



# Growing Our Economic Future

Regional Economic Development Strategy

Taber Regional Joint Economic Development Committee

December 2018





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## Introduction

Steeped in a heritage of farming and productivity, the Taber Region has seen the steady growth and value of rich agricultural products and a growing agricultural product and food processing industrial base. This legacy has ushered in opportunity and prosperity for many, and contributed to the table of the world.

This agricultural heritage serves as the basis for a broader economy that is tapped into a global food system, bringing jobs and economic-spin-off into the region for the benefit of families and businesses. The sector is complimented by a strong oil and gas industry that also drives economic vitality across the region.

With recent federal and provincial interest in cultivating and enriching a protein cluster and the broader value chain associated with the sector, opportunities arise for local producers and product processors to reach new heights, while opening up opportunities for new investment into the region, which translates into new jobs and additional economic benefits to local commerce via people's spending.

Despite the positive potential and benefits there are challenges in the Taber Region, including shortages of available skilled and unskilled labour and a lack of critical infrastructure such as high-speed internet, which inhibits the ability to take full advantage of growing an innovative and technology enabled community. In addition, the challenge of poor internet service has an impact on the appeal of the region for local youth, who often choose to leave the region for opportunities elsewhere, and an impact on main street and creative-economy businesses (designers, programmers, engineers, etc.) who are constrained.

The purpose of *Growing Our Economic Future* – the Taber Regional Economic Development Strategy – is to set a roadmap for attaining a collective vision of growing economic prosperity, backed by a thoroughly researched and consultation-informed action plan framework. The Strategy applies to the Town of Taber, Municipal District (MD) of Taber and Town of Vauxhall, as well as communities across the region that stand to benefit from its strategic objectives.

Growing our Economic Future constitutes a Regional Economic Strategy Framework applicable to the Taber Regional Joint Economic Development Committee, and three separate and customized frameworks for the Town of Taber, MD of Taber, and Town of Vauxhall.





## Approach and Methodology

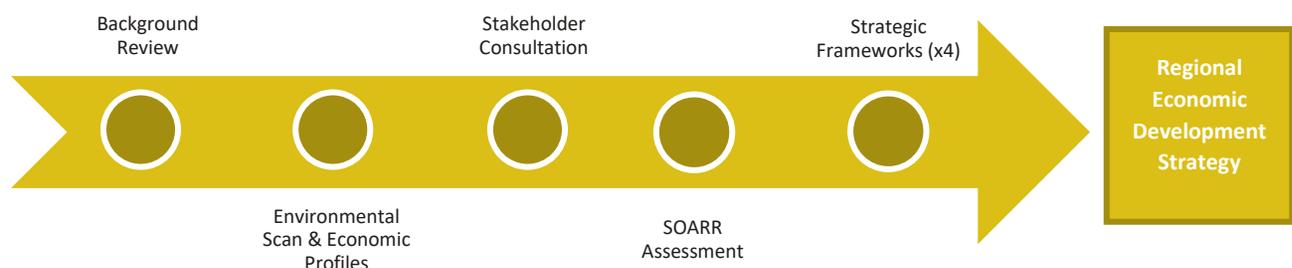
This Strategy is the result of a comprehensive process that has balanced hard data with the nuances of stakeholder engagement, existing policy and secondary research, and critical evaluation.

The process for undertaking the *Growing our Economic Future* has been as follows:

- **Background Review:** A review was conducted of existing municipal policy documents and research projects undertaken by the local municipalities, the Taber Regional Joint Economic Development Committee (JEDC), and other organizations.
- **Environmental Scan & Economic Profiles:** An overview of population, demographic, education, workforce, industry, and business trends and their implications for the existing and near-term economic landscape. In addition, a commercial gap analysis was conducted for the Town of Taber and MD of Taber, and global economic trends discussion connected local economic performance with global and national trends.
- **Stakeholder Consultations:** Consultations undertaken include a business survey, interviews with business and community leaders, and a series of workshops with the JEDC Steering Committee, industry members, tourism stakeholders. Further interviews were also conducted with industry experts during the exploration of opportunities during the action plan development component of the strategic framework development process.
- **SOARR Assessment:** A strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results (SOARR) assessment designed to allocate findings from previous phases into an analytical framework to help inform strategic planning was also performed. A SOARR was conducted for the region and each municipality.
- **Strategic Framework:** The identification of a vision for the future economy, strategic objectives and accompanying goals, actions, partnerships, timing, and performance measures to guide the implementation of the Economic Development Strategy, both for the Taber Region and for Town of Taber, Municipal District of Taber, and Town of Vauxhall. Each goal is supported by a rationale, linking it back to the strategic objective it supports.

Taken together, these results constitute the Regional Economic Development Strategy, but the region and each municipality each have their own dedicated chapters in the sections below. These components are also demonstrated in the visual graphic below.

**Figure 1: Key Methodological Components of the Regional Economic Development Strategy**



Source: MDB Insight, 2018.





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# Regional Strategic Economic Framework

This framework presents the regional context for the Taber Region, a summary of key findings from consultation results, an industry-specific series of value propositions, a strengths, opportunities, aspirations and results, and strategic objectives and action plan.

## Regional Economic Profile

An economic profile is presented here for the Taber Region as a whole, including demographic, income, education, employment, industry and quality of life attributes of the region. Results are based on Statistics Canada’s Census Profiles (2016, 2011, 2006), National Household Survey (2011), and Canadian Business Counts (December 2017). Detailed results are provided in Appendix A.

### Regional Economic Profile

#### Population

Between 2006 and 2016, the Taber Region's population grew by 4%, reaching 8,428 in the Town of Taber and 7,098 in the Municipal District (MD) respectively. Vauxhall's population declined by 66 people to 1,222.



The Taber region is youthful. The MD's median age is nearly 10 years below the provincial median at 27.6. The Town of Taber and Vauxhalls' are 36 and 29.6 respectively.

#### Prosperity

Median household income in 2016:

Region	\$71,181
Alberta	\$93,835



All communities have lower median value of dwellings than the Provincial median, which is important in resident attraction.

Vauxhall's median household value of \$219,449 is almost half that of Alberta, making it an affordable choice for new residents, especially young people and seniors.



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## Education

34% of people over 25 have not completed high school compared to 11% across Alberta, while 27% have a college or university education, compared to 53% for Alberta.

This is a possible challenge in attracting investment that relies on a skilled labour force. It is also characteristic of a brain drain effect.



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The top three fields of study for people in the Taber region are architecture, engineering, and related technologies; business, management and public administration; and health and related fields.

25% of people have a technical education related to architecture, engineering or similar - a possible strength in attracting investment.

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## Industry & Labour Force

All three communities are strong in agriculture. The strength of this industry may produce other jobs in related industries, such as agri-food manufacturing, transportation, and wholesale trade.

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The oil & gas sector has experienced a decline in local competitiveness, likely due to growth in other parts of the province.



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Education, law and social, community and government services has seen a reduction in 275 people. Management positions have a reduction in 65 people. Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport has seen a reduction in 65 people. The other occupations are either holding their own or increasing.

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Vauxhall Academy of Baseball

Sports complex, Community Centre, Aquafun Centre

Campground, pool, public libraries, and a recently renovated high school

**Quality of Life  
& Place Assets**

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Walking and recreation trails

Unique growing population of German-speaking Mexican migrants

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Local hospital - Taber Health Centre

Access to major centres (Calgary, Lethbridge) for post secondary education.

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Retail amenities in Town of Taber and Vauxhall; community service resource groups, and places of worship

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## Stakeholder Engagement Themes

Three forms of stakeholder engagement are given overviews here, along with key themes associated with each. Detailed results for all three engagement exercises are provided in Appendix B.

### Business Survey

A random sample telephone survey was conducted with businesses from Town of Taber (40 total), MD of Taber (20 total), and Town of Vauxhall (5 total) during September 2018. The primary purpose of the survey was to understand business satisfaction and prioritize items that are most likely to improve business satisfaction. Results are presented in aggregate format, due to the low overall sample size, which creates a margin of error of +/- 10%, 19 times out of 20.

### Key Findings

- Overall, 90% of businesses are either satisfied or very satisfied, equally represented by 45% each. The remainder of businesses are also equally divided between dissatisfied and very dissatisfied, at 5% each. Also, 30% of businesses report increases in satisfaction over the past 12 months compared to only 8% that report declines; representing a net improvement score of +22%.
- Factors that are statistically most likely to result in increases in business satisfaction are: access to training for employees; availability of skilled labour; development charges and off-site levies; availability of unskilled labour, and; internet service and how it meets the future needs and/or growth of businesses.
- In addition, 72% of businesses indicated that attracting and developing the local labour force was very important, and 60% of businesses said that having a diverse mix of businesses across multiple industries was important.
- Finally, 26% of business indicated they are likely to expand in the coming two years, while 17% identified they are considering relocating outside the Taber Region, and 18% anticipate downsizing or closing. These reveal opportunities for targeted business visitations.



## Interviews

A series of interviews were conducted with community and business leaders from across the region. These occurred during September 2018.

## Key Findings

- The business climate is generally viewed as healthy, though some concern was particularly identified in Vauxhall regarding the closure of some retail businesses. A general positive attitude comes from the pride and success of agriculture in the region. The oil and gas sector was also referenced as being important to the local economy.
- Local strengths include the highway transportation corridors, and existing manufacturing and processing facilities help drive regional competitiveness. There was interest growing the supply-chain among these business types. Vauxhall's recreation facilities and tourism were also noted.
- Key barriers identified to growth or success include the current carbon tax, labour supply issues and the need for migrant workers (which is increasingly challenging), minimum wage increases, and a lack of community development or placemaking features that help attract and retain people. Some people also noted that Taber has socially non-inclusive image.
- Key opportunities identified include value-added agriculture in processing, hemp and cannabis manufacturing and processing, a specific targeted focus on pulses and proteins, and recreation, leisure and retail growth.
- Key priorities identified by participants include greater collaboration between municipalities, placemaking, infrastructure support programs, and developing a more business-friendly culture. A theme that appears to have been overlooked by most interviewees relates to workforce availability, which resonated strongly in the business survey.

## Steering Committee and Stakeholder Workshops

Three workshops were hosted in October; two with business sector representatives, and one with the Steering Committee for the Economic Development Strategy. During the workshops data from earlier stages of research and results from the business survey and interviews were shown and discussed in order to more fully understand their implications or add clarity. For the key findings outlined below, a focus is placed on opportunity identification and clarification, as well as any specific feedback that may contribute to a better understanding of individual communities.

## Key Findings

- Sectors that depend on infrastructure can benefit from existing infrastructure assets. In addition to good access to highways and rail, the Town of Taber has good municipal water and sewage infrastructure to accommodate growth. The region is revered for its irrigation networks, which allows for a wide range of crops to be grown and also allows for related value-added agri-food processing industries to flourish because of great agriculture product supply but also process water availability.



- The protein sector is benefiting the region and holds even greater potential. Regional collaboration with Lethbridge has been positive. There needs to be a way to consistently get onto investors' radar in this sector. Understanding who the influencers are and what information they need is important.
- The MD is opening more land for development, which could be available for manufacturing or other industrial use. Also, the Town of Taber has designated more land for residential development. There is a lack of seniors' accommodation, but a recent study has identified recommendations.
- Local businesses are suffering because of a lack of people buying locally, which could indicate that there is not enough competition to ensure prices remain competitive, or something more needs to be done to encourage buying local.
- Leverage rich cultural history in the region in other arts and culture business development and placemaking, and allow more space for arts and cultural activities and groups to gather. Placemaking challenges can potentially be addressed by working with retailers to have more client-friendly hours, enhancing the character of the community, and continuing to promote and grow the impact of local events such as Cornfest and use the assets associated with it during other times of the year. Consider developing a volunteer tourism committee.
- Make stronger connections between high school students and key trades including agriculture, beginning with farmer-student partnerships. Also related to labour force, it was noted that a committee has been struck to investigate attracting Lethbridge College back to the community. People would also like to see Adult Learning Association continue to play a role in bridging the skills gap. Employment readiness training at a young age is needed, including soft-skills training. Leveraging low cost of living may help attract external labour in search of opportunities. Online opportunities need to be promoted locally for people that are interested in obtaining post-secondary education. There is an opportunity for economic development services to lead initiatives designed to bridge partnerships and identify opportunities for people and businesses to develop skills. Some worker shortages can be avoided by better awareness and accessibility to technology associated with automation.
- A Broadband Access strategy is needed to understand how the MD's businesses and residents can get faster internet speeds. Research needs to be done into new technologies that facilitate broadband access. There is low commitment from provincial or federal governments.
- There needs to be a commitment to promoting competitiveness in development costs to leverage the strength and break misperceptions. Ensuring that the development process is user-friendly is an unrealized opportunity. Developers need to be brought together to inform possible improvements. Those familiar with other jurisdictions may have tips for local improvement.
- There is an opportunity to look into a scholarship system that rewards people that return to the community after post-secondary education. The initiative could be led more regionally to make it more affordable.

In addition to the above three engagement methods, interviews were done with experts and external organizations or government representatives to better understand opportunities and challenges. In total six informal conversations were had with people in this category.



## Competitiveness Review

Competitiveness is the ability to demonstrate how different traits or characteristics contribute to a comparable advantage over other communities for a given sector. By understanding the unique competitiveness qualities that the Taber Region has for specific industries, it is possible to articulate a clear value proposition, which answers the question, “why would someone be interested in investing money into this line of business in the Taber Region”.

To illustrate the region’s competitive value proposition and other considerations, a matrix has been developed to juxtapose a series of evaluation criteria against each sector of interest. The five sectors recommended for varying degrees of targeted sector growth are:

- **Value-Added Agriculture** – With the interest in supercluster development, a long heritage of agricultural production, and agricultural product processing, this sector needs to be front and centre as a priority for the region. Importantly, it leverages opportunities for the protein cluster.
- **Manufacturing** – Beyond agricultural product processing, the region also has a strong presence in other forms of manufacturing, though most operations are small scale. The sector is established but there are prospects for adding to it and growing it. Every manufacturing job results in three others.
- **Tourism Development** – With strong assets and the advent of new technologies, tourism has changed and the Taber Region is in a position to take advantage of new opportunities and directions.
- **Professional services** – These are the engineers, researchers, consultants, lawyers, and other professions that constitute the key components of the knowledge-economy and are likely to work hand in hand with other sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and gas.

To each of these sectors the following criteria are assessed:

- **Estimated long-term sector growth** – The estimated long-term national and international expectations for the sector beyond the next five years.
- **Complement to existing economic base** – The ability of the sector to connect to other sectors of the local economy in a complimentary way for supply chain, servicing, or other resource needs.
- **Potential to have a significant impact on the local economy** – The ability to generate strong direct and indirect economic impacts by virtue of business growth.
- **Current state of the sector** – Economic competitiveness of the sector as it stands currently.
- **Current ability to capitalize on the sector** – The level of confidence with which the region is able to act on investment attraction at this moment.
- **Desired future state by 2027** – The vision for the sector in the region in 10 year’s time, which is intentionally beyond the lifespan of this strategy.
- **Value proposition for the sector** – The stated “selling point” that will compel investors to take notice of the opportunity in the Taber Region.



Figure 2: Industry Value Proposition Matrix

Evaluation Criteria	Value-Added Agriculture	Manufacturing	Tourism	Professional Services
<b>Estimated Long Term Growth Sector</b>	Strong	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
<b>Complement to existing local economic base</b>	Strong	Moderate-strong	Moderate	Strong
<b>Potential to have a significant impact on the local economy</b>	Strong	Moderate-strong	Moderate	Moderate
<b>Current state of the sector</b>	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Moderate
<b>Current ability to capitalize on the sector</b>	Strong A natural fit for the region, but barriers include access to high-speed internet in rural areas and skilled labour. Governments have strategic interest in protein cluster development, and the region already has an established foothold and funding.	Moderate Access to unskilled labour is not a challenge but skilled labour is more challenging	Strong The key to this sector is slow and steady growth and the acquisition of assets over time.	Moderate A key barrier is internet access, but focussing on home-based businesses and leveraging low cost of living could help.
<b>Desired future situation by 2027</b>	To be known as a destination for opportunities and innovation in agri-food technology and products, particularly regarding proteins	To be a hub for export-oriented manufacturing beyond agricultural product processing	To be an intentional destination for recreation, outdoor fun, and escape from big city life.	To be a location that cultivates knowledge and compliments other key sectors with local expertise that can be exported as well as used for local benefit



Evaluation Criteria	Value-Added Agriculture	Manufacturing	Tourism	Professional Services
<b>Value proposition for the sector</b>	Strong irrigation and farming infrastructure, qualified experts, and room for automation and innovation combine with an increasingly integrated supply chain and talent base	Affordable and available land with and without servicing is shovel ready, with a dedicated team to get you settled and installed quickly and cost-effectively	Inspired natural and expansive beauty, meets rural charm and escape in this four-season region of relaxation, fun and excitement	A tranquil lifestyle with all the amenities and services you need to build the home-based business of your dreams await in this affordable and welcoming region

## Regional SOARR Assessment

A SOARR Assessment is a model for reflecting on a base line for strategic planning by studying identified Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Risks and Results (SOARR). It is a model for appreciative inquiry; meaning, it focusses on positive attributes and opportunities, even if this is via the conversion of identified challenges or weaknesses into new opportunities or plans. It is also a forward-looking model, taking elements of what would traditionally be affiliated with a Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats analysis and using insights gained through stakeholder consultations to inform what is desired for the future and how to know when our aspirations have been met.



Figure 3: Key Considerations for a SOARR Analysis



## Strengths

S	Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are we doing well?</li> <li>• What key achievements are we most proud of?</li> <li>• What positive aspects have individuals and enterprises commented on?</li> </ul>
	What can we build on?	

- A wide diversity of crops can be grown which supports a very significant and stable agriculture and agri-food sector
- Regional strength in transportation and warehousing; transportation infrastructure via highways, high-load corridor, and rail are positive assets
- Affordable cost of living for housing and amenities
- Irrigation network is well known, which is positive for MD of Taber and other communities within the region
- Federal emphasis on agriculture cluster and proteins
- Cornfest is a rallying point for the Town of Taber and neighbouring communities



- Athletics is important in the communities; Vauxhall Baseball Academy attracts players from across Canada and contributes to the vitality of the local high school
- Availability of serviced commercial and industrial development land
- Internet access in Town of Taber is excellent, including a fibre optic network throughout the town and free wireless available in the downtown core
- A lower than average median age speaks to significant youth population
- Housing options are available in a wide range of budget categories

## Opportunities

O	<b>Opportunities</b> What are our best possible future opportunities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What changes in demand do we expect to see in the future?</li> <li>• What external forces or trends may positively affect development?</li> <li>• What are the key areas of untapped potential?</li> <li>• What weaknesses or threats can be converted into SMART improvements?</li> </ul>
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- Create a detailed inventory of all agriculture value-chain components in the region that fit with the protein sector, including source providers, transport-related companies, processors and product manufacturers and other support industry, such as health and safety testing and research and development
- Forge partnerships between local high schools and trades-related employers to allow students opportunities to be exposed to career paths in the region, and ensure career-building path planning materials are made available training of local employees
- Continue to grow regional interest and support for a protein processing cluster which cross-cuts agriculture, processing, and research and development and be aggressive in investment attraction collaboration across the Taber Region
- Spearhead a regional broadband strategy in partnership with other rural communities in the region (e.g. Lethbridge County)
- Career opportunities of the future will be more strongly tied to servicing than manual labour thanks to automation, but the region needs to ensure it is developing a labour force with the appropriate servicing skills
- Animate the downtowns of Taber and Vauxhall such that they return to being a vibrant heart of their communities
- Explore an incentive program for enticing students to return to the region after post-secondary education, such as a scholarship-reward
- Undertake an annual survey among high school students to understand what amenities they would need in order for them to return after post-secondary education and use data to inform a “welcome home” strategy aimed at creating a boomerang effect
- Targeted communications strategy to offset negative press



## Aspirations

<b>A</b>	<b>Aspirations</b>  What do we care deeply about achieving?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are we deeply passionate about?</li> <li>• As a region, what difference do we hope to make (e.g. to residents, for institutions, to businesses)?</li> <li>• What does our preferred future look like?</li> </ul>
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- To have a regionally supplied labour force and pipeline of talent to supply labour force needs
- To be known as a hub for protein processing and product development
- To have access to quality broadband infrastructure to increase competitiveness across the entire region
- To forge stronger working partnerships across the Taber Region and with neighbouring municipalities
- To make the Taber Region a place that people want to return to and raise families if they have moved away or are coming to the larger region
- To reverse the trend of brain-drain across the region and improve high school graduation and post-secondary education attainment rates

## Risks

<b>R</b>	<b>Risks</b>  How will we recognize and mitigate or eliminate potential risks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What challenges do we need to be aware of?</li> <li>• What policy shifts could impact our aspirations?</li> <li>• What contingencies should we have in place to address threats or unexpected consequences?</li> </ul>
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- Commodity price shifts that impact key agricultural sectors and stability of protein sector
- Commodity price shifts in oil and gas that impact local businesses and hiring
- Threat of continued low high school completion rates in Census results and their impact on labour force competitiveness
- Region falling behind the curve on automation in key sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and oil and gas
- Lack of affordable solutions to broadband access under conventional technologies will continue to alienate rural areas in the Taber Region



## Results

<b>R</b>	<b>Results</b> How will we know we are succeeding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are the key goals we would like to accomplish in order to achieve these results?</li><li>• What meaningful measures will indicate that we are on track toward achieving our goals?</li><li>• What resources are needed to implement our most vital projects and initiatives?</li></ul>
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- Skills gap is being reduced
- Education completion rates are improving at high school and post-secondary levels
- Taber Regional Joint Economic Development Committee has assembled task forces specifically working on specific items of priority for the region and building capacity in those areas
- Broadband strategy undertaken and top opportunities identified for improving broadband accessibility



## Regional Strategic Considerations

Based on the results of the SOARR assessments, this section brings some of the key aspirations identified and looks at them collectively for related themes, which come together as strategic objectives. These strategic objectives will inform the remainder of the strategy at a regional level and for local municipalities.

### **Objective 1: Elevating investment retention and attraction to a targeted and intentional process that produces consistent results in sectors of strength.**

- Why? Beyond the hub for protein processing, there are other sectors prime for development, and opportunities for growth need to be maximized for all. Support is also needed among the existing business base to address existing business concerns, such as access to quality broadband, and collaborations with partners across the region to solve problems. Also, ensuring there is a visible talent pipeline is essential to business attraction and retention, including the retention and attraction of families and returning youth after they have completed post-secondary studies are essential to having an attractive value proposition.

### **Objective 2: Building an entrepreneurial system that nurtures growth, facilitates knowledge-sharing and builds a stronger and more diversified economy.**

- Why? Although attracting new business to the area is of strategic interest, equally important is growing a base of entrepreneurs from within that are true innovators that fit numerous sectors of interest, but most entrepreneurs need reliable broadband, and coordinating and mobilizing them collectively takes collaborative effort. Also, one way to grow the population is to attract new entrepreneurs to the area who will bring their families, disposable incomes and higher education levels.

### **Objective 3: Improving economic foundations to ensure existing and future employers have the talent and infrastructure they need to succeed.**

- Why? The ability to attract new investment, retain existing businesses, ensure their growth, and attract families is contingent on the ability to work collaboratively without duplication to resolve identified labour challenges, make processes smoother, and ensure infrastructure needs are met.

### **Objective 4: Animating communities in the region to ensure it is a desirable location to live.**

- Why? Ensuring quality of place and quality of life attributes are inviting for businesses, residents and tourists is essential to growing a regional economy. Targeted beautification, place-making projects, and enhancement programming will help retain and attract talent, businesses and families by giving them tangible things that make each community unique.

The figure on the next page presents a matrix that juxtaposes the strategic objectives with regional aspirations to share areas of commonality.



Figure 4: Taber Regional Matrix of Strategic Objectives and Aspirations

Strategic Objective	Regional Aspirations					
	Regional labour supply and talent pipeline	Hub for protein value chain	Access to high quality Broadband	Stronger working partnerships across region	Conducive to returning and new families	Reverse the trend of brain-drain
Objective 1: Elevating investment retention and attraction to a targeted and intentional process that produces consistent results in sectors of strength.						
Objective 2: Building an entrepreneurial system that nurtures growth, facilitates knowledge-sharing and builds a stronger and more diversified economy.						
Objective 3: Improving economic foundations to ensure existing and future employers have the talent and infrastructure they need to succeed.						
Objective 4: Animating communities in the region to ensure it is a desirable location to live and visit.						



## Regional Strategic Framework

The strategic framework plays an important role in articulating how strategic objectives are converted into tangible goals. For each objective there is a series of related goals, and each goal is supported by one or more action points. Also identified is the role for the Taber Regional Joint Economic Development Committee (JEDC), potential partners, and timing and performance measures for each action. This chapter focuses primarily on objectives that represent opportunities for regional coordination, either through the JEDC or other regional partners that any two or more municipalities should be engaging with collectively. Each goal is also supported by a rationale that establishes its relevance.

The timing is indicated by Immediate (within 3 months), short (within year 1), medium (year 2 to 3), and long-term (year 4 to 5) categories. In most instances there are multiple times provided, according to different steps of the action plan. Where only one time is given, it is expected that the entire goal be met.

The figure below summarizes the strategic objectives and their respective goals. In the action plan, goals are accompanied by detailed actions or steps.

