TOWN OF OKOTOKS

2024-2029

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT **STRATEGIC PLAN**

UNLEASHING ECONOMIC POTENTIAL:

The Rock-Solid Path to Growth

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Economic Development Strategic Plan has been developed to establish a well-defined roadmap for fostering growth and innovation within the Okotoks economy over the next five years. This plan incorporates policy directions outlined in the Town of Okotoks Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and aligns with the broader Okotoks Strategic Plan.

Okotoks, nestled along the Sheep River and adjacent to the rolling foothills, with the majestic Rocky Mountains in the distance, is located approximately 15 kilometers south of Calgary on Highway 2A. Okotoks provides its residents with a high quality of life and offers ample recreational activities, arts and culture offerings and has a positive reputation for popular community events. Residents have access to services and employment opportunities that are generally offered only in larger population centres. These benefits encourage a strong foundation from which to grow its population and strengthen its business community.

The Town of Okotoks has continued to invest in infrastructure projects to accommodate and foster residential and non-residential growth, necessary given the expectation of population growth to 75,000 people in the next 60 years. By developing a clear path of action, the Economic Development Strategic Plan provides a comprehensive framework that will guide decision-making and resource allocation towards achieving economic prosperity and sustainable development in Okotoks. This plan outlines specific strategies, initiatives and goals that will drive economic growth, attract investment and create employment opportunities within the community.

The recommendations in this plan foster the uniqueness of Okotoks' economy. Building from interested party feedback and data analysis that identified key sectors including advanced manufacturing, creative industries and tourism as holding specific promise, the plan also gave consideration of best practices to chart a direction to diversify and strengthen the local economy.

Relationship building with local businesses, organizations and people within the community and the surrounding region are foundational to Okotoks' success.

ENSURE FUTURE FOCUSED AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

BUILD UP OKOTOKS' TARGET SECTORS

LEVERAGE OKOTOKS' LEADERSHIP IN ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP TO BUILD ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Based on research and evidence gathered to support its development, the strategy thoroughly examines evolving priorities, trends and unique economic strengths of Okotoks. It establishes three strategic directions that serve as a roadmap for the town's economic development: Ensure Future Focused and Sustainable Economic Development Services, Build up Okotoks' Target Sectors and Leverage Okotoks' Leadership in Environmental Stewardship to Build Economic Opportunities. These directions enable Okotoks to prioritize specific economic sectors that will contribute to the outcomes identified in the Town of Okotoks Strategic Plan including the creation of a sustainable community focused on long-term economic growth. This is based on increasing the town's tax base through priority sector support, fostering a business-friendly environment by implementing proactive feedback systems, increasing marketing efforts to encourage attraction of visitors, business and talent and becoming a leader in sustainable management.

BACKGROUND WORK

BACKGROUND WORK

This 5-year Economic Development Strategic Plan is key in guiding initiatives related to economic development from all Town departments (business centres) to support a strong economic foundation and future for Okotoks.

There were 4 phases in the process of developing this plan as highlighted below. Research conducted during this process identified advanced manufacturing, creative industries and tourism as key sectors of focus for economic growth. These sectors emerged through a base economic analysis that included a competitive assessment, a local and regional workforce analysis and an investment readiness assessment. These findings directly influenced the strategic directions, objectives and actions that have been developed to support economic growth in Okotoks.

INTRODUCTION

This plan integrates and aligns the Town's strategic and statutory plans, providing a path to achieving the identified strategic directions. This was achieved through a four phased approach that sought partner feedback, research and analysis and a comprehensive review of key documents.

PHASE

1 LAUNCH

PROJECT LAUNCH

This project was launched in August 2023. A project charter outlined all deliverables and provided a communications plan that guided the consultation and engagement process. Project progress was tracked through the project workplan to ensure efficient delivery of tasks and milestones. Internal documents identified through desktop research and provided by the Town were reviewed for relevancy and insights that supported the project outcomes.

2 ENGAGE

INTERESTED/AFFECTED PARTY ENGAGEMENT

Targeted engagement drew knowledge from local interested/affected parties and provided an understanding of the current economic climate in Okotoks. Approximately 35 individuals were consulted within this phase through in-person workshops and one-on-one interviews, along with the 386 respondents who participated in the Business Satisfaction Survey.

3 STRATEGIZE

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Building on the engagement findings, a competitive analysis, local and regional workforce analysis and an investment readiness assessment were completed. These findings provided the insight to fully understand Okotoks' strengths, opportunities, aspirations, risks and desired results (SOARR).

4 PRESENT

VALIDATION AND FINAL REPORT

In this phase, strategic directions and objectives were developed and informed specific actions based on the primary and secondary research captured in the SOARR analysis. A two-page summary of recommended key performance measures was developed that includes timelines and indicators to monitor progress of strategy implementation and impact.

KEY FINDINGS

OKOTOKS' DEMOGRAPHICS, LABOUR AND MACRO-ECONOMIC TRENDS

FAVOURABLE GROWTH CLIMATE

Located approximately 15 kilometers south of Calgary on Provincial Highway 2A, Okotoks has direct access to the largest city in Alberta. Okotoks provides its residents with ample recreational activities and has a positive reputation for arts and culture offerings. This location offers residents with access to services and employment opportunities that generally only larger population centres can provide. This combined with Okotoks' desirable quality of life provides the town with a strong foundation from which to grow its population and business community.

Okotoks has witnessed a stable rate of population growth on pace with the provincial average. Between 2016 and 2021, Okotoks' population grew by more than 1,350 people, representing a nearly 5% increase. Nearly half of this growth has been from migration from other centres across Alberta and Canada.

OKOTOKS PROVED TO BE RESILIENT TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC EMPLOYMENT IMPACT

The community demonstrated remarkable job resilience amid the COVID-19 pandemic. A clear indication of this is the consistent growth in jobs within the town from 2019 to 2021 – an impressive 28%. Okotoks' resilience stands in stark contrast to the broader Calgary Metropolitan Region (CMR), which experienced a 4% decline in jobs, as well as the province of Alberta and Canada as a whole, seeing a 4% and 3% decline in jobs, respectively. These figures provide compelling evidence of Okotoks' ability to weather the pandemic's economic impact and maintain a thriving job market.

RETAIL-BASED JOBS ARE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE INCREASING IN OKOTOKS

From 2016 to 2023, retail-based jobs[1] experienced the largest increase among location-based jobs, adding approximately 2,786 jobs. In the upcoming decade, retail-based jobs are projected to experience high rates of increase, adding an additional 1,217 jobs, which is significantly higher than the growth projected for industrial-based jobs.[2] This trend is not surprising given that the Okotoks economy is primarily driven by the service sector, which accounts for 82% of Okotoks' economy, or 11,987 jobs.[3] By contrast, the goods-producing sectors, primarily driven by export-based industries, represent 16% of the community's jobs, or 2,406 jobs.[4] It is worth noting that Okotoks has a significantly larger share of jobs in retail trade, educational services and accommodation and food services when compared to the CMR and Alberta.

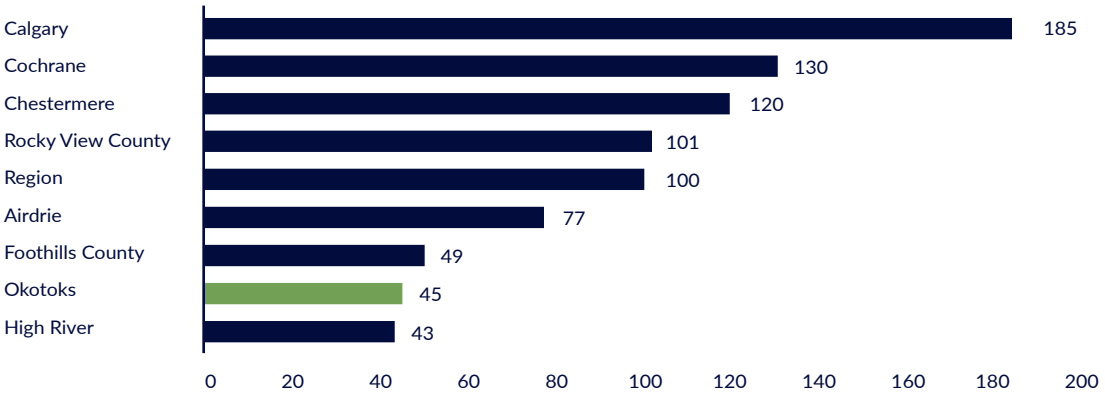
OKOTOKS SHOWS WORKFORCE STRENGTHS IN THE TRADES, BUT LAGS BEHIND REGIONAL COMMUNITIES IN THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

Based on the 2021 Census, Okotoks has displayed a higher labour participation rate of 68% compared to the national average at 63% and are on par with the provincial participation rate of 68%. This, coupled with a young population and a higher percentage of apprenticeship or trades certificates, position the town favourably for economic success in goods-producing sectors such as construction and manufacturing. However, it is worth noting that Okotoks has one of the lowest proportions of a knowledge occupation labour force compared to peer communities in the CMR. This may deter companies with more advanced production processes from establishing themselves in Okotoks. To address this issue, it is essential to attract and retain knowledge workers from within the region, including Calgary, Rocky View County and Cochrane.

1 Retail-based jobs include industries in retail trade; arts, entertainment and recreation; accommodation and food services; other services (except public administration); and a portion of jobs in the administrative and support, waste management and remediation services. Definition adapted by Deloitte LLP.
2 Lightcast, Datarun 2023.1
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.

According to the creative index[5] analysis, Okotoks ranks relatively low compared to other communities in the CMR, in terms of the factors that make a community appealing to creative industries. The town's low population diversity, limited share of high-tech jobs, lower percentage of labour with post-secondary degrees and fewer individuals with knowledge of a non-official language may limit the ability to develop a thriving creative sector.

FIGURE 1
Creative Index Score, Comparable Communities and Region vs. Okotoks, 2023



FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS ARE CHANGING THE COMMUTING LANDSCAPE IN OKOTOKS

Looking at commuting data can offer insight into how many Okotoks residents live and work in the community, which has an impact on community engagement and an increase on local spending. In 2021, approximately 4,955 commuted out of Okotoks to work. Compared to 2016, the number of people commuting out of Okotoks to work fell by 1,955 people (28%). This reduction in out-commuting is closely matched by an increase in the number of people working from home during the same period. In 2016, 1,290 people worked from home, while in 2021, this number increased to 3,205 people, representing a 148% increase. While these trends are indicative of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is unclear if they will continue as remote work becomes a topic of disagreement for some employers and employees.

From 2016 to 2021, there was a decrease in the number of people commuting out to work in almost every industry sector except for accommodation and food services; retail trade; and agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting. The most significant changes were seen in mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction (-405 people); professional, scientific and technical services (-245 people); wholesale trade (-190 people) and finance and insurance (-185 people). While flexible work arrangements cannot be solely credited for these reductions, it is worth noting that professional, scientific and technical services and finance and insurance are among the industries that offer the most remote work opportunities.[6]

5 The creative index is a gauge that measures a given community's creative economy by analyzing the amount and capability of its creative assets.
6 https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/remote-work-statistics/

THE 2023 BUSINESS SURVEY RESULTS

The purpose of the Town of Okotoks 2023 Business Survey was to gain insight into the needs of the local business community and to identify potential strategies from the results that the Okotoks Economic Development Department can use to address those needs. The goals of the survey were to understand the attitudes and perceptions of business, identify key priority areas for businesses, and identify potential expansion or retention opportunities.

The 2023 Business Survey used a mixed mode methodology, collecting responses by representative phone and web surveys using the Town's business license directory. Respondents were randomly selected and contacted to provide their responses. This flexible approach allowed for wider participation among the business community, while ensuring that the results have a high level of accuracy (with a +/-5% margin of error at a 95% confidence level) and are statistically representative of the business community in the region. The survey ran May 10 to June 6, 2023, and received 386 responses. Below are the key findings from the Business Survey.

PRIORITY FACTORS FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES

Using Deloitte's proprietary derived importance methodology, it was found that the top priority areas for local businesses included access to affordable housing, local regulations and processes, cost of office/commercial/industrial space and municipal property taxes. These priority factors are statistically more likely to improve overall business satisfaction.

BUSINESS PERFORMANCE FORECAST

This considers the changes in staff, revenue and attitudes among the business community. The metric uses a scale of -10 to +10 to score the overall direction of the business climate at the point in time of measurement, to identify if it is contracting, stable or expanding. Okotoks scored a +4.8, indicating an increasing trend in business performance and a positive outlook for the business community.

HOME-BASED BUSINESSES

Most home-based businesses surveyed (65%) do not have plans to ever grow out of their homes. Of those who participated, 26% have plans to move to a commercial location in the next 5 years.

COMMUNICATIONS

The majority of businesses that responded (71%) reported they would prefer to receive information about events, news and information via email.

FIRMOGRAPHICS

The survey captured a mix of new and longstanding businesses within Okotoks. Majority of businesses have 1-5 full-time and part-time employees (76%) and were in the retail trade sector (29%).

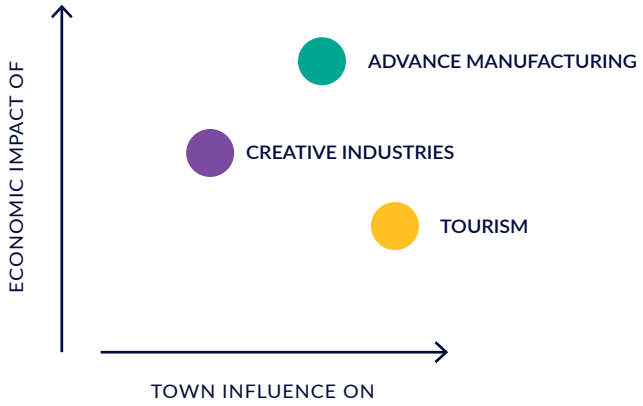
SATISFACTION

The vast majority of businesses (84%) were satisfied with the town as a location to own and operate a business. Businesses had the highest satisfaction levels with the availability of professional services (e.g., banks, accountants, legal, professionals) (92%), transportation of in-bound and out-bound goods (87%) and access to customer base (86%).

PRIORITY SECTOR ANALYSIS

Building on the macro-economic trends and Okotoks' community and economic profile, priority sectors for Okotoks were identified. Based on the employment growth trends, industry clusters and export opportunities, Okotoks' emerging and potential economic drivers include advanced manufacturing, creative industries and tourism. These sectors were then further analyzed to clarify their overall economic performance and to determine how to best position these target sectors for growth.

FIGURE 2
Economic Impact and Town Influence Matrix on Priority Sectors



CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

The creative economy concept represents the shift from a goods producing economy to a knowledge-based economy fueled by ideas and innovation. Creative ecosystems are a well-established set of ideas that evolved with input from researchers, policy makers and thought leaders from the creative industries and the wider cultural sector.

The creative economy concept suggests that economic and cultural development are co-dependant and that workers in this sector have a higher propensity to support arts and cultural industries. Creative ecosystems consist of interlinked creative cultural resources (e.g. facilities, spaces, festivals, makers, artists, designers, arts and heritage organizations, digital enterprises), human resources, policymakers, entrepreneurs, intermediaries and knowledge transfer channels and creative venues, workspaces and platforms either physical or digital. The interconnections and interdependencies make knowledge and knowledge flow the underlying dynamic, and a requirement, of a creative ecosystem. Knowledge flow connects individuals across cultural disciplines, across public, private and non-profit sectors, from community-based to professional forms of creative expression and participation, among others.

Attracting flagship creative investments as economic generators is an essential element of a creative ecosystem. This is often a single event or a specific flagship institutional investment which is seen as a major catalyst for urban development.

Despite not ranking high in the creative index, Okotoks has the potential to develop its creative sector and attract creative professionals seeking natural amenities and proximity to a big city. The town is projected to experience job growth in educational services; professional, scientific and technical services; and finance and insurance sectors.[7] Notably, these last two industries are known to offer remote work opportunities, making Okotoks an ideal location for talent in those specific industries. The Government of Alberta careers, learning and employment information, ALIS, states that the ability to work from home was an emerging trend before the COVID-19 pandemic, and for many businesses, that shift is here to stay. In one survey, 74% of small and medium-sized enterprises said they would continue to offer their employees the choice to work offsite.[8]

To capitalize on this trend, the Town can target growth in multi-tenant office spaces that cater to businesses in these sectors. This aligns with the recommended development typologies outlined in the Okotoks Commercial and Industrial Growth Study.[9]

7 Projections are from Lightcast Datarun 2023.1
8 https://alis.alberta.ca/plan-your-career/workplace-trends/remote-work/remote-work-what-it-looks-like-and-how-to-make-it-work-for-you/
9 Town of Okotoks, Commercial and Industrial Growth Study, May 2021

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

Currently there is no common definition being used for advanced manufacturing. Advanced manufacturing is broad in scope and encompasses all manufacturing activities; however, innovative technologies are a central piece to this industry.[10] In the case of Okotoks' economy, advanced technology can play a supplementary role in other priority sectors and areas of focus.

One growth opportunity for Okotoks lies in leveraging its strength in trades labour for lean or light manufacturing. Light industrial refers to production that can be carried out in smaller facilities or factories, on smaller land parcels, using lighter equipment, and with lower capital intensity compared to heavy industry processes. These operations are often integrated and located in a campus-style setting. Light industrial spaces are utilized for various activities such as assembly, disassembly, fabrication, finishing, manufacturing, packaging and repairing of different types of materials.

In addition, Okotoks has the opportunity to leverage innovations emerging from the creative sector. By attracting light manufacturing opportunities that align with environmental and water stewardship, the Town can reinforce its leadership in this sector. Exploring possibilities in value-added agriculture operations, such as vertical farming, that can be integrated with tourism experiences in the town, especially in relation to culinary innovation, will further enhance Okotoks' economic potential.

To capitalize on innovations from the creative sector, the Town can actively seek partnerships and collaborations with local artists, designers and creative entrepreneurs. By fostering an environment that supports creativity and innovation, the community can attract businesses that specialize in the production of creative products or services. This could include industries such as art galleries, design studios, digital media production or cultural events.

In terms of light manufacturing opportunities, Okotoks can focus on attracting businesses that align with its commitment to environmental and water stewardship. This could involve companies that develop sustainable products, utilize eco-friendly manufacturing processes, or contribute to water conservation efforts. By positioning and marketing itself as a hub for environmentally conscious manufacturing, Okotoks can attract businesses that share similar values and contribute to the Town's sustainability goals.

Furthermore, Okotoks can explore opportunities in value-added agriculture operations, particularly in areas like vertical farming. Vertical farming allows for the cultivation of crops in vertically stacked layers, often in controlled environments. This innovative approach to agriculture can maximize land use efficiency and reduce water consumption. By integrating vertical farming with tourism experiences, such as farm-to-table culinary experiences, Okotoks can offer unique and immersive experiences for visitors while supporting local agriculture and promoting sustainability.

Capitalizing on innovations from the creative sector, attracting environmentally conscious light manufacturing opportunities, and exploring value-added agriculture operations like vertical farming, positions Okotoks to diversify its economic base, create new job opportunities and enhance its reputation as an innovative and sustainable community.

TOURISM

Attracting visitors and residents to Okotoks through tourism presents a significant opportunity. Okotoks already boasts a high concentration of arts, entertainment and recreation businesses, which act as primary attractions for tourism. The retail trade and accommodation and food services sectors are experiencing rapid growth, and there is potential for boutique businesses in these sectors to become key contributors to the town's tourism experience.

The Commercial and Industrial Growth Study supports this notion and identifies Downtown Culinary Row as a priority growth area for Okotoks. The goal is for Okotoks to become a unique food and beverage destination within the South Calgary Market. By attracting, supporting and retaining these businesses, Okotoks can position itself as a "Culinary Town" and champion its culinary offerings.

Improving existing tourism experiences within the town can also support talent attraction and retention. Leveraging the Town's success with community events and positioning them as tourism drivers poses an opportunity to expand visitation further. These experiences showcase the quality of life offered in Okotoks and provide residents with appealing options for utilizing their recreational budget.

10 What is Advanced Manufacturing? • Trillium Network (trilliummfg.ca)

INVESTMENT READINESS ASSESSMENT

This comprehensive review evaluated the Economic Development department's capacity and the overall readiness in product and services crucial to attracting new investments. The investment readiness assessment was completed by reviewing the Town of Okotoks website with special attention paid to the economic development webpage. Economic Development departmental staff supported in addressing knowledge gaps that were not available in the public domain. The assessment revealed several strengths in investment attraction, including efficient investor intake and tracking processes, effective collaboration and rapport-building and a welcoming land-use planning regimen. These three areas form the foundation of investment readiness and foster the ability to provide excellent tracking capabilities throughout the investment process, facilitate collaboration among Town departments and external service providers, offer the ability for economic development to work closely with investors to identify suitable parcels of land and support any necessary zoning changes.

The assessment also identified areas of improvement and opportunity which are outlined in the final action plan. Actioning recommended items related to investment attraction such as priority sector analysis and proactive investment marketing efforts will have a significant positive impact on the perception of doing business in Okotoks and will support future efforts in attracting investments.

OKOTOKS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUCCESSES TO DATE

FOOTHILLS OKOTOKS REGIONAL WATER PROJECT

Historically, the limited access to water has posed a significant constraint to economic growth in Okotoks. To address this issue, the Foothills Okotoks Regional Water Project has been initiated with the goal of establishing a shared municipal water system between the Town of Okotoks and Foothills County. This project will provide Okotoks with a supplementary water source, which will support the Town's aspirations for a robust economy that fosters growth through new residential and business development. The funds committed to date for this project exceeds $30 million, with contributions from both the Province of Alberta and the Alberta Municipal Wastewater Partnership Water for Life Program. This initiative is viewed as a significant milestone in the future of economic development in Okotoks.[11]

OKOTOKS EVENTS

During engagement, participants consistently referred to Okotoks' high quality of life. A big component of Okotoks' community culture can be contributed to successful events that bring the community together. The annual Light Up Okotoks! event brings 30,000 people to the downtown area during the Christmas season, supporting local businesses and community vibrancy. Further exploring events as a tourist attraction and tourism as a priority sector is explored in the Action Plan.

