge:** *Identify, investigate, and foster environmental programs within the community that will enhance the quality of life for those working and living in the community while assisting businesses to further their commitments and targets towards environmental stewardship.*
 - ✓ Partner and participate in the Okanagan Clean Technology Study.
 - ✓ Identify, partner, contribute and participate in environmental programs and initiatives initiated by RDCO, COEDC, UBCO and Okanagan College.
 - ✓ Work with property owners of Lake Country business park to encourage green technology businesses.
 - ✓ Work with stakeholders to identify and apply for grant funding for environmental projects.
 - ✓ Identify property to support Rapid Electric Vehicle Charging station(s).
 - ✓ Work with businesses and community members to eliminate the use of plastic bags and one time use items.



5. Support Development of Small Industrial Properties & Influence Creation of Commercial Space:

- ❖ **Challenge:** *Persuade developers to provide much needed commercial space along with development of Main Street. Support and assist with rezoning of land for commercial and industrial purposes.*
 - ✓ *Establish and maintain a relationship with developers making them aware of community needs for additional commercial space.*
 - ✓ *Work with Planning and Engineering to communicate what type of programs and incentives the District can offer to make development a potential reality.*
 - ✓ *Support grant funding available to create a vision to link Main Street and the Woodsdale neighbourhoods, supporting the [Mobility Master Plan](#).*
 - ✓ *Assisting property owners and developers better understand community expectations for development.*



6. Enhance Tourism & Visitor Experience

- ❖ **Challenge:** *Attract the right type of visitor to help benefit local businesses who rely on tourism clientele, specifically seasonal. Better understand what Lake Country visitors want and expect while being in the community and providing the appropriate services and resources to minimize disruption to locals.*

- ✓ *Provide short-term vacation rental owners with appropriate training and education on how to be a responsible host and good neighbour (possibly in partnership with the Lake Country Chamber of Commerce).*
- ✓ *Bring existing vacation rentals into compliance with Lake Country bylaws.*
- ✓ *Develop, launch, refine and promote **visitlakecountry.ca** as an online resource for visitor information.*
- ✓ *Continue to strengthen the ongoing relationship with Tourism Kelowna for Destination Marketing Services for Lake Country.*
- ✓ *Oversee the agreement and memorandum of understanding with Tourism Kelowna for destination marketing.*
- ✓ *Create a tourism strategy to define goals and objectives over the next 10 years.*
- ✓ *Establish, launch, and refine:*
 - a. *Lake Country Mobile Visitor Centre.*
 - b. *Farm Gate Trail program benefiting visitors and locals.*
 - c. *Winter market beginning in 2024.*
 - d. *Mobile food vendor strategy for implementation in 2024.*



What Success Looks Like:

Objectives and tactics implemented over the duration of the strategy, 2023 to 2027 are meant to achieve the goals and end results outlined in this strategy. Depending on the objective, tactics will be fluid and flexible, and may require separate plans to properly implement. The strategy will constantly evolve to ensure objectives are met within a reasonable time frame (five-years). Staff along with the Economic Development & Tourism Committee will review the strategy throughout the five-years to monitor progress of each objective. District staff allocated time and effort will be spent to work towards achieving the ultimate desired outcome of having a strong economy in Lake Country that locals and visitors willingly and continually support.