**Figure 5: Strategic Objectives and Related Goals**

Strategic Objectives	Goal
Elevating investment retention and attraction to a targeted and intentional process that produces consistent results in sectors of strength	Identify protein champion(s) to collaborate and explore options with Protein Alliance of Alberta to grow the sector
	Attend the Protein Summit in Calgary and subsequent summits annually
	Develop regional asset maps for target industries to understand value-chain growth opportunities and critical gaps
	Continue to build alliance with Lethbridge County to collectively grow networks in key overseas markets
	Target independent entrepreneurs in the professional services sector for investment attraction
	Develop a culture and tourism asset mapping portal
Building an entrepreneurial system that nurtures growth, facilitates knowledge-sharing and builds a stronger and more diversified economy	Utilize partnerships with regional partners (CF/SouthGrow/GoA/RINSA) to nurture the local ecosystem and assist it in growing from the ground-up
	Initiate a “local innovators” working group and corresponding events
	Ensure awareness of programs and services designed to assist entrepreneurs
	Increase exposure to skilled trades and experience
Improving economic foundations to ensure existing and future employers have the talent and infrastructure they need to succeed	Implement a regional high school graduation incentive
	Increase exposure to skilled trades and experience
	Build off recent local best practices to deliver rural high-speed internet to increase coverage throughout the region
	Develop a “welcome home fund” or similar initiative as a bursary for post-graduate students that return to the region and find work or start businesses
Animating communities in the region to ensure it is a desirable location to live and visit	Enhance the use of tourism-related technology applications
	Implement a regional buy-local loyalty program
	Develop a winter-time festival to entertain locals and attract visitors
	Enhance partnerships with community organizations to build on current Community Needs Assessment work to improve synergies among diverse groups in the region



## Objective 1: Elevating investment retention and attraction to a targeted and intentional process that produces consistent results in sectors of strength

Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 1. Identify protein champion(s) to collaborate and explore options with Protein Alliance of Alberta to grow the sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify a protein champion or champions from municipal offices who can assist with building progress in the sector</li> <li>▪ Develop guidance documents that help establish the role and duties of champions</li> <li>▪ Use champions to facilitate asset inventory (mapping) and gap assessment</li> <li>▪ Liaise with specific regional, provincial and national groups and partners</li> <li>▪ Lead the development of marketing materials</li> </ul>	<p>Immediate</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Harnessing the opportunities of this new cluster will take dedicated time and cooperation. Champions can fill the void of not having a dedicated employee.</p> <p><b>JEDC Role:</b> Lead the search for champions</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Local municipalities; local businesses in the sector; Plant Protein Alliance of Alberta; Lethbridge County, Growers' Associations</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> champions identified; events attended; leads generated; leads converted; \$ of investment; location of investment</p>		
<p>Goal 2. Ensure Protein Champions attend the Protein Summit in Calgary and subsequent summits annually</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify a protein champion or protein champions to attend the next Protein Summit in Calgary and Regina               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The objective is to network, identify businesses that match supply-chain gaps, identify potential site-selectors, arrange pitch meetings</li> <li>▪ Focus on producers and processors</li> <li>▪ Attend any panels or presentations about new or emerging technology</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Make plans to send a team to future Protein Summits</li> </ul>	<p>Short</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> The preeminent global industry event is coming to Calgary and Regina in 2019, and planning needs to get underway immediately to ensure a well-equipped team can be present, while also ensuring attendance at future summits is planned for.</p> <p><b>JEDC Role:</b> Protein Champion(s)</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Local municipalities (budgeting)</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Attendance confirmed; leads generated; leads converted</p>		



Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 3. Develop regional asset maps for target industries to understand value-chain growth opportunities and critical gaps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify businesses in specific target industries (agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, and professional services) and map out the key value chain components for each (local suppliers, researchers, contractors, transportation and warehousing, etc.) and local physical assets, programs or services. Use the information to determine key gaps that can be supported by new local businesses.</li> <li>▪ Identify external suppliers that may be willing to establish satellite operations in the region.</li> <li>▪ Develop targeted marketing materials promoting specific growth opportunities based on identified market gaps.</li> </ul> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Identifying existing assets along the value chain of each industry allows for the identification of critical gaps that can be addressed through local business growth or investment attraction</p> <p><b>JEDC Role:</b> Lead research initiative; assist with marketing design</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Local businesses; local municipalities; Growers' Associations</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Number of assets and growth; number of leads; number of leads converted; \$ of new investment; location of new investment (which community)</p>	<p>Short</p>
<p>Goal 4. Continue to build an alliance with Lethbridge County to collectively grow networks in key overseas markets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Undertake a lead generation exercise to identify specific investment leads in geographies of interest</li> <li>▪ Develop a customized marketing plan including the identification of marketing techniques and appropriate materials</li> <li>▪ Execute the marketing plan collectively</li> <li>▪ Continue work with Lethbridge-Taber Food Corridor</li> </ul> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Working together increases the value proposition of the broader region, and economic impacts are likely to benefit stakeholders/residents in both regions</p> <p><b>JEDC Role:</b> Protein champions</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Lethbridge County Economic Development Staff; Plant Protein Alliance of Alberta; Export Development Canada</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Relationship brokered; new network connections made; hot leads; leads converted</p>	<p>Short</p>



Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 5. Target independent entrepreneurs in the professional services sector for investment attraction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify key demographics that represent the sector (e.g. education backgrounds, age, status as a small business owner)</li> <li>▪ Develop a landing page dedicated to “home based businesses” and small businesses that can be used to steer online traffic</li> <li>▪ Use targeted marketing techniques via online products to introduce/entice prospects to a way of life outside of “the big city” with great assets, amenities and quality of life for them and their families</li> <li>▪ Produce print materials to have available at key tourism events that attract people from larger urban areas</li> <li>▪ Implement a “spousal job match” program to increase likelihood of attracting families to the region</li> </ul> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Attracting single families that are not tied to specific locations because of employment  <b>JEDC Role:</b> Assist in marketing; assist in job-match networking  <b>Key Partners:</b> Local municipalities; local employment offices  <b>Performance Measures:</b> Banner traffic; website traffic and other diagnostics; consultations provided to leads; new home businesses attracted; spouses assisted with finding local employment</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p>Goal 6. Develop a culture and tourism asset mapping portal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify and categorize all cultural and tourism assets across the region ensuring details include the geolocation; categorize by specific sub-sectors (e.g. cultural organizations, facilities and spaces, public art, heritage resources, annual events/festivals, accommodations, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Enable an online geographic information system platform on JEDC’s website that displays regional assets and their details</li> <li>▪ Use the tool for promotions in the sector, including marketing to potential tourism product investors</li> <li>▪ Embed links to the map in other regional tourism websites and those of local municipalities</li> <li>▪ Develop signage along with a regional brand</li> </ul> <p>Note: there are firms that specialize cultural and tourism asset mapping and hosting</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> The tourism sector is often difficult for people to understand. Having an all-in-one inventory makes it easy for people to find information about different sub-categories of the sector or for prospective business owners or investors to identify tourism business opportunities  <b>JEDC Role:</b> Host platform; assist in coordination of data collection  <b>Key Partners:</b> Local cultural organizations, social clubs, tourism operators, Taber and District Chamber of Commerce; Vauxhall Business Society  <b>Performance Measures:</b> Number of assets in specific sub-categories; change over time</p>	<p>Long</p>



## Objective 2: Building an entrepreneurial system that nurtures growth, facilitates knowledge-sharing and builds a stronger and more diversified economy

Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 1 Utilize partnerships with regional partners to nurture the local ecosystem and assist it in growing from the ground-up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct an assessment with Community Futures Chinook, SouthGrow, and Regional Innovation Network of Southern Alberta (RINSA) to understand the current entrepreneurial ecosystem and its needs so that a regional strategy can be encouraged for entrepreneurs</li> <li>▪ Develop a regional entrepreneurship growth and cultivation strategy</li> </ul>	<p>Short</p> <p>Medium</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Entrepreneurs are different than small business owners and they require a special tool kit to cultivate; there are regional experts that can help with entrepreneurship cultivation and strategic planning</p> <p><b>JEDC Role:</b> Initiate relationship and commission strategy</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Local municipalities; CF Chinook, SouthGrow, RINSA</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Partnership formed; assessment and strategy completed</p>		
<p>Goal 2. Initiate a “local innovators” working group and corresponding events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Initiate working group of entrepreneurs (people that have an innovative product or service that has monetary or social value)</li> <li>▪ Host scheduled workshops geared toward introducing members to new technologies via a guest speaker, demonstration, panel discussion, or other means</li> <li>▪ Host semi-regular casual meet-ups for networking and knowledge sharing purposes</li> <li>▪ Use the working group members to assist in popularizing new technologies that will be of benefit to other businesses in similar sectors</li> </ul>	<p>Short</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Emerging technologies present a world of opportunity, but they are not always well understood and building awareness among local innovators helps to normalize technology transfer to other business owners for increased health of the overall business community</p> <p><b>JEDC Role:</b> Convene meet-up sessions in rotating locations throughout the region; arrange meet-up logistics</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Local municipalities; Growers’ Associations and other business associations</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Schedule identified; event attendance; attendee feedback</p>		



Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 3. Ensure awareness of programs and services designed to assist entrepreneurs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create a master resource list of Alberta and Federal programs aimed at entrepreneurs or to the broader business community. The resource at a minimum should include descriptive information about eligibility, type of assistance, and sector applicability. Some examples of programs include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Major Innovation Fund</li> <li>▪ Accelerating the Advancement of Agricultural Innovation Program</li> <li>▪ Adapting Innovative Solutions in Agriculture Program</li> <li>▪ Youth Agriculture Education Program</li> <li>▪ Products to Markets Program</li> <li>▪ Value-Added Products to Markets Program</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Ensure the list is made available among key partners for dissemination</li> <li>▪ Ensure the list includes key contact information that steers people interested in additional assistance toward a single point of contact</li> <li>▪ Review the list annually and update as needed</li> <li>▪ Add to AdvantageTaber.ca and other websites</li> </ul>	<p>Short</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Businesses and entrepreneurs are often unaware of the funding or other programming options available designed to encourage investment, innovation, and market growth.</p> <p><b>JEDC Role:</b> Lead resource list development process</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Local municipalities; Community Futures Chinook, SouthGrow</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> List developed; # of downloads (from JEDC and partner sights); # of businesses consulted</p>		



### Objective 3: Improving economic foundations to ensure existing and future employers have the talent and infrastructure they need to succeed

Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 1. Implement a regional high school graduation incentive</p>	<p>Note: In recent years regional high schools have apparently made impressive improvements to high school graduation rates. Despite this, census data still reveals low proportions of the population that have completed high school indicating it could take time to see results over the long-term. Also, the results from school boards do not reflect home-school rates. Indeed, the larger problem is most predominantly brain drain. This goal is designed to assist with increasing graduation rates, while recognizing and addressing brain drain in other goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Study effective programs from across Canada and Alberta to understand effective models for increasing school attendance and graduation rates</li> </ul> <p>Example: Airdrie’s “Miss School-Miss Out” reward program</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Collective effort is needed to increase high school graduation rates.</p>		
<p><b>JEDC Role:</b> Work in supporting role</p>		
<p><b>Key Partners:</b> Horizon School Board; Taber and District Community Adult Learning; Taber and District Chamber of Commerce</p>		
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Strategy undertaken; graduation rates improving in each community</p>		
<p>Goal 2. Increase exposure to skilled trades and experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop promotional materials that are visually appealing and which explain the top skilled trade opportunities in the region and establish an easy to understand career path and resources to assist in career planning.</li> <li>▪ Develop pre-apprenticeship programming that exposes interested youth to opportunities to gain some beginner skills in a given area of interest so that they will more likely be able to find an apprenticeship mentor. The program could also facilitate mentor-apprentice matching.</li> <li>▪ Develop opportunities to connect high school students with local industry for projects and practicum education requirements.<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	<p>Medium</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Stimulating interest in trades within the region makes youth more likely to stay in the region for apprenticeships, and therefore more likely to stay in the area as employees or independent contractors</p>		
<p><b>JEDC Role:</b> Initiate and spearhead discussion about action items; monitor results</p>		
<p><b>Key Partners:</b> Lethbridge College, Medicine Hat College, Taber and District Community Adult Learning</p>		
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> New apprenticeships started; graduation rates</p>		

<sup>1</sup> See for example the Magrath Sustainable Agriculture Partnership: <https://www.magrath.ca/business-development/development/sustainable-agriculture-education-partnership>;



Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 3: Build off recent local best practices to deliver high speed internet coverage throughout the region</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work with SouthGrow to identify emerging best practices and identify opportunities for extending broadband access throughout the region</li> <li>▪ Attend relevant information sessions</li> <li>▪ Compile a feasibility study to determine the best-fit model</li> </ul>	<p>Medium</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> The Province of Alberta will not complete its broadband strategy until 2019, which means actions will not be arriving until several years from now. Access to high-speed internet is a major determinant in the decision to live in a given location, which has a negative impact on labour force attraction.</p> <p><b>JEDC Role:</b> Develop and administer the feasibility study and coordinate next steps</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Local communities, SouthGrow</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Feasibility study completed; next steps initiated</p>		
<p>Goal 4. Develop a “welcome home fund” or similar to be used as a bursary for post-graduate students that return to find work or start businesses</p>	<p>Note: A “Welcome home” fund functions as a bursary on a sliding scale to reward local school system graduates for completing post-secondary education and returning to the community within a given period to work or start businesses. The most popular form of this model is the Kalamazoo Promise<sup>2</sup>, but others have emerged. The model can have a profound impact. For example, a bursary of \$2,000 to 100 students would cost approximately \$200,000, but if the average claimant got a job that paid \$35,000, the impact would be \$3.5 million in wages, along with the economic spin-offs from local spending.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Investigate case studies of other regions that have started similar models, such as the Kalamazoo Promise or similar<sup>3</sup>, and conduct a feasibility study and best practice review to determine the appropriate model and level of grant-funding</li> <li>▪ Identify partners and corporate donors to contribute to the fund</li> <li>▪ Establish eligibility criteria and award verification process</li> <li>▪ Give the fund a unique brand representative of the local context</li> <li>▪ Implement the fund and monitor its impact</li> </ul>	<p>Long</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> An incentive is needed to encourage educated youth to return to the region and inspire higher graduation rates. The result is a tool to curve population decline and increase the skilled workforce.</p> <p><b>JEDC Role:</b> Administer the Welcome Home Fund</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Local municipalities and corporate citizens</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> \$ amount awarded; # of recipients; average wage of returning worker/business owner; return on investment</p>		

<sup>2</sup> See Kalamazoo Promise: <https://www.kalamazoopromise.com/>

<sup>3</sup> See other examples including the “Stay Close, Go Far Promise Scholarship Program” in rural Virginia: <https://www.beaconofhopelynchburg.org/our-promise-scholarship/>; the New Haven Promise: <http://newhavenpromise.org/about/>



### Objective 4: Animating communities in the region to ensure it is a desirable location to live and visit

Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 1. Revisit the Chamber Bucks program and other ways to enhance local spending</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If Chamber Bucks are not very successful, the factors as to why need to be understood in greater detail through local engagement and research. These will illuminate the predominant barriers that limit local shopping in the region.</li> <li>▪ Once the barriers are understood, conduct best practice reviews about how to improve on addressing each barrier. Strategies should be made to address the top identified reasons.</li> <li>▪ If Chamber Bucks can be enhanced or modified, make the change after the research has indicated which ways it could be more affective, and if other initiatives make better strategic sense, they must be prioritized instead</li> </ul>	<p>Medium</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> The existing “Chamber Bucks” system has proven inefficient and have not led to increases in local spending, but there may be opportunities to give it an impactful overhaul, or find other ways to enhance “buy-local” community spirit.</p> <p><b>JEDC Role:</b></p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Local municipalities; Taber and District Chamber of Commerce; Vauxhall Business Society</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> System has been designed; amount of points/currency awarded and used</p>		



Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 2. Enhance the use of tourism-related technology applications</p>	<p>Building on the strength of VisitTaber.com, implement the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote the education and awareness about Airbnb hosting as a way to increase tourism stays in the region.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Host workshops on becoming an Airbnb host and how to become a “Super Host”</li> <li>▪ Forge relationships with workshop attendees so that attribution can be tracked</li> <li>▪ Create a schedule for frequency of workshops</li> <li>▪ Identify all Airbnb hosts in the region and monitor the sector</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Promote education and awareness about Airbnb Experience businesses. These are people that offer special or unique experiences to interested tourists via Airbnb, such as specific tours, farm and ranch activities, or recreational activities led by a guide.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Host workshops on becoming an Airbnb Experience host and provide advice about package options</li> <li>▪ Forge relationships with Experience hosts and monitor new start-ups</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Work with area assets to develop virtual reality (VR) tours designed to entice people to visit and experience local offerings<sup>4</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify regional production companies that are able to produce VR content (if none are available, it may also be a business opportunity for someone)</li> <li>▪ Find an assortment of VR tour examples that represent the opportunity local operators can potentially develop</li> <li>▪ Promote VR tours as a means of marketing local tourism offerings, or if the asset is municipally-owned look at producing videos for top assets</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Short</p> <p>Short</p> <p>Medium</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> New technologies have emerged that make it easier to launch small-scale businesses, while also attracting overnight stays and enhancing the brand of the region</p> <p><b>JEDC Role:</b> Initiate workshop series; provide consultations with interested people</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Local tourism product operators; regional media content producers</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Number of attendees at workshops; number of new operations started; number of overnight stays and/or clients served; number of VR videos produced; number of views; visitor trends (increased)</p>		

<sup>4</sup> There are many examples of VR videos on YouTube, and most can even be used on a tablet or mobile phone. By moving the device around while the video is playing, viewers can look around in 360(D). These kinds of videos can be used as marketing devices to entice people to come experience the real thing. See for example: <https://www.niagarafallsturism.com/vr/>; [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CH6UP-RaD\\_Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CH6UP-RaD_Q)



Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 3. develop a winter-time weekend festival to entertain locals and attract visitors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work collaboratively to identify a weekend each year that would be ideal and assemble a planning committee to launch a pilot festival for Winter 2020</li> <li>▪ Identify the content, types of events, a competition and award, options for involving regional businesses (such as a local food area), and any outdoor concerts and entertainment components and use these details to establish a working budget for the event and a timeline with key milestones and delegated responsibilities</li> <li>▪ Identify a brand for the festival and develop a plan for marketing the event to locals and target markets, such as Medicine Hat, Lethbridge and Calgary</li> <li>▪ Arrange for a base allocated budget contributed by local municipalities; Apply for grant funding from Travel Alberta to assist with event costs and marketing<sup>5</sup>, and work with local corporate sponsors to reduce municipal costs (don't forget to acknowledge their importance prominently)</li> <li>▪ Host the event</li> <li>▪ After the event has been completed conduct a post-mortem to understand if and how it can be done better the next year</li> </ul> <p>Tip: Set realistic targets for content and expected attendance for the first year and build the asset and popularity gradually</p> <p>Tip: Make use of Taber CornFest resources and experience to reduce costs and extend event planning knowledge</p>	<p>Short</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> With several events already drawing tourists to the area during summer months, there is a need to focus attention on the region during other parts of the year</p> <p><b>JEDC Role:</b> Lead the committee, generate sponsorships, spearhead marketing efforts</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Local municipalities; Travel Alberta; large corporate citizens and local businesses</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Total dollars invested; total visitors estimated (local and out of town); economic impact calculation (Brandon University has a good guide for calculating direct, indirect and induced spending impacts<sup>6</sup>); return on investment for each cohort of funders (important for future grant applications and justifying future budget allocations)</p>		

<sup>5</sup> Travel Alberta can provide grants that can cover up to 50% of event and marketing costs for up to three years: <https://industry.travelalberta.com/programs-tools/coop-investment/events-festivals-marketing>

<sup>6</sup> Brandon University: <https://www.brandonu.ca/economic-impact/methodology/>



Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 4. Enhance partnerships with community organizations to build on current Community Needs Assessment work to improve synergies among diverse groups in the region</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work with partners with a focus on enhancing intercultural appreciation and information sharing</li> <li>▪ Implement the plan with the assistance of key community leaders from across the region, serving as ambassadors</li> </ul>	<p>Long</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> There has been a history of inter-cultural tension in the region that requires collective solution seeking so as to increase mutual respect and broader social buy-in  <b>JEDC Role:</b> Work supportively with other partners (do not lead)  <b>Key Partners:</b> Local municipalities; schools; social organizations; places of worship; Taber and District Community Adult Learning Association, Alberta Health Services, Taber and District Housing  <b>Performance Measures:</b> Strategy has been completed</p>		



## Division of Responsibilities

The above frameworks had numerous goals that support the five strategic objectives, but some effort is made here to summarize the role of local municipalities in regard to the JEDC.

**Figure 6: Goals and Roles of the Joint Economic Development Committee**

Goal	Role of the JEDC and Membership
Identify protein champion(s) to collaborate and explore options with Protein Alliance of Alberta to grow the sector	Lead the search for champions via local municipalities of JEDC
Attend the Protein Summit in Calgary and subsequent summits annually	Protein Champion(s)
Develop regional asset maps for target industries to understand value-chain growth opportunities and critical gaps	Members of JEDC lead initiative and assist with marketing design
Continue to build alliance with Lethbridge County to collectively grow networks in key overseas markets	Protein champion(s)
Target independent entrepreneurs in the professional services sector for investment attraction	JEDC members assist in marketing program and assist in job-match networking
Develop a culture and tourism asset mapping portal	Host platform on JEDC website with links from municipal website; assist in coordination of data collection
Utilize partnerships with regional partners to nurture the local ecosystem and assist it in growing from the ground-up	JEDC to initiate relationship with Community Futures, SouthGrow, Government of Alberta, and RINSA and commission strategy
Initiate a “local innovators” working group and corresponding events	Convene meet-up sessions in rotating locations throughout the region; arrange meet-up logistics
Ensure awareness of programs and services designed to assist entrepreneurs	Lead resource list development process
Increase exposure to skilled trades and experience	Work in supporting role
Implement a regional high school graduation incentive	Initiate and spearhead discussion about action items; monitor results
Increase exposure to skilled trades and experience	Develop and administer the feasibility study and coordinate next steps
Build off recent local best practices to deliver high speed internet coverage throughout the region	Develop and administer the feasibility study and coordinate next steps



Goal	Role of the JEDC and Membership
Develop a “welcome home fund” or similar initiative as a bursary for post-graduate students that return to the region and find work or start businesses	JEDC lead the effort
Revisit the Chamber Bucks program and other ways to enhance local spending	Administer the Welcome Home Fund
Enhance the use of tourism-related technology applications	Initiate workshop series; provide consultations with interested people
Develop a winter-time festival to entertain locals and attract visitors	Lead the committee, generate sponsorships, spearhead marketing efforts
Enhance partnerships with community organizations to build on current Community Needs Assessment work to improve synergies among diverse groups in the region	Work supportively with other partners (do not lead)

Source: MDB Insight, 2018.





# Town of Taber Strategic Economic Framework

The Town of Taber has experienced steady population and job growth over the past several years; contributing to its appeal as a regional hub for commerce and services. Voted one of the Top 10 “Friendliest Communities” in 2017<sup>7</sup>, the charm of the community is also complimented by a variety of quality of life amenities geared toward families and youth. The Municipality’s Strategic Plan, 2018, had a placed emphasis on developing new economic initiatives, reviewing town policies and regulations that pertain to development, promote expansion of the variety of housing options in Taber, and explore post-secondary education partnership opportunities.

As a commercial hub, Taber’s economy is characterised by strength in several base industries that drive regional economic growth, including agriculture, manufacturing and transportation and warehousing. The community is generally on par with what a community of its size should have in terms of retail services, but there are some notable vacant storefronts.

Taber is also experiencing a “brain drain”, as youth leave for post-secondary education and do not return, and while regionally there are some communities that are even more affected by it, in general it is still a threat to long-term economic viability for investment and resident attraction. Unlike other communities in the region, Taber is not affected by a lack of broadband internet access, which is potentially one of the reasons why it has not see as extensive brain drain and why the population continues to grow.

These considerations and others are made apparent in the economic profile and subsequent sections, but what is also shown are opportunities to address challenges, leverage strengths, and guide the Town’s economic development priorities. An action plan is provided at the conclusion of the chapter.

## Economic Profile

Results are based on Statistics Canada’s Census Profiles (2016, 2011, 2006), National Household Survey (2011), and Canadian Business Counts (December 2017). Detailed results are provided in Appendix A.

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### Population

Between 2006 and 2016, the Town of Taber's population grew by 11%, reaching 8,428 people.



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The Town of Taber's median age is 36, similar to the Provincial average of 36.7.

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<sup>7</sup> In 2017, Expedia.ca users voted Taber the 6<sup>th</sup> friendliest community to visit, 2017: see <https://www.expedia.ca/travelblog/friendliest-towns-canada/>



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## Prosperity

Median household income in 2016:

Town of Taber	\$73,894
Taber Region	\$71,181
Alberta	\$93,835



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Between 2011 and 2016, the average value of dwellings grew from \$239,826 to \$250,464.

Average rental price was \$820 per month in 2011, growing to \$882 by 2016.

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## Education

More than double the proportion of Taber adults over 25 (26%) have not completed high school compared to the province (11%).

31% have a university certificate, diploma or degree at the bachelor level or above, compared to 27% for Taber region, and 53% for Alberta.



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The top three fields of study for people in Taber are architecture, engineering, and related technologies; business, management and public administration; and health and related fields.

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Top employment industries for residents are agriculture, manufacturing, and transportation and warehousing.

**Industry & Labour Force**

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Manufacturing is strong in the Town of Taber. Sub-sectors driving competitiveness relate to agriculture product processing and manufacturing.

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The Town's leading business categories are construction; retail trade; professional, scientific and technical services; and transportation and warehousing.

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Strong concentrations of businesses in mining, oil and gas extraction. Other sectors of strength include accommodation and food services, wholesale trade, and retail trade.



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Numerous townparks and a golf course are key outdoor assets, including a skatepark and spray park.

**Quality of Life & Place Assets**

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Cornfest (signature event), Pheasant Festival and Midnight Madness.

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Two ice arenas, Motorsport park, curling rink, health club, 600-seat auditorium, Aquafun centre featuring pools, hot tubs, steam room.

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Taber Municipal Hospital

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5 elementary schools, 5 middle & high schools, 3 post-secondary/community education institutions

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Town has access to High Speed Internet

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Retail amenities, community service resource groups, and places of worship

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Unique architectural character of some buildings





## Town of Taber SOARR Assessment

As was the case for the regional component of the strategy, a SOARR assessment has also been carried out for the Town of Taber. The results are summarized in the figure below.