11 Water Solution | The Town of Okotoks

STABILITY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICE DELIVERY IN OKOTOKS

The Town's Economic Development team is relatively new, with an average tenure of approximately 2 years. Throughout this time, significant progress has been made in terms of industry engagement and outreach. Two notable successes during this period include working towards implementing a customer relationship management (CRM) system and incorporating Localintel, an online platform that compiles relevant data about the community advantageous to businesses, into the Economic Development (Business) webpage of the Town's website. These initiatives have received positive feedback from key economic development clients, creating an opportunity to expand and strengthen relationships with other interested/affected parties who may not be as closely tied to economic development service delivery. These improvements will serve as a foundation to further build upon the momentum that Okotoks' Economic Development has already established.

BUSINESS VISITATION PROGRAM

This ongoing program involves regular business visits conducted by the Okotoks Economic Development team. The team actively participates in grand openings and other significant milestones of local businesses, fostering connections with the Town. These achievements are celebrated and shared through Okotoks' Success Stories program.

"MORE OKOTOKS" MARKETING CAMPAIGN

In recent years, the Okotoks Economic Development team has successfully established a strong collaborative relationship with the Chamber of Commerce. One notable achievement of this partnership was the implementation of the 'More Okotoks' marketing campaign. This comprehensive campaign encompassed a range of initiatives, including the development of a dedicated website, a captivating video series, as well as the strategic placement of branded benches and prominent OKOTOKS letters in the downtown area.

MUNICIPAL POLICY UPDATES

The Town has made significant efforts to foster innovative opportunities for businesses in Okotoks by developing and adapting Town policies. In 2020, temporary patio guidelines were introduced to address the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. These guidelines not only provided additional dining spaces but also contributed to the vibrancy of the community by activating outdoor areas. The introduction of mobile vending unit guidelines has created new prospects for food and beverage businesses, allowing them to potentially fill any service gaps within the town. The implementation of filming industry guidelines has made it easier for filmmakers to access information and support for their projects within the town. These policies collectively aim to offer additional business opportunities that align perfectly with the proposed creative sector.

CRITICAL PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

A number of items emerged from research and engagement as being essential to the long-term foundation for success in Okotoks. Resources should be prioritized to the areas listed below to ensure economic development in Okotoks remains focused and prepared for growth.

PRIORITY	CONSIDERATIONS
COMPLETION OF THE FOOTHILLS OKOTOKS REGIONAL WATER PROJECT	Ensuring access to supplementary water is the top priority for the Town of Okotoks in the next two years as it is crucial for the town's capacity to grow. It is imperative to consider water usage not only for the current needs of the town but also for future business expansion and investment attraction opportunities.
BUILD CAPACITY FOR TOURISM MARKETING AND DEVELOPMENT	Collaborating with community tourism stakeholders and Travel Alberta to strategically leverage the Foothills Tourism Development Zone is crucial for advancing the growth and enrichment of this pivotal sector. To support this, it is critical to take stock and develop an understanding of how the ecosystem currently operates. Additionally, it is of utmost importance to foster local tourism leadership in Okotoks, providing support to tourism marketing initiatives and aspiring tourism entrepreneurs with the goal of increasing visitors' length of stay and spend in Okotoks.
CONTINUED WORK ON INTERNAL POLICY AND PROCESS IMPROVEMENT	Okotoks possesses numerous strengths that can be effectively leveraged. It is crucial to ensure these strengths are recognized not only within Okotoks' business community but also among the general population of Okotoks and external interested/affected parties. Dispelling myths that suggest Okotoks is not business-friendly is essential to get the general public and community and business leaders to be active cheerleaders for Okotoks. To achieve this, it is important to prioritize clear and proactive communication regarding business development processes and successes. These messages should be easily accessible and consistent, providing a transparent and user-friendly experience for businesses.
PROACTIVE INVESTMENT ATTRACTION	The priority sectors for Okotoks have been defined within this strategy as the Creative Economy, Tourism and Advanced Manufacturing. Focused investment attraction within these priority sectors will ensure a focused approach to economic development that takes into consideration existing constraints within the community. These efforts will start by deepening partnership development and research in these sectors to create a targeted value proposition and an investment attraction plan for these priority sectors.

STRATEGY OVERVIEW

STRATEGY OVERVIEW

The following vision for economic development in Okotoks is a foundational element that anchors and aligns the strategic directions to the Town of Okotoks Strategic Plan and the desire for a strong local economy. The strategic directions emerged through the priority sector and competitive analysis, workforce analysis, investment readiness assessment, targeted engagement and SOARR analysis. These strategic directions and subsequent objectives and actions will be guided by the Town's vision to be the easiest place to do business in Alberta.

VISION

The 2022-2025 Town of Okotoks Strategic Plan provides a high-level overview of Council priorities to 2025 and provides insight into the vision for economic development within Okotoks. The Strategic Priorities and Action plan will provide recommendations to the Town of Okotoks Economic Development team on a path to achieving this vision.

We are the easiest place to do business in Alberta.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

These strategic directions enable Okotoks to prioritize economic sectors that will ensure the community can foster sustainable economic growth. Increasing the town's tax base supports investment in infrastructure and amenities that further investment attraction and retention efforts, building on an already strong foundation for residents' quality of life. These directions aim to maximize economic impact for the community in a sustainable manner that fits within the Town's brand

ENSURE FUTURE FOCUSED AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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ENSURE FUTURE FOCUSED AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

In recent years, the Town of Okotoks has made significant strides in expanding its economic development services by strengthening its connections with businesses and interested/affected parties. This has been achieved through initiatives such as site visits and proactive engagement with existing businesses and potential new investors. Okotoks has also implemented a customer relationship management system and is working to integrate Localintel data into its economic development website, which has positioned the town favorably for future investment.

One of Okotoks' key advantages is its proximity to Calgary; Alberta's largest economic hub. This presents an excellent opportunity for Okotoks to attract new investment and stimulate local economic growth. However, in order to fully capitalize on this opportunity, Okotoks must establish itself as a preferred location for investment where it has a competitive advantage and build a solid foundation that fosters a positive perception of the town. This can be achieved by building on past successes, identifying priority sectors for investment and actively attracting businesses within those sectors to Okotoks.

Okotoks is already a sought-after residential destination for individuals seeking a small-town lifestyle with easy access to the amenities offered by Calgary. While Okotoks boasts a strong downtown and a thriving small business community, it can be challenging to compete with the allure of Calgary and increasing one's proximity to its amenities. To address this, it is important to support and nurture unique businesses, preferably, but not necessarily, locally owned. By doing so, Okotoks can enhance its reputation and market itself as an innovative community and differentiate itself from neighbouring towns like Strathmore, High River and Cochrane.

ALIGNMENT WITH TOWN OF OKOTOKS STRATEGIC PLAN: STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY

- Enhance the Diversification of the tax base
- Review and update processes that may be barriers to businesses choosing Okotoks

The results of the 2023 Business Survey revealed that the primary reason businesses chose to locate in Okotoks was because the owners already resided in the town. This underscores the strength of locally owned businesses. Okotoks' downtown area exemplifies this strength, with its local boutiques, coffee shops and restaurants attracting visitors from Calgary and beyond. The Town has supported the downtown area by acquiring strategic parcels of land that enable further main-street business growth as recommended in the Commercial and Industrial Growth Study. This has created a niche tourism market for road trips. With the increasing number of businesses opening in Okotoks, alongside an already robust local business base, there is an opportunity to support business scale-ups.

Okotoks can continue to develop its business-friendly environment by continuing to foster two-way communication, implementing feedback systems with the local business community and seeking a deeper understanding of challenges that they are facing. Additionally, it is important to have access to the most up-to-date information and be able to share this information with potential investors that will enable investment decisions into the community. This, in turn, will help establish buy-in amongst investors that Okotoks has a business-friendly environment to operate within.

We will continue to support businesses and become a hub for entrepreneurism, by regularly improving policies, championing internal processes and facilitating connections; fostering an environment that is conducive to Okotoks' business success and supportive of Okotoks' businesses throughout the life of their business.

BUILD UP OKOTOKS' TARGET SECTORS

Although Okotoks has witnessed a stable rate of population growth, on pace with the provincial average, the local economy is still largely driven by the service industry, with a large share of out-commuting population working mainly in Calgary. Okotoks has one of the lowest proportions of knowledge-based labour forces compared to other communities in the CMR, which, along with low population diversity, limited share of high-tech jobs, lower percentage of labour with post-secondary degrees and fewer individuals with knowledge of a non-official language, presents both a challenge and an opportunity. To develop a thriving creative sector, it will be important to address this.

To transform Okotoks into a magnet for entrepreneurs and build upon its desire to be known as an innovative community, it is imperative to promote the town as a centre of innovation and economic prosperity. This will mean bringing together private, public, non-profit groups, educational institutions and the community together to fully understand the value proposition of creative industries and the benefit to Okotoks.

Building Okotoks' attractiveness to businesses within the creative economy will also require investment in amenities within the tourism, arts and cultural sector, as these quality-of-life factors are important to the creative economy workforce. A community investment program (CIP) is a common tool for incentivizing quality of life factors within communities which Okotoks can leverage to position itself as a dynamic and thriving community that offers a wealth of opportunities for growth and success by collaborating to achieve these goals. Key to this effort is a commitment to building a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem that fosters innovation, creativity and collaboration. This can be achieved through initiatives such as mentorship programs, incubators and accelerators, which provide support and resources for budding entrepreneurs and start-ups.

ALIGNMENT WITH TOWN OF OKOTOKS STRATEGIC PLAN: STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY

- Focus on arts and culture as economic drivers
- Enhance the diversification of the tax base

We will strengthen and diversify the local economy by strategically focusing our marketing and attraction efforts on industries that are the best fit for Okotoks – advanced manufacturing, the creative sector and tourism economy; thereby creating real, stable and diverse employment opportunities within the community.

POSITION OKOTOKS' LEADERSHIP IN ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP TO BUILD ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

The Town of Okotoks has built a strong foundation of economic development; however, water limitations have caused constraints on the ability to grow and has defined the Town's approach to growth and economic development. With plans to resolve these issues in progress, the Town can prepare for growth by putting businesses in the forefront of policies and procedures, creating a business-friendly environment that promotes sustainable growth.

Okotoks is already known nationwide for its environmental and sustainability leadership. This is a strength the Town can leverage to align its brand to economic development opportunities. Okotoks has an opportunity to cement its leadership amongst municipalities when it comes to water management and conservation, the very issue that has limited growth historically. This ties directly into Town Council's vision for sustainability and will enable future economic and community growth. This growth will need to be met with proactive planning on the part of town administration.

Carving a niche expertise in water management and conservation ties well into building a creative economy and expanding knowledge-based employment in the community. Specific investment attraction for this sector will be required along with a commitment to establish a centre of excellence in this field. These centres need participation from government, industry as well as educational institutions.

By improving creative economy outcomes and building an ecologically sustainable economy, Okotoks can boost the share of knowledge-based businesses. To increase the community's appeal for new investments and growth, it will be imperative to attract and retain the necessary talent while also preparing Okotoks to attract investments. Attracting these educational opportunities within Okotoks and connecting to sector priorities will be essential to retaining and growing talent locally and building stronger levels of educational attainment within the community.

Investing in the people of Okotoks' and its natural resources is investing in its future. Continued and sustainable growth will require proactive management of its most valuable resources.

ALIGNMENT WITH TOWN OF OKOTOKS STRATEGIC PLAN:

STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY

- Enhance the diversification of the tax base

DEMONSTRATED ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP

- Work towards achieving Municipal Development and Climate Action Plan targets

We will become a regional centre for sustainable and regenerative industry and innovation by utilizing and building upon our commitment to environment, conservation and responsibly managed growth; strengthening our unique position that combines quality of life, proximity to abundant natural assets and unique charm within the Foothills.

ACTION PLAN

ACTION PLAN

This Action Plan builds upon the identified strategic directions and sets a path to support the Town of Okotoks in decision making. Sustainability is a key factor within these actions and will guide priorities in a realistic and future-focused manner.

These recommendations are guided by research and engagement findings that build on the Town's strengths and focus on opportunities to prepare for growth. Examples and best practices are provided for clarification and inspiration.

The Action Plan consists of new objectives and ongoing objectives that the Town will pursue. By incorporating a combination of fresh initiatives and continuous efforts, Okotoks intends to not only sustain, but also enhance its economic development services to reach new levels. Advancing the Strategic Directions outlined ensures the foundational elements of effective economic development are upheld.

ACTION CATEGORIES

IN PROGRESS

These are actions that the Town of Okotoks is currently working on and are in progress. These are highlighted as important components that need to continue to drive economic growth and maintain relationships.

NOT IN PROGRESS

These are actions that the Town of Okotoks currently has a role in but can be enhanced to support great customer service and relationships building.

ACTION TIMELINES

This strategy encompasses a 5-year period, from 2024 – 2029. The timing for action indicates estimated timelines to provide windows to achieve the identified actions.

SHORT-TERM

These may be actions that are currently in progress or should commence in the immediate future

MEDIUM-TERM

These actions will build off the short-term actions and start with years 2-3 of the strategy term.

LONG-TERM

These actions will be a priority once short-term and medium-term actions have been completed and will build towards the vision within each strategic direction.

ENSURE FUTURE FOCUSED AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

VISION: We will be a hub for business growth and entrepreneurism, by continuously improving policies, championing internal processes and facilitating connections, and by fostering an environment for Okotoks' businesses to thrive.

1.1 BE KNOWN AS THE BEST-IN-CLASS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MUNICIPAL TEAM

ENSURE INTERNAL CAPACITY IS POISED FOR GROWTH	CATEGORY	TIMING
Adopt a customer-centric approach to municipal economic development services.	IN PROGRESS	MEDIUM-TERM
Invest in continued professional development including courses, tradeshows and industry association events that align with Okotoks' priority sectors of creative services, tourism and advanced manufacturing.	IN PROGRESS	MEDIUM-TERM
Maintain and deepen partnerships with organizations such as the Okotoks & District Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures Highwood, and key tourism stakeholders to collaborate in supporting business growth and entrepreneurism.	IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
Increase efficiencies in permitting and licensing areas to ensure appropriate approval timelines by clearly communicating and facilitating the process.	IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM

EXAMPLES

City of Brantford Customer Experience Strategy: This plan was developed with community input and was approved in April 2023 to deliver on the City's commitment to providing excellent customer service.

Foresight Canada BCNZIN Water Innovation Mixer: An event presented by Foresight Canada in partnership with BC Net Zero Innovation Network, Invest Vancouver, AquaAction and Osler to bring together interested/affected parties with a vested interest in water solutions while showcasing solutions, successes and opportunities across BC.

1.2
MEET BUSINESS NEEDS THROUGH RELATIONSHIP PROGRAMS AND INTERDEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION

IMPLEMENT AN ANNUAL BUSINESS SURVEY TO COLLECT PRIMARY INFORMATION DIRECTLY FROM LOCAL BUSINESSES	CATEGORY	TIMING
Track changes in appropriate metrics to measure progress made by the Town in business satisfaction.	IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
Utilize positive results and trends found in the business survey in relevant investment attraction marketing efforts.	IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
UTILIZE THE CRM TO SHARE RELEVANT DATA BETWEEN TOWN DEPARTMENTS REGARDING SPECIFIC ACTIONS IDENTIFIED AND INFORMATION THAT CAN BE SHARED WITH A BUSINESS	**CATEGORY**	**TIMING**
Develop a standard interview guide for regularly scheduled BR+E meetings and track all meetings and responses received in the Customer Relationship Management System.	IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
Develop working groups interdepartmentally within the Town to connect regularly on business concerns identified from BR+E meetings to understand internal limitations or concerns and to develop business friendly solutions.	NOT IN PROGRESS	MEDIUM-TERM
Host lunch and learns between Town departments to learn the demands, limits and concerns of each Town department and to share the business and economic development lens to these departments	NOT IN PROGRESS	MEDIUM-TERM
CONNECT AND DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY OWNERS	**CATEGORY**	**TIMING**
Continue to develop relationships with, and identify, realtors who specialize in commercial and industrial real estate to collaborate in attracting property specific appropriate investments.	IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
Host quarterly structured meetings with non-residential property owners to provide a forum for Okotoks economic development updates and opportunities to ask questions.	NOT IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
Where appropriate, connect motivated sellers of land with investors.	IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM

EXAMPLES

The Town of Gravenhurst Annual Business Survey: This survey has been used as a data collection tool by the Town's Economic Development team since 2015 to identify challenges and develop strategies to assist the local business community.

The City of Lloydminster Annual Business Survey: This survey has been ongoing since 2020. The results of the survey assist City Council and Administration to create policies that support local businesses.

1.3
AREA PLANNING PROPOSALS ARE REVIEWED, DESIGNED AND SERVICED TO INCLUDE MARKET-ATTRACTIVE LANDS FOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

SUPPORT FUTURE BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	CATEGORY	TIMING
Investigate incentives to offer enhanced assistance to key sectors, including funding for start-ups or expansion. Collaborate with regional and provincial organizations that offer similar funding to businesses to provide increased access to local businesses.	**IN** PROGRESS	**MEDIUM-TERM**
Understand land and infrastructure needs for business in identified target sectors and advocate for these in area planning proposals.	**IN** PROGRESS	**MEDIUM-TERM**
Map the existing 'high growth' Okotoks businesses within each target sector to better understand the support they require to grow and provide more effective support for these companies with available resources.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**SHORT-TERM**

EXAMPLES

City of Quinte West industrial CIP: This CIP stimulates private sector investment in targeted industrial areas in the city.

The 2022 Municipal Benchmarking Study: This study is released by the Canadian Homebuilders Association provides data to use for KPI's.

1.4
CENTRALIZE RELEVANT INFORMATION AND PROCESS TIMELINES FOR INVESTORS

CREATE A SINGLE, EASILY ACCESSBILE LOCATION ON THE TOWN WEBSITE FOR DEVELOPERS AND INVESTORS TO FIND CRITICAL INFORMATION RELATED TO THE TOWN'S VALUE PROPOSITION, DEVELOPMENT PERMITS, EXPECTED TIMELINES AND SUSTAINABILITY INFORMATION RELEVANT TO DEVELOPMENT	CATEGORY	TIMING
Information should be laid out in an easy-to-understand manner that clearly identifies expectations from developers and the current timelines identified for various processes.	IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
Update the interactive town map to include a table that has land use designations defined and what are acceptable uses of the land.	NOT IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
Describe and market Okotoks unique value proposition on the economic development webpage.	IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
Integrate and regularly update Localintel data into the website to highlight the Okotoks value proposition.	IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
Describe key target sectors and how their investment in Okotoks will be supported.	NOT IN PROGRESS	MEDIUM-TERM
COLLECT LOCAL BUSINESS SUCCESS STORIES AND SHOWCASE THEIR TESTIMONIALS IN RELEVANT MARKETING MATERIALS	**CATEGORY**	**TIMING**
Work with local businesses to share their success stories, publicly highlighting why Okotoks is a preferred location, the ease of establishing and doing business and any other unique advantages of Okotoks.	IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
Connect potential investors with local businesses that will act as peers and speak to their experiences of operating within Okotoks.	NOT IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
Integrate testimonials on the economic development webpage.	NOT IN PROGRESS	MEDIUM-TERM

EXAMPLES

City of Spruce Grove Business Stories: These stories feature local businesses to showcase their businesses and why they decided to grow within the city.

The Parkland County Development Permits: This webpage lists where a developer would need a permit, what is considered, identification of land-use district, application information and expected timelines to consider all in one location.

BUILD UP OKOTOKS' TARGET SECTORS

VISION: We will strengthen and diversify the local economy by strategically focusing our marketing and attraction efforts on industries that are the best fit for Okotoks: advanced manufacturing, the creative sector and tourism economy. This will add real, stable and diverse employment opportunities within the community.

2.1 ADAPT THE TOWN'S BRAND OF 'CHARMING, FRIENDLY, UNIQUE' FOR PRIORITY SECTOR BUSINESS ATTRACTION

MARKET OKOTOKS FOR NEW INVESTMENT IN ADVANCED MANUFACTURING, CREATIVE SECTOR AND TOURISM ECONOMY	CATEGORY	TIMING
Using branding initiatives, clearly communicate and articulate the brand that will drive business opportunities on the Economic Development webpage(s) on the Town's website.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
Initiate opportunities with the local business community / interested / affected parties to align with or reflect Okotoks' brand of Friendly, Charming, Unique.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	MEDIUM-TERM
Integrate the recently developed "Friendly, Charming. Unique." brand into marketing and communications to unify and promote new branding as part of investment attraction, business retention and expansion and talent attraction	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
Develop a comprehensive Investment Attraction package or pitch decks, providing information about available properties, existing tenants, success stories and target markets. The pitch deck will also present Okotoks' value proposition for investment attraction, including assets, infrastructure, target sectors, market and workforce strengths. Use these new marketing assets to engage with investors across these target markets.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	LONG -TERM
Promote site opportunities in collaboration with property owners within the commercial and industrial opportunity areas presented in the Commercial and Industrial Growth Study. (e.g. Southbank Employment node, North Point ASP area, Downtown Okotoks, D'Arcy Gateway Village, etc.)	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
Conduct a detailed analysis of target sectors to identify specific subsectors for future investment promotion and attraction efforts. This will involve identifying geographic targets and markets and defining the scope and value proposition of each sector to position Okotoks effectively in the market.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	MEDIUM-TERM

FACILITATE CREATIVE SECTOR OPPORTUNITIES	CATEGORY	TIMING
Investigate supports for the arts community to help facilitate new arts and culture businesses and support the growth of existing businesses within the sector.	IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
Further work through Face to Face Conference with Arts & Culture Businesses and work with the arts community to come up with a long-term plan for a larger, permanent space for the entire community. This should include determining if developing a separate and distinct organization and governance structure is required.	IN PROGRESS	LONG -TERM
Connect with Okotoks Film Festival to collaborate with the Alberta Film Commission and the Calgary Economic Development Film Centre to create a comprehensive list of potential filming locations and venues in Okotoks. This list should include detailed information on each location, such as size, accessibility and any special features or amenities.	IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
FOCUS ON TALENT RETENTION AND ATTRACTION SPECIFIC TO THE CREATIVE SECTOR	**CATEGORY**	**TIMING**
Conduct a comprehensive workforce gap analysis to identify the skills and competencies needed in Okotoks and to determine any gaps that exist between the current workforce and projected skill sets.	NOT IN PROGRESS	MEDIUM-TERM
Develop a talent attraction plan that focuses on showcasing Okotoks' unique attractions, amenities and cultural offerings.	NOT IN PROGRESS	MEDIUM-TERM
Position Okotoks as an attractive destination for skilled workers. This could include partnering with local tourism organizations, promoting the region's natural beauty and recreational opportunities and highlighting the arts and culture scene.	NOT IN PROGRESS	LONG -TERM
Integrate a “Move to Okotoks” subpage on the Town’s main website with information about local real estate opportunities, local organizations (including Community Immigrant Services), amenities and other relevant information to prospective residents.	NOT IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM

EXAMPLES

Canada’s Export Navigator Service: This service through the Government of Canada provides businesses within the creative sector with export guidance, funding navigation, market research, and assistance in understanding the Creative Export Strategy’s program and services.

