



SMART GROWTH STARTS HERE

FOOTHILLS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

DRAFT – APRIL, 2026.

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Foothills County Economic Development Plan

Background:

Foothills County has not had a defined Economic Development function for approximately 30 years. To grow the County, both economically and through population growth, it was identified that an Economic Development function would be needed to assist with the County's development efforts. This plan identifies specific actions and identifies focus area for the County to concentrate its efforts related to Economic Development.

Foothills County's Economic Development Plan is an actionable work plan for the County that highlights specific actions to be undertaken over time. The strategy was developed with inputs from a statistical analysis, stakeholder engagement and a quantitative analysis of the County's strengths.

Executive Summary:

Interested parties shared that Foothills County is a bedroom community and agricultural hub, that it is livable, focused on the rural way of life and has significant economic potential. There is a desire for increased communication from the County related to strengthening the economy, specifically related to providing business support services. Foothills County is forecast to grow at a slow rate due to a lack of residential land. Compared to the region the County's population is expected to stagnate over the next 10 to 20 years. Low population growth will put a higher burden on existing residents to shoulder any tax increases related to inflation, or construction and operation of new and improved amenities. Meanwhile, the County owns very little industrial land, so it must work proactively and expeditiously with the private sector to take advantage of any potential new development.

The primary outcome of this project was to define priority Sectors for Foothills County's Economic Development efforts. Specific action items were identified to grow the County's commercial/industrial base and support a corresponding increase in the population. The key opportunities and directions for Foothills County are:

1. Operate a best-in-class Economic Development office:
 - Ensure fundamental policies and protocols are in place to activate economic development services.
 - Invest the time and resources to make basic economic development tools available to staff.
 - Implement a Business Retention & Expansion program involving outreach, business visits and follow-up.
 - Share intelligence internally and provide professional customer service and client aftercare.
 - Coordinate ongoing economic development marketing aimed at potential investors and local businesses.
2. Operational Excellence.
 - In designated commercial/industrial areas, move more business types from "discretionary" to "permitted".
 - Create a designated Concierge Service for new business development applications.
 - Conduct continual reviews of the Planning & Development processes to ensure that the County is being perceived as business friendly and provides timely support.
 - Consider selling Municipal Reserve land to spur economic growth.
 - Assume build out of Aldersyde Business Corridor and Foothills Crossing. Identify future zone(s) for business growth.

3. Continue the development of servicing for main Commercial/Industrial areas.
 - Services such as water, wastewater, power, telecom, and transportation are critical to the development of commercial areas as they are basic needs for new businesses.
 - Determine schedule for service installation.
 - Identify grants/loans and off-site levies for service roll-out.
 - Marketing: let the business community know about new service timelines and completed projects (i.e. Aldersyde Water Project, proposed Volker project).
4. Develop vacant commercial/industrial land
 - Confirm infrastructure and municipal readiness for shovel ready development.
 - Prepare investment profiles and marketing tactics.
 - Execute marketing tactics.
 - Explore the need for a Special Economic Zone, if needed.
 - Investigate opportunities for the 2A corridor between Okotoks and the 552/Highway 2 interchange.
 - Work with TC Energy to find better uses for the MagCan site.
5. Agri-Business and Agri-Tech:
 - Increase private sector investment.
 - Attract value-added processors to the County.
 - Attract Ag-Tech companies to the County.
 - Create partnerships with other Government and Educational entities to enhance the visibility of the County as a premier agri-business hub in Alberta.
6. Logistics and Light Industrial
 - Identify opportunities for new commercial, retail and light manufacturing businesses.
 - Attract private sector investment in the County.
7. Tourism and Film:
 - Create a vision for the Film Industry in Foothills County.
 - Explore partnerships with regional neighbours to create a regional Film Commission.
 - Develop fees and bylaws related to the Film industry.
 - Engage with the Film industry.
 - Promote the County as a premier location for the Film industry.
 - Consider additional incentives for the Film Industry in Foothills County.
 - Conduct an audit of the Tourism assets in Foothills County.
 - Create marketing campaigns to promote Tourism in the County.
 - Develop and understanding of the impact/benefit of day trips to the County versus longer term stays.
8. Housing:
 - With a large gap between the low growth scenario and available land for housing growth, the County should consider identifying a future housing development area.
 - ❑. This area will need servicing. Given issues/concerns with water and wastewater, any development will need to either private or municipal servicing.
9. General Marketing:
 - Conduct a series of general marketing initiatives to increase the visibility of the County and the available industrial/commercial land, these initiatives may include such initiatives as:
 - ❑. Billboards.
 - ❑. Event hosting.

2. Internet advertising.
2. Attraction publications.

Detailed plans are included in this report for each of the nine opportunity areas. Each plan contains a rationale for investment, detailed steps and the competitive advantages that Foothills County may use to execute the plan.

The strategic development process for this strategy entailed the following work:

- Statistical and Trends Analysis: Statistical data from various sources (Federal Census & Alberta Regional Dashboard) painted a portrait of the local social and economic composition, including population, housing, income, education, employment, industries, and occupations.
- Stakeholder Engagement: A SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunity and Threats) was undertaken with various members of Foothills County's Economic Development Committee, Elected Officials, the local businesses community and County Administration. Key themes from these interviews have been reported as part of this report.
- Colliers Quantitative Analysis of County's Value Proposition Study.
- Action Plans: An action plan was developed for each of the best-bet opportunities, including the rationale for investing and detailed directions.

