

Introduction

There is a desire to promote Strathcona County as a favourable place for individuals and businesses to locate and to provide a diversity of employment, recreational and social choices.

Strathcona County's economy consists of five key sectors; oil and gas, manufacturing, agriculture, service and tourism.

The oil and gas industry is both a major employer, and a major contributor to the County's tax base. In 2005, energy-related functions contributed approximately 38% to the County's tax base. To prevent reliance on the oil and gas industry, it is important for the County to work towards diversifying its tax and employment base by promoting a wider range of businesses and industries.

Manufacturing and industrial operations provide support and services to commercial and industrial uses. Value-added industries help support existing businesses as well as provide export-based goods to a larger market.

Agriculture is important to the economy, with approximately 896 farms located in Strathcona County in 2005. A range of intensive and extensive agricultural operations exist, including cattle, dairy, poultry operations, fruit growers, grain and specialty farms. There is a need to continue diversifying and expanding the agricultural industry to lower transportation costs for food and promote Strathcona County as a strong agricultural producer.

Strathcona County has a wide variety of commercial enterprises, from big box and large retail chain stores, to small specialty stores and home businesses. They provide residents and nearby communities with employment and work towards meeting everyday needs.

Recreation and tourism opportunities help to attract groups to the area and bring individuals together through activities and special events. Strathcona County will continue to promote the County as a location to visit, by marketing amenities such as the Strathcona Wilderness Centre, heritage sites and sporting events.

Objectives

Strathcona County's economic development objectives are to:

- 1) Develop a strong, diversified and sustainable economy that will provide expanded opportunities for employment, support community growth and foster community pride;
- 2) Enhance and strengthen the economy of the County;
- 3) Promote sustainable development principles in order to provide increased opportunities for the County and its residents over the long term; and
- 4) Continue to retain, expand and attract new industry and business to Strathcona County.

Policies

General

Strathcona County will:

- 13.1 Support the County's development as a strong social, economic and cultural community by promoting its unique rural/urban character;
- 13.2 Support a balanced economy of tourism, agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial uses as a means of providing County citizens with diverse opportunities for employment;
- 13.3 Encourage growth and development in a well planned, sustainable manner, while ensuring compatibility between land uses;
- 13.4 Promote and strengthen the County's economy and employment base in order to retain existing businesses and jobs;
- 13.5 Pursue the development of a wide range of business and retail services that ensure a self-sustaining, self-reliant, complete economic community;
- 13.6 Communicate and promote awareness of Strathcona County in order to broaden and diversify business and industry investment;
- 13.7 Encourage and promote the development of an adequate supply of serviced land to meet a wide range of industrial and commercial needs;
- 13.8 Identify opportunities for expansion and diversification of existing petrochemical complexes;
- 13.9 Encourage the creation or expansion of environmentally friendly service industries;
- 13.10 Attract a range of small and medium sized manufacturing industries with a focus on food processing;
- 13.11 Continue to identify opportunities to expand and improve the secondary and tertiary commercial-industrial components within the regional economy, and build on providing value-added services;
- 13.12 Encourage agri-business uses such as primary and secondary agricultural production and processing within the lands encompassed by the Agri-Industrial Transition Policy Area;
- 13.13 Facilitate economic development through pro-active planning and implementation of intermunicipal policies, complementary area structure plans and/or area redevelopment plans;
- 13.14 Promote and support locally owned small businesses; and
- 13.15 Promote and support community events, recreational activities, sporting events, and cultural activities that enhance civic pride while generating economic benefit and tourism in Strathcona County.

Home Businesses

Strathcona County will:

- 13.16 Support the development of home businesses that are appropriate to the character of the neighbourhood;
- 13.17 Ensure that the intensity of a home-based business is compatible with the uses in the area where it is located and, has minimal impact on the environment, water, municipal infrastructure and neighbouring properties;
- 13.18 Ensure all home businesses are clearly secondary in nature to the residential use of the property; and
- 13.19 Ensure home businesses which are beyond the intent and purpose of a home business, re-locate to appropriate commercial or industrial zoned lands.

Recreation and Tourism

Strathcona County will:

- 13.20 Encourage the development and growth of recreation and tourism areas that are:
 - a) Complementary to our natural resources and incorporate the natural environment into the project;
 - b) Adjacent to major transportation corridors to benefit from higher traffic volumes and where acceptable access is available, per County standards; and
 - c) Strategically located within close proximity to other existing complementary commercial, recreation or other tourism enterprises.
- 13.21 Support regional tourism initiatives that will enhance Strathcona County as a tourism destination;
- 13.22 Encourage the development of new events and festivals in the County;
- 13.23 Continue to promote events within our community, such as Strathcona County's Harvest Festival of Foods and Country Christmas; and
- 13.24 Promote cooperative private, non-government and public sector initiatives to develop recreation and tourism opportunities.

Heritage

Strathcona County will:

- 13.25 Identify and conserve the community's cultural heritage through the designation of structures; the placement of recognition plaques; the completion of the Heritage Registry; and the introduction of public art which reflects historically significant events, themes and residents of Strathcona County; and
- 13.26 Develop a strategic marketing plan to access heritage tourism funds in order to promote and conserve heritage resources.

Partnerships

Strathcona County will:

- 13.27 Continue to partner with stakeholders to attract new business and tourism activity to Strathcona County;
- 13.28 Pursue new partnerships with appropriate agencies to provide access to business support such as education, skill enhancement and job training programs;
- 13.29 Develop a participative and collaborative approach with community groups, service clubs, the Chamber of Commerce, local business, and educators to identify businesses which will complement local strengths and resources;
- 13.30 Work with other Alberta Capital Region municipalities, Alberta Economic Development and Tourism, business, industry and regional agencies to capitalize on economic and strategic strengths in manufacturing and other sectors; and
- 13.31 Partner with private, not-for-profit, and other government sectors to support existing businesses, attract future development, and conduct joint marketing initiatives.