CreativeCITY: Prosperity through the Creative Economy Ecosystem Report: This report provides an overview of Calgary’s creative economy and an opportunities analysis and roadmap for the future of Calgary’s creative economy.

Markham’s Economic Development and Culture Strategy: The City of Markham developed a strategic framework through this strategy that supports the local creative ecosystem. Creating a sense of community while increasing the awareness of the sector through marketing and collaboration are critical components to achieve its success.

2.2
CELEBRATE THE UNIQUENESS OF OKOTOKS AND PROMOTE THE UTILIZATION OF PUBLIC SPACES

CONTINUE TO SUPPORT ACTIVATION OF PUBLIC SPACES	CATEGORY	TIMING
Work with event organizers to communicate and promote a coordinated event schedule with businesses and residents that provides opportunity for locals and visitors to experience Okotoks' downtown throughout the year.	**IN** PROGRESS	**SHORT-TERM**
Activate events through temporary and pop-up RFP opportunities for retail and food and beverage businesses.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**MEDIUM-TERM**
Develop a formal murals program that provides funding to non-profit community agencies and local artists to develop murals and public art installations in the downtown area.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**SHORT-TERM**
Bring tourism businesses together to develop tourism experiences that extend visitor's stay and spend in Okotoks.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**SHORT-TERM**
Define a working connection with Key Tourism Stakeholders and work to develop more tourism media assets that can be used in the promotion of the Town for both entities.	**IN** PROGRESS	**SHORT-TERM**
Encourage and seek out support for public-private partnership opportunities to enhance tourism provision in Okotoks.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**LONG -TERM**

EXAMPLES

City of Sault Ste. Marie's Mobile Rental Units: The City of Sault Ste. Marie purchased retrofitted mobile rental units to help support a vibrant food and retail market that activates their waterfront area.

Go East of Edmonton Photo Contest: This photo competition leverages current visitors and photographers' content that promotes the region to locals at the same time as increasing visual marketing assets.

Strathmore's Community Improvement Program (CIP): This CIP supports recreation and cultural events that attract visitors and support economic impact to the community.

2.3
POSITION THE TOWN TO SUPPORT TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

INVEST IN TOURISM EXPERIENCES	CATEGORY	TIMING
Further investigate opportunities related to sports tourism.	IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
Define a clear tourism management structure for tourism in Okotoks that establishes tourism as an economic driver for Okotoks. This may include the consideration of the implementation of a destination marketing fund (DMF).	NOT IN PROGRESS	MEDIUM-TERM
Develop a funding program in partnership with Travel Alberta to support tourism experience development in Okotoks through DMF funds.	NOT IN PROGRESS	MEDIUM-TERM
Work with the Culinary Tourism Alliance to prioritize farm-to-table culinary experiences that support the "culinary row" concept through program funding.	NOT IN PROGRESS	MEDIUM-TERM
Prioritize attraction of breweries and distilleries to create a vibrant downtown and nightlife.	NOT IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
ENSURE TOURISM IS INCORPORATED INTO THE DOWNTOWN AND RIVERFRONT LAND DEVELOPMENT PLANS	**CATEGORY**	**TIMING**
Explore the potential of creating a staging area for tourism operators to offer both culinary and recreation-based tourism experiences in the Downtown and future riverfront lands development area.	NOT IN PROGRESS	LONG -TERM
Work with community-based organizations that intend to use this area for events such as running, cross-country skiing, etc. to ensure space is conducive to event-based tourism.	NOT IN PROGRESS	LONG -TERM
Solicit interest from private businesses interested in creating unique outdoor accommodations within the riverfront lands development area (i.e.: star-gazing domes, a Nordic spa, etc.) that align with the enhanced culture and community health priority identified in the Town's Strategic Plan.	NOT IN PROGRESS	LONG -TERM

EXAMPLES

Guided Food Tours in Alberta: Alberta Food Tours is a private tour operator based out of Alberta that offers purchasable food tours and an online store featuring partner food products.

Travel Alberta's Tourism Investment Program: This funding opportunity focuses on marketing funding for events, festivals and rural promotion alongside product development funding with a focus on infrastructure development and assets that diversify experiences.

Highway 3 Ale Trail: A partnership between 8 breweries across southern Alberta and tourism organizations collaborated to promote brewing in the region.

Tourism Innovation Lab "Spark" Mentorship and Grant Program: This non-profit initiative supports tourism ideas and innovation by being the project manager of the Spark program in regions across Canada.

2.4
DEVELOP SUPPORTS FOR BUSINESS INNOVATION AND HOME-BASED BUSINESSES

ENCOURAGE EXPANSION AND EVOLUTION OF OKOTOKS HOME BASED BUSINESSES	CATEGORY	TIMING
Investigate the possibility of developing an incentive program to help home-based businesses expand operations into storefront properties.	NOT IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
Support home-based business scale up through a portal on the Town's website with "how-to" resources.	NOT IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
DEVELOP INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS TO FOSTER BUSINESS EXPANSION	**CATEGORY**	**TIMING**
Conduct a feasibility study for the development of a commercial kitchen business incubator that supports home-based food and beverage business innovation and expansion.	NOT IN PROGRESS	MEDIUM-TERM
Explore potential industry interest in vertical farming initiatives that could support local restaurant food supply chains.	IN PROGRESS	MEDIUM-TERM
Identify interested businesses in the agri-food space that might be interested in expansion in the Southbank and Northpoint neighbourhoods.	NOT IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
Work with Community Futures Highwood and local school divisions to explore youth entrepreneurship expansion opportunities through Junior Achievement and work to retain these businesses within Okotoks.	NOT IN PROGRESS	MEDIUM-TERM
Partner with Community Futures Highwood to host business pitch competitions targeting priority areas identified within this strategy.	NOT IN PROGRESS	SHORT-TERM
Increase post-secondary presence to lead post-secondary training on water management issues and water technology, testing and design for Southern Alberta.	IN PROGRESS	MEDIUM-TERM
Investigate the feasibility of working with other post-secondary institutions to increase programming availability and access across priority sectors.	IN PROGRESS	MEDIUM-TERM
Increase post-secondary presence in environmental leadership including agriculture, vertical farming, energy development, soils management, wetland conservation, climate resiliency and regenerative development.	NOT IN PROGRESS	LONG -TERM

EXAMPLES

Culinary Incubators across Canada: The Food Corridor highlights the top shared kitchens across Canada, offering insights into best practice in culinary incubators in Canada.

Northumberland's Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre: This is the leading-edge food innovation Centre in rural Ontario helping food entrepreneurs and farmers bring products to market.

2.5
ATTRACT NEW RESIDENTS AND RETAIN WORKING POPULATION

PRIORITIZE COMMUNITY WELLNESS INITIATIVES THAT SUPPORT BUSINESS AND WORKFORCE ATTRACTION	CATEGORY	TIMING
Work alongside the Community Health and Wellness business centre to identify the most significant quality of life factors and promote them for workforce attraction. In addition, look for gaps that can be approached and resolved.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**SHORT-TERM**
Foster multi-cultural events, tech-workshops, and networking events to build partnerships with workforce providers in Okotoks to support the integration of newcomers into the workforce.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**SHORT-TERM**

EXAMPLES

Centre for Aviation Technology at Hamilton International Airport: This new program is located at Hamilton's International Airport and home to Mohawk's Aviation Technician programs.

The City of North Vancouver's Draft Community Wellbeing Strategy: This Draft Strategy recognizes the importance of integrating community wellbeing with economic wellbeing as an integral component for individuals and communities to flourish.

LEVERAGE OKOTOKS' LEADERSHIP IN ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP TO BUILD ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

VISION: We will become a regional centre for sustainable and regenerative industry and innovation by utilizing and building upon our commitment to environment, conservation and responsibly managed growth. This will strengthen our unique position that combines quality of life, proximity to abundant natural assets and unmatched charm within the Foothills.

3.1 CREATE A ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

DEVELOP A REGIONAL WATER SECTOR WORKING GROUP INCLUDING POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS, BUSINESSES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT THAT EXPLORES ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES RELATED TO WATER CONSERVATION TECHNOLOGIES	CATEGORY	TIMING
Initiate conversations with key interested/affected parties that potentially lead to creating an arms-length structure.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**SHORT-TERM**
Develop partnerships with post-secondary institutions to develop and bring educational and research programs surrounding water technology to the community.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**MEDIUM-TERM**
Pursue funding opportunities that establish a lead agency and governance model.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**MEDIUM-TERM**
Focus business attraction efforts on water technology companies and align marketing and product offering with existing water design and servicing Okotoks businesses with water the conservation and innovation brand pillars	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**SHORT-TERM**
Collaborate with the Environment group to provide workshops for local businesses to better understand the impact and implementation of climate resilient measures on their business.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**SHORT-TERM**

CREATE PROGRAMMING TO SUPPORT THE ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIPS CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE	CATEGORY	TIMING
Work towards the development of an incubation program focused on environmental stewardship.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**MEDIUM-TERM**
Create a partnership with existing co-working spaces to establish a commercial package incentive for pilot-stage water businesses.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**SHORT-TERM**
Utilize current Foothills Okotoks Water Pipeline project as a potential demonstration site and leverage the project in business attraction efforts.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**SHORT-TERM**
Proactively identify potential investors in an incubation and/or demonstration site.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**MEDIUM-TERM**
Connect with other leaders in this space, such as the Walkerton Clean Water Centre to learn best practices and to distinguish Okotoks Centre of Excellence for other centres.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**MEDIUM-TERM**

EXAMPLES

The Walkerton Clean Water Centre: This organization was developed in the wake of an e-coli tragedy in Walkerton in 2000. This centre of excellence is an agency of the Ontario provincial government that provides training, information, resources and research that aims to be an accessible "Centre of Excellence in One Water".[12]

The Canadian Oil Sands Innovation Alliance's Water Technology Development Centre: This initiative is funded by industry to develop and test new technologies that improve environmental performance in water, land footprint, waste, and greenhouse gases impacts.

12 About - Walkerton Clean Water Centre (wcwc.ca)

3.2
FOCUS ON CLEAN-TECH MANUFACTURING BUSINESS ATTRACTION OPPORTUNITIES WITH EMPHASIS ON ENVIRONMENTAL INNOVATION

LEVERAGE THE TOWN'S MANUFACTURING OPPORTUNITIES TO CREATE A NICHE WITHIN WATER TECHNOLOGY	CATEGORY	TIMING
Expand the Town's network in the field of water technology through membership with national organizations like Foresight Canada, Aqua Hacking, ECO Canada.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**SHORT-TERM**
Develop a business attraction strategy for this sector that incentivizes investment in Okotoks.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**MEDIUM-TERM**
SUPPORT INITIATIVES THAT IMPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES AS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES	**CATEGORY**	**TIMING**
Highlight the economic impact of climate resiliency and adaptation projects and convey the benefits to potential investors.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**SHORT-TERM**
Pursue funding opportunities within the circular economy sector such as with Alberta Innovates to support pilot projects within the Town.	**NOT** IN PROGRESS	**SHORT-TERM**

EXAMPLES

Strathcona County's Circular Cities Roadmap: Strathcona County already has a number of sustainability initiatives underway when they took part in the Circular Cities workshop lead by the Recycling Council of Alberta. This roadmap highlights how Strathcona County can design waste and conserve energy to transition to a circular economy.

APPENDIX A

ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

APPENDIX A: ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

This section provides summarized feedback provided during one-on-one interviews, a workshop with Town Council and senior leadership, workshops with the Chamber of Commerce board of directors, local developers and a workshop with the Okotoks Entrepreneurial Ecosystem. Past employer engagement within the 2023 Town of Okotoks Business Survey is also summarized within this section.

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY INPUT

Deloitte LLP designed the project framework for the Town of Okotoks Economic Development Strategy as a four-phase interconnected process that began in August 2023.

PHASE

1. **PROJECT INITIATION & MANAGEMENT**
2. **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**
3. **STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**
4. **PRESENTATION AND FINAL REPORTS**

The internal and external engagement process garnered input from elected officials, senior staff, local businesses, developers and independent entrepreneurs, as well as regional economic development partners. Targeted workshops, along with one-on-one interviews, enabled interested/affected parties to share their ideas and identify what they believe are key priorities for the community.

IN TOTAL, APPROXIMATELY 35 PARTICIPANTS PROVIDED INPUT DURING THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS.

FIGURE 3
Targeted Engagement for the Okotoks Economic Development Strategy

7 Stakeholder Interviews Completed

11 Town of Okotoks Staff Workshop Participants

10 Business and Industry Partners Workshop Participants

7 Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Workshop Participants

The engagement results, in addition to the key findings from the Background, Economic, Talent Competitive Analysis, were aggregated and thematically analyzed into the SOARR Assessment (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Risks and Results) Framework.

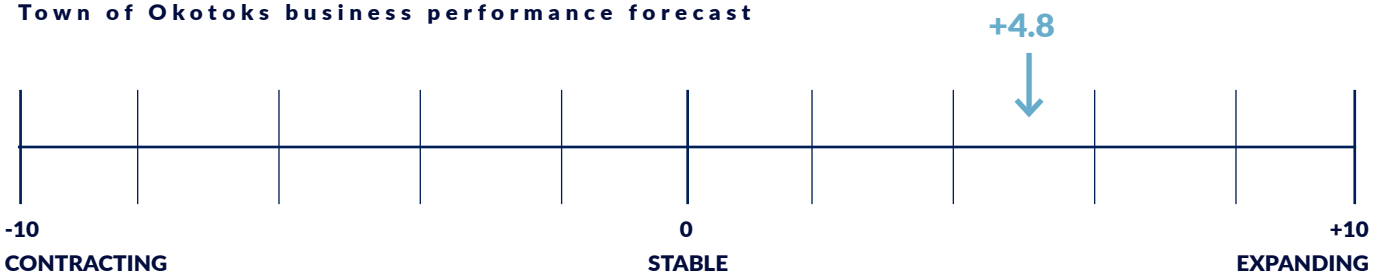
2023 BUSINESS SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

The Town of Okotoks conducted a business satisfaction survey in 2023 to understand business sentiment and needs and how to best support businesses. These provide insights into business retention and expansion opportunities for the Town's economic development function.

BUSINESS PERFORMANCE FORECAST

The Business Performance Forecast is a metric that considers the changes in staff, revenue, and attitudes among the business community in Okotoks. The metric uses a scale of-10 to +10 to score the overall direction of the business climate at the point in time of measurement, to identify if it is contracting, stable, or expanding. The Town of Okotoks scored a +4.8, indicating an overall increasing trend in business performance and a highly positive outlook for the business community.

FIGURE 4
Town of Okotoks business performance forecast



Source: 2023 Town of Okotoks Business Survey

PRIORITY MATRIX AND DERIVED IMPORTANCE

A statistical calculation was completed calculating the correlation coefficient of business factors with the key performance indicators. A list of business factors was presented, and businesses reported their level of satisfaction with each. Factors with lower satisfaction scores and high importance indicate top priorities.

1. Access to affordable housing
2. Local regulations and processes
3. Cost of office/commercial/industrial space
4. Municipal property taxes
5. Availability of office/commercial/industrial space

FUTURE PLANS

Businesses were asked questions about their future plans in the short to mid-term.

- 76% are considering selling their business or retiring within 5+ years
- 17% are considering selling their business or retiring within 3-5 years
- 7% are considering selling their businesses or retiring within 1-2 years

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Businesses were asked question about their connection to the Town's Economic Development team, programming and opportunities to further support their businesses. Only 10% of businesses have accessed economic development services, with 61% of this group accessed information or data from team members, 48% accessed business support services and 32% are accessing the Town e-newsletter. 32% of businesses are reporting they are either somewhat familiar or very familiar with the services offered by the Economic Development team.

- Lower business fees (19%)
- Affordable property for purchase or lease (17%)
- Consulting with local businesses on Town matters (16%)
- Marketing support and resources (14%)
- Diversification of businesses/industries (8%)

ENGAGEMENT KEY THEMES

Focus groups were held with senior leadership, Town Council, Local Developers, Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and the Okotoks Entrepreneurship Ecosystem and one-on-one telephone interviews were conducted with other key interested/affected parties within the community. Key themes were identified among each of these groups.

SENIOR LEADERSHIP AND TOWN COUNCIL

BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION (BR&E)

Using the recently released Business Survey Results as a baseline, discussions focused on building from this knowledge and ensuring the business community within Okotoks has access to relevant and consistent policies and programs. Participants identified the Town of Okotoks' retail strength and that its locally owned business base is concentrated to its main street area that provides a service hub and tourism asset. Interested/affected parties would like to see businesses moving into vacant properties fit the locally owned retail theme, while looking for opportunities to increase workforce housing opportunities.

REMOVING BARRIERS TO ECONOMIC GROWTH

The Town's leadership identified priority areas of focus to reduce or remove barriers for economic growth. These priorities include developing water pipeline infrastructure to support more commercial, industrial and residential development, increasing workforce housing diversity to support the attraction and retention of workers and reducing unnecessary regulatory barriers within the Town's planning systems.

MUNICIPAL LEADERS IN WATER CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

Water access has been a long-standing issue for Okotoks and other communities within Southern Alberta. Town staff and leadership voiced a desire to become a municipal leader in water conversation and management that fits within their overall priority of environmental sustainability.

CREATIVE ECONOMY

Some participants indicated a desire to enhance arts and culture opportunities within Okotoks. A discussion on the creative economy highlighted how this sector has the propensity to support arts and cultural activities and how further developing this sector could support the alignment of these areas.

The definition of the creative economy was discussed as the shift from a goods producing economy to a knowledge-based economy fueled by ideas and innovation. The creative economy concept suggests that economic and cultural development are co-dependant.

INCREASING THE TOWN'S TAX BASE

Participants recognized the need to increase the town's tax base by increasing their focus on industrial land development but struggle to fully understand the impediments to growth in this sector. There was a sentiment that future growth in this sector also needs to reflect the Town's overall brand.

LOCAL DEVELOPERS

INVESTMENT READINESS

All participants noted that the water pipeline development and access to water for new developments is the missing link to unlock Okotoks' growth potential. Once this issue has been resolved in the projected 2-year timeframe, developers feel they can shed negative sentiments about the town not being development and investment friendly. Local developers hope the Town can focus on good-news stories about the business community and reframe Okotoks' reputation about its lack of access to water and being hesitant towards growth to that of a community that is open for business. Participants expressed the need for the Town to increase their internal capacity to be able to manage this expected growth.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

The local developers that attended this session all felt they had a positive relationship with the Town but acknowledged that wasn't always the case. They expressed relationship building was an important factor to their business operations and that fully understanding the Town's plans for growth and their key development targets would help their future planning. They hope to see a continued collaborative approach in the future.

COMMUNITY FOCUSED ON HEALTH AND WELLNESS

When discussing what the town looks like in the future, participants expressed the desire to see the Town focus on health and wellness, not only for recreational opportunities for residents, but as an opportunity to align the Town's brand with new investment opportunities within this realm.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CREATING CHEERLEADERS FOR THE TOWN

Participants in this session noted that the Town has a reputation of having rigid and restrictive bylaws with lengthy approval wait times however acknowledged the progress being done in this area. Many felt this would take continued focused efforts to change this among other interested/affected parties and investors who don't work closely with the Town. Maintaining an open line of communication, marketing the Town to attract vibrant businesses, and clearly outlining processes for opening a business were ideas suggested to enhance communication efforts. Participants would like to see a flip from negative sentiments about the Town to seeing more active cheerleaders promoting the Town independently.

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

Participants noted varying levels of success with past efforts that focused on downtown revitalization. It was noted that this is the area of town, with a large concentration of small local businesses, play a role in the Town's Tourism efforts by recirculating spending within the community. These participants would like to see focused efforts on attracting new vibrant businesses to the downtown that fit within the creative economy.

WORKFORCE ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

All participants noted a desire to decrease the number of people leaving the community to work. There was a strong sentiment that current housing needs are not sufficient to attract workers who are looking to make Okotoks their home. There was a desire to ensure the Town has diversified housing with sufficient multi-unit and affordable housing options for all segments of the town's population.

OKOTOKS ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM (OEE)

BUSINESS START-UP SUPPORTS

Participants noted some frustrations with inconsistent communication with regard to business start ups and expansions. They felt that clear and transparent processes and guidelines would help businesses be able to better plan. There are also limited start-up incentives noted by this group and a lack of a focus on young entrepreneurs.

VISION FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN OKOTOKS

While the OEE have developed a vision for their organization, participant feedback indicated a lack of leadership that is driving the ecosystem. Communicating and partnering more broadly was suggested to enhance the ecosystems reach and impact.

COMPONENTS OF AN INNOVATIVE ECOSYSTEM

During engagement, OEE participants were asked probing questions to further understand key components of an innovative ecosystem to understand strengths and gaps of the OEE.

