



Village of Ashcroft
Economic Development Strategy



Submitted to:

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1.0 Introduction

The Village of Ashcroft is a small community of approximately 1600 people located approximately 90 kilometres west of Kamloops. Ashcroft is centrally located in the province, has excellent access to transportation infrastructure with both national rail lines (CN and CP) on one development site, as well as provincial and national highways, and has a superb climate. For a small community, it has a fairly diversified employment base that includes mining, agriculture, transportation, government services, and industry.

Like many small communities in BC, Ashcroft has experienced a declining and aging population. The community has also had challenges retaining services such as healthcare and education in the community.

This *Economic Development Strategy* is intended to provide direction to the Village of Ashcroft on how it can invest in economic development initiatives that build on its strengths and mitigate potential weaknesses.

1.1 Purpose of Economic Development Strategy

The purpose of this *Economic Development Strategy* is to provide guidance to Village Council and staff on the investments it could make to strengthen the local economy. This strategy includes the following:

- A review of the previous economic development strategy, an evaluation of the current economic conditions and development readiness of the community, and a review of key demographic and economic trends that the community faces;
- A discussion about the community's vision and goals for economic development as described by stakeholders and leadership;
- An outline of economic development opportunities and actions; and
- A road map for implementing the strategy.

This strategy focuses on two main areas for potential investment for the Village. These include:

- Initiatives that strengthen the overall foundation for economic development in Ashcroft and enable the community to maximize the benefits of investments into economic development; and
- Initiatives that support specific economic development sectors that could be feasible in Ashcroft.

It is important to note that this report focuses on the roles and contributions that the Village of Ashcroft can make to support economic development, principally

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through the leveraging of funding from Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT). The NDIT is a funding agency established by the province of BC to encourage and support economic development initiatives in Central and Northern BC. It currently provides the Village of Ashcroft \$50,000 per year for economic development initiatives.

1.2 Process for Developing Economic Development Strategy

The following steps were undertaken to develop this *Economic Development Strategy*:

1. Development of discussion papers – discussion papers were prepared that summarized research on a number of areas that influence economic development in Ashcroft including reviews of:

- The previous Economic Development Strategy and its implementation;
- The economic development readiness of Ashcroft
- The key market conditions and demographics of the community .

2. Community engagement – community engagement included a Council workshop and participation in the Ashcroft Community Forum

3. Development of a vision and goals for economic development – based on Ashcroft's key characteristics and the input received from the community, a vision, goals, and guiding principles for economic development were established

4. Identification of key opportunities and actions – opportunities for investing in economic development were identified based on the important characteristics of Ashcroft, as well as key market trends.

5. Preparation of an investment strategy – based on the opportunities and actions identified, a strategy was developed which outlines how the Village can invest in various initiatives to achieve the vision and goals for economic development.



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2.0 Background Conditions

This section of the *Economic Development Strategy* focuses on a review of key background conditions that will shape the opportunities that Ashcroft could consider pursuing. These include review of the following:

- The progress made in implementing the 2002 Economic Development Strategy;
- Ashcroft's economic development readiness to determine the strength of the foundation from which Ashcroft can pursue economic development opportunities;
- Ashcroft's demographic profile;
- Ashcroft's economic profile; and
- Employment trends in the community.

2.1 Review of Previous Economic Development Strategy

The previous Village of Ashcroft Economic Development Strategy was completed in June 2002 and was intended to provide a road map for community economic development actions. The 2002 Economic Development Strategy focussed on several key recommendations including:

- Branding – developing a new brand for the Village of Ashcroft;
- Boundary Expansion – expanding the municipal boundary to take in the potential Ashcroft Ranch landfill project as well as considering expanding to take in industries located just outside of Ashcroft;
- Organizational Initiatives – developing stronger partnerships with stakeholders in economic development in the Ashcroft area;
- Fibre Optics – utilizing Ashcroft's access to fibre optic infrastructure to attract businesses;
- Industrial Development – marketing Ashcroft's access to rail and highway infrastructure to promote industrial development, particularly on the CIL Lands;
- Community Enhancement – revitalizing the downtown area and improving signage for wayfinding in the community; and
- Mesa Vista Reserve Lands – considering development of this land for residential purposes in order to refresh the housing stock in the community

