

Better. Realized.



Brooks Region
Economic Development
Strategic Plan
2022-2025



Welcome.

In the Brooks Region, we believe in working together to move forward – this could not be more apparent than in our regional approach to economic development. Traditional economic development activities include exploring processes and policies to improve the economic, political, and social well-being of a community and its people. While this work is being done, we in the Brooks Region want to take our approach further. We want to build relationships, share our success, lift each other up, and open our arms to new opportunities.

Essentially, we want to help. We want to help industry, businesses, and people to realize that they can be better in the Brooks Region.



The most successful economic development strategies are comprehensive and coherent. Strategic initiatives are intricately linked together while operating in tandem to achieve the goals established by leaders. The Brooks Region Economic Development Strategic Plan was developed with this structure in mind – celebrate our past successes, build momentum, and move forward together.

The strategies within this document come from a number of sources and perspectives. This plan is a compilation of direction from elected officials, feedback from staff members, input gathered from local businesses or stakeholders, and data gathered from multiple professional studies and reports. The strategy has been created, now it's time to execute.

The implementation and action plan forming part of this document takes the strategic plan off the shelf and into the hands of staff and stakeholders. Timelines and priorities are drafted so that we can achieve results, collaboratively, for the betterment of the Brooks Region.

The following pages explore Who We Are, Where We've Been, and How We'll Make Things Better.

Consider "Better".

Is it new investment opportunities? A change of pace?

A family-friendly community? Daily adventures?

It is each of these, and more.

In the Brooks Region, we realize "better" every day.

**Brooks Region.
Better. Realized.**





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Who We Are.

The Brooks Region is our home and playground.

It is our workshop and boardroom.

It is a community of choice for those looking to forge strong social connections and reach new economic heights.





Who We Are.

Located in the heart of the Canadian Prairies, the Brooks Region is in Southeast Alberta and is home to approximately 25,000 people. Our Region is bordered by the County of Newell and includes the urban municipalities of Brooks, Bassano, Duchess and Rosemary.

The Brooks Region is who we are. We are thoughtful. We are consistent. We are disciplined. We are passionate. To build ourselves up and keep moving forward will demand much of us. Every day, we will live our vision and values and work towards the Brooks Region's mission and purpose.



Our Promise.

The Brooks Region is founded on a promise.

A promise of independence, of industry, of opportunity. We carry it forward from those who came before us. We live it every day. Though we each find ourselves here for our own reason, we're united as stewards of this place and its promise.

Our promise sets us apart from our competition. In the Brooks Region, we offer the best of both worlds. At work, business owners and investors draw upon our economic vitality, our proximity and connectivity, our primary industries, and our market size to realize their potential. At home, residents are supported by our small-town values, quality of life, affordability and access to services to realize a well-balanced life rooted in community.







Competitive Advantages.

In the Brooks Region, we offer the best of both worlds. At work, business owners and investors draw upon our economic vitality, our proximity and connectivity, our primary industries, and our market size to realize their potential. At home, residents are supported by our small-town values, quality of life, affordability and access to services to realize a well-balanced life rooted in community. There are so many advantages to living and working here, and we're proud to share them.

Transportation Network

The Brooks Region is readily accessible by Canada's major east-west transport route (Highway 1 - Trans Canada), and north via Highway 36 to connect the Brooks Region to northern Alberta oilsands. The mainline of the Canadian Pacific Railway runs through the heart of our Region and there are also two airstrips located within our borders.

Land Availability

The Brooks Region has an abundance of affordable, available land, ready for your next big project. Each partner municipality has different opportunities to develop residential, commercial and industrial land, some of which is already fully serviced.

High Speed Internet Connectivity

Whether it's the municipally owned high speed fibre optic network, BrooksNET, or the EID-Net that uses advanced wireless technology to bring internet to the rural areas of the Brooks Region, we've got amazing connections. Massive investments in infrastructure proves our dedication to the future of this Region.



Competitive Advantages.

Availability of Water

Whether its irrigation water delivered by the amazing Eastern Irrigation District (EID), or treated water delivered to every corner of the Brooks Region by the Newell Regional Services Corp. (NRSC), we've got your water needs covered. We can more than support residential, processing, industrial and agricultural growth. Come see the wonders that water can work.

Cost of Living

A sustainable local economy exists when residents are able to meet their basic human needs for survival without facing financial hardships. From a community perspective, local businesses are strong and successful, the cost of living is appropriate, and diverse jobs are available for people with differing levels of skill, training and education.

Supportive Government

Government officials in the Brooks Region support economic development initiatives and are forward thinking professionals. Our mindset is not to say "No," but rather, "Let's find a way to make that work." As stewards of the Brooks Region, we are clear and concise. We get to the point so we can get things done. We are welcoming, friendly and inviting.