**Figure 7: SOARR Assessment Results for Town of Taber**

SOARR Category	SOARR Finding
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Eureka Industrial Park and its infrastructure are positive assets, and the marketing materials are compelling</li> <li>▪ Manufacturing is highly competitive, with potential to grow or spread to adjacent sectors in the supply chain</li> <li>▪ Strong capacity for water and wastewater treatment, ideal for agri-food sector or other water-intensive processes</li> <li>▪ Outdoor bike and skate park grow value-proposition for attracting young families</li> <li>▪ Taber Cornfest and other annual events add value and attract visitors</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct a community exchange with another town to evaluate what other communities have done to improve community appeal, attractiveness to tourists, and grow the general quality of place</li> <li>▪ Cannabis product processing of oils and resins and research in advance of legalization of edibles</li> <li>▪ Work with local manufacturers and processors to identify supply-chain gaps</li> <li>▪ Develop a campaign designed to make newcomers feel welcome, including a committee and volunteers</li> <li>▪ Make use of Cornfest assets during other times of the year</li> </ul>
Aspirations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To improve the overall quality of place and attractiveness to newcomers and visitors</li> <li>▪ To ensure retail and personal services thrive and the town remains a hub for regional spending</li> <li>▪ To support existing businesses by addressing their top concerns in meaningful ways that improve business satisfaction</li> <li>▪ To attract more businesses to Taber</li> </ul>
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Youth not returning after they have left for post-secondary education</li> <li>▪ Plans are in place to minimize impact, but drought, including long-term climate change could have significant influence on investment</li> </ul>
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New quality of place identified for targeted development, revitalization or improvement</li> <li>▪ Retail businesses report improvements in revenue</li> <li>▪ Business retention and attraction engagement is continued and improvements in satisfaction are monitored</li> </ul>

Source: MDB Insight, 2018.



## Economic Vision for Town of Taber

An economic vision sets the stage for where the Town and its residents and businesses for what it wants to be in the future and gives the community something to collectively work toward. Taber's economic vision is:

**To be a destination for opportunity, growth and inspiration, and a place that people are excited to return to or discover.**

## Strategic Objectives for Town of Taber

Strategic Objectives represent the way that ideas from the SOARR and Vision can be converted in to broad goals for Taber and its partners to work toward.

Each strategic objective is accompanied by a series of goals, and each goal is supported by an action plan, timeline, rationale for undertaking the initiative in question, Municipality's role as a leader or supporter of the activity, and performance measure for evaluating the success of the initiative. A key consideration is the Rationale associated with each goal, because it is what establishes the reason and relevance for undertaking the accompanying actions.

The timing in the action plan is indicated by short (within year 1), medium (year 2 to 3), and long-term (year 4 to 5) increments.

There are four local strategic objectives, plus a fourth regionally-oriented strategic objective to tie Taber's strategy to the Regional Economic Strategy Framework presented in the previous chapter, where Taber is to play a partner role.

Because the Regional Framework addressed challenges and opportunities relevant to the broader region, it is necessary for Taber's framework to address relevant considerations that are more directly appropriate for the town. Taber's growth and level of sophistication for economic development activities are undoubtable, and overall it bucks a trend that other rural communities in Alberta are more severely challenged by (population decline, industry decline, etc.).

### **Objective 1: To support existing businesses by addressing their top concerns in meaningful ways that improve business satisfaction**

- Why? The business survey isolated specific areas that are likely to increase business satisfaction. Some of these are regional in scope and have been addressed in the Regional Framework, but some aspects such as the "municipal support of small businesses" and identifying and addressing potential misperceptions about tax and development costs can be addressed locally. The business survey also found that support for existing businesses was identified as a local priority. Also, some businesses are expanding and require resources which will assist them with the process. Finally, the business survey process itself was an enlightening experience for economic development staff, but progress cannot be effectively measured without follow-up surveys to evaluate business satisfaction and priorities in the future.



**Objective 2: To ensure retail and personal services thrive and the town remains a hub for regional spending**

- Why? Addressing opportunities and aspirations identified in the SOARR assessment, this item relates to both survey and interview results that indicated a need for continued support and encouragement of existing retail and population-oriented services in Taber. The community is currently a regional hub, but some merchants are concerned about economic leakage. The results point to a need to continue to find ways to draw people into town and to help retailers remain competitive and successful.

**Objective 3: To improve the overall quality of place and attractiveness to newcomers and visitors**

- Why? Place making, beautification and quality of place enhancements add to the appeal of a municipality, and while there were not specific survey or engagement results that point to these aspects as current challenges, addressing them will support other priorities in stakeholder engagement related to youth retention, labour attraction, and small business success. This is also an opportunity to highlight successful projects and their continued relevance, such as building on the recent success of the Coors Banquet outdoor concert event.

**Objective 4: To continue to grow investment attraction through targeted methods**

- Why? Taber is in a position to continue its pace of development and investment attraction. Building on existing strengths identified in the SOARR and implementing new ideas can ensure that investment attraction success will continue and ideally accelerate.

**Objective 5: To collaborate with regional communities in common areas of mutual opportunity or concern**

- Why? This item intentionally connects Taber with the Regional Economic Framework so that it is not neglected.

These strategic objectives and their accompanying goals are summarized in the figure below, followed by a detailed breakdown of the framework.



**Figure 8: Strategic Objectives and Goals for Town of Taber**

Strategic Objective	Goals
Objective 1: To support existing businesses by addressing their top concerns in meaningful ways that improve business satisfaction	Enhance business retention and expansion surveying and visitations
	Assemble internal and external small business resource repository
	Assist in identifying access to training for employees
	Track top labour force needs and projections
	Conduct an annual review of competitiveness
Objective 2: To ensure retail and personal services thrive and the town remains a hub for regional spending	Work with area grocers to have a Local Products section
	Monitor retail trends and report bi-annually to Chamber about results
	Initiate a Trip Advisor advocacy campaign
Objective 3: To improve the overall quality of place and attractiveness to newcomers and visitors	Implement a storefront bylaw
	Continue on the momentum of the Coors Banquet Festival
	Revitalize underdeveloped commercial spaces
	Continue to advance the affordable housing initiative
	Undertake a community exchange program to inspire place-making and beautification opportunities
Objective 4: To continue to grow investment attraction through targeted methods	Leverage existing market strengths and expand investment attraction
	Promote the LocalIntel site selection tool via targeted outreach to site selection firms affiliated with target industries (agrifood, oil and gas, transportation & warehousing)
	Develop an investment cost-calculator to assist investors and assist in lead generation
Objective 5: To collaborate with regional communities in common areas of mutual opportunity or concern	



## Strategic Objective 1: To support existing businesses by addressing their top concerns in meaningful ways that improve business satisfaction

Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 1. Enhance business retention and expansion surveying and visitations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A survey has already been conducted in September, 2018, and some of the results identified specific businesses in potential need of support (either to prevent downsizing/relocation, or to assist in expansion opportunities). Objective #1 should be to engage with these businesses (use the survey results to best understand where the businesses may be most or least satisfied, so that a meeting can be fruitful)</li> <li>▪ Identify a leadership team to oversee and advise on the program, promote it to the community, and keep it moving (4 to 6 community, business, government or education leaders), a visitation team to conduct visits, administer surveys, identify red-flag or green flag issues (volunteers or staff), and a response team to oversee administration of the program, work to address and resolve issues (municipal staff and identified partners).</li> <li>▪ Undertake a visitation program via the visitation team or a contracted survey firm (even if a random survey is conducted, there should also be targeted visitations to specific large employers or those that are key to an economic sector).</li> <li>▪ Prioritize addressing red-flag issues (downsizing, closure, relocation, or selling of business) and green flag issues (expanding) via appropriate interventions directly with individual firms.</li> <li>▪ Develop a ranked list of priority issues and challenges affecting business satisfaction and identify a series of appropriate actions.</li> <li>▪ Communicate the results and indicate what the Municipality and partners will be doing to address identified priorities.</li> <li>▪ Review, revise, and update process annually.</li> <li>▪ Note: The initiative will only be taken seriously if businesses see that action is being taken to address issues or concerns that emerge as priorities; otherwise, the process loses integrity and the result is increased business apathy and distrust toward the town. Successful implementation will drive increased trust in the Municipality and the program and lead to stronger openness among businesses to approach Municipal staff proactively.</li> <li>▪ Continue New Business Welcome package delivery and visitations.</li> </ul>	<p>Immediate</p>



Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p><b>Rationale:</b> A business satisfaction survey has already been done and the results have been informative for Taber, but also there have been opportunities to follow-up on red-flags (threats) and green flags (opportunities). Furthermore, ongoing measurement via a survey is needed to track results and changes in satisfaction over time.</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> None.</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> # of visitations; # businesses assisted; jobs and/or businesses saved via assistance; # new jobs; \$ new investment; \$ new assessment</p>		
<p>Goal 2. Assemble internal and external small business resource repository</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct research into the key small business needs areas, including start-up processes and permits, business planning, succession planning, bookkeeping basics, online and social media tools, small-business financing opportunities, business expansion tips, starting a home-based business, etc.</li> <li>▪ Post links to municipal websites, Alberta Government, Community Futures Chinook and Taber and District Chamber of Commerce programs and services designed for small businesses</li> <li>▪ Develop materials for resources that are not addressed on partner websites, such as booklets, fact-sheets, or hot-links and ensure all internally developed materials include contact information</li> <li>▪ Determine whether there is a need for information sessions or workshops, and identify appropriate topics for events</li> </ul>	<p>Medium</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Assistance from the municipality was one of the top identified priorities in the business satisfaction survey. Taber’s website is very investment-oriented, which is positive, but there are no resources for existing or new businesses. Since over 90% of Taber’s business population are small operations with fewer than 10 employees, these businesses require resources to ensure their ongoing success and satisfaction.</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Services Alberta; Community Futures Chinook;</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> # documents accessed; # referrals to partners; # downloads; # businesses assisted; \$ investment</p>		



Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 3. Assist in identifying access to training for employees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assemble two focus group discussions: one among 15 of the top employers in Taber; the other among small to medium-sized businesses representing a general cross-section of business categories               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discuss areas of specific and general training needs to identify and categorize the top training needs (separated into accredited and non-accredited)</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Develop a specific “soft-skills” enhancement workshop series in partnership with area social organizations and ensure employers are made aware of the series and look to enroll employees in need of soft-skills training</li> <li>▪ Meet annually with focus groups to review training needs and prioritize new opportunities</li> <li>▪ Continue to explore partnership opportunities with Lethbridge College partnerships to locate a satellite campus in Taber</li> </ul> <p>Note: it can be easier to work as a consortium of businesses to recruit and pay for a specialist to come and deliver a workshop than for each business to have to make arrangements to send employees away for training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify remote-training opportunities for long-form learning or accredited learning opportunities</li> <li>▪ Assemble a master list of training resources for different types of skills or occupations and identify institutions that provide training in the event that training cannot be provided locally</li> </ul>	<p>Short</p> <p>Short</p> <p>Short</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Access to employee training was a top-ranked priority in a recent Business Satisfaction Survey and attributed as the single-most-likely thing to increase business satisfaction.</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead and coordinate in ongoing manner</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Taber and District Community Adult Learning Association; Lethbridge College; Taber and District Chamber of Commerce</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Focus groups conducted; top training needs identified; resource lists assembled; new workshops developed; # of attendees; business satisfaction levels in “Access to employee training” category</p>		





## Strategic Objective 2: To ensure retail and personal services thrive and the town remains a hub for regional spending

Goals	Actions:	Timing
Goal 1. Work with area grocers to have a Local Products section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify local food products produced in the region, assembling a list and contact information for all businesses</li> <li>Work collaboratively to produce a pitch for grocery store management, including for corporate head quarters if necessary</li> <li>Pitch the value of having a local products section that supports and encourages locally made goods that meet food safety standards</li> </ul>	short
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Help to increase awareness of goods produced in the region, while supporting local businesses. There are three grocers in Taber and a Walmart which are common places for convenience shopping where people can be exposed to local and regional novelties.</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead effort</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Taber and District Chamber of Commerce; local grocers; local growers associations</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Local Products section installed; # of products sold</p>		
Goal 2. Monitor retail trends and report bi-annually to Chamber about results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor retail trends by following blogs and online commerce publications<sup>9</sup></li> <li>Assemble a presentation twice annually to demonstrate how new trends and technologies are being used in retail and restaurants</li> <li>Source findings appropriately so others can read-up more if they are interested</li> <li>Ensure the presentation includes possible opportunities and threats that businesses need to be made aware of</li> <li>Ensure copies of the presentation are available upon request</li> <li>Conduct consultations with businesses interested in learning more about specific opportunities or threats</li> </ul>	Medium
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Opening a dialog with retailers is important for general health of the sector, but it is also important to ensure businesses are aware of the opportunities and potential challenges they may face so that they can plan effectively.</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Taber and District Chamber of Commerce</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> # of presentations made</p>		

<sup>9</sup> Forbes' website regularly releases articles about trends affecting the retail sector (see for example: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/pamdanziger/2017/12/27/retail-shopping-predictions-2018/#b400d84fb337>); Vend.com also releases an annual retail trends and predictions article (see the most recent at: <https://www.vendhq.com/2018-retail-trends-predictions>)



Goals	Actions:	Timing
Goal 3. Initiate a Trip Advisor advocacy campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work with area retailers and tourism operators to ensure their operation have a Trip Advisor page</li> <li>▪ Host a breakfast information session that introduces over the course of an hour:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What Trip Advisor is and how it works</li> <li>▪ Why it is important for as many local retailers, restaurants, and tourism operators as possible be on the platform</li> <li>▪ Tips for ensuring reviews are positive</li> <li>▪ Tips for growing the number of reviews</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Short
<p><b>Rationale:</b> The first thing many people look at when planning a trip is Trip Advisor. They want to know what is worthwhile to invest their time and money. If there is not a good selection, they will not plan to stop and visit. Currently, there are fewer than 10 assets on Trip Advisor attributed to Taber, indicating an under-representation of local retail and tourism assets.</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Taber and District Chamber of Commerce</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> # of businesses/operators on Trip Advisor; average # of stars overall</p>		



### Strategic Objective 3: To improve the overall quality of place and attractiveness to newcomers and visitors

Goals	Actions:	Timing
Goal 1. Implement a storefront bylaw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct a best practice review into storefront bylaws to inform a storefront bylaw that ensures storefronts are not left looking vacant when they are not in use, placing the onus on the property owner to ensure that the space is visibly appealing, curtained, or adorned with local artwork or some other visual.</li> <li>▪ Conduct consultations with businesses and property owners</li> <li>▪ Initiate the bylaw and its punitive measures</li> </ul>	Medium
<p><b>Rationale:</b> A storefront bylaw ensures the visual aesthetic of commercial areas is preserved, thereby enhancing the neighbourhood aesthetic</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Business community</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Feasibility complete; bylaw enacted</p>		
Goal 2. Continue on the momentum of the Coors Banquet Festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Building off the momentum of 2018's Coors Banquet Festival, develop an annual music festival with a new name</li> <li>▪ Assemble a committee to lead the effort locally</li> <li>▪ Develop a business plan for an annual festival that includes a budget and communications plan</li> <li>▪ Identify a series of corporate sponsors, including a gold, silver and bronze tier sponsorship</li> <li>▪ Identify key headliner acts and additional talent, as well as other accompanying entertainment</li> <li>▪ Implement a marketing campaign and media outreach</li> <li>▪ Undertake the event</li> <li>▪ After the event, conduct a debrief meeting to identify successes and challenges of the event</li> </ul>	Short
<p><b>Rationale:</b> The Coors event generated great community spirit and drew thousands of visitors to the area.</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Initiate the committee, economic development staff to assist</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Local and regional businesses; Chamber; Tourism Southern Alberta</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Committee assembled; business plan completed; sponsors identified; total value of sponsorships; total revenue generated</p>		



Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 3. Revitalize underdeveloped commercial spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify five to eight specific properties or groupings of properties along key commercial paths</li> <li>▪ With the permission of property owners, conduct assessments to develop investment prospectuses designed to generate interest in redeveloping the sites (either by the present owner or a new investor)</li> <li>▪ Ensure each prospectus includes vital details about the property, infrastructure, taxes and development fees, etc., and the range of return on investment for a high-density development versus lower density development that meets the local building bylaw</li> <li>▪ Identify a list of development firms specializing in low-build mixed-use properties and market redevelopment opportunities</li> </ul>	<p>Medium</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Underdeveloped properties detract from the aesthetic and appeal of an area, while redeveloped ones enhance curb-appeal  <b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead prospectus development and outreach  <b>Key Partners:</b> Local property owners  <b>Performance Measures:</b> Prospectuses developed; # of inquiries; # of developers contacted; # of converted leads</p>		
<p>Goal 4. Continue to advance the affordable housing initiative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Complete the concept plan for the new designated land</li> <li>▪ Initiate development according to the plan</li> </ul>	<p>Medium</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Taber is in the process of developing a concept plan for new affordable housing in its northwest end, and this can add to the diversity of housing options and overall attractiveness of the area  <b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead  <b>Key Partners:</b> Taber and District Housing  <b>Performance Measures:</b> Concept Plan Complete; Implementation Plan being followed</p>		



Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 4. Undertake a community exchange program to inspire place-making and beautification opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assemble a team of five to six locals to explore two similar sized communities that have strong place-making (work to narrow a list of ideal candidates that make sense to evaluate and potentially emulate)</li> <li>▪ Arrange a checklist of key aspects to look at and record observations about services that make a community visitor friendly, tourist attractions (landmarks and events), natural areas); highlight what Taber is doing right, and where it can be improved</li> <li>▪ Conduct field research in two locations and compile results into a report highlighting best-fit ideas applicable to Taber</li> <li>▪ Develop a plan to implement the top listed items</li> <li>▪ Continue to develop relationship with Sister City, Higashiomi, Japan, to inspire additional ideas</li> </ul> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Learning from other communities’ application of place and quality of life asset building and use can inspire opportunities for Taber to lead local adaptations  <b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead and exercise decision making  <b>Key Partners:</b> Community at large  <b>Performance Measures:</b> Initiative undertaken</p>	<p>Long</p>



## Strategic Objective 4: To continue to grow investment attraction through targeted methods

Goals	Actions:	Timing
Goal 1: Leverage existing market strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with existing employers to identify supply-chain components and areas where they would prefer to source locally if options existed</li> <li>Develop a master list of top external companies that meet supply-chain gap criteria and identify key contacts at each company</li> <li>Leverage existing business connections to forge introductions to supply-chain-related leads</li> <li>Target investment attraction activities at leads, if possible, via direct engagement</li> <li>Leverage the LocalIntel tool in marketing efforts</li> </ul>	Short
<p><b>Rationale:</b> There is a strong economic base with well established networks and lead generation works best when it is via an established network of existing local businesses that can introduce the Town to potential new contacts. Taber has a lot going for it, so get the messaging out and reinforce it with the up-to-date data and site-selection tool.</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead, via Economic Development</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Local business networks</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> # of leads; # of leads converted to hot leads; traffic to LocalIntel tool; # of new investments; \$ of new investments</p>		
Goal 2: Promote the LocalIntel site selection tool kit via targeted social media outreach to site selection firms affiliated with target industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a marketing campaign that promotes LocalIntel<sup>10</sup></li> <li>Identify top site-selector companies and target them directly with the marketing campaign (note: in Canada site selection is handled by corporate real estate firms<sup>11</sup>. Also, studying the list of attendees for the upcoming Protein Summit will likely indicate site selectors attending the event).</li> <li>Get companies that have used the tool to endorse Taber’s LocalIntel platform</li> <li>Ensure that the tool is promoted in all outbound marketing, including messaging designed for local businesses</li> <li>Ensure that off-site levies and labour costs (average wage per hour per occupation) are posted in the tool (avoid links to additional site or PDFs)</li> </ul>	Short

<sup>10</sup> Track Economic Developers Alberta (EDA) and Economic Developer’s Association of Canada (EDAC) marketing award recipients from previous years. Checking other provinces’ associations can also inspire ideas. Taber may also need to hire a marketing company to help design a fresh concept.

<sup>11</sup> See for example companies like Colliers International (<http://www.collierscanada.com/en/offices/calgary/experts>), CBRE



Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p><b>Rationale:</b> With LocalIntel, Taber is already well-positioned to answer many site-selector's questions. This tool needs to be advertised highly visibly.</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Local companies for endorsements</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Use of tool and site diagnostics (i.e. what are people engaging with); leads generated; leads converted; # of investments; \$ of investments</p>		
<p>Goal 3: Develop an investment cost-calculator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tender a programmer to develop a site-development cost calculator</li> <li>▪ Post the calculator online and track its use, ensuring that there is a manner to capture specifications submitted by tool users (this intelligence could be useful for follow-up)</li> <li>▪ Promote the tool as part of a package also promoting LocalIntel</li> </ul>	<p>Medium</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Given how robust the LocalIntel platform is, a strong compliment could be a development cost calculator. Computer programmers can easily develop automated forms that prospects can fill-out, and these tools can get site-selector's engaged by showing them what the development cost is likely to be for all key cost considerations including development charges, taxes, labour costs (based on skill level), servicing (pipe-size, hydro needs, internet mbps needs, etc.), square footage costs for lease, purchase or new-build, and more. The tool takes these different variables and with some information that is filled-out by the prospect (such as square-feet required, number of skilled/unskilled employees, type of water-pipe circumference, etc.) provides an estimate of the expected cost for developing the property in Taber. The tool can also be configured to include data on key comparators for side-by-side cost comparisons.</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead project and host tool</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> None</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Tool developed; tool use; leads generated; leads converted; # of investments; \$ of investment</p>		

## Strategic Objective 5: To collaborate with regional communities in common areas of mutual opportunity or concern

This objective serves as a direct connection to the Regional Economic Strategic Framework in the previous chapter. The Town of Taber, its municipal partners, and other key partners have specific roles to play in ensuring the regional objectives are advanced collaboratively.

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(<http://www.cbre.ca/EN/o/calgary/Pages/home.aspx>), and Devencore (<https://devencore.com/service-details.php?id=9>)







# Municipal District of Taber Strategic Economic Framework

The Municipal District (MD) of Taber has seen impressive growth for a largely rural area, including 13% growth between 2006 and 2016. Despite the growth, the majority of residents do not live in any of the villages or hamlets that constitute the region, instead being for the most part expansive farms. The population is generally young, with a median age of 27.6, nearly 10 years younger than the provincial median.

Occupying 44% of its labour force, agriculture is the dominant employment sector in the district. It is also the top industry by number of businesses with employees. On the other hand, the district's foothold in agriculture to this extent has resulted in a lack of competitiveness in many other sectors when compared to the province overall. With increasing interest in the protein cluster, there is both room and opportunity to grow the district's foothold in complimentary industries and supply-chain categories. One critical barrier for businesses is access to high-speed internet, which is likely to take even longer to surmount than other municipalities such as Vauxhall because of the low population density. One opportunity to address the challenge is to concentrate future industrial development on the peripheries of locations such as Town of Taber and Vauxhall, the former of which already has high-speed. In addition to agriculture the MD also experienced a boom in oil and gas extraction, and has become an important driver that has potential for additional spin-off industries and support services.

The MD also has numerous assets that are attractive for residents and visitors, including a renowned shooting range and two rustic camp-grounds, but there may be room to expand development in the district by leveraging additional local assets and new technologies. The momentum of clean technology projects presents an example of a growth area, as well as potential clean technologies associated with irrigation, which may include sensors, big-data analytics, or other factors.

These considerations and others are made apparent in the economic profile below and subsequent sections, and these will be used to inform the strategic objectives and actions identified at the end of the chapter.

## Municipal District of Taber Economic Profile

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**Population** Between 2006 and 2016, the Municipal District of Taber's population grew by 13%, reaching 7,098 people.

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The MD of Taber's median age is 27.6 compared to Alberta's median age of 36.7.

That's a young, energetic population.

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## Prosperity

Median household income in 2011:

MD Taber	\$76,544
Taber Region	\$71,181
Alberta	\$93,835



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Between 2011 and 2016, the average value of dwellings grew from \$250,358 to \$321,317.

Average rental price was \$821 per month in 2011, growing to \$851 by 2016.

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## Education

42% of people over 25 have not completed high school compared to 34% across Taber region, and 11% across Alberta.

25% have a university certificate, diploma or degree at the bachelor level or above, compared to 27% for Taber region, and 53% for Alberta.

This signals there may be a brain-drain in the MD, an out-migration of young adults for post-secondary education that do not return to Taber.

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The top three fields of study are architecture, engineering, and related technologies; business, management and public administration; and health and related fields.

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Top employment industries for residents are agriculture, construction, manufacturing, and retail; however, agriculture is so strong that it dwarfs all other sectors, occupying 44% of the entire labour force.

**Industry &  
Labour  
Force**

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Top industries by number of businesses are agriculture, transportation and warehousing, construction, and real estate and rental leasing.

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Highly competitive agricultural concentrations, complimented by transportation and warehousing and utilities constitute a well-defined agricultural value chain.

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Top occupations include Sales and Service, Manufacturing and Utilities.

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Walking paths, parks, campgrounds, golf, fishing all available within MD.

**Quality of  
Life & Place  
Assets**

Lack of high-speed internet

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Two municipal airports

Local hospital, medical clinics

Schools K-12 located in hamlets of Enchant, Grassy Lake and Hays

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School division accomodates Low German Mennonite families from Mexico by respecting culture, religious beliefs and practices.

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## Municipal District of Taber SOARR Assessment

A strengths, opportunities, aspirations, risks and results (SOARR) assessment has been applied to the economic base analysis, which was summarized in the profile above and is supplemented by the content in technical appendices.

**Figure 9: SOARR Assessment Results for Municipal District of Taber**

SOARR Category	SOARR Finding
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strongest agricultural sector in the region – Taber Corn is known throughout Western Canada, but that’s just one example</li> <li>▪ Irrigation network is revered and also accessible to other industries aside from agriculture</li> <li>▪ Large number of individual and small-scale oil and gas related businesses</li> <li>▪ Local assets include gun range, municipal airport, and campgrounds</li> <li>▪ Industrial and commercial land availability in Hamlet of Hays</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Plant-protein cluster contribution and leadership</li> <li>▪ Ensure new land coming online includes portions dedicated specifically to industrial zoning</li> <li>▪ Though oil and gas are strong on paper (strong employment and competitive number of businesses), little is known about potential supply-chain gaps or clean technology business opportunities amenable to the region, including site remediation and well-decommissioning<sup>12</sup></li> <li>▪ Initiate a series of workshops targeting agricultural producers about new automated technologies</li> <li>▪ Grow tourism development through the use of new technologies</li> </ul>
Aspirations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Diversify the economic base by expanding footholds in complimentary sectors</li> <li>▪ Grow embeddedness in the regional plant-protein cluster</li> <li>▪ Reverse negative trends in education attainment</li> </ul>
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Very low high school completion rates</li> <li>▪ Commodity prices affecting local farmers</li> <li>▪ Global competition in protein sector</li> <li>▪ Mennonite and non-Mennonite cultural strains</li> </ul>
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High school completion rates have improved</li> <li>▪ Business visitations conducted, leads generated, leads converted</li> </ul>

<sup>12</sup> Note the Supreme Court of Canada recently ruled that the onus is on energy companies to clean up old well sites, even if they are in bankruptcy. See Johnson, Tracy (2019), “Supreme Court rules energy companies must clean up old wells – even if in bankruptcy,” CBC News, Jan. 31: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/supreme-court-redwater-decision-orphan-wells-1.4998995>



## Economic Vision for Municipal District of Taber

An economic vision sets the stage for where the District and its residents and businesses want it to at some unspecified future point. The vision provides a broader goal that the community aspire toward and frame future activities and priorities around. The MD of Taber's economic vision is:

To be a community that grows from a proud tradition of agriculture and expands into new growth opportunities that will diversify our economy based on our best collective assets.