FIGURE 5
Okotoks Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Engagement Feedback

PROGRAMS	
▪ What programs are in place to support entrepreneurship? ▪ What program gaps exist?	▪ The Chamber of Commerce provides advocacy efforts, collective insurance and networking events. ▪ Community Futures offers loans, guidance, coaching and programming. ▪ The Regional Economic Collaboration group offers workshops. ▪ MCG Careers offers entrepreneurship supports. ▪ There is a gap in private offerings for business support.
FINANCE	
▪ What opportunities exist to financially support business start-ups?	▪ The Community Futures office offers loans. ▪ There is an arts activation program offered by the Town for not-for-profit groups. ▪ Federal programming through Prairies Can and Provincial programs are available. ▪ Other opportunities include Alberta Innovates, AWE, Futurepreneur and Momentum. ▪ There is a gap in private investment such as angel networks or business competitions.
RESEARCH	
▪ What current research are we using to guide the direction of the OEE? ▪ What research might be helpful for future planning?	▪ Current research is guided by demographic analysis through a masterplan including consultations. (Statistics Canada, AB Dashboards, Community Census) ▪ Other data and research being used include business licence data and community and business satisfaction surveys. ▪ Data that might be useful includes qualitative data to measure progress, workforce trends and skills gaps for future planning and sustainability impact measures.

POLICY	
▪ What does the regulatory environment for entrepreneurship look like? ▪ What bureaucratic barriers are preventing entrepreneurship?	▪ Current municipal policy is difficult to navigate. Planning seems to be a consistent barrier with conflicting requirements and a very convoluted and lengthy process. ▪ Some requirements such as safety and parking policies are too stringent at times. ▪ Timelines for approvals make doing business difficult and it takes too long to change policy which is costly to entrepreneurs. ▪ Commercial lease rates are high, the Town could consider vacant property taxes. ▪ Would like to see a clearly communicated and a consistent process for opening a business. This should include business coaching services. ▪ The Town could incorporate live and work incentives for local owners.
BUSINESSES	
▪ Who are the businesses involved in governance? ▪ Who are the businesses participating in programming? ▪ Are there specific sectors of focus?	▪ Those business involved are the "usual suspects" and are a handful of hyper-involved engaged business owners.
LEADERSHIP	
▪ Who is the "owner" of the OEE? ▪ Who is driving its success? ▪ Who are we looking up to? ▪ What is the vision for the OEE?	▪ "Owners" of the OEE include business associations, non-profits, businesses and educators, with the Town playing a support role. ▪ Successful communities the OEE is looking up to include Airdrie's Chamber of Commerce and Old's Hotel Cluster. ▪ The vision for the OEE includes increasing vibrancy of the business sector that drives collaboration and business growth in an inclusive and innovative environment.
EDUCATION AND TRAINING	
▪ Who is providing education and training for participants? ▪ What are the education and training gaps that need to be filled?	▪ Currently, education and training are being provided by Associations like the Chamber, Regional Economic Collaboration, municipality and businesses. ▪ Bow Valley College and MCG Careers offer more formal/tradition education and training. ▪ Community Futures Highwood offer programs for youth, business planning, digital service squad and entrepreneurs with disabilities. ▪ Training gaps include exist coaching and grant writing expertise.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

A CONNECTED COMMUNITY

Community and business partners responded that Okotoks is a community of choice that offers amenities that reduce regular commutes to Calgary. Community members care about the town and want to see it succeed. This community pride needs to be translated into selling the community for investment and recruitment attraction as a key component to supporting community partners and business.

SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

There is a desire for the Town to help support green energy and sustainability efforts. Helping partners understand what external support and funding programs exist and the development of programming to support these efforts would help to create a collaborative effort with the Town's sustainability priorities.

BUSINESS FRIENDLY REPUTATION

Many partners feel the Town is doing a good job adjusting policies and procedures to meet the needs of businesses, but feel work still needs to be done to remove barriers and to provide a clear understanding of processes. Despite work being done to improve these policies and procedures, there needs to be a proactive effort to embrace and promote a business-friendly image.

APPENDIX B

PRIORITY SECTORS AND COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

APPENDIX B: PRIORITY SECTORS AND COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

The Background, Economic and Talent Competitive Analysis provides an overview of Okotoks' economy and workforce, as well as a summary of trends in existing research and strategic documents. The report serves as a foundation for the economic development planning process.

BACKGROUND REVIEW

A detailed review of documents relevant to the Town of Okotoks has been conducted. Policies, strategies and trends from Okotoks and the surrounding region were reviewed. These documents have been analyzed comparatively to uncover areas of thematic overlap and have been cataloged according to common themes so we could identify any patterns.

The following observations are important, as they highlight topics and trends that are strongly represented in the documents, policies and strategies that were analyzed. Further, it allows the project team to identify knowledge gaps that exist in key areas of importance that do not currently have prominence in current documentation. If these gaps subsequently represent key objectives or priorities that are identified through the research and community engagement process, then they may warrant further examination to ensure effective alignment with future priorities.

The common topics identified among the reports and strategies that we examined are:

- Business and Community Growth
- Environmental Sustainability
- Community Health and Wellbeing
- Land Development

The table below presents a common threads matrix, showing the association between each topic relative to the documents it has been identified in via a series of check marks. A single check mark (✓) indicates the document has some content relating to the theme, but it is not a primary focus of the document, while a double check mark (✓✓) indicates there is a primary focus on the theme. Only documents with relevant content for the analysis of the Town of Okotoks were selected to be reviewed.

COMMON THREADS MATRIX

DOCUMENT TITLE	BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY GROWTH	ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY	COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING	LAND DEVELOPMENT
Commercial and Industrial Growth Study	✓✓			✓✓
Municipal Development Plan	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
2022-2025 Town of Okotoks Strategic Plan	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
2023-2026 Corporate Business Plan	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
2020 Environmental Master Plan Progress Report		✓✓		
Economic Development Strategic Plan: 2018 Update	✓✓		✓✓	✓✓
A Culture, Heritage & Arts Master Plan for Okotoks	✓✓		✓✓	

DOCUMENT REVIEW

A list of documents that we examined as part of this review is set out below:

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL GROWTH STUDY[13]

The Commercial and Industrial Growth Study provides an evaluation and analysis of existing conditions and opportunities for commercial and industrial development in Okotoks. The report finds that retail growth in the community has followed population growth and Okotoks has been able to attract major retailers such as Costco. This trend has not followed for light, flex or medium industrial businesses partially due to Okotoks not being regarded as business friendly or investment ready.

Priority lands to meet a moderate 20-year demand estimate are in the Southbank Business Park, North Point Area Structure Plan and Downtown Culinary Row. The primary sector targets that were identified for Okotoks are agribusiness, clean energy, advanced manufacturing and logistics. The recommendations to ensure future commercial and industrial developments come to fruition include to shift the perception of Okotoks, promote small business, become a cost competitive municipality, improve development approvals and permitting processes, phase development of the Southbank Employment Area and North Point ASP, seek and review the purchase of strategic land parcels and to pursue and maintain collaboration and partnerships with real estate brokers, landowners and developers.

13 Town of Okotoks Commercial and Industrial Growth Study

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN[14]

The Municipal Development Plan (MDP) has a 60-year outlook (2023 – 2083) and anticipates the population of Okotoks will grow by approximately 75,000 people. The MDP sets the framework so that the current and future population of Okotoks will have equitable access to a good quality of life, to accommodate their anticipated growth and to continue to be a municipal leader in sustainability. This framework is completed through the identification of the municipality's goals and the subsequent development of policies that create a framework for how future decisions are made within the municipality.

Goals identified in the MDP were adapted from the One Planet Living Framework[15] and are

- Managing Growth
- Health and Happiness
- Equity and Local Economy
- Culture and Community
- Land and Nature
- Sustainable Water
- Local and Sustainable Food
- Travel and Transport
- Zero Waste
- Net Zero Carbon Energy

Policies that have been developed to achieve the goals set in the MDP are structured around managing growth; neighbourhood planning and design; integrated transportation; climate change community resilience and environment; housing; employment lands, parks; recreation and natural areas; downtown; and culture, heritage and arts. The MDP also looks to align municipal initiatives around quality infrastructure, economic vitality, community growth environmental excellence and a healthy and safe community.

2022-2025 TOWN OF OKOTOKS STRATEGIC PLAN[16]

The priorities in the Strategic Plan are used to inform initiatives in the Corporate Business Plan and proposed budgets. The vision identified for the Town of Okotoks is "A vibrant, resilient, and connected community that fosters the wellbeing of land and people; a community to call home". This vision directly corresponds with the five strategic priorities identified which are:

- Responsibly Managed Growth
- Strong Local Economy
- Enhanced Culture and Community Health
- Demonstrated Environmental Leadership
- Organizational Excellence

14 Uniquely Okotoks, Municipal Development Plan
15 One Planet Living, Bioregional, Sustainable Ventures
16 2022-2025 Town of Okotoks Strategic Plan

2023-2026 CORPORATE BUSINESS PLAN[17]

The Corporate Business Plan ties the strategic priorities from the Strategic Plan, the high-level results of the Municipal Development Plan, as well as the Town's various master plans and frameworks together into a cohesive document with tangible actions and expected outcomes and deliverables. The Corporate Business Plan is structured around the five strategic priorities and integrated and accessible transportation. The table below outlines where Council Strategic Priorities have been identified and what strategies are being implemented to address the priorities.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITY	IDENTIFIED STRATEGIES OF COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES
Responsibly managed growth	Improve diverse housing options for individuals and families	Understand current housing needs for Okotoks and implement options for diverse housing
	Achieve a supplemental water supply	Secure a long-term sustainable water supply for the community and potentially the region
	Additional funding to meet the needs of a growing community	Investigate opportunities for alternate funding
Strong local economy	Arts and culture as economic drivers	Enhance Okotoks' identity and local economy
	Develop downtown to attract new businesses	The downtown will become a vibrant hub for economic, social and cultural activity
	Review and update processes that may be barriers to businesses choosing Okotoks	Facilitate ease of doing business with the Town
	Diversification of the tax base	Diversification of tax base while increasing business
Enhanced Culture and Community Health	Enhance community dialogue and engagement with residents and organizations	Engage older adults where they are at
	Take meaningful steps to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action	Honour the past and embrace the future to build community
	Increase sport and recreational opportunities, and provide timely access to relevant programs and services that support health and well-being	Public access to facilities and participation in beneficial programs, services and recreation, including options that are inclusive, diverse, accessible and equitable

17 2023-2026 Corporate Business Plan

Demonstrated Environmental Leadership	Work towards achieving Municipal Development Plan and Climate Action Plan targets for: ▪ Climate Change Resilience ▪ Greenhouse Gas Emissions ▪ Water Conservation ▪ Energy Efficiency ▪ Land and Biodiversity ▪ Become the employer of choice	Achieve environmental leadership through innovative projects
		Operational efficiencies that lower water consumption to help reduce potable water consumption 20% by 2033
		Organizations, businesses and households will have access to tools that lower water consumption to help reduce potable water consumption 20% by 2033
		Town facilities and equipment will produce less Green House Gas emissions
		Support municipal and residential use of renewable energy sources to create a more resilient and flexible electricity grid by 2029
		Sharing and Circular Economies will be a significant part of how residents manage their waste by 2029
		Enhanced, healthy green spaces and sustainably built communities will be a priority in all new development by 2030
		Climate Resilient Infrastructure that can better cope with severe weather conditions and protection of land and biodiversity
Operational Excellence[18]	Become the Employer of Choice	Town of Okotoks is an employer of choice, attracting and retaining the best people in all aspects of municipal service delivery
		Enable and support healthy and resilient employees
	Technology	Modernize the delivery of programs and services through technology
	Systems and processes	Municipal excellence through continuous improvement, innovation, mature business practices and service optimization
	Governance	Apply an environmental, social and governance lens to decision making
Integrated and Accessible Transportation	No council strategic priorities identified	N/A

18 Identified as a corporate priority

2020 ENVIRONMENTAL MASTER PLAN PROGRESS REPORT[19]

The 2020 Progress Report for the Environmental Master Plan identifies the six priorities in the original Environmental Master Plan which are ecosystems and agriculture, land use and urban design, energy, emissions and air quality, waste systems, water systems and climate adaption and resilience. Key progress that the Town has made in these priority areas up to the 2020 progress report are:

- The purchase of 28.8 acres of sensitive river valley land and a subsequent development of a new river valley day use area (Waller Park).
- Policies were implemented in the MDP to protect and enhance existing ecosystems and their biodiversity through land development requirements.
- Developing a Corporate Land Strategy to guide decision making for efficient land utilization.
- Completed a baseline greenhouse gas inventory.
- Home energy and water assessments were offered to households.
- Completed a review of current waste management practices in the foothill's region.
- The first phase of the wastewater treatment plan upgrades commenced in 2019.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN: 2018 UPDATE[20]

The 2018 update to the Economic Development Strategic Plan was completed after an Industry Profile and Opportunity Analysis of the local economy uncovered that the Town's ability to capitalize on local and regional market growth opportunities was limited by resources that include available land and economic development programming. This update provided new economic development priorities that were structured around the economic climate at the time. The priorities identified are:

- Becoming Investment Ready
- Focusing on Business Retention and Attraction
- Regional Economic Development that Supports Local Employment Growth
- Placemaking

For each of these priorities, an action plan was developed, and key performance were proposed to determine the success of the Plan. Actions supported an integrated approach to providing infrastructure, services and policy frameworks to support investment readiness, broadening and building the local business base by investing in business development, support programs and services; building on collaborative regional economic development efforts; and planning, investing and encouraging placemaking efforts to grow the recognition of the community as a destination.

19 Town of Okotoks Environmental Master Plan Progress Report, February 2020
20 Town of Okotoks Economic Development Strategic Plan, 2018 Update

A CULTURE, HERITAGE & ARTS MASTER PLAN FOR OKOTOKS, 2018[21]

The Culture, Heritage & Arts Master Plan for Okotoks seeks to connect and engage citizens of all ages to encourage and nurture grassroots cultural development. In this plan, culture is defined as the work of a variety of individuals, organizations and sectors that shape the development, production and demand for cultural activity in Okotoks.

The Town has several responsibilities in the community which include managing and operating the Okotoks Art Gallery, Okotoks Museum & Archives and Rotary Performing Arts Centre; coordinating and managing the delivery of special events; and delivering visitor information services.

Goals include growing the capacity and leadership of the Okotoks community, brokering opportunities for residents to come together through culture, connecting people with the history of Okotoks, ensuring culture is a contributing force in the Okotoks economy and championing the value of culture. To achieve these goals, the plan identifies how the Town can support each identified action either as a broker, navigator, provider, supporter or storyteller. Each of these roles creates clarity for the Town in further developing arts and culture.

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

This section of the report provides an assessment of the local demographic and economic indicators, including population growth, labour force and business trends.

ECONOMIC BASE ANALYSIS

The economic base analysis examines Okotoks' current socio-economic, labour force and business conditions. The indicators were studied in comparison to the agglomeration of municipalities within Calgary Metropolitan Region Board (Further referred in this document as the CMR),[22] and province of Alberta. The following data sources were used in developing this baseline analysis.

- Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, December 2022
- Statistics Canada, Census Profile, 2021, 2016 and NHS 2011
- Lightcast (formerly EMSI Economic Modeling), Datarun 2023.1

21 A Culture, Heritage & Arts Master Plan for Okotoks
22 The Calgary Metropolitan Region Board (CMR) includes the City of Airdrie, City of Calgary, City of Chestermere, Town of Cochrane, Foothills County, Town of High River, Town of Okotoks and Rocky View County.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

POPULATION

In 2021, Okotoks had a population of 30,405, an increase of 4.8% since 2016; this translates into 1,389 additional residents. The town's population has grown at a comparable rate to Alberta and slower than CMR. The fastest growing communities in the CMR are Cochrane and Airdrie which have seen 25% and 20% population growth, respectively, since 2016.

FIGURE 6
Population Change, 2016-2021

YEAR	OKOTOKS	CALGARY - CMR	ALBERTA
2021 Census	30,405	1,544,202	4,262,635
2016 Census	29,016	1,451,174	4,067,175
Net (+/-)	1,389	93,028	195,460
% Change	4.8%	6.4%	4.8%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census | 2016 Census

MIGRATION PATTERNS

Between 2016 and 2021, 9,160 individuals moved away from the town, and 9,811 from within Alberta and Canada moved into Okotoks, a net increase of 621 residents. This increase accounts for 44.7% of the total population increase during this time, and highlights that Okotoks is a desirable community for many. The census metropolitan areas (CMA) or census agglomerations (CA) where Okotoks attracted the most residents from were Calgary (+4,363), areas outside of CMAs or CAs in Alberta (+1,736), High River (+681), Edmonton (+387) and Vancouver (+196).

FIGURE 7
Migration Patterns, 2016-2021

GEOGRAPHY	Moved to Okotoks	Moved from Okotoks	Net Okotoks Increase
Calgary (CMA)	4,363	4,168	195
Area outside census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations (Alberta)	1,736	1,319	417
High River (CA)	681	772	-91
Edmonton (CMA)	387	449	-62
Vancouver (CMA)	196	176	20

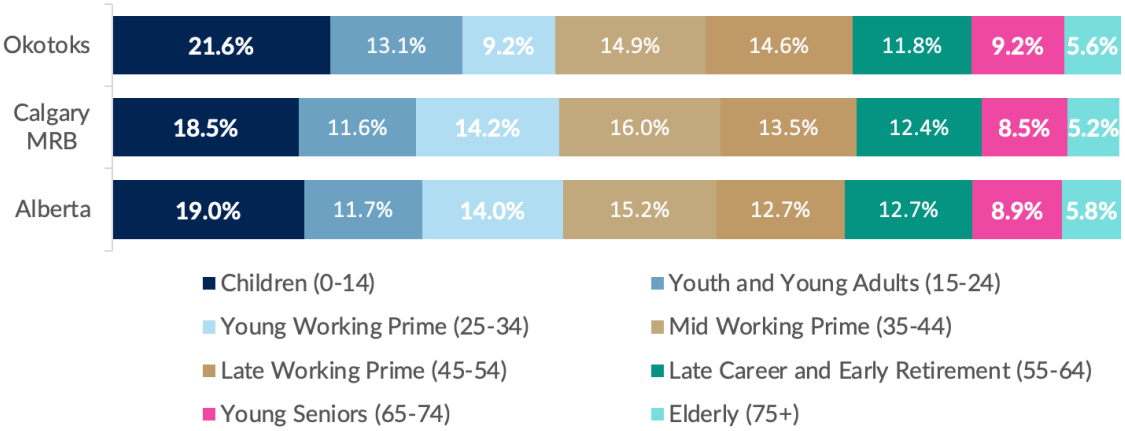
Source: Statistics Canada, Interprovincial and Intraprovincial migrants by census metropolitan area and census agglomeration of origin and destination

AGE OF POPULATION

The largest share of population in Okotoks is between the ages of 0 to 14 years, the youngest age cohort. In fact, Okotoks is home to a larger young population compared to broader geographical regions. Okotoks' median population age in 2021 was 39, which is similar to Alberta (38.6) and Canada (41.6).

Okotoks has a moderate population of working age people. 38.7% of the population in Okotoks is within the "working prime" age cohorts (people between the ages of 25 and 54). Of note, the "young working prime" cohort is significantly smaller in Okotoks compared to the rest of the CMR and Alberta. Okotoks also had the largest share of young seniors and elderly at 14.8%, compared to the CMR and Alberta

FIGURE 8
Share of Population by Major Economic Age Group, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

The 'Young Seniors' and 'Elderly' cohorts grew the most between 2016 and 2021 at 49.5% and 58.0% respectively. Other cohorts that experienced growth were 'Youth and Young Adults' (10.5%), 'Late Working Prime' (8.3%) and 'Late Career and Early Retirement' (14.1%). As the population ages, the town will experience talent shortages. Efforts need to be directed to attract and retain younger population in the area to replace the 'baby boomer' workforce.

FIGURE 9
Population Change by Major Economic Age Group, Okotoks, 2016-2021

ECONOMIC AGE GROUPS	2021	2016	(+/-)	% Change
Children (0-14)	6,575	6,950	-375	-5.4%
Youth and Young Adults (15-24)	3,985	3,605	380	10.5%
Young Working Prime (25-34)	2,785	3,300	-515	-15.6%
Mid Working Prime (35-44)	4,540	4,790	-250	-5.2%
Late Working Prime (45-54)	4,430	4,090	340	8.3%
Late Career and Early Retirement (55-64)	3,595	3,150	445	14.1%
Young Seniors (65-74)	2,795	1,870	925	49.5%
Elderly (75+)	1,770	1,120	650	58.0%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census | 2016 Census

DWELLING AND AFFORDABILITY

77.7% of dwellings in Okotoks are single-detached houses. This is a significantly higher rate than the rest of the CMR (57.7%) and Alberta (60.9%). Okotoks' high-density buildings (apartments and row houses) represent 16.4% of total dwellings, while having no apartment buildings with greater than five storeys. A wide variety of housing types is needed to support a younger cohort, newcomers, single households and seniors. This will, in turn, attract and encourage residents to live, work and/or retire in the town.