Statistical Analysis:

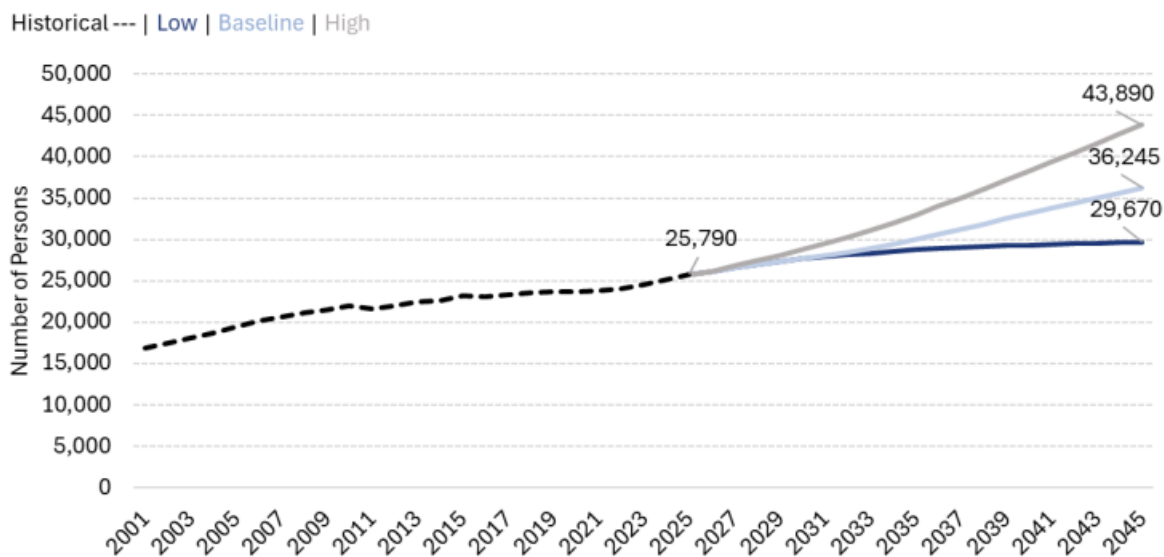
The statistical and trend analysis offers a snapshot of the socio-economic elements of Foothills County. It provides insight on patterns of change and trends identified in relation to demographics, and variables in employment and business characteristics. This section provides the key takeaways from a detailed economic and demographic base analysis of Foothills County, and where necessary comparisons to surrounding areas, including High River, Okotoks, the City of Calgary and Diamond Valley.

Demographics:

Foothills County has an older population compared to Okotoks, Alberta, and Canada with a median age of 44.1 years old. (38 years in Calgary, 38.4 years in Okotoks, 39 years in Alberta & 41.9 years in Canada). The median age in High River is virtually identical to that of Foothills County.

- Historically, Foothills County has grown at a slower rate among comparator communities/municipalities, the Province of Alberta, and Canada.
- Recent growth projections for the population of Foothills County suggests very slow population growth at current levels, as can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Foothills County Projected Population Growth.



Source: Nicholls Applied Management/ILS Technical Growth Study, 2026.

The research conducted by Nicholls/ISL indicates that there are less than 200 lots available for immediate housing development. Assuming an average of 2.7 people per home this projects that available, ready to develop lots would only support a population increase of approximately 500 people. Therefore, there is a big gap between the low growth presented in Figure 1 and the availability of land. Reaching higher growth projections will require additional development lands to be approved.

- The median household income Foothills County is among the highest in the province, and significantly higher than neighbouring communities (\$163,390 – 2023 data).
- Not surprisingly, as the County does not have a major population centre, “Journey to Work” data reveals the County as being a bedroom community for surrounding communities of the City of Calgary, Okotoks and High River.
- The County’s population has a high education rate. Over two-thirds (69.1%) of the population have a Post-Secondary Certificate, Diploma or Degree. In comparison, 57.4% of High River’s population have a similar level of education. This figure is slightly higher than in Okotoks (67.4%) and the Province (64.7%).
- The most common fields of study for those with a post-secondary education in Foothills County are Architecture/Engineering (19.1%), Business Management (14.4%) and Health related fields (11%).

Employment.

The workforce in Foothills County is drawn significantly from the urban centres of Calgary, Okotoks and High River. The County has a similar employment participation rate (67%) to Calgary and Okotoks. In the 2021 federal census, employment in Foothills County was estimated at 13,260. Foothills County is a large net exporter of workers with 38.7% working outside of the County on a regular basis, and an additional 17.1% with “no fixed workplace”, i.e. consultants, building contractors, truck drivers, etc. Additionally, 34.6% of residents work from home, leaving only 8.5% who live and work in the County at a physical location.

Among residents of the County, the largest number of job types are as follows:

- Business, Finance & Administration.
- Trades, Transport & Equipment Operators.
- Sales & Service.
- Natural Resources, Agriculture & Related Industries.

The largest industry sub-sectors by employment in Foothills County are:

- Construction.
- Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services.
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, & Hunting.
- Health Care & Social Assistance.

Normally Professions and Industry Sub-Sectors provide insight into the business activity in a County. However, in the case of Foothills County, some leeway should be given on the Professions category given the large number of commuters in the County.