Quality of Life

People have been flocking to Alberta for years to capitalize on incredible job opportunities, the natural beauty, the attractive pace of life and the opportunities and resources for families. And guess what? People that come to our Region stay in our Region; over 56% of residents have lived here for longer than five years. They come here, they love it, and they stay.



Where We've Been.

We're optimistic. We're bold. We're up early and we're up late, we've been working hard to get things done.

Pour yourself a coffee and make your mark.

It's time you realized what better looks like.





Our Foundation.

Strategic Planning.

The elected officials and staff in the Brooks Region believe an economic development program should focus on growth, development, and forward progress, all of which lay the groundwork for a prosperous future. The strategic economic development plan and workplan will provide staff with direction for action and tactics for achieving goals and priorities.

Our Purpose.

We steward the economic promise of the Brooks Region. We will leverage our position to attract new residents and investors to the region, to grow our economy, and keep it strong and healthy for future generations.

Our Vision.

The Brooks Region is a community of choice for those looking to build strong social connections and scale new economic heights. We will sustain and grow our economy while welcoming people from Canada and beyond to help realize the promise of the Brooks Region.

Our Mission.

We connect residents and investors to the promise of the Brooks Region through advocacy, support, and cooperation. As stewards of the promise, we work to attract, retain, and grow business in the Brooks Region. We offer the support to grow, the strength to lead.

Our Values.

The Brooks Region is founded on values guided by our history of blue-collar work and small-town life. We are industrious and independent, yet welcoming and helpful. We are resilient and dependable. We are true to our roots, and stewards of the gifts left to us by our predecessors.



Working Together.

Brooks Region Economic Development initiatives are overseen by a Joint Services Committee that is comprised of elected officials of each of the municipalities in the Region. The municipal partners consist of the Town of Bassano, Villages of Duchess and Rosemary, City of Brooks and County of Newell.

The Economic Development Team consists of City of Brooks staff members and stakeholders from partner organizations such as the Newell Regional Tourism Association and Community Futures Entre Corp. Team members are responsible for coordinating the regional economic development efforts and implementing activities that have been approved through the budget that has been allocated for that purpose.

Funding for these economic development initiatives comes from the County of Newell and City of Brooks as a 50/50 cost share. Annual budgets are developed and approved each year with input and consultation from all municipal partners.



Our Stakeholders.

Our primary internal stakeholders include those individuals, groups, and organizations that oversee (and deliver) messaging in the Brooks Region. These include, but are not limited to: political representation in the City of Brooks, the Town of Bassano, the Villages of Rosemary and Duchess, and the County of Newell, and economic development staff located throughout the Region.

Our secondary stakeholders are those in the Region who we partner and collaborate with, but their work is not explicitly directed by the Brooks Region. Secondary stakeholders include the Brooks and District Chamber of Commerce, the Brooks Region Tourism Association, the Eastern Irrigation District, Business Revitalization Zones, Agricultural Societies, Community Futures Entre Corp, and the Palliser Economic Partnership.



Looking Back.

In March 2019, the Joint Services Committee came together and drafted an updated Strategic Plan which included three Strategic Focus Areas. These Focus Areas and the associated workplan were meant to maintain the momentum achieved over the previous three years and help sustain and create economic growth in the Region. Those three areas were focused on by staff throughout 2019-2021 and special projects were developed for each initiative. Here's what we worked on:

Partnerships & Collaboration.

The Joint Shared Services Committee works with regional partners in the local government, non-profit and private sector industries to achieve shared goals for the Brooks Region.

Special Projects: Development Process Streamlining; reduce barriers to development and investment; work with the Eastern Irrigation District (EID) to achieve shared goals; leverage our assets (water, land, recreation spaces) together to provide more opportunities for advancement; seek new funding avenues for economic development programming; and host regular Regional Economic Development & Tourism Stakeholder meetings.





Looking Back.

Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E).

Expansion of existing industries accounts for 60-80% of future job growth. This is why existing businesses in the Region need to be engaged and supported so they can succeed and grow. Continue to work with entrepreneurs and businesses to learn obstacles, create programming to overcome obstacles and foster growth.

Special Projects: Use Newell Proud as a shop local and business engagement tool; foster and support entrepreneurs; PowerUp Conference held each year; marketing support and training offered; Business to Business networking opportunities created; assist businesses with online sales; perform a value chain assessment for major businesses and groups; create a beautification program; create a formal BRE program; perform bi-annual surveys; provide NewGrow funding for businesses; and perform a Labour Market Study.

Investment Readiness and Attraction.

Staff continued the work being done to make the Brooks Region ready and attractive for new investment in the large scale and small scale. The Region has many competitive advantages that need to be promoted and leveraged so investors and developers realize the potential of the Brooks Region.