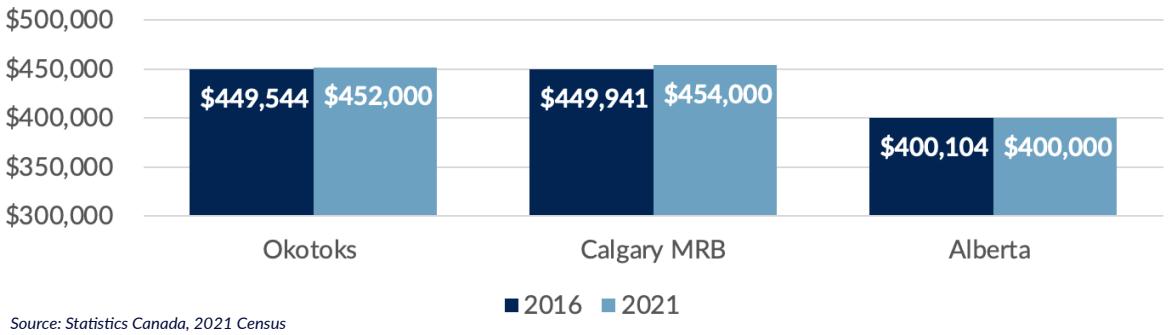
FIGURE 10
Dwelling Type, 2021

DWELLING TYPE	Okotoks	CMR	Alberta
Single-detached house	77.7%	57.7%	60.9%
Semi-detached house	4.9%	6.5%	6.0%
Row house	6.2%	9.7%	7.8%
Apartment or flat in a duplex	1.1%	3.7%	2.7%
Apartment in a building that has fewer than five storeys	9.1%	15.1%	15.1%
Apartment in a building that has five or more storeys	0%	7.0%	4.6%
Other single-attached house	0%	0.1%	0.1%
Movable dwelling	1.1%	0.5%	2.8%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

The median value of all dwellings in Okotoks in 2021 was $452,000, which is slightly lower than the CMR ($454,000), while significantly higher than that of Alberta ($400,000). Median value of dwellings increased in Okotoks and the CMR while Alberta saw a decline.

FIGURE 11
Median Value ($) of Dwellings, 2016-2021



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

According to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Okotoks saw a total of 236 dwellings starts in 2022, up nearly 17% from 2021. Thus far in 2023, there have been 117 new housing starts. Most of the new housing starts have been single-detached homes, however, there has been a recent increase in the number of row homes being started. Of note, 40 new apartment units were started in 2022, and will help increase population density.

FIGURE 12
Historical Starts by Dwelling Type, Okotoks

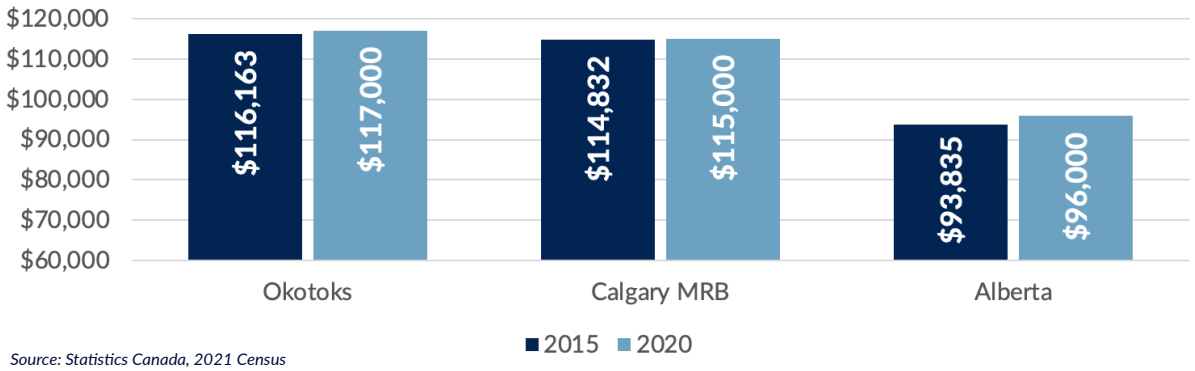
YEAR	Single	Semi-detached	Row	Apartment	All	% Change from Previous Year
2018	106	38	6	0	150	-29.2%
2019	115	32	12	1	160	6.7%
2020	76	48	28	1	153	-4.4%
2021	122	52	28	0	202	32.0%
2022	107	22	67	40	236	16.8%
YTD 2023	37	28	52	0	117	-50.4%
Other single-attached house	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.1%	0.1%
Movable dwelling	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	0.5%	2.8%

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Housing Starts: By Dwelling Type, 2019-2023 | Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Housing Market Information Portal 2023

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

In 2015 and 2020 Okotoks had a higher median household income compared to CMR and Alberta. Okotoks has seen its median household income increase by $837 (0.7%) between 2015 and 2020. During this same period, Alberta has seen its median household income grow by $2,165 (2.3%). Median household income has been stagnant in Okotoks and the CMR since 2015, while Alberta has seen modest growth.

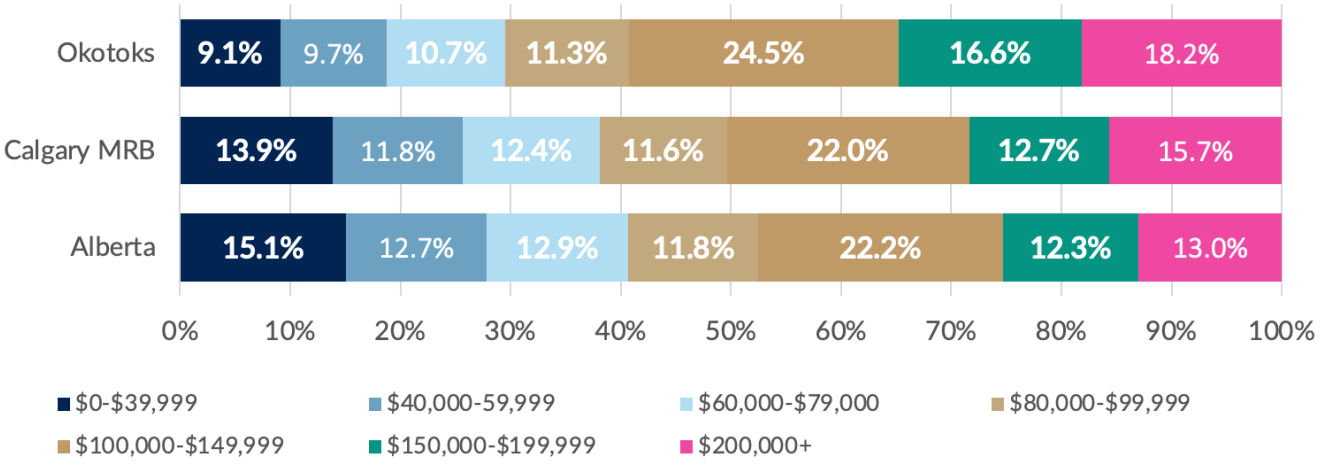
FIGURE 13
Median Total Income of Households, 2015-2020



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

Okotoks has a higher share of households with income above $100,000 (59.3%) compared to the CMR (50.4%) and Alberta (47.5%) while simultaneously having a significant amount of households with total income below $39,999. Together with the data above, households in Okotoks generally have higher income than their comparators and may have more disposable income.

FIGURE 14
Share of Households by Income Group, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

OKOTOKS TALENT AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

This section of the report provides an assessment of the local and regional labour force trends, including educational attainment, educational pipeline (post-secondary completions by instructional program) and creative index.

SKILLED LABOUR AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Education attainment can be looked at as an important descriptor of labour force capacity. The figure below summarizes skilled labour proportions for comparator areas, which is composed of those people that have completed an apprenticeship, trade certificate, or college or university degree, diploma or certificate.

As of 2021, the proportion of skilled labour aged 15 and over in Okotoks was 56% and lower compared to the CMR (61%) but similar to Alberta (56%). Between 2016 and 2021, the number of skilled labourers in the town grew by 900 people, 7% growth. While the growth experienced in Okotoks was slightly less than the growth experienced in the CMR, it was 1% higher than the provincial growth rate.

Limited housing availability can impede population and skilled labour growth. Over the past five years, Okotoks has only experienced an average of 176 dwelling completions per year, with the majority (66%) of these being single detached units. This insufficient pace of housing development may hinder Okotoks' ability to attract and retain a diverse range of residents and workers. To address this issue, Okotoks may need to explore strategies to increase the supply of affordable and diverse housing options in the community.

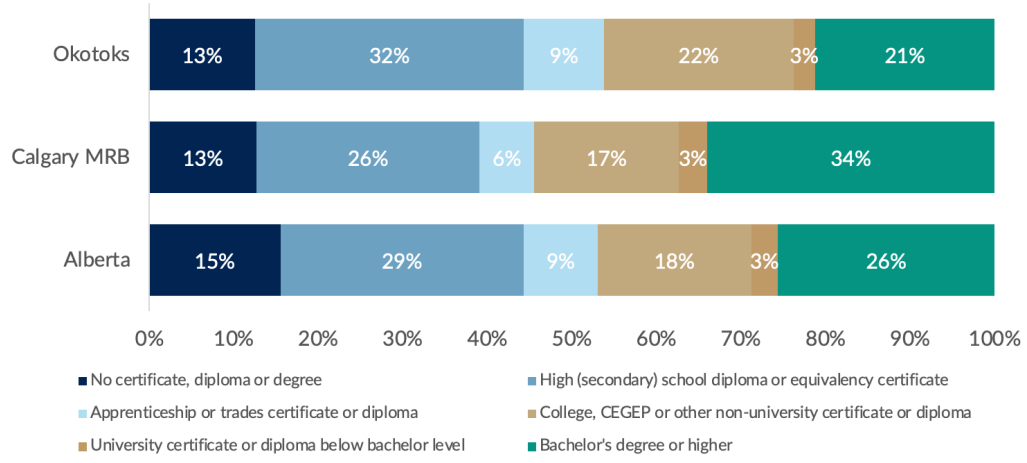
FIGURE 15
Skilled Labour Force, 2016-2021

SKILLED LABOUR	OKOTOKS	CMR	ALBERTA
Census 2021	13,050	756,165	1,880,185
Census 2016	12,150	698,870	1,769,500
Net (+/-)	900	57,295	110,685
% Change	7%	8%	6%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

In terms of educational attainment, Okotoks has a larger share of labour force with an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma (9%) and college, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma (22%) compared to both the CMR and Alberta. Access to people with apprenticeships is important for goods-producing sectors such as agriculture, construction, utilities and manufacturing.

FIGURE 16
Educational Attainment for the Population 15 Years and Over, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL PIPELINE

The purpose of this analysis is to gain a comprehensive understanding of Okotoks' access to skilled labour. To achieve this objective, we have conducted an in-depth examination of the educational pipeline available to Okotoks. Due to its advantageous location, Okotoks has easy access to a wide range of regional post-secondary institutions, most of which are located within an hour's distance. By analyzing this information, we can determine the size of the talent that Okotoks can target at the regional level.

The completion figures in this analysis include the following institutions:

- Alberta College of Art and Design
- Alberta University of the Arts
- Ambrose University
- Bow Valley College
- Mount Royal College
- Mount Royal University
- Southern Alberta Institute of Technology
- St. Mary's University
- University of Calgary

Between 2016 and 2020, an average of 17,303 people per year completed post-secondary programs from the above institutions. The largest segment of graduates completed programs related to health professions and related fields, with an average of 3,312 completions per year. This was followed by business, management, marketing and related support services, with an average of 3,290 completions per year.

The region also produces a significant number of skilled education workers (average of 1,257 completions per year) and engineering, engineering technologies and engineering-related fields (1,936).

This healthy pipeline of talent supports Okotoks' employers to meet their labour needs. However, the town should implement efforts to attract and retain this talent within the community. By offering competitive job opportunities and a high quality of life, Okotoks can position itself as an attractive destination for graduates.

FIGURE 17
Completions by Classification of Instructional Programs (2-Digits CIP), Calgary CMA, 2015-2020

CIP	DESCRIPTION	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	ANNUAL AVERAGE
n/a	Total	16,381	16,948	17,056	17,862	18,268	17,303
51	Health professions and related programs	3,027	3,163	3,177	3,961	3,230	3,312
52	Business, management, marketing and related	2,896	3,038	3,261	3,331	3,924	3,290
13	Education	1,035	1,093	1,342	1,348	1,468	1,257
15	Engineering technologies and engineering-related fields	1,248	1,112	960	811	970	1,020
14	Engineering	891	918	900	907	963	916
45	Social sciences	928	877	871	878	902	891
44	Public administration and social service professions	443	578	470	680	621	558
26	Biological and biomedical sciences	541	475	540	529	618	541
11	Computer and information sciences and support	431	450	472	474	656	497
19	Family and consumer sciences/human sciences	427	410	355	467	480	428
42	Psychology	385	417	380	445	442	414
50	Visual and performing arts	379	399	375	418	379	390
09	Communication, journalism and related programs	392	398	390	340	413	387
22	Legal professions and studies	308	371	388	404	429	380
40	Physical sciences	373	421	355	356	237	348
47	Mechanic and repair technologies/technicians	320	316	321	243	230	286
31	Parks, recreation, leisure and fitness studies	221	230	249	291	295	257
04	Architecture and related services	230	259	255	259	260	253
48	Precision production	293	228	264	201	195	236

12	Personal and culinary services	182	234	240	234	220	222
30	Multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary studies	214	199	201	218	269	220
46	Construction trades	218	333	292	120	85	210
23	English language and literature/letters	142	159	156	146	137	148
10	Communications technologies/technicians	153	144	117	101	99	123
43	Security and protective services	93	120	114	114	126	113
54	History	103	102	90	110	111	103
03	Natural resources and conservation	76	99	108	87	92	92
27	Mathematics and statistics	84	76	75	75	111	84
24	Liberal arts and sciences, general studies and humanities	93	83	63	85	77	80
16	Aboriginal and foreign languages, literatures and linguistics	65	64	55	43	63	58
25	Library science	45	48	51	33	42	44
49	Transportation and materials moving	48	42	51	48	27	43
38	Philosophy and religious studies	41	39	42	42	33	39
41	Science technologies/technicians	24	18	30	18	30	24
05	Area, ethnic, cultural, gender and group studies	19	16	26	24	20	21
55	French language and literature/letters	12	9	18	12	6	11
28	Military science, leadership and operational art	3	12	6	6	6	7

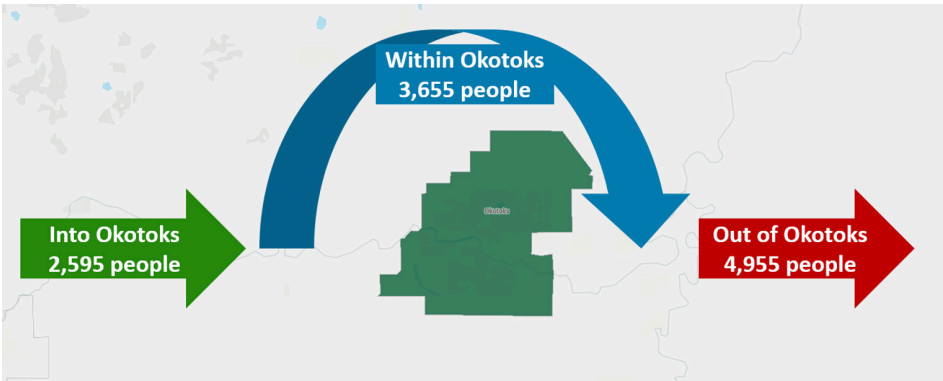
Source: Lightcast, Datarun 2023.1 | CIP with total values at 0 are not displayed in the table

COMMUTING PATTERNS

Okotoks is a net exporter of workers. In 2021, approximately 4,955 people, or 58% of Okotoks' commuting employed labour force, left the town for work. Approximately 3,655 people lived and worked in the town, and another 2,595 people came from other communities to work in Okotoks. This means a total net outflow of 2,195 workers. Most of these out-commuters left the town to work in health care and social assistance; retail trade; and construction.

Most of the people commuting out of Okotoks travel to Calgary (3,160 people or 64% of outbound commuters), followed by High River (485 people or 10% of outbound commuters). On the other hand, most of the workers coming to Okotoks have Calgary as their place of residence (1,305 people or 50% of inbound commuters), followed by Foothills County (680 people or 26% of inbound commuters).

FIGURE 18
Commuting Flows, Okotoks, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS ARE CHANGING THE COMMUTING LANDSCAPE IN OKOTOKS

Compared to 2016, the number of people commuting out of Okotoks to work fell by 1,955 people (6,910 people commuted out of Okotoks in 2016). This 28% reduction in out-commuting is closely matched by an increase in the number of people working from home during the same period. In 2016, 1,290 people worked from home, while in 2021, this number has increased to 3,205 people (148% increase).

In Okotoks, from 2016 to 2021, there was a decrease in the number of people commuting out to work in almost every industry sector except for accommodation and food services; retail trade; and agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting. The most significant changes were seen in mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction (-405 people); professional, scientific and technical services (-245 people); wholesale trade (-190 people); and finance and insurance (-185 people). While flexible work arrangements cannot be solely credited for these reductions, it is worth noting that professional, scientific and technical services and finance and insurance are among the industries that offer the most remote work opportunities.[23]

FIGURE 19
Out Commuting by Industry Sector (2-Digit NAICS), Okotoks, 2016-2021

INDUSTRY	2021 Census	2016 Census	Net Change	% Change
72 Accommodation and food services	170	100	70	70%
44-45 Retail trade	525	500	25	5%
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	55	40	15	38%
71 Arts, entertainment and recreation	95	115	-20	-17%
55 Management of companies and enterprises	0	40	-40	-100%
51 Information and cultural industries	40	90	-50	-56%
22 Utilities	65	130	-65	-50%
81 Other services (except public administration)	195	260	-65	-25%
56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	110	180	-70	-39%
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	30	110	-80	-73%
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	220	335	-115	-34%
31-33 Manufacturing	420	545	-125	-23%
62 Health care and social assistance	730	855	-125	-15%
91 Public administration	325	470	-145	-31%
23 Construction	490	650	-160	-25%
61 Educational services	340	515	-175	-34%
52 Finance and insurance	45	230	-185	-80%
41 Wholesale trade	270	460	-190	-41%
54 Professional, scientific and technical services	250	495	-245	-49%
21 Mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction	225	630	-405	-64%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census | 2016 Census

23 https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/remote-work-statistics/

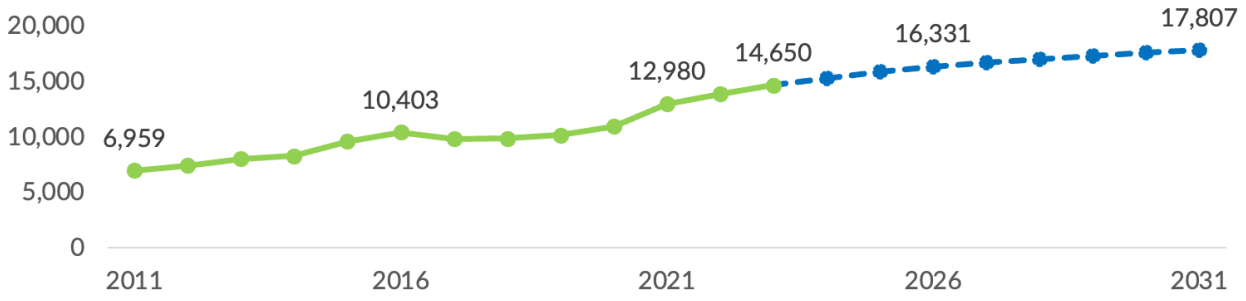
OKOTOKS JOB TRENDS

This section provides an assessment of local workforce trends by the estimated number of jobs by industry sector and occupational categories.

HISTORICAL AND PROJECTED JOB GROWTH

Jobs in the town of Okotoks proved to be resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is evidenced through the 780 job increase between 2019 and 2020 and 2,044 job increase between 2020 and 2021. In comparison, both Alberta and the broader CMR experienced job declines of 8% and 9%, respectively, during the same period.

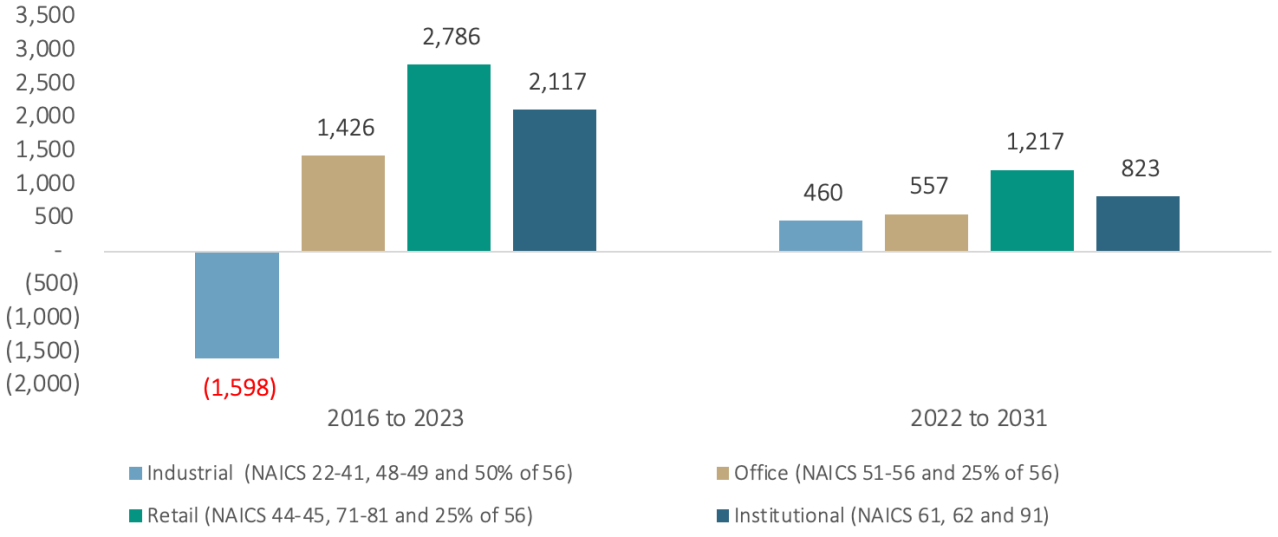
FIGURE 20
Okotoks Jobs, 2011 to 2031



Source: Lightcast, Datarun 2023.1

Okotoks showed office-based, retail-based and institutional-based job growth from 2016 to 2023. Meanwhile, industrial-based jobs experienced a 34% decline during the same period. All location-based jobs are projected to grow during the next 8 years, with retail-based jobs experiencing the largest net growth (+1,217 jobs) and institutional-based jobs experiencing the fastest growth at 27%. Office-based jobs and industrial-based jobs are projected to grow by 15% and 20%, respectively, during the same time.