- The number of registered apprentices has also seen significant growth in the County, rising from 52 in 2011 to 184 in 2024.

Business Characteristics.

According to the Alberta Regional Dashboard, the number of businesses in Foothills County has been steadily increasing from 2018, rising from 565 business to 980 in 2024. County business license data indicates that 1189 business licenses were issued in 2025 (489 of these licenses were for non-resident businesses). This suggests a gap of approximately 280 businesses that may be operating in the County without a business license.

Business incorporations in the County also show steady growth in the last 15 years, rising from an annual rate of 63 in 2011 to 139 in 2025. Most of the businesses (97.8%) in Foothills County are small businesses with less than 50 employees.

Non-Residential Tax Rates:

An analysis of non-residential tax rates reveals that Foothills County’s rate is competitive with other municipalities in the region. The County’s rate compared to the City of Calgary is extremely advantageous.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Foothills County	8.82	8.42	8.76	8.73	8.86
Rocky View County	7.53	7.65	7.60	7.33	7.62
Calgary	15.83	16.51	17.88	18.43	18.36
High River	8.86	8.84	8.4	8.04	7.4
Okotoks	8.02	8.25	8.19	8.57	7.81
Black Diamond	8.54	9.22	8.97	8.74	8.64

Source: Alberta Regional Dashboard ([Alberta Regional Dashboard & Site Selector](#))

The lower non-residential tax rates, combined with lower land costs (\$60,000-\$100,000/acre in Foothills County, \$300,000 in Rocky View County and \$500,000+ in Calgary) suggests an advantage that Foothills County can exploit.

Agriculture:

Agriculture plays a significant role in the business community in Foothills County, highlighted by numerous crop farms, several Cattle feedlot operations, Poultry producers, and a major Cattle processing operation.

- In 2021, almost 500 farms reported the presence of Cattle, a slight decline from the 2011 census.
- However, these farms reported a 32% increase in the number of cattle during the same time period.
- Conversely, the presence of other livestock declined in the same 10-year period (pigs, horses, elk, bison).
- Farms in Foothills County are also major producers of crops with significant acreage being devoted to Barley, Wheat, Canola, and Alfalfa/Alfalfa Mixtures.
- While the presence of greenhouses grew between 2011 and 2021, they still only account for a little over 500,000 sq ft in combined size.
- Innovation is an increasing fact of day-to-day operations for the County’s farming community. Farmers in Foothills County show solid adoption of technology to guide farming decisions. For example:
 - Automated guidance steering systems (auto-steer) – 232 farms.
 - Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping – 108 farms.
 - Variable-rate input application – 139 farms.
 - Drones – 36.
 - Soil sample test – 194.
 - Slow-release fertilizer – 171.
- Additionally, one-in-ten farms in the County are producing renewable energy on site. In 2021, 99 farms produce renewable energy – 91 Solar/10 Wind (this suggests a small overlap with some farms with Solar and Wind). This represents a 54.7% increase from 2016.
- The average age of farm operators in Foothills County continues to increase, rising from 57.2 years in 2011 to 59.4 years in 2021.

Partner Engagement:

Stakeholder engagement helps to understand the economic environment in Foothills County. Qualitative interviews were conducted with members of the Economic Development Committee, elected officials, administration and business owners. It was undertaken to seek input on the strengths and weaknesses of the County's economy, as well as understanding the opportunities and threats for the County. The feedback was gathered from a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis. This analysis was then used to inform the development of Foothills County Economic Development Plan. This section summarizes the feedback from SWOT interviews conducted with 20 people between February and April, 2026.

Following is a summary of what we heard:

SWOT Analysis.

Strengths: What are the strengths of the County from an Economic perspective? (What are we doing well? What key achievements are we most proud of? What can we build on?)

- Available land.
- Large amount of zoned industrial/commercial land.
- Proximity to Calgary.
- Access to Transportation Networks.
- Diverse Commodity Markets.
- Knowledgeable Planning & Development department.

Weaknesses: What are the weaknesses of the County? Where do we need to improve?

- **Competition:** The County faces significant competition from neighbouring communities such as Rocky View County, Calgary, Okotoks and High River. Some of these competitors are better positioned by being shovel-ready and having the necessary services available.
- **Commodity Dependence:** Natural resource and agriculture communities are often vulnerable to commodity price changes, global economic trends and geopolitical issues. As the County has such a high concentration in specific agricultural sectors there is a related risk. Diversification may need to be explored to reduce the County's exposure to commodity markets.
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** Specifically related to water, wastewater, and Internet.
- **Housing:** The County has a plethora of higher end housing. Housing will be needed at multiple price-points to provide employers with the necessary workforce.
- **Workforce:** The County relies heavily on workforces from Calgary, High River and Okotoks. Actions could be undertaken to reduce this reliance.
- **Lack of major developments (other than Cargill):** The County needs to prove it can effectively plan and permit large developments. A poor experience from one large developer could scare off future development.
- **Streamlining the planning process.** More than half of businesses spoken to in the SWOT process indicate some frustration with the County's planning department, either difficulty in getting plans approved, excessive enforcement of bylaws, or an excessive timeline for getting plans improved. While these findings should be taken with a grain of salt as many of the businesses spoken to did not have experience with

other governments in different geographies. However, there is always room for improvement and there are actions that could be implemented to ensure the County is a business-friendly location.