Special Projects: Identify target sectors and industries based on potential for growth, impact, and investment likelihood; create lists of target businesses, investors and developers; create investment profiles and marketing materials for target sectors; create a marketing plan to build relationships with target sectors; host familiarization tours; attend trade shows and conference; direct marketing; create a "Businesses We Need" or "Investment Opportunities" section on the website.

How We'll Make Things Better.

Let's build on the momentum that's been generated in the Brooks Region. Let's take more steps forward towards realizing the promise our communities have to offer.

Let's get to work.



Strategic Focus Areas.

**Business Retention
& Expansion.**

**Workforce
Development.**



Marketing.

Tourism.



Business Retention & Expansion.

Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) is the process of supporting and nurturing current businesses within the Region. Since 80% to 90% of economic growth comes from the expansion of existing businesses, the importance of a strong BR&E program becomes obvious.

Create a formal BR&E Plan

- ▶ Perform surveys regularly (bi or tri annually)
- ▶ Create a welcome and after care program for new businesses
- ▶ Perform exit interview where possible

Business supports and programs offered with partner organizations where possible

- ▶ Digitization assistance
- ▶ Succession planning for businesses
- ▶ Use Newell Proud as a shop local program
- ▶ Business Spotlights
- ▶ Business Beautification Loans/Grants
- ▶ Power Up Conference
- ▶ NewGrow
- ▶ Mentorship program
- ▶ Local Innovation Network

Business to Business networking sessions

- ▶ Import replacement as one theme for discussion
- ▶ Partner with the Brooks & District Chamber of Commerce

Value chain assessment with JBS Food Canada Inc.

Workforce Development.

Labour force is one of the most important variables in economic development as it forms a basis for economic development strategy. Recognizing the linkage between labour capacity and economic development, the Region must work to ensure there is a sufficient workforce to support existing businesses as well as expanding and new businesses.

Implement recommendations from the Workforce Development Strategy

- ▶ Create a Workforce Development consortium to jointly address and move this strategy forward
- ▶ Keep building the Brooks Region brand
- ▶ Expose young people to the opportunities that exist in the Region
- ▶ Upskilling/Reskilling opportunities for workers
- ▶ Keep promoting entrepreneurship and cultivating an entrepreneurial culture
- ▶ Work with employers to help improve work culture, and to increase their capacity and competitiveness
- ▶ Actively engage and consult with youth
- ▶ Provide support to industries and workers affected by COVID Pandemic

Track ongoing vacancies, gaps and skill gaps in the local workforce

- ▶ Veterinarian attraction and retention
- ▶ Assist businesses and organizations where appropriate on problematic vacancies

Work with local educating bodies to have education/training opportunities available

Monitor housing availability and make recommendations to municipal partners if issues arise

Alberta Advantage Immigration Program

- ▶ Apply to be a community (region) under the rural renewal stream to attract and recruit foreign applicants to fill local positions

Physician attraction and retention

- ▶ Explore the one-clinic model for Brooks

Marketing.

Sharing positive messages about the Region, its communities, businesses, organizations, and people will help showcase the Region as a great place to live, work, and invest. Continued marketing efforts using diverse and creative methods in traditional and new media will help the rest of the world recognize the competitive advantages and assets in our Region.

Website updating

- ▶ Statistics are updated and relevant
- ▶ Linkage to/from partner municipality websites
- ▶ Businesses for sale posted under investment opportunities

Ongoing investment attraction efforts

- ▶ Gauge investment readiness
- ▶ Have relevant information available for site selectors and investment inquiries
- ▶ Marketing of local assets (fibre optic and rural connectivity)
- ▶ Investment opportunities listed on website (warehousing, value added ag profiles, tourism business plans, etc.)
- ▶ Apply to be a community (region) under the Rural Entrepreneur Stream to attract new businesses and investors

Re-branding/Re-naming

- ▶ Newell representation in the name/logo
- ▶ Logo alterations
- ▶ Tagline

Culture shift

- ▶ Draft and share the narrative that development and expansion is positive; gain traction to support growth and development
- ▶ Combat NIMBYism within our Region

Signage on Highway 1 and 36 corridors

Tourism.

The Brooks Region is home to some of the most desirable natural and manmade tourist attractions in Alberta and should be celebrated as a destination of choice.

We will continue working to best leverage the Region's tourism assets and respond to the need for more experiential tourism opportunities.

Improvements at Lake Newell

- ▶ Camping sites expanded
- ▶ Recreational opportunities and things to do
- ▶ Promote and develop experiences for tourists and residents

Pathway to Kinbrook Island Provincial Park

- ▶ Get funding in place
- ▶ Build pathway



Taking Action.

Working with our partners, staff will work to implement the decisions of elected officials and make gains in key areas.

Our workplan will be flexible and can be adjusted as new opportunities arise.