## Strategic Objectives for Municipal District of Taber

Based on the vision identified above in combination with the results of the SOARR assessment, a strategic framework has been created. The framework functions as an action plan, to guide the MD in its economic development processes.

The framework consists of a series of strategic objectives supported by various goals that will help drive outcomes that meet the objective. Importantly, each goal is supported by a set of actions for implementing the goal and a corresponding timeline that identifies short (within a year), medium (1 to 2 years) and long-term (3 to 5 years) time horizons for accomplishing the identified goal. In some cases where key milestones are involved in a series of actions, the timeline is broken-out accordingly.

Also supporting each goal is a rationale that explains why the goal is appropriate for the objective in question, as well as the role of the municipality (leader or supporter), and relevant performance metrics to guide ongoing evaluation of progress. There are three strategic objectives specific to the MD of Taber, and an additional strategic objective that links the local strategy back to the Regional Economic Strategy Framework.

### **Strategic Objective 1: Be a leader in new technologies and innovative applications for agriculture and cleantech=0-----**

- Why? Building on the MD's existing strengths in agriculture, the community is in a position to capitalize on a growing knowledge base and ensure knowledge is transferred among the industry. Stakeholder interviews identified an interest in pushing spin-off industries related to agriculture, but at the heart of industry change is advancements in technology.

### **Strategic Objective 2: Formalize a business retention and expansion plan to engage businesses, monitor problems and provide opportunities for intervention**

- Why? The recent business satisfaction survey indicated businesses in need of assistance, as well as provided insight into the priorities for addressing business satisfaction. Some of these priorities are addressed regionally via the Regional Economic Framework, but others are more specific to the MD.



**Strategic Objective 3: Diversify the economic base by expanding the agricultural foothold into adjacent sectors**

- Why? Building on the numerous sectors that the MD already excels at, such as agriculture, manufacturing, and transportation and warehousing, there are opportunities to expand business assets into related sectors up and down the value-chain.

**Strategic Objective 4: Work regionally on collaborative economic opportunities**

- Why? This item intentionally connects MD of Taber with the Regional Economic Framework so that it is not neglected.

The above strategic objectives are summarized in the figure below, along with their respective goals, which are further elaborated in the subsequent framework.

**Figure 10: Strategic Objectives and Related Goals for Municipal District of Taber**

Strategic Objective	Goal
Objective 1: Be a leader in new technologies and innovative applications for agriculture	Make the MD a leader in innovative project demonstrations
	Initiate an annual competition for Agricultural Innovator of the Year
	Pursue relationships with Lethbridge College in protein and pulse-crop production and processing
Objective 2: Formalize a business retention and expansion plan to engage businesses, monitor problems and provide opportunities for intervention	Identify supply chain gaps in oil & gas sector and prioritize local expansion or entrepreneur development to fill gaps
	Initiate a business retention and expansion program
	Increase awareness of assistance MD of Taber can provide business regarding expansion
Objective 3: Diversify the economic base by expanding the agricultural foothold into adjacent sectors	Drive interest in agricultural consulting via cultivation of local expertise Greenhouses and greenhouse technology
	Develop investment prospectuses for Greenhouse sector development
	Promote small-scale on-farm food processing
	Promote hemp production and product development
	Increase clean technology applications across the district
Objective 4: Work regionally on collaborative economic opportunities	



## Strategic Objective 1: Be a leader in new technologies and innovative applications for agriculture and cleantech

Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 1. Make the MD a leader in innovative project demonstrations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In partnership with the Chamber, conduct an outreach exercise to determine local farmers and food processors that are using innovative technologies</li> <li>▪ Make arrangements to have semi-regular innovative technology demonstrations where local operators conduct familiarization tours and demonstrate how an innovative new technology is applied</li> <li>▪ Make use of social media to document each event and help generate broader public support for technology awareness</li> <li>▪ Facilitate mentor-matching for operators interested in learning from others that have already adopted a new technology</li> <li>▪ Encourage reporting of new technology adoption on an ongoing business and conduct mass outreach annually to identify new operators that have technology that can be demonstrated</li> </ul>	<p>Short</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> New technologies are coming online all the time for the agriculture and agri-food sector. Early adopters can become trend-setters and local operators can build a culture that drives and shares innovative approaches and technology.</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead and coordinate</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Taber and District Chamber of Commerce; Growers' Associations</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Innovators identified; # of demonstrations offered; # of attendees; qualitative feedback; social media response</p>		
<p>Goal 2. Initiate an annual competition for Agricultural Innovator of the Year and awards series</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assemble a governance committee to oversee award process</li> <li>▪ Solicit corporate donations to host and commission awards</li> <li>▪ Initiate an awards gala event and invite local media and a guest speaker</li> <li>▪ Institute a nomination process and jury awards based on a series of categories (e.g. agriculture, food processing, environmental stewardship, innovative solutions, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Host event and distribute awards</li> </ul>	<p>Short</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Acknowledgement of industry leaders using innovative technology promotes awareness of the opportunities to a broader audience, while also acknowledging early adopters of new technologies.</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Support the process</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Taber and District Chamber of Commerce; local businesses; Growers' Associations and other business associations</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> event initiated; attendance; social media response; media coverage</p>		



Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 3. Pursue relationships with post-secondary institutions in protein and pulse-crop production and processing</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Linking local farmers with research opportunities assists in driving recognition of the region as part of the innovation ecosystem.</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Lethbridge College, Olds College and University of Alberta, Calgary</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Inventory</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct an annual review of research projects underway at post-secondary institutions in southern Alberta</li> <li>▪ Conduct a scan of local agricultural producers to determine interest in participating in research</li> <li>▪ Assist in match-making</li> </ul>	<p>Medium</p>



**Strategic Objective 2: Formalize a business retention and expansion plan to engage businesses, monitor problems and provide opportunities for intervention**

Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 1. Identify supply chain gaps in oil &amp; gas sector and promote local expansion or entrepreneur development over investment attraction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct targeted outreach of existing oil and gas and related services in the MD</li> <li>▪ Conduct business visitations or phone inquiries to find out about supply-chain gaps. Identify key components of supply chain that are missing locally that either are being provided by external companies or are lacking in general</li> <li>▪ Consider complimentary services such as site remediation and well-decommissioning, abandonment and reclamation services</li> <li>▪ Assemble a set of information (number of oil &amp; gas businesses, key supply-chain-related businesses, and key missing businesses), and promote opportunities for the establishment of local satellite service offices</li> <li>▪ Promote supply-chain gap opportunities locally among existing entrepreneurs in the event that some may have interest in investing in diversifying and expanding</li> </ul>	<p>Short</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Oil and gas sector has been strong regionally, and the MD may be in a position to fill supply-chain gaps via its business retention and expansion processes.</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead and partner</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Taber and District Chamber of Commerce</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> # of business expansions facilitated; \$ new investment; # new jobs created</p>		



Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 2. Initiate a business retention and expansion program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A survey has already been conducted in September, 2018, and some of the results identified specific businesses in potential need of support (either to prevent downsizing/relocation, or to assist in expansion opportunities). Objective #1 should be to engage with these businesses (use the survey results to best understand where the businesses may be most or least satisfied, so that a meeting can be fruitful)</li> <li>▪ Identify a leadership team to oversee and advise on the program, promote it to the community, and keep it moving (4 to 6 community, business, government or education leaders), a visitation team to conduct visits, administer surveys, identify red-flag or green flag issues (volunteers or staff), and a response team to oversee administration of the program, work to address and resolve issues (municipal staff and identified partners).</li> <li>▪ Undertake a visitation program via the visitation team or a contracted survey firm (even if a random survey is conducted, there should also be targeted visitations to specific large employers or those that are key to an economic sector).</li> <li>▪ Prioritize addressing red-flag issues (downsizing, closure, relocation, or selling of business) and green flag issues (expanding) via appropriate interventions directly with individual firms.</li> <li>▪ Develop a ranked list of priority issues and challenges affecting business satisfaction and identify a series of appropriate actions.</li> <li>▪ Communicate the results and indicate what the Municipality and partners will be doing to address identified priorities.<sup>13</sup></li> <li>▪ Review, revise, and update process annually.</li> </ul>	<p>Medium</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Business retention preserves local jobs, while identifying those in a position of expansion can grow the local economy and produce new jobs.</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead the process</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Taber and Region Chamber of Commerce; local business leaders; community leaders</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Visitations completed; # of red flags and # of interventions; # of green flags and # of interventions; # of jobs/businesses saved; # businesses expanded/# of jobs from expansion; \$ new investment</p>		

<sup>13</sup> Note: The BRE initiative will only be taken seriously if businesses see that action is being taken to address issues or concerns that emerge as priorities; otherwise, the process loses integrity and the result is increased business apathy and distrust toward the town



Goals	Actions:	Timing
Goal 3. Increase awareness of assistance MD of Taber can provide business regarding expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop a series of guidelines to inform businesses of the business expansion process</li> <li>▪ Identify government programs designed to assist with business expansion, including export development assistance</li> <li>▪ Post resources online and promote widely among Chamber membership and direct interested businesses toward a single point of contact</li> </ul>	Medium
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Many businesses may be in a position to expand and not know how to approach the process, and a random survey will only capture a portion of the larger population</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Taber and District Chamber of Commerce; local business leaders; community leaders</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Website traffic and diagnostics; # consultations; # expansions assisted; \$ investment; # new jobs</p>		

### Strategic Objective 3: Diversify the economic base by expanding the agricultural foothold into adjacent sectors

Goals	Actions:	Timing
Goal 1. Drive interest in agricultural consulting via cultivation of local expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify local innovators and industry leaders and determine level of expertise</li> <li>▪ Assist in linking businesses with coaching resources (to be coached)</li> <li>▪ Encourage expertise business planning via scheduled business plan consultations</li> <li>▪ Work with the Chamber to promote expertise for consultation purposes</li> </ul>	Short
<p><b>Rationale:</b> There is no question the MD holds a lot of knowledge capital related to agriculture, and there is regional and national demand for such expertise in the form of consultants. The approach has the potential to diversify the value proposition of the sector. Expertise can come from any number of backgrounds, from engineering to age-old experience.</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Taber and District Chamber of Commerce</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> # of consultations; # of new consultants</p>		



Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 2. Develop investment prospectuses for Greenhouse sector development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop an investment prospectus for the greenhouse industry</li> <li>▪ Keep an inventory of available properties most ideally suited for greenhouse development</li> <li>▪ Undertake a lead generation exercise to identify firms specializing in greenhouse operations and market opportunities</li> </ul>	<p>Medium</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Greenhouses is one of the few agricultural categories that currently has a weak local presence, but with advancements in technology and growing demand for year-round access to specific products, there are good opportunities for growth in the sector that will not require a large pool of unskilled labour. The opportunity can also compliment the protein cluster.</p>		
<p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead</p>		
<p><b>Key Partners:</b> None</p>		
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Prospectus complete; inventory complete (updated regularly); # of leads; # of leads converted; \$ investment; # new jobs</p>		
<p>Goal 3. Promote small-scale on-farm food processing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify a variety of small-scale farm operations suitable to local bylaws (e.g. micro-breweries, cideries, oil-seed extraction, hemp product manufacturing such as bast and hurd, preserves/bottling etc.) and create scenario examples for different operations and post them on a dedicated page on the website</li> <li>▪ Provide business plan assistance and identify government grant programs that may support diversification</li> <li>▪ Promote consultation opportunities online and in print local public spaces and at the Chamber</li> </ul>	<p>Long</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Expanding into another direction on-site may result in job creation while expanding the new-value of the agri-food sector.</p>		
<p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead</p>		
<p><b>Key Partners:</b> Taber and District Chamber of Commerce</p>		
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Scenarios developed; web traffic; # of consultations; # new operations; \$ new investment</p>		







# Town of Vauxhall Strategic Economic Framework

Vauxhall constitutes a growing economy with competitiveness in several sectors that drive the broader economy. Key strengths include a growing manufacturing base and competitive transportation and warehousing sector. Both of these sectors tap into regional strengths in agriculture and oil and gas extraction. A new water treatment plant increases the town's prospect of attracting new investment into the community. On the other hand, the town also faces some notable challenges relating to population decline and low high school completion rates, with over 60% of people aged 25 to 64 not having a high school diploma or equivalent. Consultations have suggested some of this may be due to influxes of new populations with lower education levels, but a more likely explanation is brain drain. The negative population trend supports this. Poor homeschool completion rates may explain part of it; however, this data is more difficult to collect. There have been impressive graduation rates at Horizon School in recent years, which could indicate that over time (for example ten years), the graduation rate may reverse and start climbing in the Census Population. Vauxhall also has a young median age (29.6 compared to the provincial median of 36.7), tied to the large Mennonite population.

A unique attribute of the community is the Vauxhall Baseball Academy, which attracts students from across Canada and the United States as they seek to hone their skills. There are also considerable amenities designed to enhance the quality of place, such as an outdoor pool, a community centre, a curling rink and ice arena, and seniors' drop-in centre, but a high vacancy rate in commercial offerings diminishes the marketability of the town as a vibrant place for investment. Declines in retail and personal service options may be a product of negative population trends. A further complication is a lack of quality internet service, which likely impacts perceptions of viability for some business types and the overall attractiveness of the community to potential new residents or skilled labour.





## Town of Vauxhall SOARR Assessment

A strengths, opportunities, aspirations, risks and results (SOARR) assessment has been created to guide strategic planning for Vauxhall’s economy.

**Figure 11: SOARR Assessment Results for Town of Vauxhall**

SOARR Category	SOARR Finding
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Manufacturing is growing and in a position of competitiveness for a community of its size; also strong is transportation and warehousing, indicating the beginning of a cluster</li> <li>▪ Vauxhall Baseball Academy is a renowned institution for talent development</li> <li>▪ Recreation facilities noted as being of high quality</li> <li>▪ Affordable housing to remain competitive</li> <li>▪ Mennonite Alternative Program has contributed to 98% graduation rate at Horizon School</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Formalize a business retention and expansion plan to engage businesses, monitor problems and provide opportunities for intervention</li> <li>▪ Initiate a business after-care program that involves following up with newly landed businesses to understand potential challenges and identify ways of improving investment readiness for future business attraction efforts</li> <li>▪ Work with area-partners to identify stronger adult high school equivalency completion rates</li> <li>▪ Work with Vauxhall Baseball Academy to develop a broader program</li> <li>▪ Identify critical supply-chain gaps as opportunities for investment attraction in key sectors such as agri-food, oil and gas servicing, and transportation and warehousing</li> <li>▪ Initiate a main-street revitalization plan to improve the appeal and attractiveness of main commercial area</li> </ul>
Aspirations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reverse trends that pose a threat to economic viability including population decline and low high school graduation rates</li> <li>▪ Increase access to quality internet service for residents and businesses</li> <li>▪ Enhance investment attraction and business retention practices</li> <li>▪ Increase the attractiveness of community assets, public spaces, and commercial zones of the downtown core</li> </ul>
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Youth continue to leave and not return to Vauxhall</li> <li>▪ Retail business continues to decline</li> </ul>
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved relationship with Vauxhall Base Ball academy</li> <li>▪ Population growth has resumed</li> <li>▪ After-care program has been implemented and visitation schedule is in place</li> </ul>



## Economic Vision for Town of Vauxhall

An economic vision enables an opportunity to ensure strategic objectives can advance the community toward a shared idea of its ideal economic future. Based on the above considerations and in light of the Town's strategic plan, the following vision is applied to Vauxhall's economy.

Vauxhall's economy is supported by a growing and educated talent base, thriving and diverse business community, and engaging municipality that understands and responds productively to business needs and concerns.

## Strategic Objectives for Town of Vauxhall

Strategic Objectives are the broad initiatives that will help to advance Vauxhall toward its economic vision, but importantly they are also complimented by the broader objectives also identified in the Regional Strategy Framework. This section looks specifically at those activities and initiatives that should be targeted locally by the Town of Vauxhall and other partners. Each strategic objective is accompanied by a series of goals, and each goal is supported by an action plan, timeline, rationale for undertaking the initiative in question, Municipality's role as a leader or supporter of the activity, and performance measure for evaluating the success of the initiative.

The timing is indicated by short (within year 1), medium (year 2 to 3), and long-term (year 4 to 5) increments. There are three local strategic objectives, plus a fourth regionally oriented-strategic objective to tie Vauxhall's strategy to the Regional Economic Strategy Framework.

It should be noted that a majority of major concerns for Vauxhall related to internet service and high school completion rates are covered under the Regional Economic Framework and are not endemic to Vauxhall alone. For this reason, they are not addressed in this portion of Vauxhall's strategy, but rather the focus is placed on things that Vauxhall should be pursuing directly, as opposed to collectively with the Municipal District and Town of Taber.

The strategic objectives and their respective goals are the following figure, which is followed by a detailed breakdown of the Strategic Framework, including actions, timing and related details.



**Figure 12: Strategic Objectives and Related Goals for Vauxhall**

Strategic Objective	Goal
Objective 1: Enhance business attraction and retention efforts to maximize economic impact	Formalize a business retention and expansion plan to engage businesses, monitor problems and provide opportunities for intervention
	Identify critical supply-chain gaps as opportunities for investment attraction in key sectors such as agri-food, oil and gas servicing, and transportation and warehousing
	Initiate a business after-care program
Objective 2: All things Baseball! Leverage existing baseball assets to expand into a broader economic driver	Work with Vauxhall Baseball Academy to expand programming
	Expand the baseball legacy in Vauxhall (through complimentary asset and entertainment development)
Objective 3: Ensure Vauxhall is inviting to tourists and residents by creating a unique sense of place	Initiate a main-street revitalization plan to improve the appeal and attractiveness of main commercial areas
	Revitalize under-developed spaces
Objective 4: Work regionally on collaborative economic opportunities	



## Strategic Objective 1: Enhance business attraction and retention efforts to maximize economic impact

Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 1. Formalize a business retention and expansion plan to engage businesses, monitor problems and provide opportunities for intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify a leadership team to oversee and advise on the program, promote it to the community, and keep it moving (4 to 6 community, business, government or education leaders), a visitation team to conduct visits, administer surveys, identify red-flag or green flag issues (volunteers or staff), and a response team to oversee administration of the program, work to address and resolve issues (municipal staff and identified partners).</li> <li>▪ Undertake a visitation program via the visitation team or a contracted survey firm (even if a random survey is conducted, there should also be targeted visitations to specific large employers or those that are key to an economic sector).</li> <li>▪ Prioritize addressing red-flag issues (downsizing, closure, relocating, or selling) and green flag issues (expanding) via appropriate interventions directly with individual firms.</li> <li>▪ Develop a ranked list of priority issues and challenges affecting business satisfaction and identify a series of appropriate actions.</li> <li>▪ Communicate the results and indicate what the Municipality and partners will be doing to address identified priorities.</li> <li>▪ Review, revise, and update process annually.</li> </ul> <p>Note: The initiative will only be taken seriously if businesses see that action is being taken to address issues or concerns that emerge as priorities; otherwise, the process loses integrity and the result is increased business apathy and distrust toward the town. Successful implementation will drive increased trust in the Municipality and the program and lead to stronger openness among businesses to approach Municipal staff proactively in times of the year when a survey is currently not being offered.</p>	<p>Short</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> There is a need to continually maintain positive relationships with the business community, monitor its overall health, and intervene where appropriate by providing advice, assistance or services. Good BRE also produces a trusting and more open business community.</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Coordinate and lead BRE programming</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Vauxhall Business Society</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Business satisfaction; # of red flags; # of green flags; # of businesses assisted; \$ new investment from assistance</p>		



Goals	Actions:	Timing
<p>Goal 2. Identify critical supply-chain gaps as opportunities for investment attraction in key sectors such as agri-food, oil and gas servicing, and transportation and warehousing</p>	<p>Asset mapping is the process of identifying industry sub-sectors of substantive strength and other local assets that give value to a sector, such as infrastructure or specific labour force components.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Undertake industry asset mapping exercises for agri-food, oil and gas, and transportation sectors, including all physical and infrastructure assets that assist each particular sector or increase their value. Identify and categorize assets into a database (spreadsheet)</li> <li>▪ Work with clusters of business types to determine if there are shared needs for specific goods or services that are currently imported and identify opportunities to either attract new businesses to fill the market gap or encourage local business emergence or expansion to occupy the identified gap.</li> <li>▪ Conduct targeted investment attraction based on identified gaps.</li> <li>▪ Work regionally where sectors share broad similarities, such as agri-food and proteins; including in the collection and sharing of data</li> <li>▪ Use the results of the asset mapping to leverage strengths and also indicate where opportunities exist for investment.</li> </ul>	<p>Short</p>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> The easiest way to generate new investment is to understand and engage with the existing business community, but convincing investors that there is a need and opportunity requires the appropriate data to help make a solid case for investment. Expansions or attractions mean new jobs, which brings more disposable income into the community, which is the best way to secure the retail and personal services sector</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead data collection</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> JEDC</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Asset mapping complete; gap analysis complete; business investment in gap area obtained; \$ of business investment (per gap area and overall)</p>		



Goals	Actions:	Timing
Goal 3. Initiate a business after-care program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Devise a framework and set of resources for following up with newly landed businesses to understand potential challenges and identify ways of improving investment readiness for future business attraction efforts</li> <li>▪ Identify key intervals within the first year of a newly landed business where a site visit can be arranged</li> <li>▪ Identify a key staff person that is most ideally suited to conduct visitations and ensure the Mayor is involved in at least one visitation</li> <li>▪ Undertake visitations and log findings (never commit to anything on the spot!) and explore solutions</li> <li>▪ Use visitations to probe for new network connections and leads</li> <li>▪ Recruit ambassadors for future investment attraction activities that may require local references or contacts</li> </ul>	Short
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Ensuring that newly landed businesses have positive impression of the municipality creates an environment where new businesses feel secure and looked after, and assists in the generation of new investment leads.</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Dedicated staff person and Mayor</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> None</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Number of visitations; issues identified and solutions provided;</p>		



## Strategic Objective 2: All things Baseball! Leverage existing baseball assets to expand into a broader economic driver

Goals	Actions:	Timing
Goal 1. Work with Vauxhall Baseball Academy to expand programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advocate for the investigation into the feasibility of a summer baseball program at Vauxhall Baseball Academy</li> <li>▪ Advocate for the investigation into the feasibility of an intensive coaching development program to be offered yearly</li> </ul>	Short
<p><b>Rationale:</b> The Academy is already very successful and plays a role in the local economy, but by expanding its value proposition, visitors will be in</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Advocate, not lead</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Vauxhall Baseball Academy</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Feasibility process initiated</p>		
Goal 2. Expand the baseball legacy in Vauxhall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Spearhead a working committee to assess and pursue complimentary asset development associated with baseball, such as a museum, amusement space, retail geared toward baseball in Vauxhall, unique branding outlets, and an annual event that is designed to attract tourists to Vauxhall.</li> <li>▪ Identify opportunities for public-private partnership and Tourism Alberta grants.</li> </ul>	Medium
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Building off the Vauxhall Baseball Academy presents opportunities for commercial and tourism development, which broadens the general appeal of the Town to new audiences.</p> <p><b>Municipal Role:</b> Lead committee</p> <p><b>Key Partners:</b> Vauxhall Business Society; CF Chinook; Vauxhall Baseball Academy</p> <p><b>Performance Measures:</b> Committee struck; strategy undertaken and implemented; new investment related to baseball theme; new assets; visitor volume; social media and web diagnostics</p>		





#### Strategic Objective 4: Work regionally on collaborative economic opportunities

Given the fact that a series of strategic objectives and goals have also been identified for the region, the Town of Vauxhall has a role to play in contributing to their realization. These are available in the Regional Strategic Framework provided in Chapter 2, and their fulfillment and success can be looked at as Vauxhall's success, as it stands to benefit from the results; particularly as they relate to education, skilled labour, and investment attraction and infrastructure.





## Appendices



# Appendix A – Background Review

## Detailed Economic Base Analysis

To the greatest extent, this section references data from the 2016 Census output from Statistics Canada’s Community Profiles, and uses that data in comparison to previous Census releases and/or the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS). Notably, the 2011 NHS was a voluntary survey, and therefore lacked a truly random distribution and may result in distortions due to skewed participation rates. The weakness associated with the NHS is acknowledged here because results may be impacted to some unmeasurable degree.

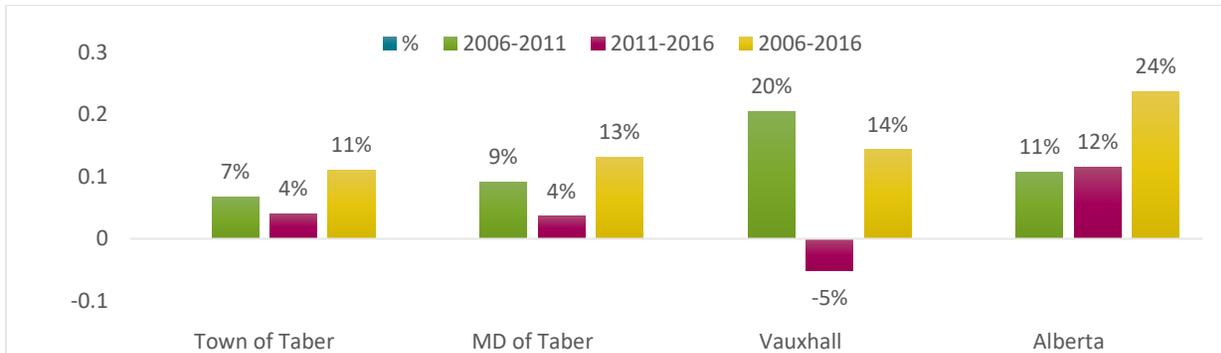
The analyses use Town of Taber, MD of Taber, Vauxhall, Region, and Alberta as comparators.