- Lack of zoned properties for commercial and industrial uses (permitted vs. discretionary uses).

Opportunities: What opportunities does Foothills County have?

- Agri-Business and Agri-Tech:
- Logistics & Warehousing:
- Film:
- Tourism:
- Ability to help local businesses.

Threats: What threats do we need to be aware of? How will we recognize and mitigate these threats?

- Lack of Housing & local labour
- Electorate/Growth Concerns – opposition to growth.
- Bio-Hazards, i.e. Covid or Agriculture related.

Building the Foundation:

Several core components must be established to strengthen Foothills County’s commitment to maintaining a robust economic development program. These foundational elements equip staff with the tools needed to respond efficiently and accurately to investors who expect prompt and reliable service. Successful economic development efforts build on the community’s existing assets and strengths, while fostering strong relationships among key influencers and decision-makers. When local businesses and collaborative partners have confidence in the program, it becomes easier to launch growth-focused initiatives and attract new investment.

Direction and Detailed Steps:

ACTION	RATIONALE
<p>Ensure fundamental policies and protocols are in place to activate economic development services.</p>	<p>Develop communication and rapport with all municipal departments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Map out gatekeepers of information, resources and approval within the County’s elected and administrative organizational structure. ○ Schedule frequent formal and informal conversations with appropriate municipal staff and elected officials. ○ Build rapport and trust among peers and others by offering help, support, and information. ○ Encourage a team approach to review new development opportunities and challenges, and to identify and nurture prospects. <p>Align intentions and resources with others to achieve results of mutual benefit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strengthen dialogue and cooperation with neighbouring communities, to develop a better understanding of joint opportunities. ○ Consider cooperative initiatives with regional alliances and provincial associations.
<p>Invest the time and resources to make economic development tools available to staff.</p>	<p>Activate and populate a customer relationship management database for email communication and lead tracking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop an Economic Development website ● Review Economic Development website of other communities in Alberta and implement necessary changes/ideas. ● Map commercial and industrial properties on the Economic Development website with GIS mapping technology linked to detailed online information. ● Improve Foothills County presence on social media, specifically LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, Google, YouTube, etc. Engage with followers and add images and video on social media feeds. ● Explore retaining the assistance of lead generation companies and connect with Government offices that generate leads.
<p>Implement a Business Retention & Expansion program involving outreach, business visits, and follow-up.</p>	<p>Arrange visits with major employers and high-growth businesses at an average rate of 6-8 per month to understand their opportunities, development plans, and challenges</p> <p>Follow up with businesses to provide value, information on funding programs, or other resources</p> <p>Anticipate the needs of expanding businesses and encourage dialogue with any regulatory process</p>

	<p>Populate a confidential database with companies' contact information, key principals, number of employees, corporate ownership and other critical information</p> <p>Act as a facilitator to direct challenged businesses to the appropriate potential source of a solution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fix bottlenecks and pinch points to improve customer service excellence. <p>Implement a business satisfaction survey – to be conducted every 4 years.</p>
<p>Share intelligence internally and provide professional customer service and client aftercare.</p>	<p>Utilize the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) to share intelligence (eg meetings with potential investors and developers) across Municipal departments, subject to confidentiality protocols.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate staff to funnel updates into the CRM from Economic Development, Public Works, Finance & Administration, Reeve's Office, Administrative Staff, Committee Members, • Ensure Foothills County customer service representatives understand lead handling protocols.
<p>Coordinate ongoing economic development marketing aimed at potential investors and local businesses.</p>	<p>Create a marketing plan for all advertising, promotional, public relations, media relations, online publishing, social media, and stakeholder communication platforms and channels.</p> <p>Post news, events, properties for sale, and business announcements on the Economic Development website and share with associated media/related organizations (Chamber and Community Futures).</p> <p>Develop a quarterly/bi-annual email newsletter and share it through the CRM database and via social media.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage followers on Social Media to explore the economic development website, opt in to the CRM and subscribe to the email newsletter. • Ensure the latest information about Foothills County investment opportunities is shared with lead generators and economic development agencies. • Invite employers and entrepreneurs to spread positive messages about the region to their suppliers and clients. • Follow up with potential developers and investors to update the CRM on progress and to gauge the level of service Foothills County is providing. • Review marketing and promotional outcomes annually.

Operational Excellence:

Several core components must be established to strengthen Foothills County’s commitment to maintaining a robust economic development program. These foundational elements equip staff with the tools needed to respond efficiently and accurately to investors who expect prompt and reliable service. Successful economic development efforts build on the community’s existing assets and strengths, while fostering strong relationships among key influencers and decision-makers. When local businesses and collaborative partners have confidence in the program, it becomes easier to launch growth-focused initiatives and attract new investment.