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Since 2002, there has been significant progress made on several of these initiatives including:

- Developing a new community brand – a new brand for the community – *Wellness Awaits You* – was developed for the community and is now used on much of the Village’s promotional materials including the Village website;
- Ongoing development of the Ashcroft Terminal site – the Ashcroft Terminal site has undergone significant development on the CIL Lands as Ashcroft has become an inland terminal, thus taking advantage of excellent rail and highway access ;
- Undertaking community enhancement programs – a number of community enhancement programs continue to be undertaken including streetscape beautification and the downtown façade program; and
- Expanding the Village boundaries to incorporate Ashcroft Ranch and reviewing the feasibility of incorporating other sites – the Village took action early on to expand its boundaries to incorporate the Ashcroft Ranch site based on the premise that the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) would be constructing a landfill on the property. Since that time, however, the GVRD has altered its approach to solid waste management and it is highly unlikely the Ashcroft Ranch will be used as a landfill. The Village also review other potential boundary expansions but found that they would not result in a positive net benefit for the Village.

2.2 Review of Ashcroft’s Economic Development Readiness

When considering an economic development strategy, it is important to assess the strength of the foundation of the Village and the community at-large to undertake economic development. This assessment of economic development readiness is critical to ensuring that the Village and the community are able to maximize the benefits associated with any investment into economic development initiatives. The criteria reviewed as part of this economic development readiness include:

- Infrastructure – what is the state of municipal and provincial infrastructure in the community?
- Land Availability – is there a supply of available commercial and/or industrial land?
- Community Facilities, Services, and Events – is there a diversity of community facilities, services, and events that are attractive to residents of all ages?
- Business Services – are there services available within the community that assist the business community?



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- Relationship with Other Jurisdictions – does the Village have strong relationships with other nearby jurisdictions?
- Information Availability – is there a central repository of information available that would be of use to prospective investors?
- Planning and Policy Framework – is the planning and policy framework up-to-date?

This assessment intends to identify potential gaps in Ashcroft's economic development readiness.

Infrastructure

In order to attract investment, it is critical that a community is able to provide basic infrastructure such as water and sewer services, and roads. It is also beneficial to have access to other infrastructure such as access to the provincial highway network and national rail network, as well as to fibre optic technology.

Ashcroft is in a fortunate position of having a high quality of infrastructure. Not only are high quality municipal services such as roads, sewer and water provided and have sufficient capacity for expansion, the Village is also fortunate to have access to highway and rail infrastructure. This access sets Ashcroft apart and provides it with a significant advantage in terms of being a transportation logistics hub; an advantage that is only beginning to be leveraged.

In addition to its access to highway and rail infrastructure, the community has excellent access to fibre optics technology which could be leveraged to attract businesses to the community.

Branding

How a community chooses to promote itself, through its brand, can provide a significant foundation from which to attract certain kinds of economic development opportunities. The Village has invested significantly in community branding with the development of the *Wellness Awaits You* brand. This is a brand that the community has significant pride in and has helped the Village promote itself, particularly as a community for retirees. The Village has established a policy framework for use of the brand in the broader community by businesses. Given the pride that the community has in this brand, it could be leveraged in a number of different ways including attracting new residents, tourists, and businesses to Ashcroft.

Land Availability

In order to attract commercial and industrial development, it is important to have an inventory of land available for these purposes. Ashcroft is in a challenging position if new commercial or industrial development is to be promoted. There are a very limited number of industrial parcels available with the majority of

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vacant industrial land held within the Ashcroft Terminal site and held under one property owner. For commercial development, there are a number of vacant parcels and buildings, however it is unclear whether these are available for sale. Overall, there is not a significant amount of land available for development within the Village boundaries, particularly for industrial purposes.