### Demographic Portrait

#### Population and Population Growth

As shown in Figure 13, between 2006 and 2016, the population of the town and the MD has grown, with growth over the latest period (2011 to 2016) being 4% in each. Meanwhile, Vauxhall’s population declined in 2011 – 2016. In particular, as Figure 14 shows, while the town and MD grew by 324 and 247 people, respectively, to 8,428 and 7,098, while Vauxhall declined by 66 people from 1,288 to 1,222.

**Figure 13: Population Growth, 2006-2016**



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile, 2011 Census Profile.

**Figure 14: Population Change, Absolute, 2006-2016**

Population and dwellings	Town of Taber	MD of Taber	Vauxhall
2006	7,591	6,275	1,069
2011	8,104	6,851	1,288
2016	8,428	7,098	1,222

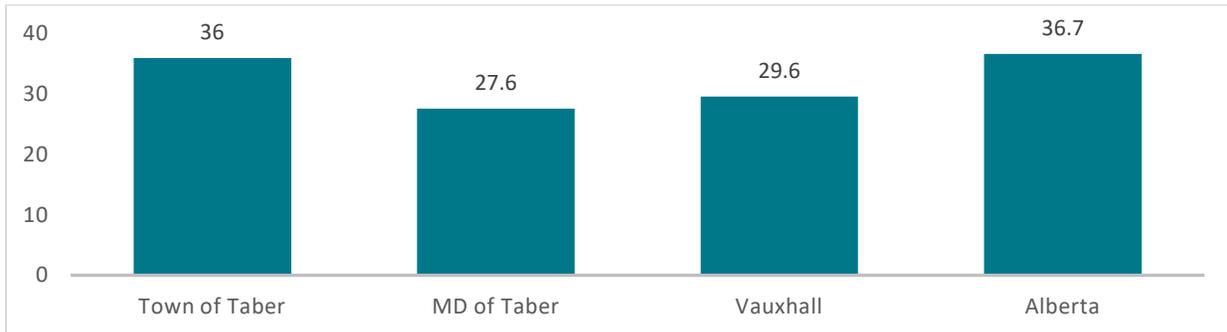
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile, 2011 Census Profile.

#### Population by Age Structure



As seen in Figure 15, the communities boast a comparatively younger population than the Alberta median age. The MD of Taber in particular has a median age nearly 10 years below the provincial median at 27.6.

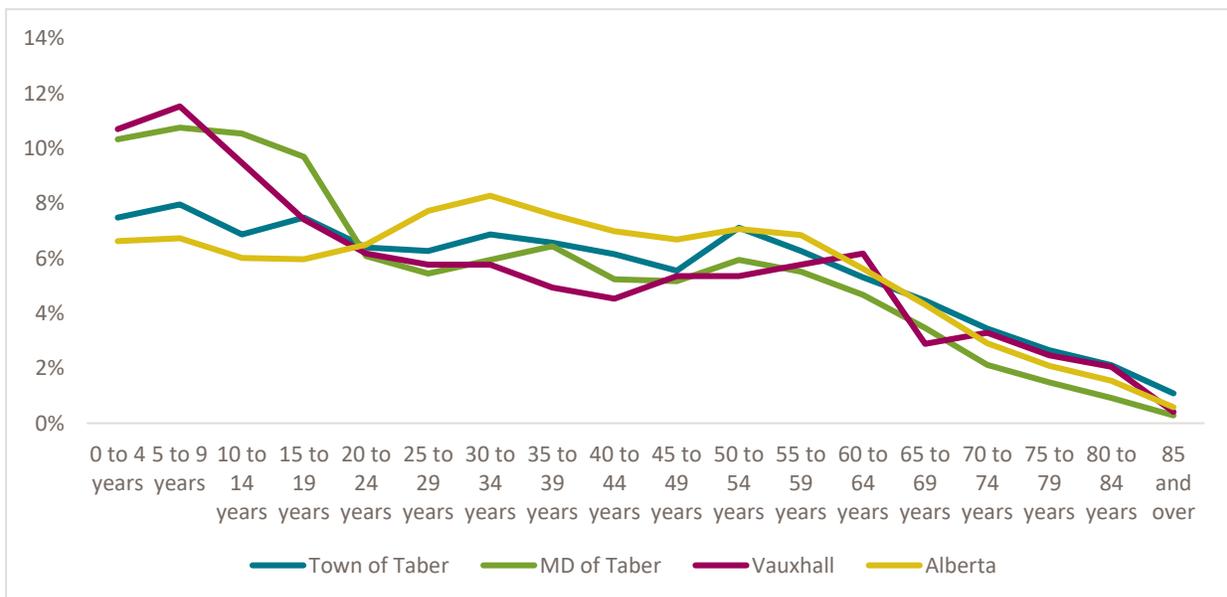
**Figure 15: Median Age, 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profiles.

Indeed, when studied according to age distributions, as shown in Figure 16, MD of Taber and Vauxhall each have notably larger populations aged 0 to 25 than the provincial distribution. The Town of Taber has a population that more evenly distributed across all age groups until ages 65 and over, where its trend mirrors the MD, Vauxhall and the province overall.

**Figure 16: Population Age Group Distributions, 2016**



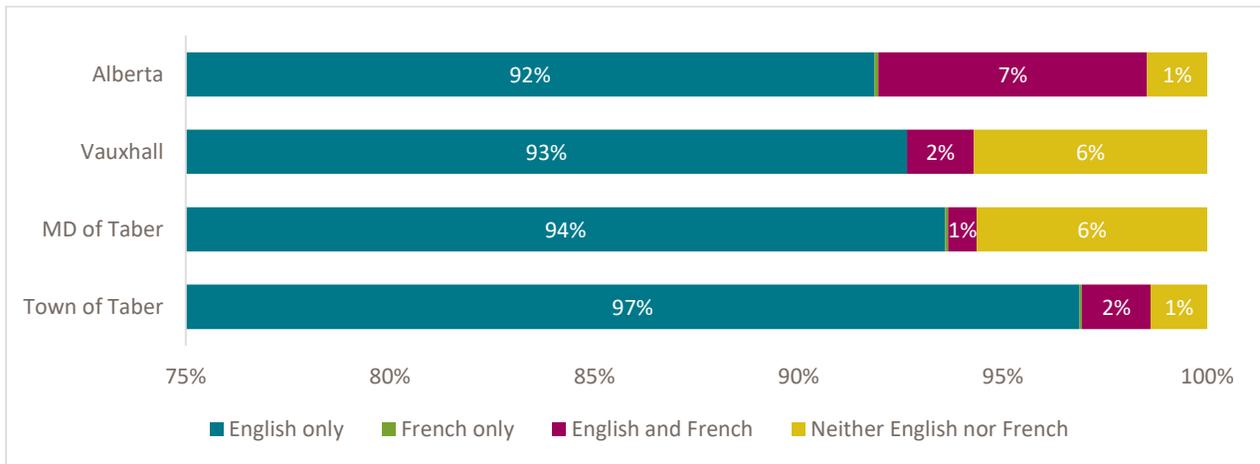
Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 Census Profiles.



### Knowledge of Official Languages

In comparison to the Alberta population, the Vauxhall and MD of Taber boast a larger population in that speak neither French or English. This is due to the high concentration of Mennonites who speak a dialect of German, as demonstrated in Figure 18.

**Figure 17: Knowledge of Official Languages, 2016**



Source: 2016 Census Profile.

**Figure 18: Knowledge of Languages, 2016**

Languages	Town of Taber	MD of Taber	Vauxhall	Alberta
Total Population	8,220	6,490	1,220	3,978,145
Germanic languages	1,550	3,455	695	112,670

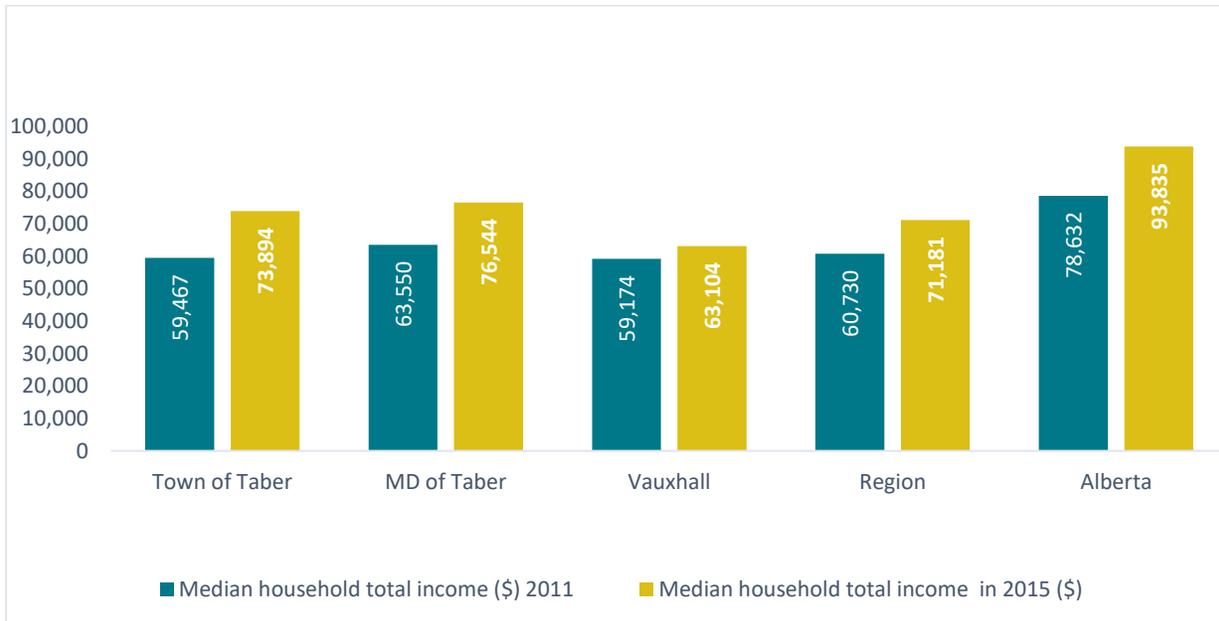
Source: 2016 Census Profile.

### Household Income

As shown in Figure 19, median household incomes continue to rise across Alberta, and the Taber region echoes this trend. For external investors, high incomes can represent a potential barrier to investing in a community because of concerns over increased labour force costs. Though not measurable in concrete numbers, some additional consideration must be given to the relative cost of private sector labour, at least from a qualitative perspective. Business visitation surveys could help to gain estimates of labour force costs, which could be used for investment attraction datasets or marketing materials. These would serve as a counter-weight to other considerations such as household income.



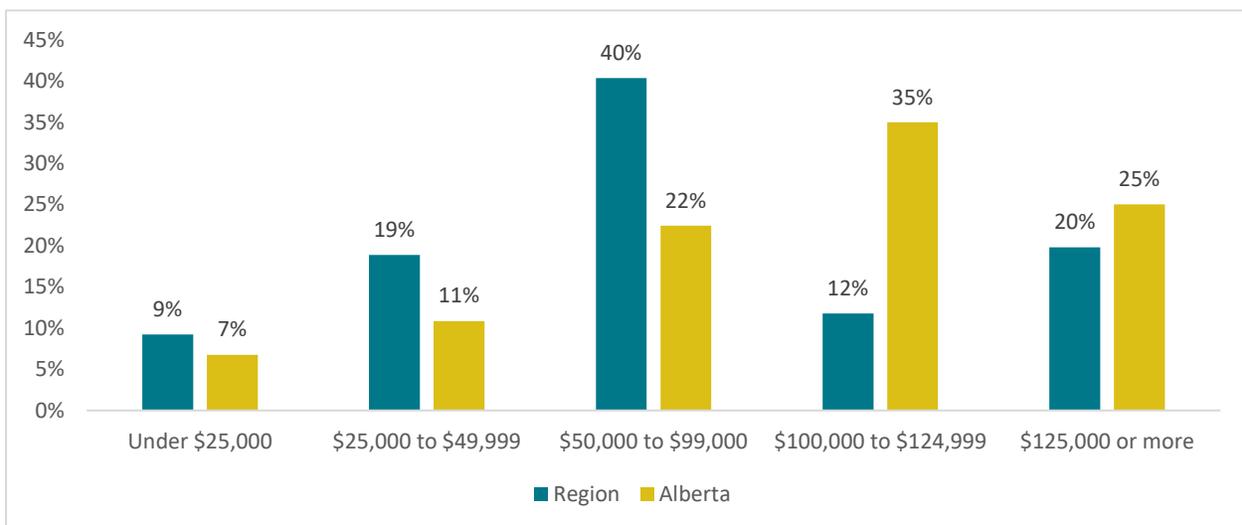
**Figure 19: Median Household Income, 2011 & 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada: 2016 Census Profile, 2011 National Household Survey.

Figure 20 illustrates that the Taber region has a lower concentration of higher income households earning \$100,000 or greater than the overall province, and the region has the largest proportion of households earning between \$50,000 and \$99,000; nearly double the proportion of Alberta overall.

**Figure 20: Income of Households aged 15 years and over, 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census Profile.

## Cost of Living and Characteristics



Figure 21 illustrates that Vauxhall has the lowest median value of dwellings and monthly shelter costs (\$219,449 and \$790, respectively), which may be an advantage to the community when trying to attract new residents. All communities have lower costs than the Provincial median, which is important in resident attraction. From a labour force perspective, having affordable accommodations, be they for purchase or rent, can help to attract talent to a region, particularly if combined with other considerations.

**Figure 21: Median Dwelling Value and Rent Cost (per month), 2011 & 2016**

Category	Town of Taber	MD of Taber	Vauxhall	Alberta
Median value of dwellings 2011	\$239,826	\$250,358	\$160,357	\$349,684
Median value of dwellings 2016	\$250,464	\$321,317	\$219,449	\$400,104
Median monthly shelter costs for rented dwellings 2011	\$820	\$821	\$775	\$1,017
Median monthly shelter costs for rented dwellings 2016	\$882	\$851	\$790	\$1,243

Source: Statistics Canada, National Household Survey 2011, Statistics Canada 2016 Census Profile.

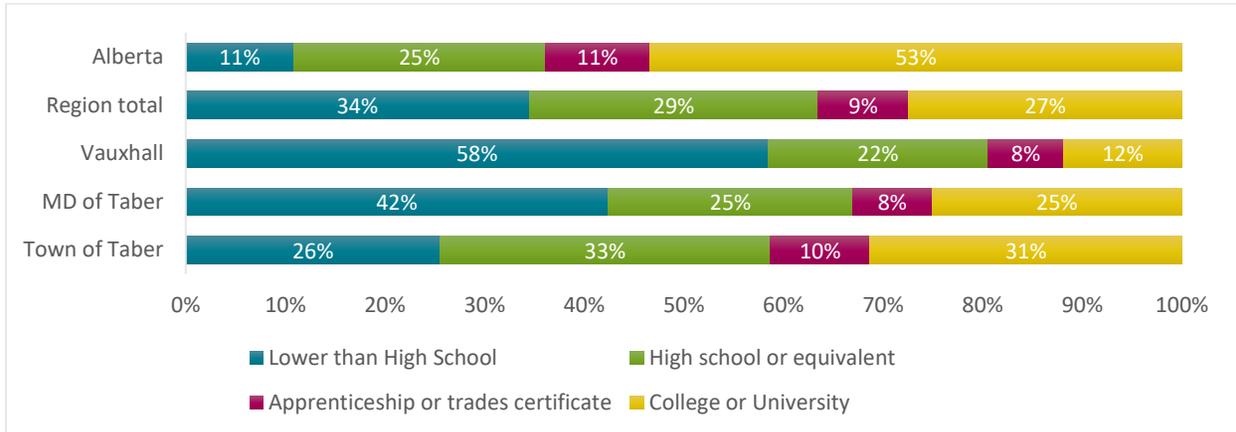
### Educational Profile

An educational profile is an important socioeconomic indicator as it reveals a community’s ability to staff new and existing businesses. For the purposes of this profile, the total population aged 25 to 64 years old was examined in relation to the highest certificate, diploma or degree they have obtained. **As shown in the following figure, in 2016 there is a greater proportion of the population in comparison to the Province who have less than a high school education and less than a College or University Education. In particular, Vauxhall has a 25 to 65-year-old population in which more than half (58%) have less than a high school education, while MD of Taber has almost half (42%) without a completed high school education.**

The region is faced with a possible challenge in attracting investment that relies on a skilled labour force. Also, as noted, existing or new businesses that would require talent may not be able to find it locally. A potential driver of this outcome is brain-drain, which is the out-migration of young adults for post-secondary education that do not return to the region they are originally from.



**Figure 22: Population aged 25 to 64 years old by educational attainment, 2016**



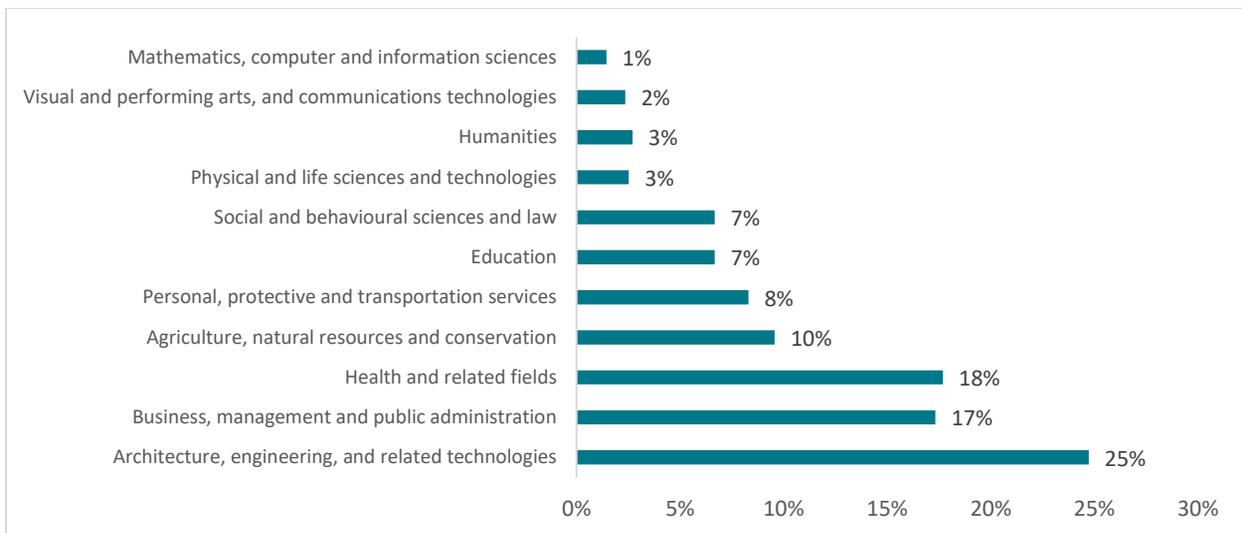
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile.

For people in the Taber Region that have completed post-secondary education, the figure below outlines their fields of study. The top three education categories are:

- Architecture; engineering; and related technologies
- Business, management and public administration
- Health and related fields

Notable is that 25% (685 people) have a technical education related to architecture, engineering or similar, which could be positive for investment attraction.

**Figure 23: Field of Study for Post-Secondary Education Graduates, 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile.

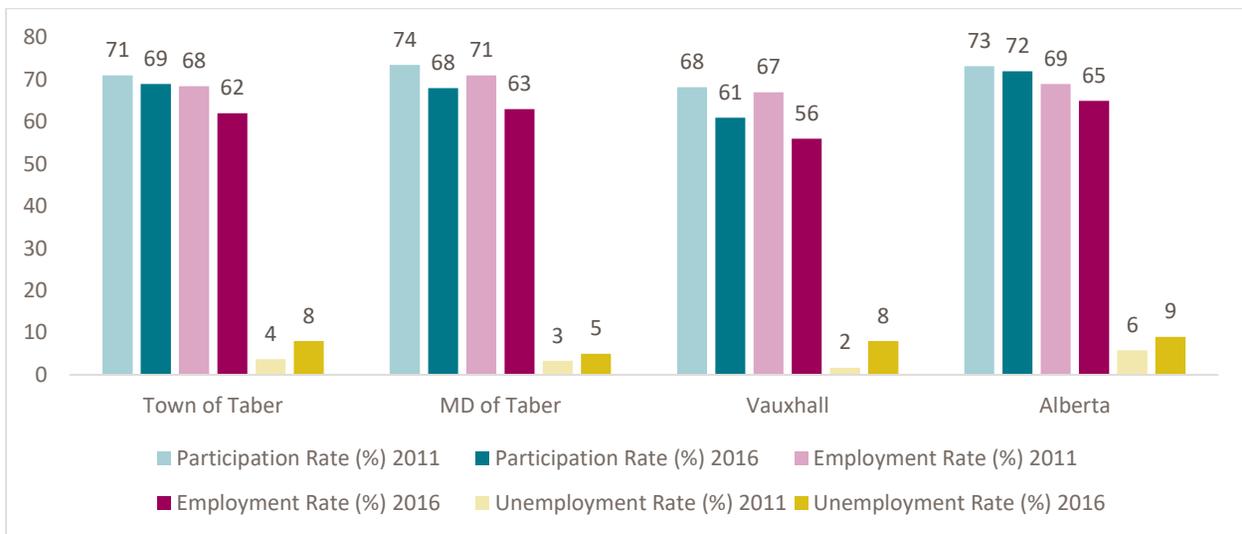


## Labour Force

### Unemployment Rate

As shown in Figure 24, the Taber region's unemployment rate<sup>15</sup> has remained on par in comparison to the Province, with the exception of MD of Taber, whose rate was lower at 5%. Across the region there has been a trend of declining participation rates ranging between 2% and 7%.

**Figure 24: Participation, Employment, and Unemployment Rates in Percent, 2006 & 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile

### Labour Force by Industry Sector

For 2016, 21% of employment in the Taber Region was associated with agriculture, followed by manufacturing (10%) and retail trade (10%). Construction and health care and social services are also large employers.

<sup>15</sup> Important definitions from Statistics Canada:

**Participation Rate:** "Total labour force expressed as a percentage of the population aged 15 years and over." A high participation rate means more people in the community are actively engaged in either working or looking for work.

**Employment Rate:** "Number of employed persons expressed as a percentage of the population 15 years of age and over." High employment percentages suggest a strong performance of the community.

**Unemployment Rate:** "Number of unemployed persons expressed as a percentage of the labour force." High unemployment suggests a high proportion of people actively seeking or capable of working, but who are not.



**Figure 25: Total labour force population aged 15 years to 64 by industry, 2016, Taber Region**

Total - Industry - North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) 2012	Absolute	%
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	1,640	21%
21 Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	445	6%
22 Utilities	70	1%
23 Construction	585	7%
31-33 Manufacturing	820	10%
41 Wholesale trade	290	4%
44-45 Retail trade	775	10%
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	445	6%
51 Information and cultural industries	55	1%
52 Finance and insurance	105	1%
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	40	1%
54 Professional, scientific and technical services	225	3%
55 Management of companies and enterprises	10	0%
56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	195	2%
61 Educational services	415	5%
62 Health care and social assistance	515	7%
71 Arts, entertainment and recreation	55	1%
72 Accommodation and food services	485	6%
81 Other services (except public administration)	430	5%
91 Public administration	235	3%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile

Looking more specifically at the competitiveness of each community relative to the equivalent provincial distribution for each industry, the figure below presents the results of a location quotient analysis. This kind of analysis allows for the identification of industries that are export-oriented (also known as “base” industries). A score of 1.25 or greater represents a sector that is export-oriented, which means that the sector brings money from outside of the community into the area. A score ranging between 0.75 and 1.24 represents an industry that is on par with the provincial average, indicating it is mainly catering to the local economy, but could have the potential of growing into an export-oriented industry. Finally, an industry that has a score below 0.75 represents an area where the sector is considered to be relatively weak. These scores have been tracked for 2011 and 2016, to understand if a sector is growing or shrinking in competitiveness.

According to Figure 26 below, the following insights have emerged:

- All three communities are strong in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (most predominantly the agriculture sub-sector), and all three communities have grown in their competitiveness. Strongest



among the three communities is the MD of Taber, which is largely rural and has grown from a score of 12.08 to 15.40. That means for every one agriculture related employee that one would normally find in the province, MD of Taber has 15 people working in the sector. Strong LQ results also mean that there is a greater likelihood of multiplier effects, whereby the strength of the industry, such as agriculture, produces other jobs in related industries such as agri-food manufacturing, transportation, and wholesale trade.

- For mining, quarrying, oil and gas extraction (largely oil and gas related), the MD of Taber had been moderately competitive in 2011, but growth in the sector in other parts of the province has likely resulted in a decline in local competitiveness, with MD of Taber shifting from a place of strength in 2011 at 1.35 to weakness in 0.58.
- Manufacturing is strong in Town of Taber and Town of Vauxhall, with very modest decline in Taber and notable growth in competitiveness in Vauxhall. Sub-sectors that are likely driving competitiveness in the sector likely relate to agricultural product processing and manufacturing, which may help the region leverage its position within the Protein Supercluster efforts. MD of Taber is on par with the province, but slipping; indicating a need to prevent further slippage via value-added agricultural processing. For examples, some farms, depending on the municipal zoning restrictions, allow for soybean oil processing on farm lands or bioethanol production, which are subsets of manufacturing but used in the farming context.
- Also growing in Vauxhall is competitiveness in transportation and warehousing, which is a critical component of supply-chain development, and information and cultural industries, which relates to such sectors as telecommunications, radio-television-film production, and some creative economy components associated with writers, composers, etc. Vauxhall has also been strong in educational services, though its competitiveness has declined between 2011 and 2016.
- Finally, both Town of Taber and Town of Vauxhall are competitive in other services, which are a catch-all title for population-oriented services (e.g. beauty salons, pet groomers, auto-repair, etc.), associations, churches, and other related categories.