Direction and Detailed Steps:

ACTION	RATIONALE
Investigate AI for Planning	Recently, the City of Edmonton has introduced AI in their approvals process for new developments. The purpose of this is to speed up the process.
Sell Municipal Reserve Land – slowly, or strategically w/caveats.	Identify Municipal Reserve land that could be sold.
Buy large tracts for future development	By buying large tracts in the Aldersyde Business Corridor and Foothills Crossing the County gains leverage over what sort of development happens and when it happens.
More “Permitted Use” from “Discretionary”	Conduct a review of permitted and discretionary use business types for the Aldersyde Business Corridor and Foothills Crossing land use areas.
Improve investor confidence	Specifically related to increasing the number of approved uses in Aldersyde Business Corridor
Planning & Development Focus Groups/IDI’s	Conduct focus groups or In-Depth Interviews with businesses that have recently been through the Planning & Development process.
Planning & Development website updates	Ensure that the planning and development section of the County’s website is updated frequently.
Concierge Service	Consider building a concierge service for new business developments in the County. This dedicated team will provide business developers with front of queue access.
Future planning	Consider additional commercial/retail area + industry area.
Highway 2A North of Okotoks	Investigate a SWOT Analysis for this area. Highway 2A between Okotoks and Highway 2/H552 overpass represent potential from Highway Commercial perspective. The volume of traffic in this area makes it a prime development opportunity for the County.
Proactive Planning Initiatives	Investigate proactively adopting Area Structure Plans, Outline Plans, Land Use Designations to facilitate/encourage development in appropriate locations.

Investment Attraction Plan by Sector.

Investment Attraction Plan for Agri-Business & Ag-Tech.

Foothills County will position itself as a Western Canadian hub for innovative, sustainable, and commercially competitive agriculture, integrating advanced technology, value-added processing, and environmentally responsible practices.

Strategic Objectives

1. Increase private-sector investment in agri-business and ag-tech by 20–30% over five years.
2. Expand value-added agriculture including processing, packaging, bio-processing, and supply-chain logistics.
3. Accelerate ag-tech innovation by attracting companies working in automation, robotics, data analytics, water-tech, genetics, and climate-smart technology.
4. Support local farm and ranch diversification through technology adoption and new market opportunities.
5. Enhance employment opportunities in both primary agriculture and high-tech ag services.

Geographical & Infrastructure Advantages

Foothills County has several advantages in targeting the Agri-business and Ag-Tech sectors, most notably.

- Proximity to Calgary, an international logistics hub with a growing tech ecosystem.
- Access to Highway networks connecting to major Canadian and U.S. markets.
- High-quality agricultural land suitable for crops, livestock, and specialty products.
- Access to water infrastructure, ag research institutions, and an experienced ag workforce.

Economic & Regulatory Advantages

- Competitive land costs for rural commercial development.
- Business-friendly municipal leadership open to innovation and commercial growth.
- Opportunities for customized zoning for agri-business and ag-tech facilities.
- Strong legacy of family farming, ranching, and commodity production.

Innovation & Market Advantages

- Growing market demand for:
 - Precision agriculture solutions.
 - Greenhouse and controlled-environment agriculture.
 - Carbon reduction and regenerative farming.
 - Local food production and supply-chain resilience.
 - Agri-tourism and farm-to-table ventures.

Target Investment Sectors for Agri-Business and Ag-Tech

A. Agri-Business

1. **Value-added processing**
 - Meat processing and specialty protein plants.
 - Grain milling, seed cleaning, malt, and feed manufacturing.
 - Specialty foods, ready-to-eat products, artisan goods.

2. Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA)

- Greenhouses.
- Vertical farms.
- Hydronic & aquaponic operations.

3. Bio-products & Environmental Solutions

- Biochar production.
- Biomass energy.
- Waste-to-value technologies.

4. Agri-logistics & Distribution

- Cold chain facilities.
- Produce aggregation hubs.
- Packaging and supply-chain tech.

B. Ag-Tech

1. Precision agriculture and automation

- Sensors, drones, mapping systems.
- Robotics for livestock and crop management.

2. AI & data platforms

- Farm management software.
- Predictive analytics and yield optimization systems.

3. Climate-smart and regenerative tech

- Soil health monitoring.
- Water conservation and irrigation tech.

4. Genetics & livestock technologies

- Selective breeding tech.
- Animal health monitoring systems.

Directions and Activities.

DIRECTION	ACTIVITIES
Create a Foothills Ag-Opportunity Portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sector profiles. ● Land inventory. ● Available utilities and infrastructure. ● Incentives and permitting processes.
Brand Positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Foothills County: Where Agriculture Meets Innovation.” ● Focus on sustainability, land quality, and proximity to Calgary’s tech resources.
Targeted Outreach Campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attend at least 3 ag-business/tech trade shows (e.g., Agri-Tech NA, World Ag Expo) each year. ● Direct outreach to companies in Alberta, Western Canada, and the northern U.S. ● Partnerships with Invest Alberta, Calgary Economic Development, Alberta Innovates.
Digital Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tailored investment microsite. ● Virtual tours of industrial lands and ag-innovation zones.
Zoning for Agri-Industrial and Ag-Tech Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pre-zoned lands for quick setup. ● Cluster development to encourage synergy among tenants
Fast-Track Permitting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dedicated “Investment Concierge” service. ● Clear, predictable timelines.
Tax Incentives and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rebates for new technologies or sustainability infrastructure. ● Property tax reductions.

Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore potential partnerships with Government and Education entities for related projects in the County.
Infrastructure Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water for large agri-business facilities. • Pilot project support for experimental ag-tech projects. • Broadband and digital connectivity for precision agriculture. • Road improvements around development clusters.

3 Year Action Plan

Year 1

- Develop investment brand and promotional materials.
- Identify and prepare land inventory.
- Begin targeted marketing to ag-tech and agri-business firms.