Business Retention & Expansion.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORKPLAN

Business Retention & Expansion	2022				2023				2024				Progress
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Create a formal BR&E Program													
Perform surveys regularly (bi or tri annually)													
Create a welcome and after care program for new businesses													
Perform exit interviews where possible													
Business supports and programs offered with partner organizations where possible													
Digitization assistance													
Succession planning for businesses													
Use Newell Proud as a shop local program													
Business Spotlights													
Business Beautification Loans/Grants													
Power Up Conference													
NewGrow													
Mentorship program													
Local Innovation Network													
Business to Business networking sessions													
Import replacement as one theme for discussion													
Partner with the Chamber of Commerce													
Value chain assessment with JBS Foods													

Workforce Development.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORKPLAN

Workforce Development	2022				2023				2024				Progress
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Implement recommendations from WDS													
Create a Workforce Development consortium to jointly address and move this strategy forward													
Keep building the Brooks Region brand													
Expose young people to the opportunities that exist in the Region													
Upskilling/Reskilling opportunities for workers													
Keep promoting entrepreneurship and cultivating an entrepreneurial culture													
Work with employers to help improve work culture, and to increase their capacity and competitiveness													
Actively engage and consult with youth													
Provide support to industries and workers affected by COVID Pandemic													
Track ongoing vacancies, gaps and skill gaps in the local workforce													
Veterinarian attraction and retention													
Assist businesses and organizations where appropriate on problematic vacancies													
Work with local educating bodies to have education/training opportunities available													
Monitor housing availability and make recommendations to municipal partners if issues arise													
Physician attraction and retention													
Explore the one-clinic model													
Alberta Advantage Immigration Program													
Apply to be a community (region) under the Rural Renewal Stream to attract and recruit foreign applicants to fill local positions.													

Marketing.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORKPLAN

Marketing	2022				2023				2024				Progress
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Website updating													
Statistics are updated and relevant													
Linkage to/from partner municipality websites													
Businesses for sale posted under investment opportunities													
Ongoing investment attraction efforts													
Gauge investment readiness													
Have relevant information available for site selectors and investment inquiries													
Marketing of local assets (fibre optic and rural connectivity)													
Investment opportunities listed on website (warehousing, value added ag profiles, tourism business plans, etc.)													
Apply to be a community (region) under the Rural Entrepreneur Stream to attract new businesses and investors.													
Re-branding/Re-naming													
Newell representation in the name/logo													
Logo alterations													
Tagline													
Culture shift													
Draft and share the narrative that development and expansion is positive; gain traction to support growth and development													
Combat NIMBYism within our Region													
Signage on Highway 1 and 36 corridors													

Tourism.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORKPLAN

Tourism	2022				2023				2024				Progress
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Improvements at Lake Newell													
Camping sites expanded													
Recreational opportunities and things to do													
Experiences for tourists and residents													
Pathway to Kinbrook Island Provincial Park													
Get funding in place													
Build pathway													





Key Performance Indicators.

Key performance indicators (KPIs) refer to a set of quantifiable measurements used to gauge success towards a set of targets, objectives, or strategic goals. One central goal for the Brooks Region Economic Development program is to implement KPIs through setting targets and measurable deliverables. Progress reports on the Strategic Focus Areas and Workplan are provided annually and KPIs will be used to measure success.

Considering the nature of the work we do, a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures will be used. The following Key Performance Indicators will be used to track our success as we implement our workplan:

- Local GDP levels
- Healthy, happy partners (qualitative information)
- Business health and satisfaction
 - Success stories from businesses (qualitative information)
 - Number of businesses reached/assisted through programs
 - New businesses opened vs. business closures
 - Data from Business Retention and Expansion surveys
- Marketing reach through social media, website etc.
- FCSS Quality of Life Survey data
- Labour/skilled worker vacancy (ie: physicians, veterinarians, etc.)
- Development permit data
 - Number of permits
 - Construction value of permits
 - Housing stats
 - Vacancy rates
 - Population data using school/preschool data
 - Real estate statistics
 - ▶ Farmland prices for irrigated and non-irrigated
 - ▶ Residential prices
- Education opportunities are present that fulfill our regional needs

Commitment to Collaboration.

The municipal and organizational partners within the Brooks Region play an important role in achieving success; these partnerships and collaboration require clear, two-way communication to ensure accountability and healthy relationships. To achieve this, the following activities occur:

- ▶ Joint Services meets monthly
- ▶ Partners receive reports containing pertinent information
- ▶ External stakeholders meet quarterly

The Terms of Reference for Economic Development were approved by Joint Services in 2021 and are reviewed as necessary. These Terms of Reference outline the composition of the committee, the meeting schedule, program goals, and the roles and responsibilities for both staff and committee members. Key duties to be undertaken by staff are outlined, as well as how financial contributions will be recommended and approved by partners.





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