Community Facilities, Services, and Events

Community facilities, services, and events are important components of a livable community and thus they are critical to employee and citizen attraction and retention. For a small community, Ashcroft has a good number of services and facilities that enhance the livability of the community. However, it has been indicated by Council and community members that there are gaps in some service offerings, including the need for a daycare and the desire for facilities, such as a fitness facility and increased trails in the community. There is a particular need to develop and retain the facilities and services needed to make the community attractive to younger people, particularly as Ashcroft's population ages.

Business Services

The most notable issue is the waning strength of the Chamber of Commerce to speak for business interests in the community. Having a stronger Chamber of Commerce could assist existing business retention and help attract new businesses to town.

The Village's involvement with the Northern Development Initiative Trust and the Southern Interior Beetle Action Coalition provides Ashcroft with access to several funding and business support opportunities. Generally, Ashcroft has access to a wide range of provincial and federal services and agencies, such as Community Futures, that can enable access to training, business support, and funding for the implementation of economic development agencies.

Relationships with Other Jurisdictions

Having strong and collaborative relationships with neighbouring jurisdictions can be an important factor for smaller communities such as Ashcroft. By working collaboratively to promote a region rather than an individual community, it is possible to strengthen the attractiveness of investing in the area. There are many potential benefits to be realized from collaborating on economic development initiatives with neighbouring communities, as each jurisdiction in the region has different advantages and disadvantages. While the Village has established relationships with adjacent jurisdictions, there could be a stronger emphasis on the part of the Village of Ashcroft, Village of Cache Creek and Ashcroft Indian Band on collaborating on issues of shared importance, such as economic development to strengthen the region.

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Information Availability

The Village of Ashcroft has a significant amount of information on its website that provides a solid foundation for learning about the community. However, this information could be strengthened, for economic development purposes, by having more information regarding Ashcroft and economic development activities and opportunities, such as land availability, demographics, and incentives for business.

Planning and Policy Framework

Ashcroft's planning, policy and marketing framework is generally in place, and is reflective of current community sentiment on key issues. That being said, both the Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw have been amended since they were adopted and would be timely to update these documents to make them less cumbersome to work with and to better reflect current best practices and provincial legislation.

Summary

This overview of economic development readiness has demonstrated that Ashcroft has sufficient infrastructure to support the development of employment lands, a wide range of community services and events, sufficient support for businesses and entrepreneurs, and a good website.

However, there are a number of gaps and weaknesses, which may limit potential economic development activity, including: attracting young people to live in the community; limited availability of commercial and industrial land base; an opportunity to strengthen relationships with neighboring communities (Cache Creek and Ashcroft Indian Band); a need for an update to the Zoning Bylaw and OCP; and an inactive Chamber of Commerce.

2.3 Review of Demographics

As mentioned earlier, the Village of Ashcroft currently has a population of approximately 1600 people. However, over the past several years the population growth of the Village of Ashcroft has either been negative or static. In 2011, the population was 1,628 people this was -2.2% change from the 2006 census and a -8.9% change since 2001. Currently, the population profile for the Village of Ashcroft shows a higher than average median age when compared to British Columbia as a whole (55.2 years vs. 41.9 years), and a much larger percentage of the population is 65 years or older (30% vs. 15.6% for BC). The historical population data from census data (1981 to 2011) is illustrated in **Figure 2.1**.