Figure 26: Location Quotient Analysis, 2011 and 2016

Total - Industry - North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) 2012	Town of Taber		MD of Taber		Vauxhall	
	2011	2016	2011	2016	2011	2016
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	1.49	2.00	12.08	15.40	4.83	6.12
21 Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	1.00	1.16	1.35	0.58	0.68	0.61
22 Utilities	1.52	0.96	0.79	0.34	1.68	3.97
23 Construction	0.87	0.73	0.74	0.67	1.23	0.83
31-33 Manufacturing	2.50	2.44	1.21	0.98	1.20	2.05
41 Wholesale trade	1.21	1.23	0.74	0.94	0.62	0.00
44-45 Retail trade	0.85	1.18	0.91	0.50	1.29	0.78
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	0.78	1.14	0.89	1.05	0.71	1.32
51 Information and cultural industries	0.74	0.48	0.68	0.34	0.00	1.32
52 Finance and insurance	1.08	0.38	0.30	0.44	5.11	0.94
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	0.42	0.32	0.00	0.27	0.00	0.00
54 Professional, scientific and technical services	0.34	0.48	0.28	0.25	0.00	0.39
55 Management of companies and enterprises	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.36	0.00	0.00
56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	0.46	0.66	0.48	0.65	0.00	0.50
61 Educational services	1.13	0.87	0.88	0.64	1.70	1.33
62 Health care and social assistance	0.80	0.74	0.29	0.48	0.00	0.27
71 Arts, entertainment and recreation	0.60	0.35	0.00	0.42	0.00	0.00
72 Accommodation and food services	1.14	1.19	0.30	0.52	0.44	0.85
81 Other services (except public administration)	1.65	1.43	0.75	0.68	2.01	1.85
91 Public administration	0.78	0.68	0.49	0.34	0.00	0.71

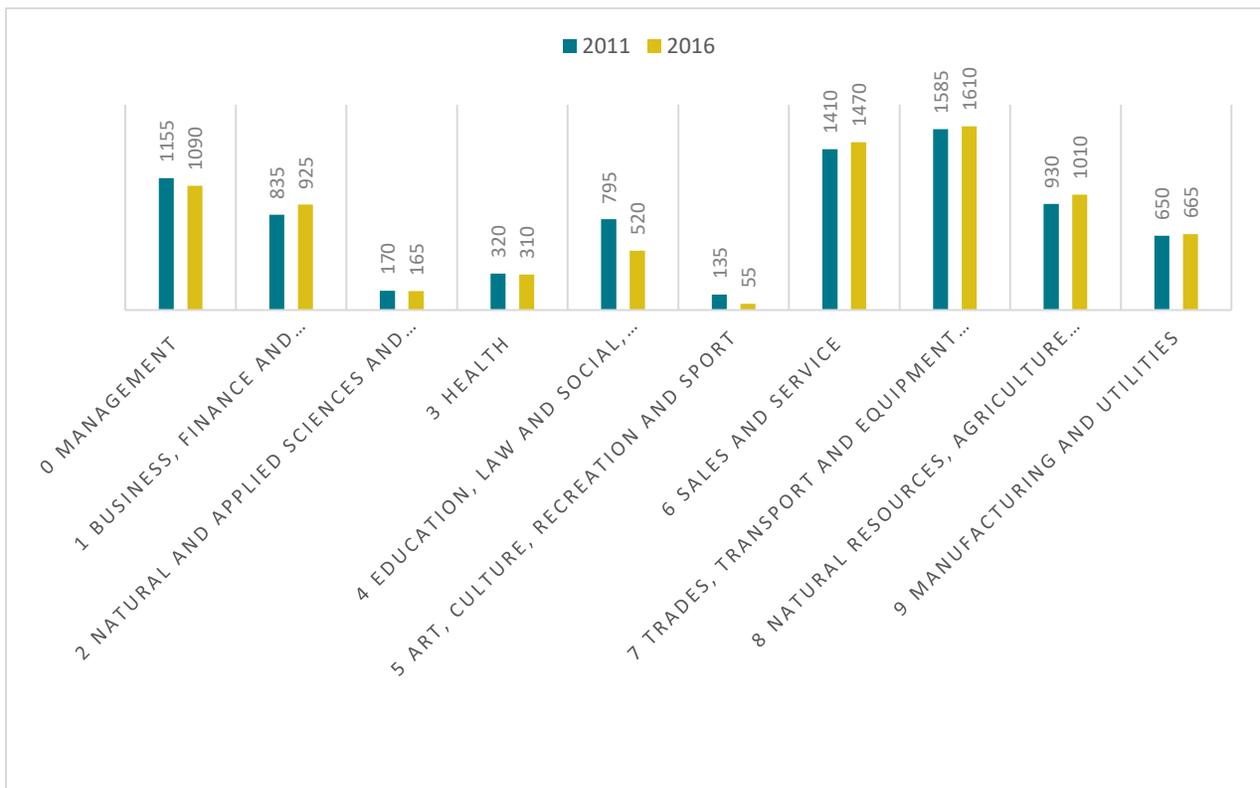
Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profile, 2016.



### Labour Force by Occupational Classification

Figure 27 shows the occupation category distributions according to National Occupation Classification (NOC). Education, law and social, community and government services has seen a reduction in 275 people. Management positions have a reduction in 65 people. Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport has seen a reduction in 65 people. The other occupations are either holding their own or increasing.

**Figure 27: Total labour force population aged 15 years and over by occupation in Taber Region, 2011 + 2016**



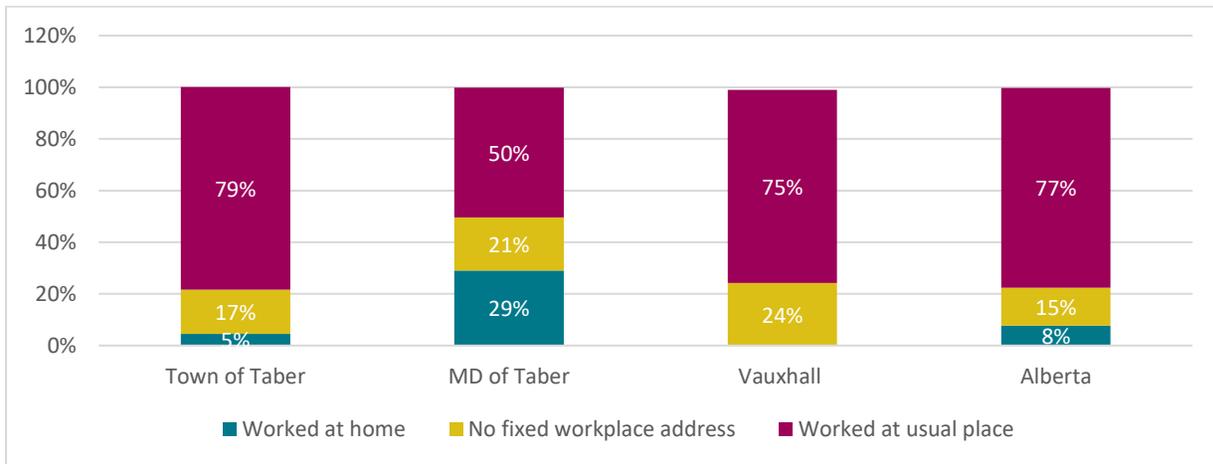
Source: Statistics Canada. National Household Survey, 2011; Census Profile, 2016



### Place of Work Status

In looking at place of work status for the Taber region, results indicate there is considerable uniformity between comparators. Notably, 24% of residents in the MD of Taber work at home; this may be due to the agriculture sector.

**Figure 28: Total employed population aged 15 years and over by place of work status, 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada. Census Profile, 2016.

### Commuting Patterns

Figure 29 highlights where the working population of each community is travelling to for work as well as the net difference of commuters coming to a community for work versus leaving it for work. For Town of Taber most people stay in the community for work, whereas for MD of Taber and Vauxhall larger proportions commute to another municipality, usually within the same census division which is Census Division 2. MD of Taber also has a larger number of people leaving the community for work than coming to it for work (-145), whereas the Town of Taber and Vauxhall, which are more urban, are seen to attract more commuters from outside of their respective municipalities.

**Figure 29: Commuter Flows to Normal Place of Work, 2016**

Category	Town of Taber	MD of Taber	Vauxhall
Commute within census subdivision (CSD) of residence	75%	32%	45%
Commute to a different census subdivision (CSD) within census division (CD) of residence	23%	61%	48%
Commute to a different census subdivision (CSD) and census division (CD) within province or territory of residence	2%	8%	7%
Commute to a different province or territory	0%	0%	0%
Net Difference in Residents Leaving versus Coming	+450	-145	+25

Source: Statistics Canada - 2016 Census. Catalogue Number 98-400-X2016325.

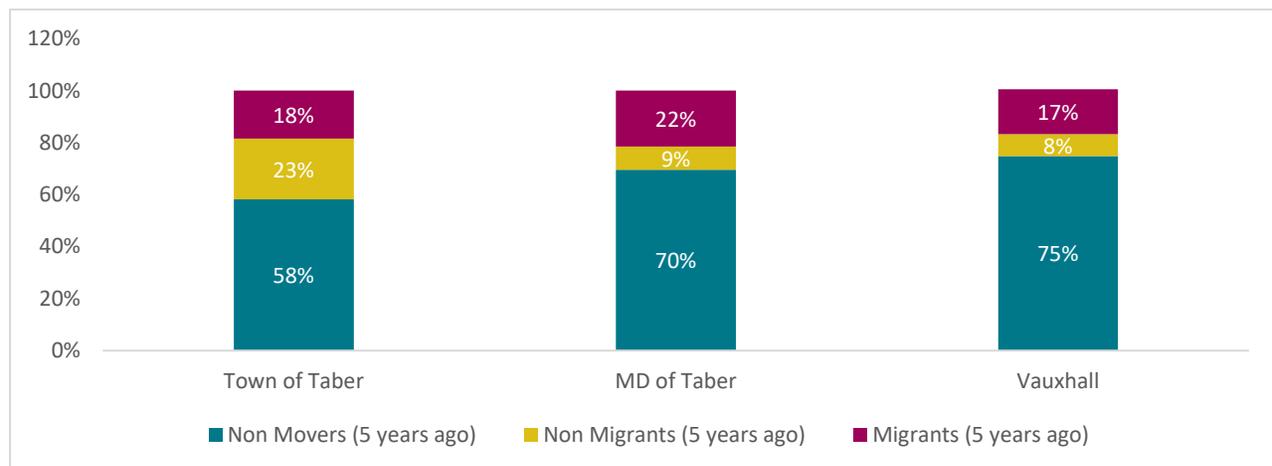


## Mobility Status

The mobility status of residents was examined to determine the level of new residents that the communities were able to attract between 2011 and 2016. Figure 30 shows the proportion of non-movers (those who have not moved since the last census), non-migrants (those who have moved but remained in the same municipality since the last census), and migrants (those who have moved from a different municipality since the last census).

The number of people staying within the municipality or not moved is relatively consistent, ranging between 78% and 83% collectively. Notably, MD of Taber has seen the largest proportion of new residents from outside the community.

**Figure 30: Mobility Status over the Last Five Years, 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profile, 2016.

## Canadian Business Counts

Statistics Canada’s Canadian Business Counts provides a record of business establishments by industry sector and size. This data is collected from the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA).

The Canadian Business Counts data records business counts as either “Without Employees” or “With Employees.” The establishments in the “Without Employees” category include the self-employed (i.e. those who do not maintain an employee payroll, but may have a workforce consisting of contracted workers, family members or business owners). It should be noted that the Canadian Business Counts data is compiled by Industry Canada based on data from the Canada Revenue Agency as a primary resource in establishment counts; therefore, businesses without a business number or indicating annual sales less than \$30,000 are not included. Being an enterprise without employees does not necessarily mean that there are no contract workers working for an employer, which is often the case in sectors such as construction.

For this section, only the Town of Taber and MD of Taber have been studied, because the business population in Vauxhall is not well recorded in Canadian Business Counts. Statistics Canada advises that



business counts should not be studied comparatively over multiple time periods, instead insisting that each release should be treated as a static snap-shot of the most recent distribution of enterprises.

As of December 2017, Town of Taber had 1,255 classified enterprises, of which 883 were without employees and 427 were businesses with employees. The majority of enterprises with employees in Taber are small, having between 1 to 4 employees (235 total). However, the town has 14 enterprises employ between 50 and 99 people, and another seven employing more than 100 people.

Sectors where there are notable numbers of enterprises employing more than 50 people include agriculture, manufacturing and transportation and warehousing.

**Figure 31: Canadian Business Counts for Town of Taber, 2017**

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)	Total	Without Employees	With Employees	1-4	5-9	10-19	20-49	50-99	100+
Sub-total, classified	1,355	883	472	235	100	73	43	14	7
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	171	142	29	12	3	5	6	3	0
Mining and oil and gas extraction	80	45	35	26	4	4	1	0	0
Utilities	4	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Construction	158	95	63	35	14	7	6	1	0
Manufacturing	21	8	13	1	3	2	4	1	2
Wholesale trade	46	16	30	7	10	8	5	0	0
Retail trade	69	23	46	11	16	11	6	2	0
Transportation and warehousing	125	86	39	24	5	3	4	3	0
Information and cultural industries	4	1	3	0	3	0	0	0	0
Finance and insurance	59	48	11	4	3	4	0	0	0
Real estate and rental and leasing	218	200	18	14	2	1	0	0	1
Professional, scientific and technical services	108	65	43	33	6	3	1	0	0
Management of companies and enterprises	12	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	47	32	15	9	3	2	1	0	0
Educational services	14	6	8	2	2	2	1	0	1
Health care and social assistance	54	26	28	15	3	5	2	2	1
Arts, entertainment and recreation	9	6	3	2	0	0	1	0	0
Accommodation and food services	34	6	28	7	7	10	3	1	0
Other services (except public administration)	119	63	56	32	16	5	2	1	0
Public administration	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2

Source: Canadian Business Counts, December 2017.



For the MD of Taber, there was a total of 1,277 enterprises in December 2017, of which 943 had no employees and 334 had employees. Similar to the Town of Taber, the MD is characterized largely by micro-sized businesses (i.e. businesses employing fewer than five people); however, almost all business is contained within the agriculture sector, where there are 21 enterprises that employ at least 20 people. According to Canadian Business Counts, there are no businesses in MD of Taber employing more than 100 people, but a ground-truthing exercise with the community find there is in fact one manufacturer that employs over 200 people. The table has been updated to reflect this new finding. All other results reflect those from Statistics Canada.

**Figure 32: Canadian Business Counts, Municipal District of Taber, 2017**

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)	Total	Without Employees	With Employees	1-4	5-9	10-19	20-49	50-99	100+
Sub-total, classified	1,277	943	334	228	50	35	17	4	0
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	650	500	150	104	20	11	12	3	0
Mining and oil and gas extraction	32	19	13	10	3	0	0	0	0
Utilities	5	4	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Construction	111	70	41	25	8	8	0	0	0
Manufacturing	20	17	3	2	0	0	1	0	1
Wholesale trade	29	15	14	5	2	6	1	0	0
Retail trade	35	18	17	12	2	1	1	1	0
Transportation and warehousing	129	92	37	31	4	2	0	0	0
Information and cultural industries	4	1	3	2	1	0	0	0	0
Finance and insurance	24	21	3	1	1	1	0	0	0
Real estate and rental and leasing	110	104	6	6	0	0	0	0	0
Professional, scientific and technical services	29	20	9	7	2	0	0	0	0
Management of companies and enterprises	3	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	19	16	3	1	1	0	1	0	0
Educational services	4	2	2	0	0	2	0	0	0
Health care and social assistance	13	4	9	7	1	1	0	0	0
Arts, entertainment and recreation	6	5	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Accommodation and food services	11	6	5	2	2	1	0	0	0
Other services (except public administration)	41	27	14	11	3	0	0	0	0
Public administration	2	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0

Source: Canadian Business Counts, December 2017.



The next figure compares the distribution of business with employees for the Town of Taber and MD of Taber. The town's leading business categories are construction (13%), retail trade (10%), professional, scientific and technical services (9%), and transportation and warehousing (8%). Meanwhile, the District's leading business categories are dominated by agriculture (45%), as was suggested in the previous series of data above. Yet, the district also has a large proportion of construction firms (12%) and is even stronger than the town in transportation and warehousing (11%); again, reflecting the strength of the agriculture value chain.

**Figure 33: Proportion of Businesses According to North American Industry Classification System, 2017**

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)	Town of Taber	MD of Taber
Agriculture	6%	45%
Mining and oil and gas extraction	7%	4%
Utilities	0.2%	0.3%
Construction	13%	12%
Manufacturing	3%	1%
Wholesale trade	6%	4%
Retail trade	10%	5%
Transportation and warehousing	8%	11%
Information and cultural industries	1%	1%
Finance and insurance	2%	1%
Real estate and rental and leasing	4%	2%
Professional, scientific and technical services	9%	3%
Management of companies and enterprises	0%	0%
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	3%	1%
Educational services	2%	1%
Health care and social assistance	6%	3%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1%	0.3%
Accommodation and food services	6%	1%
Other services (except public administration)	12%	4%
Public administration	0%	1%

Source: Canadian Business Counts, December 2017, Businesses with Employees.

A final exercise applied to the Canadian Business Counts data is a location quotient analysis. While in an earlier section a location quotient analysis was applied to the labour force in the region, in this context it is comparing the proportion of businesses in a given category against the proportion of businesses in the same category at the provincial level. Categories with 1.25 or greater represent strong concentrations of businesses, while those between 0.75 and 1.25 are considered on-par with the province, and lower than 0.75 are considered non-competitive. This series does not study a trend over time. LQs were tracked for enterprises with and without employees.

Focusing primarily on businesses with employees, the Town of Taber has strong concentrations of businesses in mining and oil and gas extraction (3.16). Other sectors of strength include accommodation and food services (5.13), wholesale trade (4.34), and retail trade (2.85), with moderate strength also found in utilities, transportation and warehousing, educational services and other services. While Public Administration is strong, these enterprises are government corporations, such as municipalities or



offices of more senior levels of government.

The MD of Taber has highly competitive agricultural concentrations, complimented by transportation and warehousing (1.93) and utilities (1.49). It is clear that both the town and district play important roles in servicing a well-defined agricultural value chain and cluster.

**Figure 34: Canadian Business Counts Location Quotient Analysis, 2017**

North American Industry Classification System	Town of Taber		MD of Taber	
	Without Employees	With Employees	Without Employees	With Employees
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	1.46	0.56	4.80	12.25
Mining and oil and gas extraction	2.17	3.16	0.86	1.21
Utilities	2.86	1.78	3.57	1.49
Construction	0.89	1.10	0.61	0.88
Manufacturing	0.72	2.19	1.43	0.30
Wholesale trade	1.24	4.34	1.09	0.95
Retail trade	0.76	2.85	0.56	0.49
Transportation and warehousing	1.65	1.40	1.65	1.93
Information and cultural industries	0.17	0.98	0.16	0.93
Finance and insurance	0.79	0.34	0.32	0.27
Real estate and rental and leasing	1.10	0.18	0.53	0.41
Professional, scientific and technical services	0.49	0.61	0.14	0.18
Management of companies and enterprises	1.33	0.00	0.21	0.47
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	0.98	0.86	0.46	0.19
Educational services	0.63	1.58	0.20	0.55
Health care and social assistance	0.61	1.23	0.09	0.32
Arts, entertainment and recreation	0.63	0.58	0.49	0.27
Accommodation and food services	0.59	5.13	0.55	0.25
Other services (except public administration)	1.16	1.93	0.47	0.45
Public administration	0.00	14.19	0.00	1.36

Source: Canadian Business Counts, December 2017.



## Economic Forecasts and Local Impacts of Market Trends

This section will review the Agri-tech/Agrifood, Cleantech and Tourism trends in Canada, and will assess their potential impact and opportunities they provide to rural Canada and specifically opportunities present in the Taber region of Alberta.

### Precision Agriculture

Agriculture is an important section of the economy in the Taber region, and the large-scale acreages are well poised to take advantage of new advanced and precision agriculture techniques. Precision agriculture is the practice of utilizing information technology to observe, measure and respond to inter and intra-field variability to manage crops. Precision agriculture includes tools such as GPS guidance, control systems, sensors, robotics, drones, autonomous vehicles, variable rate technology, GPS-based soil sampling, automated hardware, telematics and farm management software. This technological assistance helps farmers closely monitor crops over large areas, respond to variations in soil, apply pesticides, insecticides and fertilizers only where needed and forecast production based on facts and data.

Precision agriculture is a growth area in the global economy. As has been observed, “The Global Precision Farming Market was valued at USD 3.58 billion in 2017, and is expected to reach a value of USD 7.30 billion by 2023, at a CAGR of 12.61% over the forecast period, 2018-2023.”<sup>16</sup> With the world’s population expected to surpass 9 billion by 2050, the global demand for food will only increase, making agriculture in general a growth area. The market has huge growth potential in Canada and around the world.

As a rapidly evolving area, Western Canadian farmers have generally been adopting precision agriculture technologies and using it to increase full productive potential.<sup>17</sup> As the market experiences investment from tech companies and the offerings to farmers increase, a potential challenge that farmers may experience is an overload of information available and inability to decipher which technologies are the smartest investment.

The Government of Canada announced in 2018 the Canadian Agricultural Partnership federal-provincial-territorial investment of \$406-million in strategic programs and initiatives for the agricultural sector, among them are a slew of programs that would assist farmers in funding investments in innovation, efficiency and environmental stewardship. Activities under these projects are almost exclusively assistance investment in precision agriculture upgrades to increase efficiencies. There is government support from all levels of government for Alberta farmers to invest in precision agriculture.

Irrigation infrastructure is an incredibly important asset in the Taber region, and adopting advanced irrigation technologies and practices would help to conserve that system. Similarly, with such large acreages, Taber farmers would be able to apply fertilizers and pesticides with better precision, potentially minimizing run-off to irrigation systems.

Another benefit to Taber farmers in adopting advanced technologies is the need for less manual labour in

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<sup>16</sup>Global Precision Farming market Analysis, Growth, Trends and Forecasts 2018-2023. Researchandmarkets.com <<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20180516006430/en/Global-Precision-Farming-Market-Analysis-Growth-Trends>>

<sup>17</sup>Cross, Brian. “Precision ag evolving quickly.” November 2, 2017. <<https://www.producer.com/2017/11/precision-ag-evolving-quickly/>>



the field. As the Taber region experiences challenges retaining a farm labour workforce, technologies would decrease the need for bodies in the field.

While trends suggest that farmers in Alberta and the Taber region tend to be open to adopting precision agriculture practices, a potential challenge may be that the region's increasing Mennonite population may be resistant to the adoption and integration of technology into farming practices. Initial investment costs to digitizing farming practices can be quite high, and, while there are available supports, there may be hesitancy among some farmers, especially considering the overwhelming choices available to them.

### Clean Technology

Clean tech refers to a broad range of technologies and activities that increase operational performance and efficiency to the benefit of the environment. It is a term that includes everything from fuel efficient transportation solutions to green energy infrastructure.

Globally, the clean tech industry has experienced progressive growth since the early 2000s. Estimates are that the global market is worth over US\$ 1 trillion.<sup>18</sup> Canada has partaken in this global marketplace, though its international ranking in cleantech merchandise exports fell from 14<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> place from 2005 to 2014 – attributed to rise in international competitors and decline in government support during that period.<sup>19</sup>

Government initiatives signal that the federal government has prioritized spending in that area; the Canadian Government has put \$7.4 billion in spending to advance clean tech initiatives<sup>20</sup>, including assisting Canadian clean tech firms with scaling up to compete in the global clean tech marketplace.

The Alberta Government's carbon taxing initiatives may have caused increased costs for some Southern Alberta entrepreneurs, though it also signals an opportunity for investment into clean tech industries, particularly in the green energy sector. In 2018 the Alberta government pledged to invest \$5.3 billion to support a "diversified, lower carbon economy over the next three years." The Taber region is known for its long days and significant sunlight, an asset that makes a strong case for investment into solar energy projects. Similarly, the open fields and prairie winds lend themselves to wind power generation.

The presence of the oil and gas industry in Alberta is an asset that contains infrastructure that could transition easily to supporting the green energy sector. Fracking in Southern Alberta provides an opportunity for clean tech firm attraction because there has been progressive investment in wastewater cleaning technologies by Canadian firms. Businesses specializing in this area may grow or locate to the

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<sup>18</sup> Cote, Lynn. "How can Cleantech Canada compete for global market share?" October 17, 2017. Blog post. <<https://www.edc.ca/en/blog/cleantech-canada-growing-global-markets.html>>

<sup>19</sup> The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service. "Canada unveils clean-technology strategy." March 22, 2018. <<http://tradecommissioner.gc.ca/canadexport/0002802.aspx?lang=eng>>

<sup>20</sup> Invest Alberta. "Industry profile: Cleantech" Accessed October 2, 2018. <<https://investalberta.ca/industry-profiles/cleantech/>>



Region to support the local oil and gas industry in its inevitable next upswing.<sup>21</sup>

## Tourism

Canada is increasingly a tourism destination for international travelers, who come seeking out genuine, outdoor and natural experiences<sup>2223</sup>. Tourists to Canada are predominantly motivated by experiences that enhance local scenery.<sup>24</sup> Alberta's opportunity market is centred on cross-border US tourists and local tourism from the urban centres in Lethbridge, Calgary and Medicine Hat. There is global growth in culinary tourism, and while Canada is not yet known for its culinary tourism offerings, it has potential to position itself as a "frontier" for local food experiences. Canada's culinary tourism brand centres on its farm grown, rustic offerings, a brand that Taber is well positioned to take advantage of, especially in areas such as Vauxhall and its traditionalist segment of the population. US travelers to Canada tend to be pleasantly surprised by the culinary offerings in Canada, especially as it is generally not their first motive for travel to the country.

As an agricultural hub, the Taber region is well positioned to develop its culinary tourism offerings. Taber is regionally known for its corn crops and its annual Corn Fest event. The Taber region could take advantage of growing interest in urban-rural tourism.

Farm-based rural tourism often includes farm tours, country fairs, agricultural festivals and special events and agricultural travel routes. By developing agriculturally based tourism products and experiences, Taber can take advantage of the segment of the tourism market that seeks-out genuine, grassroots experiences and inject local tourism dollars from the surrounding urban centres, as well as from cross-border US tourists.

Sports tourism is another fast-growing segment of the Canadian economy. Sports tourism in Canada surpassed \$6.5 billion in spending in 2015, according to the Travel Survey of Residents of Canada and the International Travel Survey, with the largest source of that spending being the domestic market (72%).<sup>25</sup> This suggests that Canadians will travel locally and regionally for sports tourism experiences.

The Taber region holds a unique opportunity in this area with the Vauxhall Baseball Academy. Interest could be generated in surrounding urban areas for attending games at the state-of-the-art stadium.