Figure 21
Location-based Job Growth, Okotoks, 2016-2031



Source: Lightcast, Datarun 2023.1

Service industries represent 82% of Okotoks' economy (11,987 jobs). The goods-producing sectors, which tend to be export based industries, represent 16% of the town's jobs (2,406 jobs). In 2023, the largest industry sectors by employment in Okotoks were retail trade (2,643 jobs – 18% of jobs); professional, scientific and technical services (1,452 jobs – 10% of jobs); educational services (1,338 jobs – 9% of jobs); and health care and social assistance (1,286 jobs – 9% of jobs). Okotoks has a significantly larger share of jobs in retail trade; educational services; and accommodation and food services, compared to the CMR and Alberta.

The 2021 Census estimated that 3,205 people worked from home during the Census period, most of these were women (1,745 people or 54% of all people working from home in Okotoks). Residents who work remotely continue to make a big impact on the town's economy. This group is typically high-skilled, earn high wages and spend a lot of time and money in the community.

FIGURE 22
Number of Jobs by Industry Sector, Okotoks, 2023

NAICS	DESCRIPTION	OKOTOKS	CMR	ALBERTA
11	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	84	4,813	51,899
21	Mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction	462	38,034	111,623
22	Utilities	92	8,195	17,121
23	Construction	1,281	81,039	235,678
31-33	Manufacturing	487	43,405	128,877
41	Wholesale trade	532	39,892	102,846
44-45	Retail trade	2,643	98,667	268,042
48-49	Transportation and warehousing	457	56,144	135,583
51	Information and cultural industries	151	14,872	27,669
52	Finance and insurance	539	36,121	78,742
53	Real estate and rental and leasing	290	22,626	53,277
54	Professional, scientific and technical services	1,452	102,685	192,234
55	Management of companies and enterprises	221	10,733	17,259
56	Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	609	42,251	107,883
61	Educational services	1,338	58,232	159,227
62	Health care and social assistance	1,286	104,443	270,574
71	Arts, entertainment and recreation	395	20,016	46,928
72	Accommodation and food services	1,170	58,720	170,296
81	Other services (except public administration)	527	34,092	109,284
91	Public administration	377	30,162	116,723
X0	Unclassified	258	16,767	44,725
N/A	Total	14,650	921,908	2,446,489

Source: Lightcast, Datarun 2023.1

Looking forward to 2031, and compared to 2023, the industries that are projected to add more jobs to the Okotoks' economy are retail trade (+620 jobs); health care and social assistance (+411 jobs); and accommodation and food services (+407 jobs). During this time, only one industry is projected to experience a job decline: agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (-56 jobs).

FIGURE 23
Projected Job Growth by Industry Sector, Okotoks, 2023 to 2031

NAICS	DESCRIPTION	2023 Jobs	2031 Jobs	(+/-) Change	% Change
n/a	Total	14,650	17,807	3,157	22%
44-45	Retail trade	2,643	3,263	620	23%
62	Health care and social assistance	1,286	1,697	411	32%
72	Accommodation and food services	1,170	1,577	407	35%
61	Educational services	1,338	1,662	324	24%
54	Professional, scientific and technical services	1,452	1,704	252	17%
81	Other services (except public administration)	527	663	136	26%
48-49	Transportation and warehousing	457	592	135	30%
52	Finance and insurance	539	659	120	22%
23	Construction	1,281	1,383	102	8%
31-33	Manufacturing	487	580	93	19%
21	Mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction	462	552	90	19%
55	Management of companies and enterprises	221	311	90	41%
56	Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	609	699	90	15%
91	Public administration	377	465	88	23%
X0	Unclassified	258	324	66	26%
41	Wholesale trade	532	589	57	11%
53	Real estate and rental and leasing	290	338	48	17%
71	Arts, entertainment and recreation	395	426	31	8%
22	Utilities	92	120	28	30%
51	Information and cultural industries	151	175	24	16%
11	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	84	28	-56	-67%

Source: Lightcast, Datarun 2023.1

CURRENT AND FORECAST OCCUPATIONS

When examining jobs by occupation in Okotoks, the top occupational categories are related to sales and service (4,407 jobs or 30% of the town's total jobs); business, finance and administration occupations (2,655 jobs or 18% of the town's total jobs); and trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations (2,199 or 15% of the town's total jobs); and. These occupations accounted for 63% of the total jobs in Okotoks.

A more detailed view of specific occupations highlights five occupation types that account for 13% of all jobs available by local employers in Okotoks.

- Retail salespersons and visual merchandisers (601 jobs)
- Cashiers (359 jobs)
- Food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related support occupations (318 jobs)
- Retail and wholesale trade managers (310 jobs)
- Retail sales supervisors (306 jobs)

FIGURE 24
Top Occupational Categories (1-Digit NOC), Okotoks, 2023

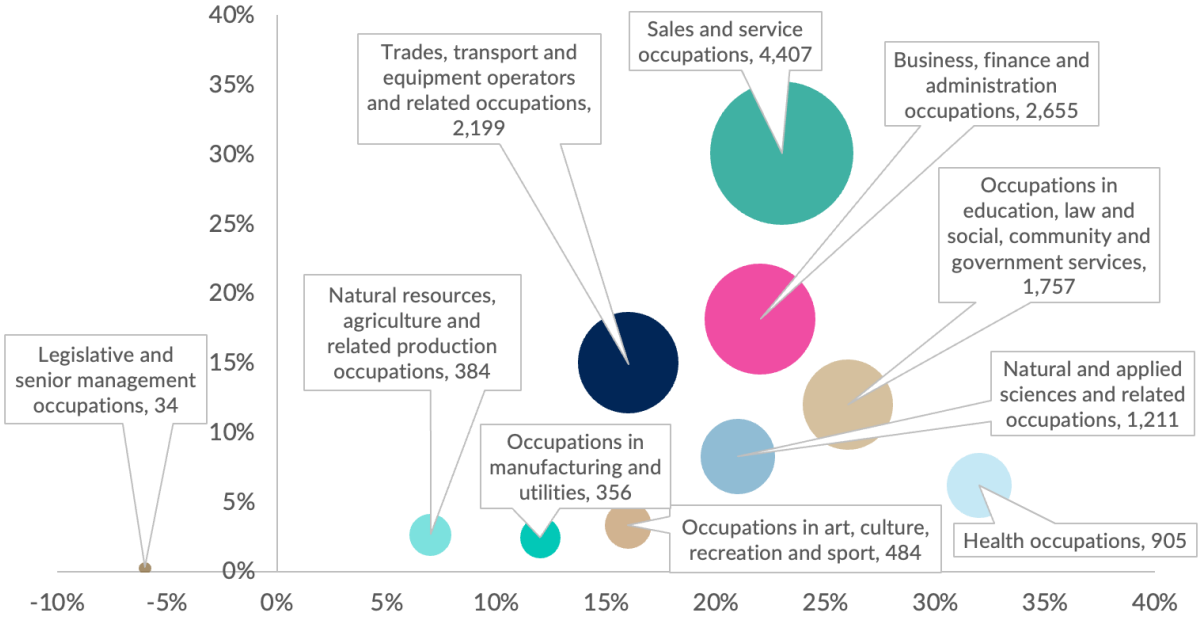
NAICS	DESCRIPTION	2023 Jobs	% Jobs 2023
n/a	Total	14,650	100%
6	Sales and service occupations	4,407	30%
1	Business, finance and administration occupations	2,655	18%
7	Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	2,199	15%
4	Occupations in education, law and social, community and government services	1,757	12%
2	Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	1,211	8%
3	Health occupations	905	6%
5	Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport	484	3%
8	Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	384	3%
9	Occupations in manufacturing and utilities	356	2%
X	Unclassified occupation	258	2%
0	Legislative and senior management occupations	34	0%

Source: Lightcast, Datarun 2023.1

Looking forward to 2031, occupational growth in Okotoks will be led by sales and service category (+996 jobs or 23% growth); and health occupations (+589 jobs or 22% growth). These two occupational categories will represent close to 50% of the occupational growth in the town.

At a more detailed level, the occupations projected to experience the largest growth in Okotoks include retail salespersons and visual merchandisers (+126 jobs or 21% growth); followed by elementary school and kindergarten teachers (+111 jobs or 39% growth); and retail sales supervisors (+94 jobs or 31% growth).

FIGURE 25
Proportion of Occupations in 2023 and Projected Change, Okotoks, 2023-2031



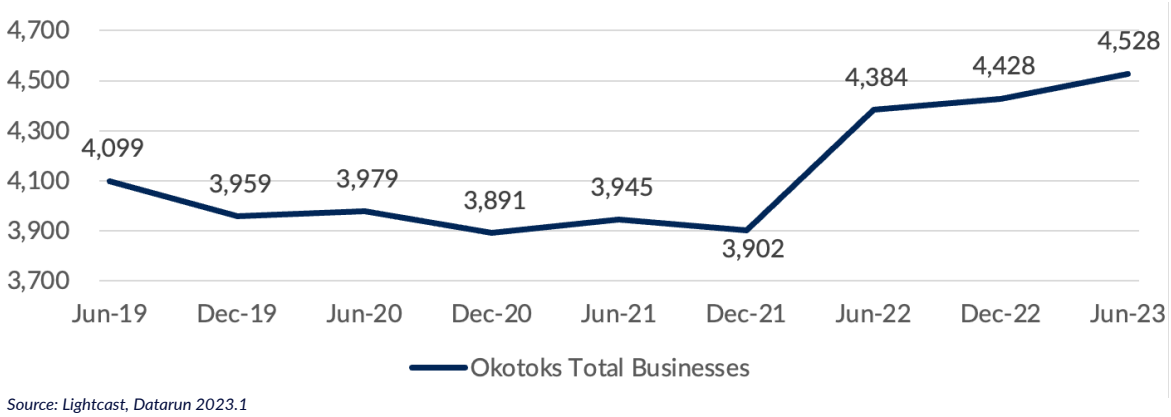
Source: Lightcast, Datarun 2023.1

OKOTOKS BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT AND STRUCTURE

The review of the business structure in Okotoks for the period between December 2018 and December 2022 provides an understanding of the growth or decline of businesses over the five-year period and the key characteristics that define Okotoks' business community. When combined with the broader industry analysis, the business patterns information will assist in understanding the key industry opportunities for Okotoks.

Between June 2019 and December 2021, Okotoks experienced a slight decrease in the number of businesses, decreasing by 197 (-4.8%). However, in June 2022 the total number of businesses increased well past June 2019 totals to 4,384 businesses (+12.4%) from December 2021. The upward trend in the total number of businesses has continued through June 2023 business count data.

FIGURE 26
Total Businesses, June 2019 to June 2023, Okotoks



Source: Lightcast, Datarun 2023.1

As per the June 2023 Canadian Business Counts data, Okotoks had 4,528 businesses. This includes 1,340 with employees and 3,188 businesses without employees. Small businesses with nine or less employees make up 80.2% of all businesses in Okotoks with employees while there are 14 total businesses with 100 or more employees (1.0% of businesses with employees). The business size is of significance because small, medium and large firms are believed to provide different economic functions within an economic region. Small firms are seen as the major source of new products and ideas, while large firms typically develop as products become more homogenous and firms begin to exploit economies of scale.

FIGURE 27
Businesses by Industry (2-Digit NAICS) by Size, Okotoks, June 2023

NAICS	1-4	5-9	10-19	20-49	50-99	100-199	200-499	500+	With Employees	W/O Employees	Total
11	14	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	19	177	196
21	21	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	23	59	82
22	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3
23	149	37	18	14	2	1	0	0	221	405	626
31-33	14	12	7	2	1	0	0	0	36	60	96
41	16	4	6	2	0	0	0	0	27	55	82
44-45	53	45	22	12	3	5	2	0	143	130	273
48-49	31	8	3	3	2	0	0	0	47	91	138
51	10	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	16	25	41
52	26	5	10	5	0	0	0	0	46	166	212
53	43	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	50	531	581
54	198	17	6	3	1	0	0	0	225	530	755
55	3	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	5	20	25
56	29	16	15	3	0	1	0	0	64	99	163
61	11	7	2	1	0	0	1	1	23	44	67
62	65	15	17	9	2	2	0	0	110	149	259
71	6	7	4	3	3	0	0	0	23	45	68
72	15	18	7	14	5	0	0	0	59	25	84
81	65	12	15	4	1	0	0	0	97	210	307
91	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	3	0	3
X0	87	10	4	0	1	0	0	0	102	365	467
Total	856	219	147	81	23	9	4	1	1,340	3,188	4,528

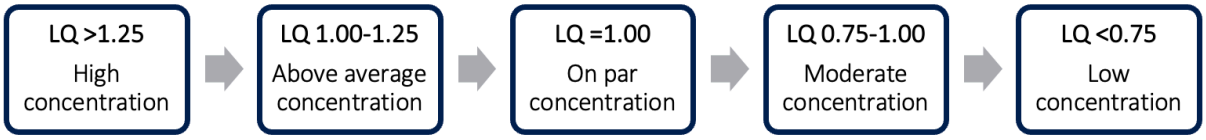
Source: Lightcast, 2023, Datarun 2023.3 | Canadian Business Counts, December 2022

11 - Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting |21 - Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction | 22 – Utilities | 23 – Construction | 31-33 – Manufacturing | 41 - Wholesale Trade | 44-45 - Retail Trade | 48-49 - Transportation and Warehousing | 51 - Information and Cultural Industries | 52 - Finance and Insurance | 53 - Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | 54 - Professional, Scientific and Technical Services | 55 - Management of Companies and Enterprises | 56 - Administrative and Support, Waste Management and Remediation Services | 61 - Educational Services | 62 - Health Care and Social Assistance | 71 - Arts, Entertainment and Recreation | 72 - Accommodation and Food Services | 81 - Other Services (except Public Administration) | 91 - Public Administration

BUSINESS CONCENTRATIONS

To determine business concentrations, a location quotient (LQ) analysis was completed. This analysis compares the concentration of a sectors business in Okotoks and compares them against the concentration of the same sector in both the Calgary CMA and the province of Alberta. This analysis analyzes LQs at the 2-digit industry sectors level.

FIGURE 28
Location Quotient Definitions



From the analysis, the following insights have been discovered.

Sectors that have a high concentration of businesses relative to the Calgary CMA include agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting; mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction; construction; manufacturing, arts, entertainment and recreation; and public administration.

Sectors that have a high concentration of businesses relative to Alberta include construction; manufacturing; information and cultural industries; professional, scientific and technical services; educational services; and arts, entertainment and recreation.

FIGURE 29
Business Concentrations (Location Quotients), Okotoks, December 2022

NAICS	DESCRIPTION	LQ CMA	LQ Alberta
11	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	3.94	0.53
21	Mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction	1.29	1.06
22	Utilities	0.47	0.53
23	Construction	1.41	1.35
31-33	Manufacturing	1.39	1.27
41	Wholesale trade	0.91	0.91
44-45	Retail trade	1.22	1.12
48-49	Transportation and warehousing	0.48	0.51
51	Information and cultural industries	1.01	1.27
52	Finance and insurance	0.88	1.00
53	Real estate and rental and leasing	0.89	0.88
54	Professional, scientific and technical services	0.90	1.31
55	Management of companies and enterprises	0.61	0.67
56	Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	0.98	1.05
61	Educational services	1.24	1.53
62	Health care and social assistance	0.80	0.88
71	Arts, entertainment and recreation	1.45	1.51
72	Accommodation and food services	0.76	0.74
81	Other services (except public administration)	1.20	1.04
91	Public administration	1.42	0.43

Source: Lightcast, 2023, Datarun 2023.3 | Canadian Business Counts, December 2022

QUANTIFYING OKOTOKS' KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

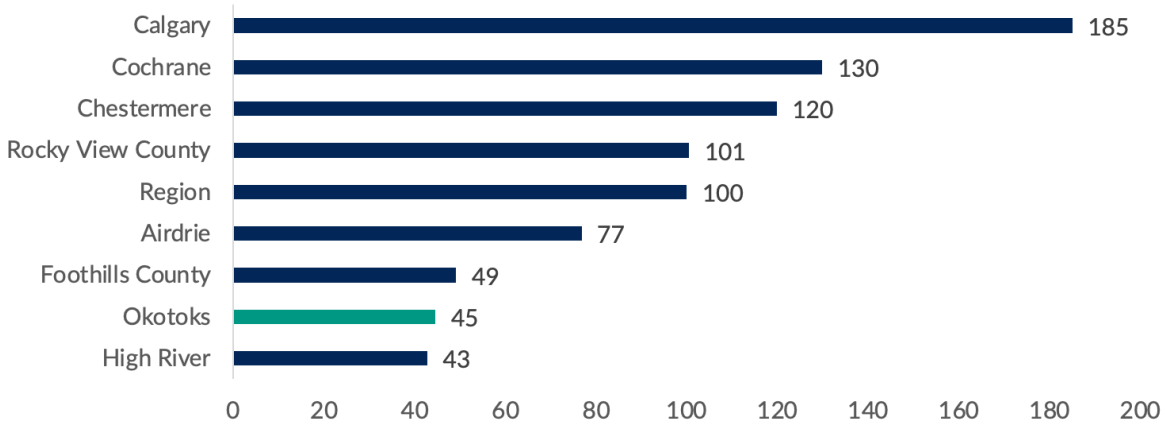
CREATIVE INDEX SCORE

A Creative Index is a gauge that measures a given community's creative economy by analyzing the amount and capability of its creative assets. Recognizing and quantifying a region's Creative Assets is often done by analyzing the three "Ts" of economic development: Tolerance, Talent and Technology. These categories place the greatest value on the attraction and retention of creative capital. Creative capital differs from human capital in that its value lies not in the capability to produce but in creating and developing ideas. The three "Ts" are co-dependent; all three are necessary to promote creative growth, and no single one carries more importance or weight than the others. The Creative Index is an overall ranking of the selected comparable communities and peer regions based on how well they score on each indicator. For the Creative Index, all index scores are calculated. The Creative score is calculated as follows:

CREATIVE INDEX SCORE = Index Score + Index Score + Index Score / 3

The Creative Index analysis reveals that Okotoks ranks second to last among comparable communities. To enhance its appeal to potential talent and investment, Okotoks must prioritize efforts to bolster its creative talent and promote greater population diversity. By doing so, Okotoks can position itself as a more attractive and dynamic community for individuals and businesses alike.

FIGURE 30
Score, Comparable Communities and Region vs. Okotoks, 2023



Source: Lightcast, Datarun 2023.1 | Canadian Business Counts, December 2022 – Adapted by Deloitte

TALENT INDEX

A community's Talent is the size and capacity of its knowledge occupations and its related educational attainment. The following parameters were used to calculate the Talent Index:

- **Share of knowledge occupations** – Knowledge occupations consist of people who are paid to think. These include management, business, finance and administration occupations, natural and applied sciences and related occupations, health occupations, occupations in education, law and social, community and government services and occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport

- **Share of high-tech occupations** – High-technology occupations are scientific, engineering and technician occupations. Individuals employed in these occupations are collectively referred to as technology-oriented workers. Some technology-oriented workers are engaged in research and development, increasing scientific knowledge and using it to develop products and production processes; others apply technology in other activities, including the design of equipment, processes and structures; computer applications; sales, purchasing and marketing; quality management; and the management of these activities.

- **Educational attainment** – The proportion of the labour force with:
  - post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree
  - field of study in arts, business, science and engineering and health

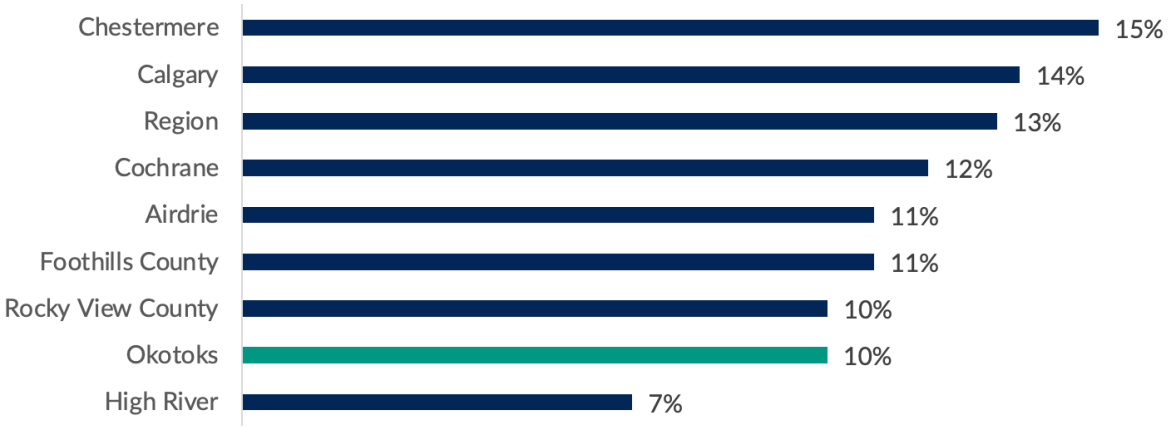
The figure below shows the share of knowledge occupations in Okotoks and comparator communities in 2021. The share of knowledge occupations was assessed at NOC 1-digit and include NOC 0 to NOC 5. Knowledge workers make up 47% of Okotoks' total labour force. Okotoks ranked sixth after Calgary, Rocky View, the region, Cochrane and Foothills. Calgary leads in knowledge occupations at 53%.

FIGURE 31
Share of Knowledge Occupations, Comparable Communities and Region vs. Okotoks, 2021

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

The figure below shows the share of high-technology occupations in Okotoks, regional communities and the CMR in 2023. Technology-oriented workers make up 10% of Okotoks' total workforce, ranking second last, just above High River.

FIGURE 32
Share of High-Technology Occupations, Comparable Communities and Region vs. Okotoks, 2023



Source: Lightcast, Datarun 2023.1

Talent is often associated with the level of education achieved. While objectively, it may preclude individuals who would be considered talented (ex., an artist who may not have a high school degree), measuring the share of the population with a post-secondary degree is often correlated with the overall health and prosperity of a community.