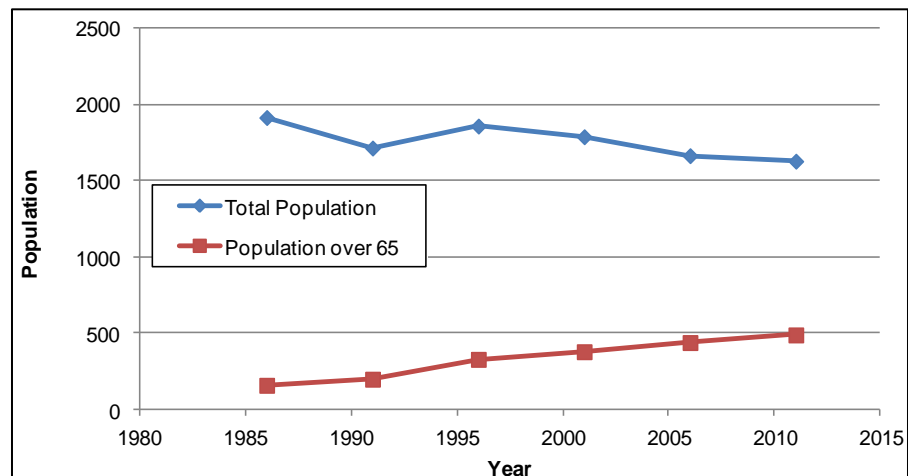
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Figure 2.1: Village of Ashcroft Historical Population



Between 1981 and 2011 (30 years), the average annual growth rate is calculated to be -1.1%. However, the Village's population that is over 65 is increasing despite the population trend over the past 30 years. As indicated in **Table 2.1**, the proportion of Ashcroft's population that is within the working years (18 – 64 years old) is 55% while for the TNRD, as a whole, this is significantly higher at 64%. Another indication of Ashcroft's aging population is the number of people older than 45, which is approximately 63%. This is 13% higher than the TNRD as a whole.

Table 2.1: Age Range of Population

| Age Range | Population | % | TNRD % |
|---|-------------|-----|--------|
| 0 – 4 years (Pre-School) | 80 | 5% | 5% |
| 5 – 17 years (School Age) | 155 | 10% | 14% |
| 18 – 24 years (Transition Years) | 90 | 5% | 9% |
| 25 – 44 years (Working Life – 1 st Half) | 275 | 17% | 23% |
| 45 – 64 years (Working Life – 2 nd Half) | 540 | 33% | 32% |
| 65+ years (Retirement) | 490 | 30% | 17% |
| Total | 1630 | | |

The aging and declining population that Ashcroft has experienced, and will likely continue to experience unless made to be a focus of remediation, presents many challenges including:

- Increased demands on the healthcare system, concurrent with fewer health resources in the community;
- Reduced number of young people to sell or transition small businesses to which impacts the level of commerce in the community;



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- Reduced workforce size to support emerging industries such as Ashcroft Terminal; and
- Reduced number of families to support the operation of schools and other facilities.

2.4 Economic Profile

Ashcroft's economic base consists of the following:

Agriculture – Ashcroft's economic base has historically included agriculture as a primary component and major employer with numerous farms and, in past years, cannery operations. Farming and ranching continue to this day and includes Desert Hills Ranch and Blue Goose Ashcroft Ranch, both of which employ dozens of people, particularly in the summer months when agricultural activity is highest.

Mining – while there is no mining activity directly in Ashcroft's boundaries, the proximity and direct access to Highland Valley Copper Mine has meant that mining has traditionally been a major employer of Ashcroft residents. In addition to Highland Valley Copper Mine, IG Machine and Fibres leverages its access to granular resources to produce roofing granules and employs approximately 50 people. Both of these industries have been relatively steady with employment, though it has been noted anecdotally that the number of people who live in Ashcroft and work at Highland Valley Copper may decline as the population ages and retires from jobs there.

Manufacturing – secondary industry includes the Ashcroft Treating Plant (Koppers Inc.). It has been in operation for a number of years and employs approximately 30 people. This segment of the economy has been steady.

Government Services – Ashcroft functions as a sub-regional provincial government service hub and contains the School District # 74 offices and the Ashcroft and District General Hospital. The combined provincial and municipal services results in employment for over 100 people in Ashcroft. Given the nature of provincial investments, and, in particular, declining school enrollment, the number of people employed in government services may decrease over time.

Transportation Logistics – this industry is growing in Ashcroft, with the development of the Ashcroft Terminal. The Ashcroft Terminal is an inland railcar transloading facility, which is specifically located to service both CP and CN rail companies. The Ashcroft Terminal consists of 320 acres of industrially zoned land providing an opportunity for increased railcar storage, transloading for multimodal transportation, and handling of bulk goods.