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<sup>21</sup> Woody, Todd. "Clean tech entrepreneurs look to cash in on fracking boom." April 25, 2013. <<https://qz.com/78413/clean-tech-entrepreneurs-look-to-cash-in-on-fracking-boom/>>

<sup>22</sup> Roberto, Rocha. "Why Canada's tourism industry is finally heating up again." June 18, 2018. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/travel-canada-numbers-1.4682484>

<sup>23</sup> Destination Canada. Global Tourism Watch: Canada, US, China, Japan, Australia, UK. 2017. <<https://www.destinationcanada.com/en/global-tourism-watch>>

<sup>24</sup> Destination Canada. "Canada Culinary Positioning Research – US Travellers" <[https://www.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/archive/733-Canada%20Culinary%20Positioning%20Research%20-%20US%20Travellers/Culinary\\_research\\_US\\_EN\\_0.pdf](https://www.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/archive/733-Canada%20Culinary%20Positioning%20Research%20-%20US%20Travellers/Culinary_research_US_EN_0.pdf)>

<sup>25</sup> Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance. "Sport Tourism surges past \$6.5 billion annually." March 2, 2017. <<https://canadiansporttourism.com/news/sport-tourism-surges-past-65-billion-annually.html>>



## Commercial Gap Analysis

### Summary of Findings

A population-oriented commercial gap analysis (gap analysis) was conducted for the Town of Taber, and included comparisons to MD of Taber under the light of Provincial business count averages (Alberta). The gap analysis juxtaposes the theoretical number of population-oriented businesses against the actual amount of businesses in the same category to determine if there are sufficient businesses relative to the size of the population.

The gap analysis identifies areas where possibilities for future development may exist. It does not represent a conclusive assessment, but instead something that should be combined with other considerations such as ground-truthing, square-footages of existing occupied space, and the awareness of potential threats such as online competition.

A gap is defined by a theoretical underrepresentation in a given North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) industry sub-sector, relative to what the per-capita population can theoretically be expected to support. The analysis uses data from Statistics Canada's Census Profiles (2016) and Canadian Business Counts (2017). Population size has been corrected for 2017 based on annual growth rates. Taber is compared to MD of Taber because of geographic proximity and consequential economic leakage. Scores of -1.0 or lower (e.g. -2.0, -3.0, etc.) represent how many businesses are missing, while scores that are positive numbers (e.g. 1, 2, 3, etc.) represent how many businesses the sector is overrepresented by. The analysis used 4-digit NAICS codes and only tracked businesses with employees. Businesses without employees were not included.

### Key Gap Analysis Findings

- A commercial gap analysis reveals that Taber is in alignment with provincial average count for most retail businesses, notably 'full service restaurants' and office of physicians that exceed the average count by 11 and 7 units respectively.
- Health and personal care stores (i.e., pharmacies, etc.) are identified as being underserved in Taber and MD of Taber (-3.1 and -3.1 respectively); notice that both town and MD of Taber lack an average of 3 business units in this sector (Figure 36 NAICS code 4461).
- Comparison retail such as shoes and accessories are theoretically under-supplied (shoes is -0.7; jewellery, luggage and leather goods stores are -1.5). There may be room to build more clusters in the sector, but caution is needed as online retail continues to grow into comparison shopping categories. Niche retailers that work together as a cluster have a stronger opportunity in this space, and can also potentially benefit from both local and online retail if they embrace online sales platforms. Niche means specialty or rare goods that people are willing to pay a premium for because of their qualities.
- The town and MD both theoretically have room for more real estate agents and brokers (-1.7 and -1.2, respectively), and the sector is one of the few that is actually aided by online content, which helps to draw potential investors.



## Background and Methodology

A population-oriented commercial retail and service gap analysis (gap analysis) was conducted for the Town of Taber and included comparisons to the MD of Taber. The gap analysis juxtaposes the theoretical number of population-oriented businesses against the actual amount of businesses in the same category to determine if there are sufficient businesses relative to the size of the population.

Using a population base from the 2016 Census, the annual growth rate from the 2011 to 2016 census period was used to calculate the estimated 2017 populations for Town of Taber and MD of Taber. The 2017 population is used to obtain a per-capita estimate of how many businesses in a given four-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) subsector can be supported by the local population. The per-capita estimate of businesses for each community is referred to as the theoretical capacity. By comparing the actual amount of businesses in each NAICS category to the theoretical capacity the gap is identified. Gaps are labeled as Capacity (+/-), where negative values represent an under-representation of businesses in the sector, relative to what the population can theoretically support. A positive value means that the sector has an over-representation. The analysis has focussed exclusively on businesses that have one or more employees and therefore excludes sole-proprietorships.

Gaps are tracked on a one-to-one basis, meaning that a category with a score of +/- 1 represents a gap or surplus of one business for the sector. Meanwhile, a score of +/-3 represents a gap or surplus of three businesses, and so forth. A score of zero (0) means the ideal number of businesses relative to the category size already exists for the community. Gaps are presented in numbers rounded to one decimal place. As an example, the *Speciality food store* sector has a theoretical capacity of 2.1 retailers in that category, but does not have any such retailers; meaning, Taber is under-capacity by -2.1 businesses, or approximately 2 businesses.

Comparisons were made to the MD of Taber because this community represents the most likely sources of economic leakage due to people purchasing goods or services outside of the community.

### Type of Audience

Different kinds of population-oriented businesses have different kinds of audiences. These are typically classified as destination-oriented, comparison-oriented, or convenience oriented. Destination-oriented businesses rely on patrons from broader geography, often beyond the actual community. They are often sought specifically for the good or service they offer, which is typically a higher-order good or service (i.e., something people are willing to spend larger amounts of money on). Examples of destination-oriented businesses are automotive dealers, gambling industries, and traveler accommodations.

Comparison-oriented businesses have clients that are interested in comparing similar products or brands. A cluster of comparison businesses could produce a destination as well, but the main audience is normally local, with some exceptions for specific niches within clothing and accessory retail, specialty goods, and upscale restaurants. Examples of comparison businesses are electronics and appliance stores, clothing and other accessory stores, legal and accounting services, and offices of dentist.

Finally, convenience-oriented businesses rely on people that are in the area or passing by as their key audience. Examples are health and personal care stores (i.e., pharmacies), grocery stores, corner-stores or gas stations, and personal and household good repair and maintenance.



## Limitations of the Analysis

The commercial gap analysis represents a theoretical model based on mathematics and does not account for the possibility of anomalies or a definite conclusion relative to investment opportunities. Instead, it must be treated as one of several tools used to help understand where growth potential possibly exists in the town and MD.

Because the model uses Statistics Canada's Canadian Business Counts, it is being based on businesses that have indicated they are in a particular industry through declarations made to the Canada Revenue Agency. There is a possibility that the actual number of businesses is not exactly the same in Canadian Business Counts as in other business directories, primarily because:

- Some businesses in Canadian Business Counts are unclassified
- Only businesses that generate more than \$30,000 per year are compelled to make declarations to the Canada Revenue Agency
- Many home-based businesses may not, for various reasons, be incorporated

Therefore, the results of the analysis are a starting point for deeper opportunity investigation rather than conclusive evidence of specific opportunities.

## Key Findings of Commercial Gap Analysis

### General Retail

A commercial per capita analysis of general retail business reveals that Taber is in alignment with the provincial average in several areas (i.e., current capacity > -0.8). This includes home furnishing and furniture (-0.3), electronics and appliance (-0.6), clothing (0.2) and sporting goods (-0.5), *numbers in bracket represent gap or surplus compared to the provincial average*

In addition, some businesses in Taber retail sector exceed the expected average count, notably grocery stores (3.0), other merchandise stores (3.7) and automotive dealerships (3.3). An oversupply of automotive dealerships in the town of Taber is likely attracting residents from the MD which is under-supplied in this subsector (automotive dealerships -1.5). Health and personal care stores (i.e., pharmacies, etc.) are identified as being underserved in Taber and MD of Taber (-3.1 and -3.1 respectively). Notice that both the town and MD lack an average of 3 business units in this sector (*fig 1 NAIC code 4461*). According to industry coding schema, this sector includes drug stores and pharmacies, cosmetics, beauty supplies, and perfume stores, optical goods stores, food (health) supplement stores and health appliance stores.

Comparison of retail such as jewelry, luggage, and leather accessories are also under-supplied (town -1.5 and MD -1.2). There may be room to build a business unit in the sector, but caution is needed as the proliferation of online retail may have an impact on business performance.

A possible solution is to combine some elements of convenience associated with these different retail options with other strong retail or people-oriented services, such as a café that sells some music accessories, or a vintage thrift store that also sells select hobby items. In other words, expanding the value proposition of some other form of retail or service to include aspects of these may fill local demands, while placing a less direct strain on a specific kind of retail. Thrift stores (categorized as used merchandise



stores) are under-represented in Taber (-0.7) and in MD of Taber as well (-0.6). Please note that the capacity numbers for 'used merchandise stores' are higher than the threshold of (-0.8) as described in the previous section but the absence of these facilities (0) based on 2017 business count may suggest an opportunity of exploring its merit in the community.

### Professional Services for Residents

Taber and MD of Taber both have an underrepresentation of personal care services (-1.5 and -3.8 respectively). An example of personal care services may include hair care and esthetic services, massage services, diet counseling services, and ear-piercing services, etc.

Health-care related services as a cluster include various specific sectors, some of which are more sales-oriented and others of which are more service oriented. A substantial presence of families and working aged people suggest a higher demand for health care services, but it is noted that both dental offices and offices of 'other health practitioners' (e.g., chiropractors, physio/occupational/speech therapists, etc.) are over-supplied in Taber town. This over-supply seems to be balanced by an under-representation of such facilities in the MD of Taber (*other health practitioners -1.4*) speaks to the fact that the Town represents a hub for health care and personal care services, attracting people from the rural surroundings.

Both the town and the district are under-represented in insurance carriers and legal services; however online services in the insurance subsector may be an area of concern. Insurance has seen strong trends toward online comparison for pricing and coverage, which may impact future stability of brick and mortar locations. Real estate, on the other hand, can benefit from online content to generate attention for potential investors (be they home buyers or others). The town and district both theoretically have room for more real estate agents and brokers (-1.7, -1.2 respectively) and especially in legal services (-1.9 and -5.8 respectively). Notably, this only includes businesses that have employees, and many real estate business owners operate as independents, even if they are affiliated with a larger umbrella brand..

Nonetheless, the overall findings indicate that in terms of professional services, Taber has a good alignment with its current population profile except for insurance, real estate, and legal services as highlighted above. In addition, further exploration of personal care services may be worthwhile.

### Arts & Entertainment, Accommodation & Food

In this economic domain, a total of four main sub-sectors were expected to be present given the population of the town, namely amusement and recreation, traveller accommodation, specialty food services, and full-service restaurants. Taber was found to surpass the expected average count in all of the above based on 2017 town population count especially in the areas of the full-service restaurant and traveler accommodation where the expected number was more by 11 and 2.4 units respectively. The higher number in these areas is also balancing the under-representation of these facilities in the MD of Taber (traveler accommodation -2.2, full-service restaurant -2.3). This is typical of destination-oriented business such as these where a community gets successful in attaining business from nearby regions. These again point to the fact the Town of Taber is a commercial hub in the region.



Figure 35: Population count and change used for analysis

Region	2011 Population	2016 Population	5-year growth	Annual Growth/decline	Estimated 2017 population
Alberta	3645257	4067175	11.574%	2.315%	4161326
Town of Taber	8104	8428	3.998%	0.800%	8495
MD of Taber	6851	7098	3.605%	0.721%	7149

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profiles, 2016; Census Profiles, 2011; Modified by MDB Insight, 2018.



Figure 36: Population-Based Commercial Gap Analysis for Taber & Comparators, 2018.

4-Digit NAICS	Industry Groups	# of Businesses in Alberta	# of People Per Business in Alberta	Theoretical Capacity: Taber Town	Actual Number in Taber Town	Capacity (+/-): Taber Town	Theoretical Capacity: Taber MD	Actual Number in Taber MD	Capacity (+/-): Taber MD	Audience Type
4411	Automobile dealers	850	0.0002	1.7	5	3.3	1.5	0.0	-1.5	Destination
4412	Other motor vehicle dealers	322	0.0001	0.7	0	-0.7	0.6	0.0	-0.6	Destination
4413	Automotive parts, accessories and tire stores	556	0.0001	1.1	4	2.9	1.0	2.0	1.0	Comparison
4421	Furniture stores	324	0.0001	0.7	1	0.3	0.6	1.0	0.4	Comparison
4422	Home furnishings stores	615	0.0001	1.3	1	-0.3	1.1	0.0	-1.1	Comparison
4431	Electronics and appliance stores	796	0.0002	1.6	1	-0.6	1.4	0.0	-1.4	Comparison
4441	Building material and supplies dealers	498	0.0001	1.0	2	1.0	0.9	0.0	-0.9	Comparison
4442	Lawn and garden equipment and supplies stores	357	0.0001	0.7	1	0.3	0.6	0.0	-0.6	Comparison
4451	Grocery stores	975	0.0002	2.0	5	3.0	1.7	5.0	3.3	Convenience
4452	Specialty food stores	1018	0.0002	2.1	0	-2.1	1.7	1.0	-0.7	Destination / comparison
4453	Beer, wine and liquor stores	268	0.0001	0.5	2	1.5	0.5	2.0	1.5	Convenience
4461	Health and personal care stores	2976	0.0007	6.1	3	-3.1	5.1	2.0	-3.1	Convenience
4471	Gasoline stations	1189	0.0003	2.4	7	4.6	2.0	2.0	0.0	Convenience
4481	Clothing stores	1840	0.0004	3.8	4	0.2	3.2	0.0	-3.2	Comparison
4482	Shoe stores	341	0.0001	0.7	0	-0.7	0.6	0.0	-0.6	Comparison
4483	Jewellery, luggage and leather goods stores	714	0.0002	1.5	0	-1.5	1.2	0.0	-1.2	Comparison
4511	Sporting goods, hobby and musical instrument stores	713	0.0002	1.5	1	-0.5	1.2	0.0	-1.2	Destination / comparison
4513	Book stores and news dealers	57	0.0000	0.1	0	-0.1	0.1	0.0	-0.1	Comparison
4521	Department stores	95	0.0000	0.2	1	0.8	0.2	0.0	-0.2	Comparison
4529	Other general merchandise stores	156	0.0000	0.3	4	3.7	0.3	2.0	1.7	Varia



4-Digit NAICS	Industry Groups	# of Businesses in Alberta	# of People Per Business in Alberta	Theoretical Capacity: Taber Town	Actual Number in Taber Town	Capacity (+/-): Taber Town	Theoretical Capacity: Taber MD	Actual Number in Taber MD	Capacity (+/-): Taber MD	Audience Type
4531	Florists	621	0.0001	1.3	1	-0.3	1.1	0.0	-1.1	Convenience
4532	Office supplies, stationery and gift stores	310	0.0001	0.6	0	-0.6	0.5	0.0	-0.5	Comparison
4533	Used merchandise stores	326	0.0001	0.7	0	-0.7	0.6	0.0	-0.6	Comparison
4539	Other miscellaneous store retailers	461	0.0001	0.9	1	0.1	0.8	0.0	-0.8	Varia
4541	Electronic shopping and mail-order houses	540	0.0001	1.1	0	-1.1	0.9	0.0	-0.9	Comparison
5121	Motion picture and video industries	196	0.0000	0.4	0	-0.4	0.3	0.0	-0.3	Convenience
5221	Depository credit intermediation	314	0.0001	0.6	5	4.4	0.5	1.0	0.5	Convenience
5241	Insurance carriers	1147	0.0003	2.3	0	-2.3	2.0	0.0	-2.0	Comparison
5242	Agencies, brokerages and other insurance related activities	229	0.0001	0.5	3	2.5	0.4	2.0	1.6	Comparison
5312	Offices of real estate agents and brokers	1302	0.0003	2.7	1	-1.7	2.2	1.0	-1.2	Comparison
5411	Legal services	3356	0.0008	6.9	5	-1.9	5.8	0.0	-5.8	Comparison
5412	Accounting, tax preparation, bookkeeping and payroll services	3706	0.0009	7.6	10	2.4	6.4	2.0	-4.4	Comparison
6211	Offices of physicians	383	0.0001	0.8	8	7.2	0.7	3.0	2.3	Convenience
6212	Offices of dentists	250	0.0001	0.5	2	1.5	0.4	2.0	1.6	Convenience
6213	Offices of other health practitioners	1411	0.0003	2.9	8	5.1	2.4	1.0	-1.4	Convenience
6221	General medical and surgical hospitals	219	0.00005	0.4	1	0.6	0.4	0.0	-0.4	NA
7111	Performing arts companies	71	0.0000	0.1	0	-0.1	0.1	0.0	-0.1	Destination
7112	Spectator sports	49	0.0000	0.1	0	-0.1	0.1	0.0	-0.1	Destination
7113	Promoters (presenters) of performing arts, sports and similar events	91	0.0000	0.2	0	-0.2	0.2	0.0	-0.2	Destination
7121	Heritage institutions	157	0.0000	0.3	1	0.7	0.3	0.0	-0.3	Destination
7131	Amusement parks and arcades	43	0.0000	0.1	0	-0.1	0.1	0.0	-0.1	Destination
7132	Gambling industries	312	0.0001	0.6	0	-0.6	0.5	0.0	-0.5	Destination



4-Digit NAICS	Industry Groups	# of Businesses in Alberta	# of People Per Business in Alberta	Theoretical Capacity: Taber Town	Actual Number in Taber Town	Capacity (+/-): Taber Town	Theoretical Capacity: Taber MD	Actual Number in Taber MD	Capacity (+/-): Taber MD	Audience Type
7139	Other amusement and recreation industries	602	0.0001	1.2	2	0.8	1.0	1.0	0.0	Destination
7211	Traveller accommodation	1285	0.0003	2.6	5	2.4	2.2	0.0	-2.2	Destination
7212	Recreational vehicle (RV) parks and recreational camps	210	0.0001	0.4	0	-0.4	0.4	0.0	-0.4	Destination
7213	Rooming and boarding houses	48	0.0000	0.1	0	-0.1	0.1	0.0	-0.1	Destination
7223	Special food services	463	0.0001	0.9	1	0.1	0.8	0.0	-0.8	Comparison
7224	Drinking places (alcoholic beverages)	58	0.0000	0.1	2	1.9	0.1	0.0	-0.1	Comparison
7225	Full-service restaurants and limited-service eating places	4260	0.0010	8.7	20	11.3	7.3	5.0	-2.3	Destination / comparison
8111	Automotive repair and maintenance	6665	0.0016	13.6	14	0.4	11.4	4.0	-7.4	Comparison
8112	Electronic and precision equipment repair and maintenance	202	0.0000	0.4	2	1.6	0.3	0.0	-0.3	Convenience
8114	Personal and household goods repair and maintenance	3172	0.0008	6.5	1	-5.5	5.4	0.0	-5.4	Convenience
8121	Personal care services	2187	0.0005	4.5	3	-1.5	3.8	0.0	-3.8	Comparison
8122	Funeral services	706	0.0002	1.4	1	-0.4	1.2	0.0	-1.2	Destination
8123	Dry cleaning and laundry services	333	0.0001	0.7	1	0.3	0.6	0.0	-0.6	Convenience
8129	Other personal services	325	0.0001	0.7	1	0.3	0.6	0.0	-0.6	N/A

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profiles, 2016; Canadian Business Counts, 2017; Modified by MDB Insight, 2018. Values highlighted in green represent a gap in capacity of more than -0.8.



**Figure 37: Ranking of Top Commercial Gap Industries for Town of Taber**

4-Digit NAICS	Industry Groups	Actual Number in Taber Town	Capacity (+/-): Taber Town	Actual Number in Taber MD	Capacity (+/-): Taber MD	Audience Type
8114	maintenance	1	-5.5	0.0	-5.4	Convenience
4461	Health and personal care stores	3	-3.1	2.0	-3.1	Convenience
5241	Insurance carriers	0	-2.3	0.0	-2.0	Comparison
4452	Specialty food stores	0	-2.1	1.0	-0.7	comparison
5411	Legal services	5	-1.9	0.0	-5.8	Comparison
5312	Offices of real estate agents and brokers	1	-1.7	1.0	-1.2	Comparison
6239	Other residential care facilities	0	-1.6	0.0	-1.4	Destination
8121	Personal care services	3	-1.5	0.0	-3.8	Comparison
4483	Jewellery, luggage and leather goods stores	0	-1.5	0.0	-1.2	Comparison
4541	Electronic shopping and mail-order houses	0	-1.1	0.0	-0.9	Comparison

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profiles, 2016; Canadian Business Counts, 2017; Modified by MDB Insight, 2018.

**Figure 38: Ranking of Top Commercial Gap Industries for Municipal District of Taber**

4-Digit NAICS	Industry Groups	Actual Number in Taber Town	Capacity (+/-): Taber Town	Actual Number in Taber MD	Capacity (+/-): Taber MD	Audience Type
8111	Automotive repair and maintenance	14	0.4	4.0	-7.4	Comparison
5411	Legal services	5	-1.9	0.0	-5.8	Comparison
8114	maintenance	1	-5.5	0.0	-5.4	Convenience
5412	payroll services	10	2.4	2.0	-4.4	Comparison
8121	Personal care services	3	-1.5	0.0	-3.8	Comparison
4481	Clothing stores	4	0.2	0.0	-3.2	Comparison
4461	Health and personal care stores	3	-3.1	2.0	-3.1	Convenience
7225	places	20	11.3	5.0	-2.3	comparison
7211	Traveller accommodation	5	2.4	0.0	-2.2	Destination
5241	Insurance carriers	0	-2.3	0.0	-2.0	Comparison

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profiles, 2016; Canadian Business Counts, 2017; Modified by MDB Insight, 2018.



## Document Review

Official documents from the Town of Taber, the MD of Taber, and the Town of Vauxhall were consulted for the background review. Four of these were regional documents that dealt with the region as a whole. The first section summarizes those regional documents, followed by documents specific to Vauxhall, the Town, and finally the MD. The sections summarize the key takeaways from these documents, and the economic considerations they provided.

### SouthGrow Community Business Retention, Expansion and Marketing Plans

**Purpose:** This report synthesizes information from projects on investment attraction plan and leads, community profile development, and the investment readiness of the region. It makes marketing recommendations to specific communities in the SouthGrow regional alliance.

#### Key Takeaways & Economic Considerations:

##### Municipal District of Taber

- Access to three primary highways a major strength; routes to major centres & access to hamlets with industrial land. Rail lines with two spurs.
- Level topography with irrigation (Taber, Bow River, St Mary's Irrigation systems) & continual expansion of water supplies. Home to 1/3 of province's irrigated acreage
- Has attracted a diverse industry base in agricultural processing; Sugar beet and vegetable processing industries; strong oil and gas industries as well
- Welcoming and business friendly environment based on BR&E interviews
- Transparent with developers; Competitive industrial mill rate
- Progressive people
- Opportunities in solar, wind, opiates (poppies for pain medication), biofibre, nutraceuticals
- Website is good but lacking in elements necessary for investment attraction; scattered user experience

##### Town of Taber

- Recreational facilities, shopping, events, good schools
- Food processing and oil field servicing industries. Examples include, Rogers Sugar as major employer; 100-150 people in offseason, 300-350 Oct-Feb; Potato chip factory, Rowland Seeds Co. (hemp); Sunrise Poultry
- Has had ease in attracting agri-food industry investment; potential to be a value-added ag-hub
- Retail sector struggles due to proximity to urban Lethbridge
- Growing; is regional service centre
- Family oriented, safe community
- Industrial development shares a 50/50 split with residential development
- Access to irrigation



- Streamlined economic development and planning processes; progressive CAO
- No rail spur in town, but has the potential to be addressed
- Opportunity exists to foster partnerships between industry, research and learning institutions
- Young population; median age 35
- Worth studying commuter patterns to determine whether more local entertainment, dining options would be welcomed
- Good website

#### **Town of Vauxhall**

- Population 1,200
- Vauxhall Academy of Baseball is one of the town's claims to fame; produces pro athletes
- Great recreation facilities, new pool
- Is a quiet town, likely to attract families over businesses
- Has attracted seniors due to low cost of living
- Slow pace of life
- Limited availability of industrial lots
- Opportunities in sports tourism; should focus on attracting accommodation businesses
- Website is nice & clean but offers little to site selectors

#### **Taber Regional Joint Economic Development Committee 2017 Strategic Plan**

**Purpose:** Outlines the mission, vision and guiding principles for the Taber Regional Joint Economic Development Committee. Lays out action plan template to follow.

#### **Key Takeaways & Economic Considerations:**

Core focus areas

- Increase value added capacity
- Promote existing assets
- Positive perception of existing industrial commercial base
  - Recognize and support the value that existing industrial/commercial/agricultural base provides to the region
  - Identify opportunities for expansion
- Workforce is adequately skilled and employed
  - Increase capacity and availability of workforce
  - Identify workforce training needs
  - Housing is available and affordable



- Value added producer is drawn to the region
  - Identify supply chain opportunities
- Regional assets are well utilized
  - Develop, expand, and improve trail system
  - Promote regional events and activities
  - Explore recreational event opportunities
  - Better utilize partnerships with tour operators and organizations

### Tourism Visioning – Municipal District of Taber, Town of Taber, Town of Vauxhall (2015)

**Purpose:** Develop an overall tourism theme for the three communities MD of Taber, Town of Taber, Town of Vauxhall.

#### **Key Takeaways & Economic Considerations:**

- A cohesive tourism theme will allow for development of value-added regional tourism products and experiences
- Community support for tourism vision
- Offer authentic tourism experiences: Festivals and Events – ‘Family Fun.’ Build on strength of existing festivals and events. Sports and Recreation – ‘County-Style Sports’
- Municipalities working collaboratively promoting each other’s local events; offering complimentary concurrent events will increase visitor stays and increase economic benefits to whole region.
- Create niches for each municipality: MD Taber ‘Outdoor adventure’; Town of Taber ‘Community Hospitality’; Town of Vauxhall ‘Learn-Play-Experience.’

### Spouted: The Plant Ingredient Opportunity Taking Root on the Prairies – Canada West Foundation (2017)

**Purpose:** Outlines the opportunity the plant ingredient production and processing sectors present to the prairie provinces.

**Key Takeaways & Economic Considerations:** Prairie Provinces already grow many crops (lentils, peas, beans) that are in demand globally to be processed into plant ingredient components (protein, fibre, starch).

Plant ingredient processing is a global opportunity for the prairie economy; can be leveraged as a pan-prairie opportunity for Alberta, MB, SK. Plant ingredient processing offers a realistic path for export growth and diversification for the Prairie economy.

Prioritize partnerships with food science R&D; commercialization side can be expanded.