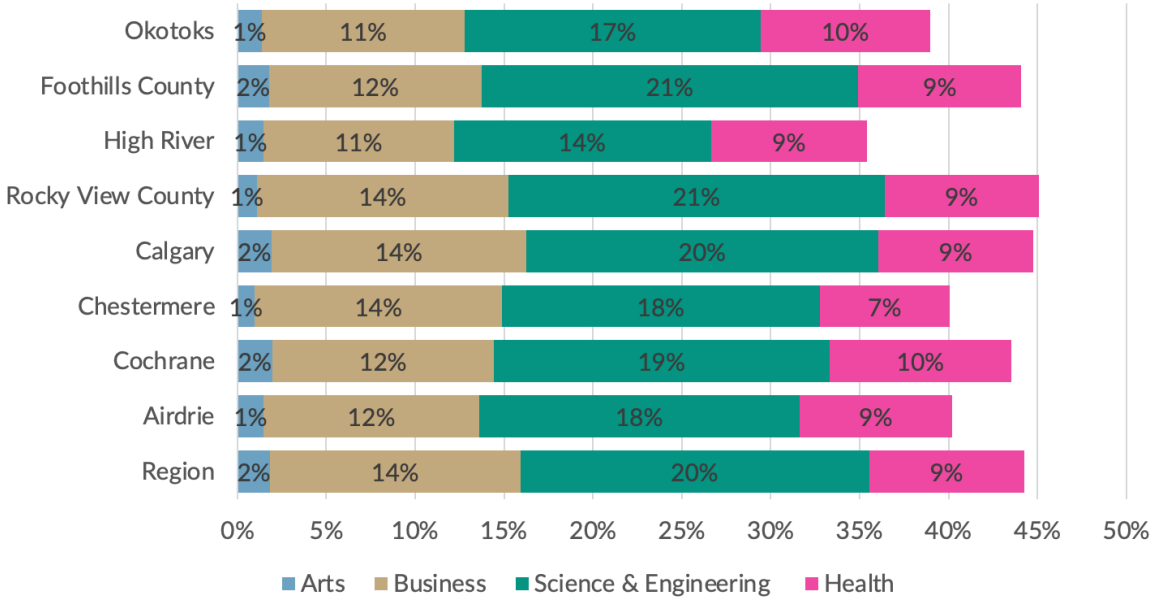
Approximately 56% of Okotoks' population 15 years or older have a post-secondary degree. Among its nearby communities, Okotoks ranks seventh, just above Chestermere and High River.

FIGURE 33
Share of Population (+15 years) by Post-Secondary Certificate, Diploma, or Degree, Comparable Communities and Region vs. Okotoks, 2023

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

The figure below presents a further examination of the share of the population with a post-secondary degree. Creatives are often individuals with degrees in science and engineering fields, arts or business. Education related to health care is also included given the innovations and creative activities in health care. The field of study breakdown illustrates that 39% of Okotoks' post-secondary degree-holding population is focused on science and engineering fields, health, art and humanities, or business.

FIGURE 34
Distribution of Post-Secondary Degrees by Field of Study (+15 years), Comparable Communities and Region vs. Okotoks, 2023



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

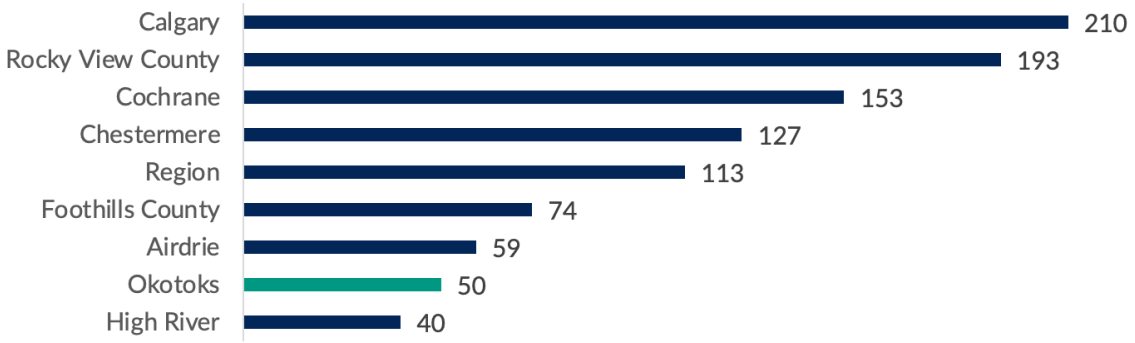
TALENT INDEX SCORE

The talent index is an overall ranking of the selected comparable communities and peer regions based on how well they score on each indicator. Four indicator scores are calculated: share of knowledge workers, share of high-tech occupations, share of the population with a post-secondary degree and share of the population with a post-secondary degree in science, arts or business. Each indicator uses the following formula to calculate a score:

INDICATOR SCORE = Total Number of Communities / Rank of Community x 10
INDEX SCORE = Combined Indicator Scores

The Talent Index is illustrated in the figure below. Out of the comparable communities, Okotoks ranked second last on the talent index score.

FIGURE 35
Talent Index Score, Comparable Communities and CMA vs. Okotoks, 2023



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census | Lightcast, Datarun 2023.1 - Adapted by Deloitte

TECHNOLOGY INDEX

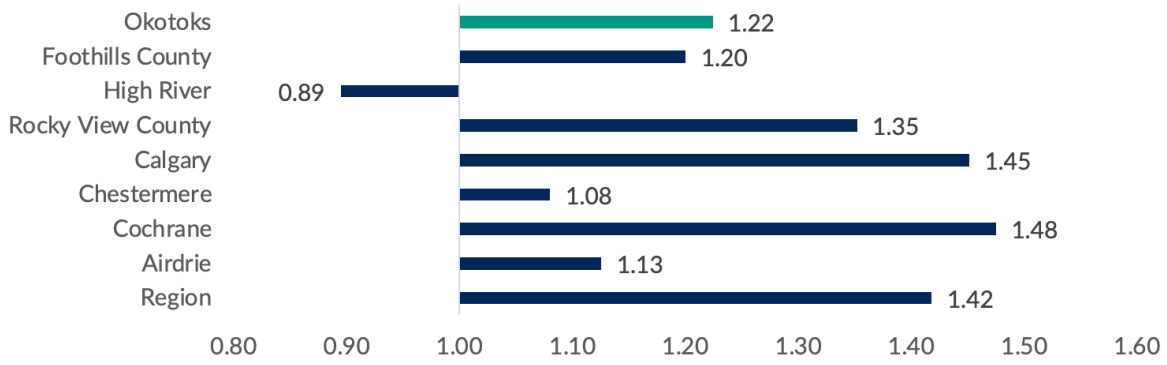
Technology is critical to developing and growing any economy. Without the necessary technology allowing information sharing and high-speed communication, communities and its businesses have difficulty competing in the global economy. Communities with large, well-developed and sustainable tech sectors and cultural industries can maintain high economic growth into the future. The figure illustrates the percentage share of STEM firms located in the community. 17% of all Okotoks' businesses are STEM-based firms[24]. Okotoks ranks fifth compared with the communities in the CMR.

FIGURE 36
STEM firms Share, Comparable Communities and Region vs. Okotoks, December 2022

Source: Lightcast, Datarun 2023.1 | Canadian Business Counts, December 2022

The figure below shows the Location Quotient of Okotoks and comparable communities as a factor of Alberta for STEM firms. Okotoks shows an LQ of 1.22, indicating an above average concentration of STEM industries in the town. Okotoks recorded the fifth largest LQ among comparators.

FIGURE 37
STEM firms LQ, Comparable Communities and Region vs. Okotoks, December 2022



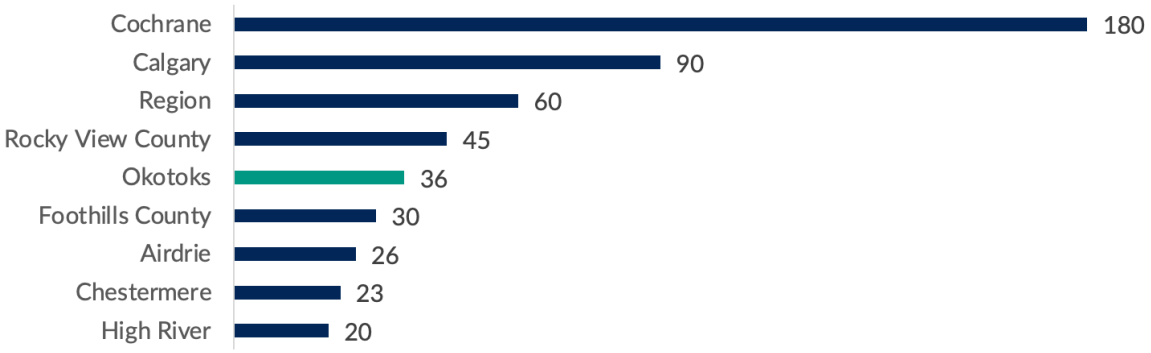
Source: Lightcast, Datarun 2023.1 | Canadian Business Counts, December 2022

24 STEM firms include industries in the following sectors: Professional, scientific and technical services, computer and electronic product manufacturing, machinery manufacturing, electrical and transportation equipment manufacturing, chemical manufacturing, publishing industries, telecommunications and utilities.

TECHNOLOGY INDEX SCORE

The Technology Index is an overall ranking of the selected comparable communities based on how well they score on each indicator. For the technology index, two indicator scores are calculated: the share of STEM establishments and the ranking associated with the STEM location quotients. The score is calculated using the same formula that was used to calculate the talent index. Okotoks ranks fifth, above half of the comparators on the Technology Index.

FIGURE 37
Technology Index Score, Comparable Communities and Region vs. Okotoks, December 2022



Source: Lightcast, Datarun 2023.1 | Canadian Business Counts, December 2022

OKOTOKS TARGET SECTORS

This section of the report details the industry sector trends that impact on Okotoks' competitiveness. Building on the macro-economic trends and Okotoks' community and economic profile, this data analysis clarifies Okotoks' industry sector performance and position target sectors for the community.

Based on the employment growth trends, industry clusters and export opportunities, Okotoks' emerging and potential economic drivers include:

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Despite not ranking high in the creative index, Okotoks has the potential to develop its creative sector and attract creative professionals seeking natural amenities and proximity to a big city. The town is projected to experience job growth in educational services; professional, scientific and technical services; and finance and insurance sectors. Notably, these last two industries offer remote work opportunities, making Okotoks an ideal location for this type of talent. The Alberta careers, learning and employment information – ALIS, states that the ability to work from home was an emerging trend before the COVID-19 pandemic, and for many businesses, that shift is here to stay. In one survey, 74% of small and medium-sized enterprises said they would continue to offer their employees the choice to work offsite.[25]

To capitalize on this trend, the town can incentivize growth in multi-tenant office spaces that cater to businesses in these sectors. This aligns with the recommended development typologies outlined in the Okotoks' Commercial and Industrial Growth Study.[26]

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

Opportunities for Okotoks include a focus on lean or light manufacturing. Light industrial is described as any production that can be fulfilled in smaller facilities/factories or smaller land parcels, uses lighter equipment and has lower capital intensity than heavy industry processes. They are often integrated operations and on-site manufacturing in a 'campus-style' setting. Light industrial spaces are used for assembly, disassembly, fabricating, finishing, manufacturing, packaging and repairing of several types of materials. Enabling connections within the construction sector also presents an opportunity for Okotoks through the manufacturing of prefabricated building elements including homes. As construction costs continue to increase, manufacturers are exploring modern technologies and processes to allow for 'built-to specification'' designs. These cost-efficient processes further lead to opportunities for just-in-time delivery of building components to construction sites, furthering the position of the transportation and warehousing sector as a critical enabler.

25 https://alis.alberta.ca/plan-your-career/workplace-trends/remote-work/remote-work-what-it-looks-like-and-how-to-make-it-work-for-you/
26 Town of Okotoks, Commercial and Industrial Growth Study, May 2021

TOURISM

Attracting visitors and residents to Okotoks through tourism is a significant opportunity. Okotoks currently boasts a high concentration of arts, entertainment and recreation businesses which act as primary attractors of tourism. Retail trade and accommodation and food services are some of the fastest growing sectors in Okotoks. These sectors have the opportunity to become a primary tourism experience within the town. Supporting this notion is the Commercial and Industrial Growth Study that identifies Downtown Culinary Row as a priority growth area for the town with the goal for Okotoks to be a food and beverage destination that is unique the South Calgary Market.[27] Improving existing tourism experiences within the town can support talent attraction and retention as these experiences highlight the quality of life that is offered within the town and provide residents with appealing options on how they utilize their recreational budget.

FIGURE 39
Priority Sectors, Okotoks

TOP GROWING SECTORS	HIGH CONCENTRATION CMA/PROVINCE	LARGEST EXPORTERS
Retail trade	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	Mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction
Health care and social assistance	Mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction	Manufacturing
Accommodation and food services	Construction	Transportation and warehousing
Educational services	Manufacturing	Retail trade
Professional, scientific and technical services	Information and cultural industries	Professional, scientific and technical services
Other services (except public administration)	Professional, scientific and technical services	Construction
Transportation and warehousing	Educational services	Educational services
Finance and insurance	Arts, entertainment and recreation	
Construction	Public administration	
Manufacturing		

SUGGESTED TARGET SECTORS

- Creative industries
- Advanced manufacturing
- Tourism

The color codes used above are intended to illustrate the connections between the first three columns and the suggested target sector column below. For instance, the target sectors of construction and manufacturing are highlighted in red in the first three columns, as they are linked to advanced manufacturing as a target sector.

27 Commercial and Industrial Growth Study, May 2021

KEY FINDINGS

OKOTOKS' DEMOGRAPHICS AND LABOUR TRENDS

FAVOURABLE GROWTH CLIMATE

Located approximately 15 kilometers south of Calgary on the Provincial Highway 2A, Okotoks has direct access to the largest city in Alberta. Okotoks provides its residents with ample recreational activities and has a positive reputation for cultural offerings. The direct connection to the largest economic hub in Alberta offers residents with access to services and employment opportunities that only larger population centres can provide. This combined with Okotoks' desirable quality of life features provide the town with strong foundation from which to grow its population and business community.

Okotoks has witnessed a stable rate of population growth, on pace with the provincial average. Between 2016 and 2021, Okotoks' population grew by more than 1,350 people, representing a nearly 5% increase. Nearly half of this growth has been from migration from other centres across Alberta and Canada.

OKOTOKS PROVED RESILIENT TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACTS ON EMPLOYMENT

The Town of Okotoks has demonstrated remarkable job resilience amid the COVID-19 pandemic. A clear indication of this is the consistent growth in jobs within the town from 2019 to 2021 – an impressive 28% increase in jobs during this period. This stands in stark contrast to the broader Calgary Metropolitan Region (CMR), which experienced a 4% decline in jobs, as well as the province of Alberta, which saw a 6% decline, and Canada as a whole, which witnessed a 3% decrease in jobs. These figures provide compelling evidence of Okotoks' ability to weather the pandemic's economic impact and maintain a thriving job market.

RETAIL-BASED JOBS ARE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE LEADING GROWTH IN OKOTOKS

From 2016 to 2023, retail-based jobs[28] experienced the largest increase among location-based jobs, adding approximately 2,786 jobs. In the upcoming decade, retail-based jobs are projected to continue leading the growth, adding an additional 1,217 jobs, which is significantly higher than the growth projected for industrial-based jobs. This trend is unsurprising given that the Okotoks economy is primarily driven by the service sector, which accounts for 82% of Okotoks' economy, or 11,987 jobs. By contrast, the goods-producing sectors, which tend to be export-based industries, represent only 16% of the town's jobs, or 2,406 jobs. It is worth noting that Okotoks has a significantly larger share of jobs in retail trade, educational services and accommodation and food services compared to the CMR and Alberta.

28 Retail-based jobs include industries in retail trade; arts, entertainment and recreation; accommodation and food services; other services (except public administration); and a portion of jobs in the administrative and support, waste management and remediation services.

OKOTOKS SHOWS WORKFORCE STRENGTHS IN THE TRADES, BUT LAGS BEHIND REGIONAL COMMUNITIES IN THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

Based on the 2021 Census, Okotoks has displayed a higher labour participation rate of 68% compared to the national average at 63%, and similar to the provincial participation rate, also at 68%. This, coupled with a young population and a higher percentage of apprenticeship or trades certificates, positions the town favourably for economic success in the goods-producing sectors, such as construction and manufacturing. However, it is worth noting that Okotoks has one of the lowest proportions of knowledge occupation labour force compared to peer communities in the CMR. This may deter companies with more advanced production processes from establishing themselves in Okotoks. To address this issue, it is essential to attract and retain knowledge workers from nearby communities, including Calgary, Rocky View County and Cochrane.

According to the creative index analysis, Okotoks ranks relatively low compared to other communities in the CMR, just above High River, in terms of the factors that make a community appealing to creative industries. The town's low population diversity, limited share of high-tech jobs, lower percentage of labour with post-secondary degrees and fewer individuals with knowledge of a non-official language may hinder the ability to develop a thriving creative sector.

FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS ARE CHANGING THE COMMUTING LANDSCAPE IN OKOTOKS

In 2021 approximately 4,955 commuted out of Okotoks to work. Compared to 2016, the number of people commuting out of Okotoks to work fell by 1,955 people (28%). This reduction in out-commuting is closely matched by an increase in the number of people working from home during the same period. In 2016, 1,290 people worked from home, while in 2021, this number increased to 3,205 people, representing a 148% increase.

From 2016 to 2021, there was a decrease in the number of people commuting out to work in almost every industry sector except for accommodation and food services; retail trade; and agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting. The most significant changes were seen in mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction (-405 people); professional, scientific and technical services (-245 people); wholesale trade (-190 people) and finance and insurance (-185 people). While flexible work arrangements cannot be solely credited for these reductions, it is worth noting that professional, scientific and technical services and finance and insurance are among the industries that offer the most remote work opportunities.[29]

29 https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/remote-work-statistics/

APPENDIX C

INVESTMENT READINESS ASSESSMENT

APPENDIX C: INVESTMENT READINESS ASSESSMENT

An investment readiness review was completed for the Town of Okotoks. This review is designed to establish a baseline of the Town's current economic development capabilities and to understand the existing processes and capacity surrounding site selection and investor concierge services. This analysis should be used as a tool that helps the Town of Okotoks and its Economic Development Department along its continuous improvement journey.

The investment readiness analysis goes over seven buckets of themes related to investment readiness, 'Investor Intake and Tracking', 'Rapport and Collaboration', 'Welcoming Land-Use Planning Regimen', 'Serviced Property Inventory', 'Readiness to Respond', 'Existing Business Intelligence', and 'Marketing and Communications'. The framework is meant to be scalable, depending on the size and intricacy of the local economy. This review was completed in three phases, an initial desktop review where the Deloitte project team reviewed the Town of Okotoks website and other relevant material as it related to investment readiness, a review by relevant municipal employees that addressed gaps that could not be publicly sourced, and a final revision process by the project team that analyzed new information gathered from the Town of Okotoks. Scores were given to each section of the review based on the level of priority of each topic and the service level within the Town of Okotoks.

KEY FINDINGS

The Town of Okotoks scored 77% in terms of overall investment readiness. Evaluations for sections related to Rapport and Collaboration scored well (96%), as did Investor Intake and Tracking (94%). Marketing and Communications and Serviced Property Inventory did not score as well, at 47% and 60% respectively.

INVESTOR INTAKE AND TRACKING	94%
RAPPORT AND COLLABORATION	96%
WELCOMING LAND-USE PLANNING REGIMEN	88%
SERVICED PROPERTY INVENTORY	60%
READINESS TO RESPOND	72%
EXISTING BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE	82%
MARKETING & COMMUNICATION	47%
OVERALL SCORE	77%

INVESTOR INTAKE AND TRACKING

INVESTOR INTAKE AND TRACKING	STATUS	NOTES
1. Municipality has person(s) designated as main contact on economic development	Yes	Lorie Watson and Josh Welz.
2. Main contact is a trained and certified economic development professional	Yes	Lorie is CEDP.
3. Main contact has access to up-to-date local municipal development plan and land use bylaw and knows Council's policies on new development proposals	Yes	
4. Main contact understands site selection response protocol (handling inquiries, data collection, site visit, etc.)	Yes	
5. Municipality has staff, contractor, or partnership in place to generate leads for investment attraction	Yes	
6. Municipality has person(s) designated as key contacts on land use planning, development and building matters in respective communities	Yes	Okotoks is hiring a land and leasing coordinator.
7. Elected representatives and municipal staff are compliant with mandatory confidentiality expectations related to inquiries, discussions and negotiations	Yes	
8. Municipality has up-to-date and easy to navigate webpage for potential investors to reach Economic Development staff	Needs Improvement	Economic Development webpage is easy to navigate to. Contact information for the department is all general. Having the individual email to reach out to main contact would improve connection to staff.
9. Municipality maintains a tracking system for investor inquiries and follow-up, monitor outcomes and work to improve how it deals with potential investors	Yes	The Town has a dedicated CRM system in place.

