

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE – PROJECT PROPOSAL



PROPOSAL:

For Council's consideration: Economic Development Advisory Committee proposal for a project to create an economic development landing page on the municipal website

DIVISION NO.: All

COUNCILLOR: All

SUBMITTED BY: Julie McLean, Deputy Director of Planning

BACKGROUND:

February 16, 2022 Council approved Terms of Reference for an Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) by approving the following motion:

Councillor Waldorf moved that Council accept the proposed Economic Development Advisory Committee Terms of Reference as amended.

The primary role of the EDAC is to provide advice to Council on economic development matters to foster a positive business climate and support business attraction and retention in Foothills County.

The Council approved mandate for the EDAC includes (among other items):

- Providing strategic advice to Council on creating a positive business climate to attract new business, retain existing business and to enable business creation and expansion,
- Advising Council on development of local business and economic development projects, programs and strategies, and
- Proposing economic development budget items to Council annually.

EDAC MOTION:

At the December 19, 2024 regular meeting of the EDAC municipal administration guided the Committee through a discussion on the Community Investment Readiness Self Assessment. This assessment is in the Investment Readiness Toolkit. The Toolkit was created by the Alberta Government and the Economic Developers of Alberta and was adopted by the EDAC in September of 2024 as the guiding document for the future creation and implementation of an "Economic Development Plan" for Foothills County.

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT READINESS SELF ASSESSMENT:

The Self Assessment in the Investment Readiness Toolkit is designed to give a community an understanding of its investment readiness level. It is intended to assist communities with identifying investment readiness gaps and determining the effectiveness of their planning and economic development processes.

It was generally understood that the County was doing fairly well in some areas, but it was identified that work was needed regarding the items in the Communications section of the assessment.

In the Communications section of the self assessment, it asks:

COMMUNITY AND SITE SELECTION PROFILE
43. Does your municipality have a community profile?
44. Is it updated on a regular basis (e.g. every six months)?
45. Does it include your community's vision statement?
46. Does the community profile include the following elements (point for each): a. news of recent business expansions and new business locating? b. local municipal and volunteer services and business partnerships? c. references to local business groups? d. list of local services? e. list of facilities? f. list of attractions? g. list of photos or other graphics to support written information?
47. Does your community maintain a profile using the North American Site Selection Standards Template?

WEBSITE
48. Does your community have a standalone website (not connected to the main community website)?
49. Does your website contain an easily downloadable copy of your community profile?
50. Does your website contain information done to the North American Site Selection Standards?
51. Does your website list key contacts?
52. Does your website include a list of available real estate?

OTHER COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS

53. Has your municipality reviewed and improved the mapping used to illustrate your regulatory and promotional documents?

54. Do you maintain regular contact with media representatives?

Looking at these items, the Committee felt that a good starting point and something that could probably be reasonably easily achieved in the short term would be to create some economic development content for the County Website. This would include items on the list above such as key contacts, community profile and information about the Highway 2A Corridor and Foothills Crossing

EDAC MOTION:

After reviewing and discussing the self-assessment exercise, the EDAC approved the following motion:

Resolution: 20

Moved by: Don Francis

That the Committee encourage Foothills County to consolidate Economic Development information and document links on the website for easier navigation.

PROPOSED PROJECT:

As noted, it was identified by the EDAC that the County's website does not currently have an investment attraction "landing page". This is a dedicated place on the website where investors can go to find information and tools needed to evaluate Foothills County as a location for investment. It is deemed an essential tool to effectively market the County's many assets including a strategic location, skilled workforce, key industries and (very soon) ample serviced lands for development.

In our recent grant applications (NRED and CanExport) the creation of an Investment Attraction Landing page was one of the projects proposed. The proposal in the grant applications contemplated the creation of an economic development page that would include key messaging, calls to action, opportunity profiles, links to our land offerings, site selector data and community profile and information. The cost that was allocated to this project in the grant application was not significant.

REQUEST OF COUNCIL:

Council is asked to discuss the recommendation from the Economic Development Advisory Committee and provide direction to administration as Council deems appropriate.