## Vauxhall



### Town of Vauxhall Economic Development Community Profile (2018)

**Purpose:** Provides an economic overview of Vauxhall including community statistics, local assets, and dev opportunities.

**Key Takeaways & Economic Considerations:**

- Strongest industries are Agriculture and Utilities, Transportation, Construction and Warehousing.
- State of the art Jets Stadium can seat 500; recently renovated. Opportunities for sports tourism.
- Availability of new, fully serviced residential lots; 5 industrial lots for sale.

### Municipal District of Taber & Town of Vauxhall Intermunicipal Development Plan (2010)

**Purpose:** Bylaw document outlining formalization of relationship between MD of Taber and Town of Vauxhall with respect to planning matters of joint interest within the urban fringe.

**Key Takeaways & Economic Considerations:**

- Ensures development is planned in a manner that is complementary to existing and proposed developments
- Facilitates cooperation between both municipalities
- Ensures any present and future conflict between the municipalities is reduced or eliminated
- Makes protection of agriculture and agricultural productivity a prime concern to both the MD of Taber and the Town when making decisions on land use and development proposals

### Town of Vauxhall Municipal Development Plan (2018)

**Purpose:** Is a long range planning tool that guides growth and development. Provides overall policy direction for land use decisions.

**Key Takeaways & Economic Considerations:**

- Town is expected to grow at historic avg of 1%/year; Over half of all residents of Vauxhall claim German as mother-tongue; Relatively low portion of population has completed high school
- Promote high school Mennonite Alternative Program to encourage education; make educational resources available
- Approx. 54% of all working residents commute outside of census subdivision for work to Taber or MD Taber
- Municipal water distribution system, Sanitary & Stormwater systems require improvements to meet future growth projections. Goal is to ensure developments have adequate infrastructure.
- Residential land use accounts 21% of total land area; Commercial land use 3%; 15% Industrial; 15% Public & Institution; 46% Urban Reserve of total land area.
- Goal to prioritize industrial development; Extremely limited vacant retail zoned land; Urban reserve land could be assessed for industrial development



### Community Growth Analysis –Town of Vauxhall (2013)

**Purpose:** Purpose is to provide background information about the community, identify trends within the community and to review the viability of undeveloped land within the Town boundaries to accommodate future development.

- **Key Takeaways & Economic Considerations:** “Potato Capital of the West”
- Population 1,288; Town experienced unprecedented growth between 2006-2011 census; young age distribution suggests possible need for schools, rec centres, amenities, employment; Town is forecasted to grow at rate of 1.5%-2% annually
- There are more males than females and the cultural composition is largely German-speaking Mexican/Central American Mennonites
- Historically a service centre for surrounding rural region; has lost that role to Town of Taber and Brooks
- Limited amount of serviced land to accommodate existing and future demand for residential, commercial and industrial uses.
- Diverse workforce, predominance of sales and service industry; Significant gap between residential and non-residential mill rates
- Infrastructure deficiencies in water/sewer may be constraint to growth; Underutilized commercial opportunities; located on HWY 36, limited supply of serviced developable land
- Shortage of lands for residential growth

### Town of Vauxhall Strategic Plan 2017-2020

**Purpose:** Outlines Town of Vauxhall’s vision, values and strategic goals from 2017-2020.

- **Key Takeaways & Economic Considerations:**

Presents Vauxhall as a safe, family oriented community.

Strategic three-year goals:

- Promote Vauxhall as an affordable place to live (small town living; rec; families; seniors.)
- Community and economic development to revitalize Vauxhall (brand development; BR&E, downtown & hwy corridor revitalization, brownfield)
- Assess infrastructure needs and determine priorities (maintenance of streets/sidewalks, facilities)
- United community so we can thrive together (enhance communication with community; foster inclusive community)
- Be proactive and prepared to seize economic opportunities (identify strong fit economic opportunities; research broadband opportunities, partnerships; research solar opportunities, partnerships; promote & support local business.)



## Town of Taber

### Town of Taber Strategic Plan (2018)

**Purpose:** Outlines the mission, vision, values and strategic goals of the Town of Taber.

**Key Takeaways & Economic Considerations:**

- Improving internal and external communications: with stakeholders, media, Council’s public presence. Finalize and adopt a communications strategy.
- Develop Community & Promote Growth
  - Pursue opportunities through Protein Innovation Grant
  - Develop business list to engage via in-person meetings
  - Review Town policies that pertain to development
  - Promote expansion of variety of housing options in Taber; identify housing typology gaps; explore affordable housing development partnerships
  - Explore partnerships with post-secondary institutions to foster a learning environment and offer educational and training opportunities in Taber
  - Define & Practice good governance: develop partnerships with other regional governments and organizations; inter-municipal collaboration opportunities
  - Enhance sense of community; define sense of place, promote local cultural diversity; develop and promote local arts community

### MD of Taber and Town of Taber Intermunicipal Development Plan (2007)

**Purpose:** Bylaw document outlining formalization of relationship between MD of Taber and Town of Taber with respect to planning matters of joint interest within the urban fringe.

**Key Takeaways & Economic Considerations:**

- Ensures development is planned in a manner that is complementary to existing and proposed developments
- Facilitates cooperation between both municipalities
- Ensures any present and future conflict between the municipalities is reduced or eliminated
- Currently lands within the Intermunicipal Development Plan area are designated as Rural Agricultural, Urban Fringe, and Grouped Country Residential
- Makes protection of agriculture and agricultural productivity a prime concern to both the MD of Taber and the Town when making decisions on land use and development proposals

### Town of Taber Business & Community Profile (2018)

**Purpose:** Provides an overview of Town of Taber’s economic development opportunities, community



statistics, local assets.

**Key Takeaways & Economic Considerations:**

- Population 8,428, growing.
- Large agri-food processing industry, fertile soil allowing for diversity of crops.
- 30+ Hectares of prime industrial land ready for development in Taber.
- Direct transportation access; Hwy 3, CP Rail Main Line.
- Parks & rec, festivals & events, numerous restaurants within Town of Taber. Advertises community culture of volunteerism.

**Town of Taber NW Area Structure Plan (2017)**

**Purpose:** Guides future development in the NW of the Town of Taber.

**Key Takeaways & Economic Considerations:**

- Area covered in document is zoned as Urban Reserve District; protected for future urban growth.
- NW Area is planned to be a mix of Low Density Residential, Mixed Density Residential, Medium Density Residential, Neighbourhood Commercial.
- Is planned to accommodate for future population growth.

**Town of Taber Municipal Development Plan**

**Purpose:** Long range plan influencing municipal land use and growth patterns in Town of Taber.

**Key Takeaways & Economic Considerations:**

- Taber is poised to continue its steady, long-term growth; excellent transportation connections, fully irrigated farmland, excellent soil conditions; regional service centre for ag sector.
- Regional service centre to ag sector and oil & gas industries.
- Alberta Bakken oil field promises increased oil activity for the future – Town of Taber poised to accommodate for demand for industrial land for these activities.
- Town Council & Admin encourage innovation
- Favourable weather; good soil conditions; lots of sunlight
- Trading area market of 24,000 people
- Will encourage broad range of housing types, sizes, community spaces
- Will enhance rec opportunities
- Young population base; 20-24 y/o people leave to pursue employment elsewhere

Goals are:

- Economic prosperity – maintain balance of residential & non-residential activities



- Environmental responsibility
- Healthy mixed-use downtown
- Support infill development
- Urban design
- Parks, pathways
- Culture & community
- Respect for heritage
- Property standards
- Maximize existing infrastructure
- Promote sustainable design

### Taber & District Housing Foundation Affordable Housing Project – Community Consultation Summary (2018)

**Purpose:** Results from community consultation on affordable housing, April 2018. Presents summary of process, overall ideas, opinions & concerns of stakeholders. 26 attendees; 15 local residents.

#### **Key Takeaways & Economic Considerations:**

- Found that developing affordable housing in Taber was essential & would help community as a whole.
- Barriers to affordable housing include cost, political buy-in, funding
- People in most need for affordable housing include single mothers, single seniors, working poor
- Youth/young professional retention is an issue in Taber; not enough social activity nor work opportunities
- Groceries are expensive in Taber vs. Lethbridge, leads to leakage
- Transportation between communities should be improved for access to healthcare

### Taber & District Housing Foundation Affordable Housing Project – Needs and Demand Assessment (2017)

**Purpose:** Is meant to gain a better understanding of housing gaps within the Taber Region. Provides direction to the Taber District and Housing Foundation & stakeholders in terms of housing priorities.

#### **Key Takeaways & Economic Considerations:**

- About 18% of people in Vauxhall, and 17% in M.D. of Taber are considered “low-income” – greater than average 8.8% in Alberta
- Housing stock in MD Taber is not very diverse – 91% of stock being single-detached homes. 78% of dwellings in Vauxhall were single-family in 2016



- Greater proportion of owners than renters in region compared with the province

### Taber & District Housing Foundation Affordable Housing Project – Taber Affordable Housing Strategy (2017)

**Purpose:** Defines the town’s role in providing affordable housing. Assists in developing the Town of Taber’s approach to addressing affordable housing in the area, and will guide the town’s housing strategy for 8 years (2018-2026).

#### **Key Takeaways & Economic Considerations:**

- 43-86 households in Taber are in “core need” of affordable housing; meaning they are in unaffordable homes and have no alternative
- 18% of homeowners and renters are spending 30% or more of their household incomes on shelter
- As Taber is a rural area, most homeless or underhoused peoples are not as “visible”

## Municipal District of Taber

### 2017 Economic Development Annual Report – Municipal District of Taber

**Purpose:** Report on economic development initiatives in MD of Taber

#### **Key Takeaways & Economic Considerations:**

- MD of Taber hired an EDO in 2017; updates on EDO’s projects
- Prioritizing agri-food; solar; cannabis growing/packaging facilities; tourism.

### Municipal District of Taber Economic Development Community Profile

**Purpose:** Provides an economic overview of MD of Taber including community statistics, local assets, and dev opportunities.

#### **Key Takeaways & Economic Considerations:**

- MD of Taber composed of 5 hamlets; hamlets have industrial lots
- Median age 27.4. Relatively young population for a rural area
- MD of Taber is agriculturally diversified, intensely farmed. Complemented by agri-food processing industry (Rogers Sugar, Lamb Weston)
- Thriving energy sector including oil, two wind lots
- Access to provincial highways; Crowsnest CPR main rail line.
- Post-secondary institutions accessible nearby in Lethbridge, Calgary.



# Appendix B – Detailed Stakeholder Engagement

## Reconnaissance Interview Results

A series of one-on-one reconnaissance interviews were conducted with 11 community and business leaders from the Taber region to gather their thoughts on various topics. The purpose was to obtain a qualitative understanding of considerations about the Taber region to supplement quantitative data already collected, and to potentially point toward follow-up questions to be used in a subsequent series of workshops. The interviews occurred during the month of September, 2018. Results are presented in aggregated format according to theme.

### How would you describe the business climate in broader Taber Region?

The general consensus is that the business climate is good and healthy. There was some concern for the business climate in Vauxhall specifically with the closure of some retail businesses, though it appeared that Taber was growing and that the agricultural sector was healthy. Agriculture and oil & gas were referenced as the most important components of the local economy, with one taking over for the other when either one declined. There was some acknowledgment of the need to be cautious with the boom/bust cycle of the oil & gas industry and the need to diversify.

### Do you think the business climate supports the attraction of new investment to the community?

Yes, across the board.

### From an economic/business perspective, what do you think are the Taber region's most important assets?

The region's irrigation infrastructure was referenced as the number one most important asset in the region. Oil and gas were second. Strong highway transportation corridors were also mentioned. In Vauxhall recreation facilities for tourism were referenced. Existing manufacturing and processing facilities were also seen as important assets for the region, which signalled supply chain opportunities in the agriculture and ag processing sectors.

### What is your vision for the economy over the next 10 years?

The vast majority of respondents mentioned value-added agriculture, and agricultural processing expansion. Some expressed frustration with the inefficiency of exporting raw agricultural goods for processing elsewhere, and a desire to see more of that type of activity done locally in Taber.

Many discussed population growth, increased access to broadband technologies, and the potential for a post-secondary institution.



### What do you see as the most relevant challenges or barriers to economic growth in the Taber region?

- Carbon tax – increasing costs to do business
- Labour supply issues; need to bring in migrant workers
- Minimum wage increase costing entrepreneurs too much
- Some concern for lack of community development & placemaking that dissuades people from moving there
- Some concern for Taber’s image as a socially non-inclusive place

### What significant opportunities for economic development or business growth do you see?

- Value added agriculture was noted most often
- Hemp, marijuana
- Pulses & protein industry
- Recreation, leisure and retail – some acknowledgement that people – especially young people – would leave the Taber region on weekends for entertainment in Lethbridge.

### If you were writing this Strategy, what one or two key priorities would you include to position the economy of the Taber Region for success into the future?

- Collaboration between municipalities
- Placemaking
- Ensuring infrastructure supports growth
- Conscious effort to seek out new opportunities
- Creating a business-friendly culture beyond the municipality
- Keep costs of doing business low



## Business Survey Results

65 businesses were randomly interviewed, including five from Vauxhall, 20 from MD of Taber, and 40 from Town of Taber. Business contact information was sourced from Dunn and Bradstreet. Numbers were contacted at random until the identified quotas were met. Because results are random, they are generalizable to the broader business populations across the region. The figure below demonstrates the distribution of participants for the survey according to North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Results represent a margin of error of +/-10%, 19 times out of 20.

**Figure 39: Distribution of Industry Participation in the Survey**

NAICS Industry	Number
11 - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	6
21 - Mining and oil and gas extraction	1
22 - Utilities	1
23 - Construction	2
31-33 - Manufacturing	6
41 - Wholesale trade	3
44-45 - Retail trade	3
48-49 - Transportation and warehousing	5
51 - Information and cultural industries	0
52 - Finance and insurance	2
53 - Real estate and rental and leasing	0
54 - Professional, scientific and technical services	10
55 - Management of companies and enterprises	0
56 - Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	4
61 - Educational services	0
62 - Health care and social assistance	2
71 - Arts, entertainment and recreation	1
72 - Accommodation and food services	3
81 - Other services (except public administration)	6
91 - Public administration	0
Uncategorized	10

Source: MDB Insight, 2018.

The visuals below present the survey results in aggregate form.



## Overall Business Satisfaction



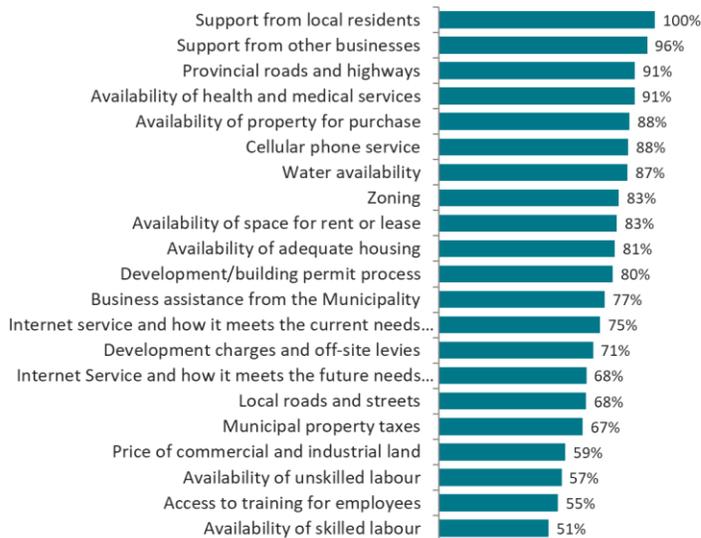
## Business Satisfaction Past 12 Months



Net Improvement score = % more positive (30%) - % more negative (8%) = +22

Respondents n=66

## Performance of Business factors



The Ranking is a combination of Very Satisfied and Satisfied



Respondents n=66 (note base sizes vary and excludes don't know)



### Priority Table

Community Factors	Performance	Importance	Priority
Access to training for employees	55%	5.14	1
Availability of skilled labour	51%	3.77	2
Development charges and off-site levies	71%	4.81	3
Availability of unskilled labour	57%	3.13	4
Internet Service and how it meets the future needs and/or growth of your business	68%	4.10	5
Business assistance from the Municipality	77%	4.87	6
Local roads and streets	68%	2.80	7
Price of commercial and industrial land	59%	1.70	8
Internet service and how it meets the current needs of your business	75%	2.68	9
Availability of space for rent or lease	83%	3.31	10
Municipal property taxes	67%	1.71	11
Cellular phone service	88%	4.45	12
Availability of health and medical services	91%	5.52	13
Availability of adequate housing	81%	2.21	14
Water availability	87%	2.92	15
Provincial roads and highways	91%	3.11	16
Zoning	83%	1.54	17
Development/building permit process	80%	1.18	18
Availability of property for purchase	88%	0.88	19
Support from other businesses	96%	2.83	20
Support from local residents	100%	1.51	21

### Most important elements of a successful economy



Respondents n=66



### Future Plans

Plans to...	% Yes	Follow up Questions (note small base sizes)
Expand within next 2 years	26%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7 are experiencing difficulties</li><li>• 5 have reasons why Taber Region will not be considered</li></ul>
Relocate outside Taber Region	17%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 say they will relocate within the next 6 months</li><li>• 9 say relocation will occur more than 6 months from now</li></ul>
Downsize	12%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 say downsizing will take place within next 6 months</li><li>• 7 say downsizing will occur more than 6 months from now</li></ul>
Close	6%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 0 say they will close within next 6 months</li><li>• All 4 say the business will close more than 6 months from now</li></ul>
Sell	8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3 say they will sell within the next 6 months</li><li>• 2 say they will sell more than 6 months from now</li></ul>



## Workshop Results

Workshops were held on October 18<sup>th</sup> with the Project Steering Committee and two sets of businesses. The notes below reflect the aggregated results of those sessions. The sessions were preceded by a presentation of regional economic development data:

### **Based on what we've seen so far, is there anything that has surprised you? Anything confirm what you may have already thought?**

- Sectors that are based on the infrastructure, like transportation, are strong and point to opportunities to leverage more development/value-add
- Rural Broadband an issue – if you want to attract business, this is important. Is existing broadband being used as a selling feature?
- Financial Services – surprised due to fact there are so many banks. Is there anything lacking? Are we underserved?
- MD under for manufacturing – gap considering the amount of raw product that is produced.
- MD is opening more real estate for development. (mentioned that MD land is expensive and the municipality will not take ag land out of service for a large industry)
- Support from locals – businesses are closing all the time.
- Median age is low due to population makeup – Mennonites have large families which have ensured viability of some schools.
- May be gap in Stats Canada in that all may not have participated (resulted in lower population in Vauxhall)
- Unemployment rate – thought it may be lower – still recovering.
- When there is red across the municipalities, there may be more opportunity – work to fill in the gaps.
- Amenities are there (art and culture) – but there may be more opportunity to capitalize. Taber Art and Culture Society, couple of quilting clubs – they lost their venue to advertise when the funding model changed through Adult Ed.
- Retail trade is working hard to have goods and price points that attract
- Building skills in the ag sector – Green Certificate at the High School level – Currently connection with the ag producer is self-managed by the student.
- Room for incentive-based options to continue education.
- Get into schools to talk about what skills are required by employers in the community.
- Difficulty with negative press – development of a communications strategy?
- Local training may result in youth retention. Committee has been formed to bring Lethbridge College to the community.



- Education findings in comparison to the Province shows the challenges especially related to skilled/unskilled labor:
  - Mennonite schools thrive vs public schools struggle for students.
  - Difficult situation hiring females due to lack of entry level skills.
  - There are supports for adult Mennonite population, but culture creates various issues. Some of these issues are a Provincial matter.
  - Low level of skills is a hindrance in innovation and technology.
  - Taber Adult Learning can offer more programs to address the gaps.
  - Need for social supports. Education level surprising to some – however, ag domination in the MD has attracted employees that have a lower education.

**What are some of the Region’s competitive advantages that don’t show in these figures or numbers?**

- Labour affordability is an advantage – living wage is less
- Stability of jobs, housing costs, lots of volunteers
- Athletics – Baseball Academy for example (brings new people to the community but businesses are closing)
- Small town vibe, lack of traffic compared to urban
- 400 people travelling in town to work (from housing study)
- Water and sewage infrastructure is excellent and is a significant advantage to this region
- Have amended water licenses to include industry other than ag. Town is not limited in water access.
- Irrigation – can grow crops here that can’t be grown in other areas. Example: Sugar processing
- New processors would be protected via irrigation district in their water use during drought
- Opportunity in the transportation sector
- Transportation corridor, Highway 3 Initiative, High Load Corridor
- Protein Strategy – good collaboration – need more value add
- Wealth of agriculture organizations in Lethbridge and Taber can provide support and resources



Next, results of the business survey were shared and discussions were had about the top ranked priorities:

Priority	Why is this an issue now? Are there ways to resolve the priority?
<b>Availability of skilled labour</b>	Need to be more accepting and involve the LGM population in community organizations.
<b>Access to training for employees</b>	<p>Mandate of local adult education network limits offerings. Community Futures may be an option.</p> <p>Employment readiness is important. People need to be willing to learn. Employees drawn from outside. Bias to term “education” when dealing with Mennonite population. Community Resources need to be shared. Needs assessment being conducted to draw a Lethbridge College campus branch.</p> <p>Did growth happen too fast? Private sector could set up a certification service. Mennonite population have to learn English prior to further training. Occupational Health and Safety rules have changed – is there an opportunity here? Online courses are available. Should Economic Development be involved in training? – They can bring together those organizations who can help – all progress will hopefully result in a positive effect to community economic health.</p> <p>Where do we send to train them? What are options for places and time? These are issues.</p>
<b>Development charges and off-site levies</b>	<p>One of the lowest in the Province. Is this a communications issue?</p> <p>Relatively new – construction is more expensive – taxes can’t provide all the infrastructure \$</p> <p>Try to be user friendly. Communities have a variety of levies within the same region; need to be aware. Bring developers together to discuss the issue.</p>
<b>Availability of unskilled labour</b>	<p>Scholarship if you come back to the community – a regional scholarship? Criteria is to come back to the community.</p> <p>Opportunity to move to automation due to gap in the workforce.</p> <p>AFDN study on housing – MD hoping to move forward. Town is looking to purchase 60 acres for residential.</p> <p>Development of transportation network between communities because of housing cost differences?</p> <p>Housing is available for assisted living, but fully subscribed at present. Housing study has provided recommendations.</p>



Priority	Why is this an issue now? Are there ways to resolve the priority?
<b>Internet Service and how it meets the future needs and/or growth of your business</b>	<p>Basic service in the MD – not adequate for automation, real time, etc. Some technologies are not available for business operation. Precision ag requires connection. Town of Vauxhall and fire dept have service.</p> <p>Need fiber to compete. Lack of government vision (Prov and Fed). Advocacy to Fed government to ensure that broadband is an essential service.</p>

Following the above discussion, a series of themes that emerged from stakeholder interviews were also presented and workshop participants were asked to indicate to what extent each theme was perceived to be true or untrue. The table below summarizes the results of those discussions:

Stakeholder Theme (from interviews)	Why/Why not?	Solutions
<b>Carbon taxes are a problem</b>	<p>Competitiveness in the Province – carbon tax and cost of employment (e.g. plant chose Manitoba over Alberta)</p> <p>Agrifood processors are hit – \$2-2.5 million to the sugar producers.</p> <p>Affecting all different aspects in the community (social housing and agriculture for example).</p>	<p>Need education.</p> <p>Moot point – can't change.</p>



Stakeholder Theme (from interviews)	Why/Why not?	Solutions
<p><b>There are not enough “place making” characteristics in the region</b></p>	<p>Development plan in the town is incorporating recreation and amenities. Lots of activities for children but once kids are gone, not a lot to do. There is support when things are going on. Need more things to do. Access to medical services is exceptional.</p> <p>No place to pull off on the highway.</p> <p>Downtown rolls up at 6:00.</p> <p>Things to do in Vauxhall is a problem.</p> <p>Younger families – are there enough?</p>	<p>Town is open to new ideas (patios etc.).</p> <p>Are recreation opportunities being marketed?</p> <p>Some communities have volunteer tourism committees.</p> <p>Are there enough signs? No parking for RVs. Need more.</p> <p>Use assets from Cornfest at other times during the year (e.g. stage).</p> <p>What is being done to market these assets to industry who are looking at the community.</p> <p>Work with old and new businesses.</p> <p>Attract previous residents back.</p>
<p><b>Newcomers have a hard time feeling welcome</b></p>	<p>Is the same in a lot of communities.</p> <p>There is a newcomers evening but it is only for Mennonites.</p>	<p>Have an event open to everyone.</p> <p>Taber Social Club – form a group</p> <p>Welcome wagon, or form of, is an opportunity to find out why they moved to the community.</p>
<p><b>There are growing opportunities in hemp and cannabis production</b></p>	<p>Hemp – yes. Cannabis – no.</p> <p>MD just approved a cannabis production facility. If we produce here, will we embrace the use?</p> <p>Two large cannabis operations in Claresholm and Medicine Hat.</p>	<p>Is there an opportunity when Taber is half way between?</p>
<p><b>The protein industry is a key opportunity for future growth</b></p>	<p>This is a huge opportunity. Already producing the product – no secondary processing.</p>	<p>Scale is here to supply. Problem is everyone is trying to determine where the processor should be. We aren’t on the radar as a place where a processor could exist.</p>



The final discussion centred on the notion of a vision for economic development in the region. Based on key words and themes identified during interviews, a draft vision was presented and participants were encouraged to share feedback about it.

- Concept for a Vision: Our economy provides diverse opportunities that attract and retain families, talent and entrepreneurs to the region and that represent our collective heritage and innovative character as we build a positive future together.

There should be no variation between the municipalities – Need a regional vision - each community can take a piece but all leads to the same vision.

Additional considerations:

- It is believed within the community that these factors are key to economic diversification and success: population growth, increased access to broadband technologies, and the potential for a post-secondary institution.
  - Community Advisory committee to address post-secondary needs– can Olds College be involved? Can Christian colleges be leveraged? Have lots who have not graduated from high school. ACE and YELP are two organizations with Mennonite involvement. Advisory committee members are determined by the college.

## One-on-One Interviews

A series of one-on-one interviews were done to obtain greater insight into opportunities that had been uncovered under earlier stages. Due to confidentiality agreements their results are not presented, nor can they be aggregated because of their specific content. The results of these interviews will merely inform strategic planning options and considerations associated with implementation and partnerships.