RAPPORT AND COLLABORATION

RAPPORT AND COLLABORATION	STATUS	NOTES
1. Economic Development staff have positive, well-developed rapport with all municipal departments	Yes	
2. Economic Development staff communicate regularly with regional, provincial and federal government agencies and professional associations to learn about new policies, programs, information or issues/trends	Yes	Successful examples of collaboration with provincial and federal bodies include the water licensing agreements for the Town.
3. Economic Development office partners with independent business groups, local Chamber of Commerce, or tourism board to jointly market the community as a business location or tourist destination	Yes	"More Okotoks"; there is a Town Representative on the TDZ board for the region.
4. Municipality pools resources with neighbouring communities to jointly fund competitiveness studies and/or economic development strategies	Yes	A Town representative sits on regional support board (foothills, diamond valley). In some cases, there is a strained relationship.
5. Economic development staff have regular communication with local Indigenous and are actively seeking to improve relationships and develop cooperative opportunities.	Yes	On staff Indigenous Relations advisor.
6. Municipality's Economic Development staff participate actively in a regional economic development alliance (formal or informal) with staff from neighbouring communities	Yes	CMRB is the closest example.
7. Economic Development staff can reach local utility representatives with a single call/email	Yes	
8. Economic development staff regularly communicate with local high schools and post-secondary institutions educating them about local employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, and work-integrated learning programs ("co-ops")	Needs Improvement	

WELCOMING LAND USE PLANNING REGIMEN

WELCOMING LAND-USE PLANNING REGIMEN	STATUS	NOTES
1. Municipality lists the policy intention, regulations and permitted uses in each land use designation	Needs Improvement	The Land Use Bylaw has all this information in a strong format. Having definitions of land use designations in the interactive map would improve clarity. Additionally, the definitions should be posted directly on the Town website.
2. Municipality has effective information system to provide municipal development plan and zoning information to prospective developers (e.g., air photos, series of charts or maps)	Yes	The Land Use Bylaw Interactive Map is a great tool to highlight where certain businesses can operate in accordance with existing bylaws.
3. Land use bylaws are flexible enough to allow desired development in the community	Yes	The Land Use Bylaw has sufficient flexibility to allow desired development and allows for amendments that follow a specified approval process.
4. Key municipal contact person is knowledgeable about Official Plan and how policies and land use designations may affect proposed development in the community	Yes	
5. Economic development is addressed in the municipality's land use plan	Yes	Economic Development is not mentioned in the Town's Land Use Bylaw but is a key focus area of the Municipal Development Plan which directly supports the bylaw.
6. Municipality has a flow chart outlining the steps in the land use planning and development approvals process in the community	Needs improvement	There is a flow chart that outlines process for a major development permit that includes estimated timelines. It is in a linked PDF document. Bringing this flow chart and information directly on the Town website would make it easier to find for potential businesses.
7. List is readily available of all the application fees, charges and levies that a developer would be required to pay in connection with processing a planning/development proposal in the community	Yes	Fees are listed for business licenses, and permit fee estimates are available for industrial and commercial businesses but are not readily available for other charges and levies that may be applicable.
8. Municipal planning staff discuss and coordinate their work with economic development staff	Yes	
9. Municipality has designated individual or team (i.e., "development concierge") to guide proponents through the approvals process	Yes	
10. Municipality has in place a pre-development consultation committee or meeting process involving representatives from all departments affecting a new development or expansion	Yes	The municipality utilizes their DPA meetings once a month to discuss applications interdepartmentally.
11. The municipal development plans, area structure plans and land use bylaws kept up to date (e.g., updated every five years)	Yes	
12. Where businesses are allowed, a wide range of business uses are permitted, as well as signage, and on-site customer parking	Yes	

13.	Municipality has information on how long it takes for a typical planning application/proposal in the community to be approved	Needs Improvement	There is information on timing for major development permits, but not for other types. Adding this information directly to the website will help enable businesses and residents to make economical decisions for themselves. This information should be aligned with the process flow chart that has been developed.
14.	When a development application has been successfully completed, there is a review of the process with the proponent as part of the Municipality's customer services programs	Needs Improvement	There is an opportunity for value added feedback and to get testimonials from clients from a post project survey.
15.	Contact person is aware of environmental regulations affecting investors considering development	Yes	
16.	Local municipal development plans have one general designation for each basic land use category: residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, open space, rural and environmentally sensitive.	Yes	
17.	Establishment of new "home occupations" are allowed in most areas of the community, without the need for a municipal development plan amendment and/or land use bylaw change	Yes	Home based business are allowed.

SERVICED PROPERTY INVENTORY

SERVICED PROPERTY INVENTORY	STATUS	NOTES
1. Communities have a satisfactory mix of available buildings and shovel-ready lands	Needs Improvement	There is sufficient shovel ready land available in the business park, however there are limited listings for existing commercial and industrial buildings.
2. Municipality owns industrial land for sale to developers	Yes	
3. Municipality has satisfactory water/sewer and electrical servicing capacity for industrial and commercial land inventories	Needs Improvement	The Town has recognized that limited water availability to the Town has hindered industrial growth.
4. Available property inventory updated regularly (at a minimum, quarterly)	Needs Improvement	It is unknown how often the property inventory is updated. The Town website only has property owned by Okotoks listed. Dating the last time the website was updated for this information will allow investors to know how recent the listings are.
5. Available property inventory provides key site information for each parcel of land	Yes	
6. Available land inventory is posted on the economic development website, with permission from landowners and/or agents	No	
7. Sellers of available buildings and shovel-ready lands are motivated to sell, and their intentions are clear, even if the properties are not listed with a real estate broker	Needs Improvement	The Town is only in contact with real estate agents, so they are unaware of the intentions of property owners who are not listed with agents.
8. Available property inventory includes both publicly and privately owned land	No	The Town only lists land owned by Okotoks.
9. Economic Development staff works closely with commercial real estate in the area to update the inventory regularly	Yes	Economic Development are connected and work closely with commercial real estate. There are a handful of local players whom they know and work with well. The town stays up and builds relationships with new partners in the region that pop up.
10. Available land inventory is connected to the community GIS system	No	

READINESS TO RESPOND

READINESS TO RESPOND	STATUS	NOTES
1. Economic development staff respond in a substantive manner to inquiries within the same workday as inquiry received	Yes	
2. Community has formal strategic plan for economic development, updated in the past three years	Yes	The last update to the economic development plan was in 2018. The Town is engaged in updating the economic development strategy.
3. Municipality has financial incentive program (grants, loans, fee exemptions, rebates) for business expansions and new industrial/ commercial development	Yes	The Town has a 'Targeted Industrial Tax Incentive' Policy. There is an opportunity to explore a wider reaching incentive program for other areas.
4. There is a budget for economic development activity in the municipality	Yes	
5. Community has established economic development committee in an advisory capacity	No	
6. Municipality seeks expertise from experts when needed	Yes	
7. Community maintains list of key contacts in both the private and public sectors who can provide advisory and technical assistance in key areas (e.g., oil and gas, agriculture, real estate, telecommunications, trade agreements, taxes, etc.)	No	
8. Community has office/staff to create a one-window development process	Needs Improvement	The Town has a single intake form for everything such as BL, DP, safety codes and fire. There is room for improvement in this form.
9. Community maintains list of local business leaders to whom site selectors can be confidentially referred for testimonials about the community	Needs Improvement	The Business Success Stories program highlights local success stories and has many public examples. The Town should be able to make connections between the success stories and investors to speak about the benefits of the community.
10. Community has a business ambassador program in place to meet potential investors during site-selection visits	Yes	There is not an official program, but there is a dedicated staff member.

EXISTING BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

EXISTING BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE	STATUS	NOTES
1. Municipality liaises with the local business association(s), e.g., chamber of commerce, about economic development issues	Yes	
2. Economic Development staff coordinate an active Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) Program, including regular business visits, tracked progress on issues raised by local employers, follow up, CRM system for monitoring changes to number of jobs, corporate ownerships, suppliers, and other critical information about major employers, etc.	Yes	The BR+E program continues to be built out. In its current form, it is quite robust. Lorie administers, and logs information for visits as well as prospective ones utilizing a combination of excel, email and the CRM.
3. Senior member of the municipality monitors/evaluates the community's track record on liaising with existing investors	Needs Improvement	This can be done via BluDot, the Town's CRM system. However, it requires more initiative and focus from the Town.
4. Mayor, CAO, Economic Development Officer or planning staff meet with groups of local businesspeople on a regular basis to talk about business needs and future plans (e.g., once every six months for a breakfast meeting)	Yes	The CAO/Mayor and EDO meet with the Chamber biannually for this very purpose. In addition, the Ec Dev Office is out in the community on a regular basis (ad hoc) meeting with businesses and business groups.
5. Economic Development staff actively inform and educate elected representatives, business groups and major employers about the importance of economic development efforts	Needs Improvement	There is not a formal/regular mechanism that allows Economic Development staff to speak with the elected representatives. As it stands, the department utilizes reporting to do this.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS	STATUS	NOTES
1. Municipality maintains a dataset of reliable statistics tailored to investor inquiries	Needs Improvement	The Town website datasets are directly linked to the Alberta Regional Dashboard, so the stats are updated regularly. The Town is engaged with Local Intel to build out some website marketing pieces. They will utilize what comes from the economic development strategy to inform the work
2. Municipality publishes excerpts from dataset as Community Profile and website pages and updates appropriately	No	Okotoks is working with Localintel to publish additional marketing pieces.
3. Municipality has investment attraction marketing plan identifying specific targets, tactics, channels, timelines, messages, and tracking.	No	
4. Economic development website is high in search engine rankings	Needs Improvement	The Town website is high in SEO, but some other keyword searches do not highlight the economic development webpage.
5. Branding is differentiated from comparable neighbouring communities.	Yes	
6. Economic development branding is consistent across all online and print media.	Yes	All branding is the Town of Okotoks branding. Economic Development could use its own sub-brand to differentiate its support for business.
7. Marketing follows economic development best practices in concept, presentation, and engagement	Needs Improvement	Key community profiles of desirable types of businesses and key statistics are missing from relevant webpages or are in other areas. Creating a more flushed out webpage for economic development can help to address this factor.
8. Economic Development promotions aimed at investors are distinctly separate from general municipal promotional activities aimed at citizens	No	
9. Community maintains a standalone economic development website or features economic development prominently on municipal websites	Needs Improvement	Economic Development could be displayed more prominently and more information on town services should be highlighted on the webpage.
10. Economic Development staff participate in networking sessions, conferences, trade shows, and missions related to target sectors	Needs Improvement	Identification of target sectors will enable staff to be more targeted in trade shows.
11. Regular contact is maintained with media representatives	Yes	The Economic Development department relies on the communications department for this support.
12. Economic Development staff maintain social media feeds (separate from general municipal social media) and engage online with local businesses, agencies and others	Needs Improvement	Economic Development and Community Engagement social media challenges are collaboratively maintained. However, without a distinct website, this would cause confusion. There is an opportunity to use established feeds to promote economic development within the Town and to outside investors.

APPENDIX D

CREATIVE INDEX

APPENDIX D: CREATIVE INDEX

The creative index evaluation uses three levels of measurement: **Talent, Tolerance, and Technology**. These '3T's' are part of an economic development theory that gives importance to attracting and retaining creative capital. Creative capital differs from the mass production of goods and services (human capital) and focuses on the capacity to generate innovative ideas, concepts, products, and processes that lead to unique characteristics and evolving technologies.

Talent is a crucial factor in economic development, as it refers to the size and capacity of a community's knowledge occupations and its related educational attainment. A community's ability to attract and retain talented individuals is a key driver of economic growth.

Tolerance is another important factor, as it measures a community's diversity and openness to innovative ideas and concepts. Communities that are more tolerant tend to have higher levels of creativity and innovation, which can lead to economic growth.

Technology is a critical component of economic development, as it enables businesses to be more productive and efficient. Communities that invest in technology infrastructure are better positioned to attract and retain businesses, which can lead to job creation and economic growth. Together, these 3Ts form the foundation for successful economic development.

CREATIVE INDEX SCORE

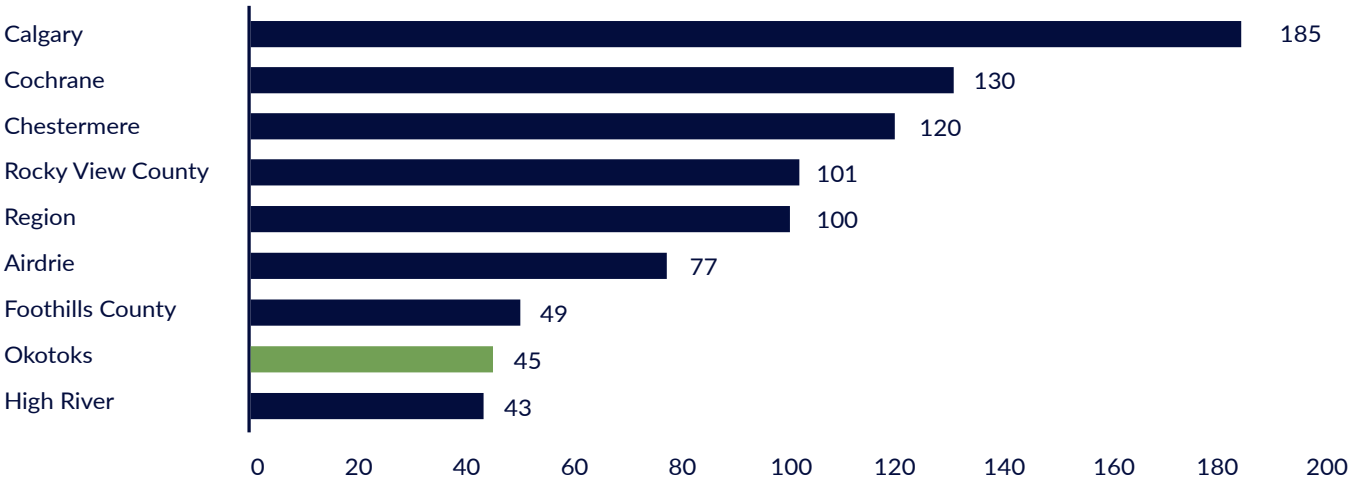
The creative index combines the 3Ts to score a community's overall creativity. In examining these 3Ts, a community can measure the extent to which it has developed the conditions that could foster a creative economy. The 3Ts are measured through data types that depict the workforce's occupational structure and characterize a community's level of creative assets. The Creative Index is an overall ranking of the selected comparable communities and peer regions based on how well they score on each indicator. For the Creative Index, all index scores are calculated. The Creative score is calculated as follows:

CREATIVE INDEX =	**Index Score + Index Score + Index Score /3**

Peer regions and comparable cities were selected to benchmark Okotoks' creativity index and overall performance: *City of Calgary, Rocky View County, Cochrane, Chestermere, Foothills County, Airdrie, High River, and the combined results of the region.*

Reference: https://www-2.rotman.utoronto.ca/mpi/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Global-Creativity-Index-2015.pdf

CREATIVE INDEX =	Index Score + Index Score + Index Score /3



TALENT INDEX – AREAS OF ANALYSIS

A community's Talent is the size and capacity of its knowledge occupations and its related educational attainment. The following parameters were used to calculate the Talent Index:

Share of knowledge occupations: Knowledge occupations consist of people who are paid to think. These include management, business, finance and administration occupations, natural and applied sciences and related occupations, health occupations, occupations in education, law and social, community and government services and occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport.

Share of high-tech occupations: High-technology occupations are scientific, engineering, and technician occupations, the same occupations used to define high-tech industries. Individuals employed in these occupations are collectively referred to as technology-oriented workers. Some technology-oriented workers are engaged in R&D, increasing scientific knowledge, and using it to develop products and production processes; others apply technology in other activities, including the design of equipment, processes, and structures; computer applications; sales, purchasing, and marketing; quality management; and the management of these activities.

Educational attainment including:

- The proportion of the labour force with a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree
- The proportion of the labour force with a field of study in arts, business, science & engineering, and health

Indicator Score =
Total Number of Communities / Rank of Community x 10

Index Score =
Combined Indicator Scores

RESULTS

- Knowledge workers account for 47% of Okotoks' labour force (ranked sixth)
- Technology-oriented workers make up 10% of Okotoks' total workforce (ranked eighth)
- 56% of Okotoks' population 15 years or older have a post-secondary degree (ranked seventh)
- 39% of Okotoks' post-secondary degree-holding population is focused on science and engineering fields, health, art and humanities, or business. (ranked eighth)

Note: City of Calgary, Rocky View County, Cochrane, Chestermere, Foothills County, Airdrie, High River, and the combined region are the comparators.

See Page 99 for Talent Index score.

TOLERANT INDEX – AREAS OF ANALYSIS

Tolerance is a measure of a community's diversity and openness to innovative ideas and concepts. Diverse communities are shown to be more open and accepting of different people and thoughts. This openness, in turn, allows more creative ideas to emerge and flow through the economy. The following parameters were used to calculate the Tolerance Index:

Minorities: Minorities population refers to a group of people who are in the minority within a particular area or society. This could include individuals who belong to racial, ethnic, religious, or linguistic groups that are not the dominant or majority group in a given location.

New-Canadians: New-Canadian population refers to individuals who have migrated from one country to another with the intention of settling there permanently or for an extended period of time.

Knowledge of Non-Official Language: refers to the ability to understand, speak, read, and write a language that is not recognized as an official language or a language of wider communication in a particular region or country. Non-official languages may include minority languages, indigenous languages, dialects or other languages that are spoken by a smaller group of people within a larger community.

Indicator Score =
Total Number of Communities / Rank of Community x 10

Index Score =
Combined Indicator Scores

RESULTS

- 8% of Okotoks' population is considered a visible minority. (ranked eighth)
- 13% of Okotoks' population identify as New Canadians (ranked 7th)
- 7% Okotoks' of population spoke an unofficial language (ranked 8th).

Note: As part of this analysis, Okotoks was ranked among some of the fastest growing and diverse communities in Alberta. The strength of these comparators in this area can cause a relatively lower tolerance score in Okotoks and provides a lens for Okotoks to continue growing in this space.

Okotoks was ranked in comparison to the City of Calgary, Rocky View County, Cochrane, Chestermere, Foothills County, Airdrie, High River, and the combined region.

See Page 99 for Talent Index score.

TECHNOLOGY – AREAS OF ANALYSIS

The Technology Index is an overall ranking of the selected comparable communities based on how well they score on each indicator. Technology is critical to developing and growing any economy, including creative economies. Without the necessary technology allowing information sharing and high-speed communication, communities cannot compete with or even gain access to the global economy. Communities with large, well-developed and sustainable tech sectors and cultural industries can maintain high economic growth into the future. The following parameters were used to calculate the Technology Index:

STEM Firms: Proportion of total businesses conducting STEM related activities

STEM Location Quotient: Comparative concentration of STEM firms within municipalities

Indicator Score =
Total Number of Communities / Rank of Community x 10

Index Score =
Combined Indicator Scores

RESULTS

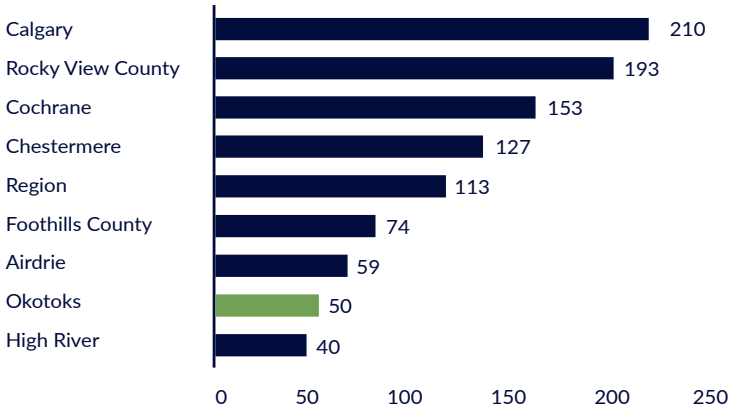
- 17% of all Okotoks' businesses are STEM-based firms (ranked fifth)
- Okotoks' shows an LQ's of 1.22. Okotoks' recorded the fifth largest LQ among comparators.

Note: Okotoks was ranked in comparison to the City of Calgary, Rocky View County, Cochrane, Chestermere, Foothills County, Airdrie, High River, and the combined region

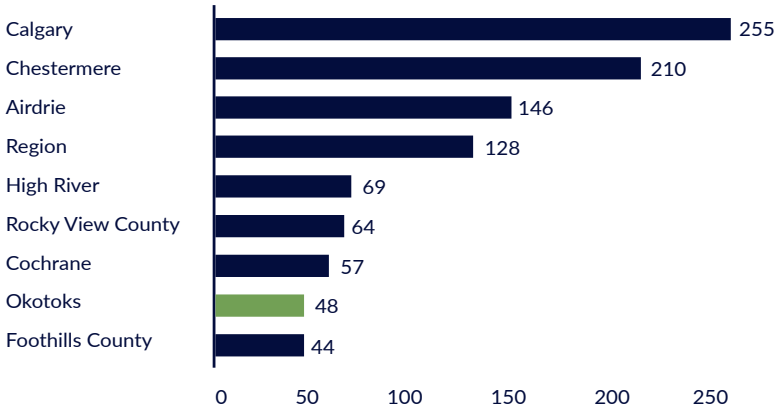
See Page 99 for Talent Index score.

The Creative Index analysis reveals that Okotoks is currently ranked second to last among comparable communities. To enhance its appeal to potential talent and investment, Okotoks must prioritize efforts to bolster its creative talent and promote greater population diversity. By doing so, Okotoks can position itself as a more attractive and dynamic community for individuals and businesses alike.

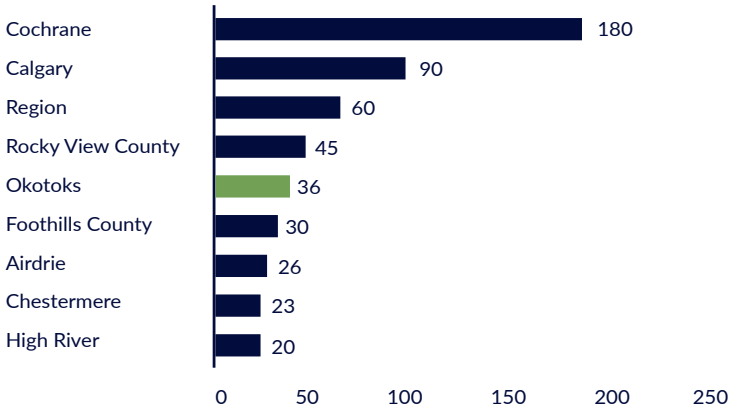
TALENT INDEX



TOLERANCE INDEX



TECH INDEX



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census | Lightcast Analyst, Datarun 2023.1

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2024-2029

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT **STRATEGIC PLAN**

Okotoks