Year 2

- Create Ag-Technology Demonstration Zone.
- Host an annual Foothills Ag-Innovation Summit.
- Secure one major value-added processor.
- Expand broadband and infrastructure upgrades.
- Establish partnerships with relevant post-secondary institutions and industry groups.
- Attract two ag-tech pilot companies.

Year 3

- Launch Agri-Business Accelerator Fund.
- Market cluster development success stories.
- Support expansions of existing businesses.
- Evaluate economic impact.
- Scale successful programs.
- Expand policies to attract international investment.

KPIs (Key Performance Indicators)

Economic

- Number of new agri-business and ag-tech investments.
- Job creation and workforce participation.
- Increase in assessed value of commercial agri-industrial properties.

Innovation

- Number of tech pilot projects hosted.
- Partnerships with research institutions.
- Adoption of precision agriculture among local producers.

Marketing & Outreach

- Investor inquiries generated.
- Event participation.
- Website traffic and digital engagement.

Investment Attraction Plan for Light Industrial & Logistics

Foothills County is strategically positioned as one of Alberta’s most attractive locations for light industrial, warehousing, distribution, and logistics operations. Situated directly south of Calgary—an international logistics hub—and connected to major transportation corridors, the County offers abundant industrial-zoned land, competitive taxes, efficient permitting, and access to a skilled workforce.

Foothills County offers direct access to Highway 2 / QEII (Alberta’s busiest trade corridor connecting to the U.S. border) and indirectly, the CANAMEX trade corridor. It also offers proximity to Calgary International Airport (YYC) — a major cargo airport and global logistics hub. Furthermore, the Lethbridge-Calgary train line runs through the County. Given the County’s location, next to Calgary, it is only a short trip to nearby intermodal facilities.

The County’s designated industrial/commercial areas have large parcels suitable for build-to-suit, campus-style developments, and flex industrial uses. Additionally, the road network has the ability to accommodate heavy vehicle traffic and large-format buildings (100,000+ sq ft).

Strategic Objectives:

1. Increase private-sector investment in Light Industrial & Logistics sectors.
2. Enhance employment opportunities for those that live in the County.

Target Sectors.

Logistics & Distribution	Light Manufacturing	Food Processing & Cold Chain	Transportation, Trucking, and Fleet Services
E-commerce fulfillment centers	Modular construction and prefabricated buildings	Specialty food processing	Truck terminals
Temperature-controlled warehousing	Metal fabrication	Beverage, dairy, and protein processors	Maintenance and repair facilities
Last-mile delivery hubs	Plastics and composites	Cold storage logistics facilities	Commercial vehicle storage
Regional distribution centers	Agricultural technology equipment		

Investment Attraction Strategy.

Direction and activities.

DIRECTION	ACTIVITIES
Brand Positioning: “Calgary’s High Access Industrial Gateway”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a targeted Investment Prospectus for Light Industrial & Logistics. • Develop sector-specific web content, dashboards, and land inventory maps. • Create investor decks highlighting shovel-ready sites. • Run digital campaigns targeting logistics firms in Western Canada and the U.S.
Investor Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend logistics, industrial development, and real estate conferences (e.g., ICSC, NAIOP).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct direct outreach to site selectors, developers, and brokers. • Partner with Calgary Economic Development and regional agencies for dual marketing. • Host annual Industrial Developer Roundtable.
Partnership/ Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large landholders and industrial developers. • Calgary logistics companies seeking expansion. • Alberta Transportation for corridor improvements. • Utility providers to ensure scalable capacity for growth. • Attend at least 2 local trade shows per year.
Incentive Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider property tax rebates for job-creating projects. • Fast-track permitting for major developments. • Off-site levy discounts in targeted areas. • Infrastructure cost-sharing for catalyst projects.

Success Metrics & KPIs

9.1 Business Outcomes

- Number of new industrial/logistics firms established.
- Number of business expansions.
- Total square footage of new industrial development.
- Capital investment attracted.

9.2 Economic Impact

- Job creation.
- Property tax revenue growth.
- Increase in serviced industrial land absorption.

9.3 Engagement Metrics

- Leads generated through marketing campaigns.
- Site selector engagements.
- Developer partnerships secured.

3-Year Action Plan (High Level)

Year 1 – Foundation & Positioning

- Develop full investment prospectus
- Launch digital marketing and site selector outreach.
- Map full industrial land inventory.
- Identify priority infrastructure needs.

Year 2 – Expansion & Promotion

- Target logistics and light manufacturing firms.
- Promote shovel-ready sites.
- Attend key conferences/trade shows.
- Initiate infrastructure upgrades.

Year 3 – Consolidation & Growth

- Secure anchor industrial tenants.
- Strengthen developer ecosystem.
- Implement incentive tools if required.
- Review KPIs and update strategy.

Investment Attraction Plan for the Tourism Industry

Strategic Objectives

Foothills County is uniquely positioned as a gateway tourism destination between urban and mountain experiences—bordering Calgary and Kananaskis Country. The strategy focuses on attracting private investment into experiential tourism, accommodations, agri-tourism, and outdoor recreation infrastructure. The goal of the investment attraction plan for the Tourism Industry is to increase tourism-related investment, visitor spending, and overnight stays while preserving rural character.

Foothills County is uniquely positioned from a Tourism perspective due to:

- Proximity to 1.4M+ residents in Calgary metro area.
- High traffic corridors - Highway 2 & Highway 22 (Cowboy Trail).
- Scenic foothills landscapes and ranching heritage.
- Close to global draw: Banff National Park.
- Spruce Meadows and other world class equine venues.

Current Tourism trends that can be leverage in the investment attraction plan include:

- Experiential travel (authentic, local experiences).
- Eco-tourism and sustainability.
- Short-stay/weekend rural escapes – close to home.
- Film Tourism.
- Food and Beverage Tourism.
- Recreational Tourism (Equine, Western, Sports).

Target Sectors

The Tourism investment attraction plan will focus on the following Sectors.

Unique Accommodations	Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure	Agri-Tourism & Culinary Tourism	Film & Creative Tourism	Rural Commercial Nodes
Boutique lodges, eco-lodges, glamping	Trail systems Regional Fieldhouse	Farm stays, U-Pick Experiences	Studio spaces, filming infrastructure	Destination retail clusters
Ranch stays, luxury cabins	Adventure parks (ziplines, climbing)	Distilleries, wineries, farm to table experiences	Visitor experiences tied to filming locations	Artisan markets Farmers Markets
Wellness Retreats/Spas	River-based tourism (rafting and fishing)	Culinary trails and seasonal festivals		Tourism-related mixed-use developments

Investment Attraction Strategies

DIRECTION	ACTIVITIES
Proactive Investor Targeting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Targeting boutique hotel developers. 2. Targeting spa and retreat developers. 3. Build database of potential targets.
Marketing & Promotion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dedicated tourism investment website. 2. Participation at trade shows. 3. Digital campaigns targeting W.Canada and US investors.
Partnerships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborate with Travel Alberta & Tourism Calgary. 2. Work with Indigenous communities on cultural tourism.
Incentive & Policy Tools	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fast-track permitting for Tourism Projects. 2. Consider tax incentive or development fee reductions. 3. Identify Tourism development zones. 4. Consider Private-Public Partnerships.
Investment Readiness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pre-zone key tourism lands. 2. Develop shovel ready sites with necessary infrastructure (roads, broadband, and utilities).

Ideas for Private Public Partnership Projects.

1. Foothills Eco-Resort.
 - High-end sustainable lodge near Kananaskis access or anywhere along Cowboy Trail.
 - Year-round appeal (spa, winter activities).
2. Cowboy Trail Experience Hub.
 - Cultural center + events + accommodations.
 - Celebrates ranching heritage.
3. Agri-Tourism Trail Network.
 - Linked farms, breweries, and markets.
 - Seasonal events (harvest festivals).
4. Film Tourism Route
 - Tours tied to productions filmed in High River & region.
5. Golf Route.
 - There are a significant number of Golf Courses in the Foothills County area.

5 Year Action Plan.

Phase 1 (0–12 months)

- Develop branding + investment materials

- Identify priority sites
- Begin investor outreach

Phase 2 (1–3 years)

- Secure anchor investments.
- Launch pilot tourism projects.
- Expand marketing internationally.

Phase 3 (3–5 years)

- Cluster development (agri-tourism, accommodations)
- Increase overnight stays significantly.
- Establish Foothills as a recognized destination.

Key Performance Indicators.

- Number of new tourism investments
- Total capital investment (\$)
- Visitor numbers & overnight stays
- Tourism employment growth
- Average visitor spending

Conclusion.

- Foothills County has a rare opportunity to become Alberta's premier rural tourism investment destination by leveraging its location, authenticity, and natural assets. With targeted investment attraction and strategic partnerships, the region can build a sustainable, high-value tourism economy.

Investment Attraction Plan for Film Sector:

Foothills County is uniquely positioned to become a premier film production destination in Alberta due to its experience, diverse landscapes, proximity to Calgary’s film workforce and studios, and competitive cost environment. This Investment Attraction Plan outlines strategic actions to attract film and television productions, grow local film-related businesses, and strengthen long-term creative-industry capacity.

Strategic Objectives:

1. Increase film production spending within Foothills County.
2. Attract investment from production companies, studios, and film-related service providers.
3. Grow local workforce capacity through partnerships with industry and post-secondary institutions.
4. Build a film-friendly reputation grounded in efficiency, hospitality, and regulatory clarity.
5. Enhance economic diversification and support local businesses through film-related activity.

Marketing: Foothills County should position itself as:

“Alberta’s (Western Canada’s?) premier natural-set film hub—small-town, scenic, and production-ready.”

Key Advantages

- Immediate access to Calgary (major crew base, equipment houses, the Calgary Film Centre).
- Varied film-friendly landscapes: ranchlands, foothills, forests, rivers, heritage towns, rural highways.
- Competitive permitting environment relative to other jurisdictions.
- Established reputation following productions filmed in Southern Alberta (e.g., major Hollywood and streaming projects).
- Lower-cost accommodations and services compared to urban cores.

Target Markets

- Major U.S. film and streaming studios (Netflix, Amazon, Paramount, Disney).
- Canadian independent productions.
- Commercials, reality TV, and documentary producers.
- Location scouts, location managers, and production managers.

Direction and detailed steps:

DIRECTION	ACTIVITIES
Direct Film Production:	Encourage productions to film on location through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenic rural vistas • Heritage and ranch properties • Small towns and hamlets for period or “Middle America” looks • Protected natural environments ideal for outdoor shooting.
Film Infrastructure Investments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary and permanent set construction yards • Rural soundstages or “pop-up” studios • Props, set dec, and costume rental facilities • Transportation hubs for trucks, trailers, and equipment storage
Support Services	Attract businesses that service film: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catering, accommodation, RV rentals • Specialty livestock, horse wranglers, stunt coordinators

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy equipment, generators, construction supplies • Security, traffic control, and logistics services
Tourism & Legacy Projects	<p>Use productions to enhance tourism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film-inspired travel routes • Set-visit partnerships • Local business promotions featuring “Filmed in Foothills County” branding
Develop a Film-Friendly Business Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlined permitting with guaranteed turnaround times. • Publish a clear Film Production Guide outlining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ contact information ○ regulations ○ permit fees ○ insurance requirements ○ parking, road closures, drone rules • Appoint a Film Liaison Officer within economic development.
Build a Location Library & Marketing Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionally photograph public and private locations: ranches, heritage barns, industrial areas, bridges, river valleys, hamlets. • Integrate into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alberta Film Commission library ○ LocationsHub ○ County’s economic development website • Create digital one-page sheets for “signature locations”.
Strengthen Industry Partnerships	<p>Collaborate with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberta Film Commission • Calgary Film Centre • ACTRA, IATSE, DGC • Post-secondary institutions (SAIT, MRU) for training • Local chambers, tourism associations. • Host annual Film Industry Familiarization Tours (FAM tours) for scouts and producers. • Attend at least one local trade show per year.
Incentives & Support Programs	<p>While the Province offers robust tax credits, Foothills County can provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fee reductions or waivers for long-stay productions • Preferred vendor lists to support local purchasing • Fast-track approvals for large productions • “Film Welcome Package” with local contacts, maps, emergency services info.
Workforce & Training Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support short-term boot camps and micro-credentials for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ production assistants ○ grips and electricians ○ set construction ○ art department <p>Facilitate networking between industry and local residents/businesses.</p>
Brand Foothills County as a Filming Destination	<p>Marketing tactics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated web page: “Film Foothills” • Social media showcasing behind-the-scenes snapshots • Branded signage at major filming sites • Case studies of successful productions • Tradeshow attendance (AFCI Week, Banff Media Festival).

Community Engagement Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate residents about economic benefits (hotel stays, catering, property rentals). • Develop a Community Filming FAQ to address noise, traffic, privacy, and compensation. • Build a database of film-friendly landowners. • Set guidelines for respectful filming to maintain strong community relations.
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Implementation Timeline

Year 1.

- Build filming guide, website, and branding.
- Create location library.
- Begin outreach to scouts and studios.

Year 2.

- Host Familiarization “FAM” tour.
- Launch community engagement campaign.
- Seek partnerships for training and infrastructure.
- Market through industry channels.

Year 3.

- Hire Film Liaison & Tourism Officer.
- Evaluate need for additional incentives.
- Support new local film service businesses.
- Track economic impacts and refine strategy.

Key Performance Indicators

Short-term (1–2 years)

- 10% increase in number of productions filming in the county.
- Creation of a film location library.
- Establishment of film liaison officer role.
- Completion of FAM tour.

Mid-term (3–5 years)

- Attract at least 2 film-related service businesses.
- Secure one major feature film or series per year filming in Foothills County.
- Document increases in local spending and business utilization.

Long-term (5+ years)

- Development of permanent or semi-permanent film infrastructure.
- Recognition as a top film destination in Western Canada.
- Sustained annual growth of film-related economic impact.

Conclusion: With targeted investment attraction strategies, Foothills County can leverage its natural beauty, proximity to Calgary’s film ecosystem, and supportive business environment to become a highly competitive filming destination. By implementing this plan, the County can increase economic diversification, attract new investment, create local jobs, and enhance its reputation across the North American film industry.

Long-Term Consideration: Develop a Foothills Film Commission that includes Okotoks, High River and Foothills County. Use Alberta Community Partnerships (and other sources) for initial position funding.

General Marketing:

A series of general marketing initiatives will be needed to improve the visibility of Foothills County among the business community. While it is well known among Council and selected members of the business community that the County has significant light industrial/commercial land, it is not believed that this knowledge extends to the wider business community. Time should be spent brainstorming how to message the wider business community about the available land in the Aldersyde Business Corridor and Foothills Crossing.

For example:

- Billboard (made of wood) signs along Highway 2 identifying the Aldersyde Business Corridor and Foothills Crossing.
- Billboard (official Pattison/Far West) – alongside Highway 2 in a high visibility location. Potentially on land owned by the County.
- Use the “Welcome to Foothills County” signs to promote the County, i.e. hang “investfoothills.ca”
- State of the Economy breakfast with leading Foothills County businesses (bring in speaker from Credit Union/Western Financial).
- High River Rodeo has a VIP section/boxes – use that to host leading prospects.
- Purchase Google Ads to showcase the Aldersyde Business Corridor and Foothills Crossing.
- Create a Foothills County “Fact Guide” to showcase the County, Key Stats, Available land, etc. The publication would be left at key locations in the County – Golf Courses, County office, Rec Centre, Hotels, Rec Centres, etc.
- Testimonials – with several large projects currently at the planning stage, testimonials should be considered from these proponents.