Currently it employs approximately 10 people though there are expansion plans that will result in an increase in the number of people on-site. With further

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development of the site anticipated, the number of people employed would be expected to grow. Arrow Transportation also has a significant operation in Ashcroft providing transportation logistics in the region.

Retirement Living - Ashcroft has an aging population with a significant proportion having reached retirement age. Ashcroft's climate, access to healthcare, affordability, central location within the province, and access to events makes Ashcroft an attractive community for retirement living. A number of retired people have moved to Ashcroft to take advantage of these opportunities.

2.5 Employment Profile

Currently the Village of Ashcroft is experiencing lower levels of employment than the rest of the Province. Employment in the community remains heavily dependent on mining (15.9%) and primary resource industries when compared to the Province as a whole. However, a high proportion of people also work in retail trade (11.9%) and services, such as: administrative and support; waste management and remediation services (11.9%), educational services (6.3%), accommodation and food services (7.9%), and health care and social assistance (7.1%). In general, Ashcroft has a fairly diversified employment base, especially considering its small size.

As indicated in **Table 2.2**, the major employers in Ashcroft include School District # 74, IG Machine & Fibres, Ashcroft Treating, the Village of Ashcroft, and the Ashcroft Terminal. Combined, these major employers account for almost 30% of the total employment in the community.



Table 2.2: Major Employers in Ashcroft

| Company | Product/Service | # of Employees | Ownership |
|--------------------------------------|--|----------------|-----------|
| School District # 74 (Gold Trail) | Education | 85 | Public |
| IG Machine & Fibres | Roofing Granules | 50 | Private |
| Ashcroft Treating | Custom Treating Ties, Timbers and Pilings | 30 | Private |
| Village of Ashcroft | Government | 14 | Public |
| Ashcroft Terminal | Materials Management | 10-20 | Private |

Source: Village of Ashcroft - Investment Ready Community Profile (2013)

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It is important to note that Desert Hills Ranch is also a major employer; however many of its employees are seasonal workers.



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3.0 Vision, Goals, and Guiding Principles for Economic Development

This section of the Economic Development Strategy summarizes the vision, goals, and guiding principles for economic development in Ashcroft.

Vision

The vision for the Village's Economic Development Strategy is:

The Village of Ashcroft will work to create a strong foundation for a diverse range of economic development initiatives to take root and thrive.

Goals of Economic Development Strategy

The goals of the Economic Development Strategy include:

- Developing a robust economic development foundation;
- Enabling the diversification of the economy; and
- Ensuring that economic development initiatives are within the capacity of the community to achieve.

Guiding Principles

Guiding principles provide a framework for making decisions relating to economic development. The Village's guiding principles for economic development include:

- The Village of Ashcroft represents an enabling agency for economic development in the community, and therefore will strive to complement the economic development efforts of community stakeholders;
- The Village of Ashcroft will support economic development opportunities that are driven and supported by the passion and entrepreneurial spirit of community members;
- The Village of Ashcroft will continue to foster a business friendly relationship with the private sector;
- The Village of Ashcroft will work to support cooperation amongst neighbouring communities to maximize business development and investment opportunities that benefit all communities in the region; and
- The Village of Ashcroft will work with local businesses and community members to support the development of a diversified economic base.



4.0 Economic Development Opportunities

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This section of the *Economic Development Strategy* describes key economic development areas in which the Village of Ashcroft can invest to create opportunities for economic growth. The economic development opportunities are described in two ways:

- 1.) Foundational Initiatives – these are initiatives that strengthen Ashcroft's foundation for pursuing economic development opportunities, and would put the community in a stronger position to attract and retain business.
- 2.) Sector Specific Initiatives – these summarize opportunities for the Village to take an active role in specific sectors of the economy such as tourism, agriculture, and transportation logistics among others.

The initiatives that have been proposed are generally based on what is within the Village's capacity to provide, including Ashcroft's annual allocation of NDIT funding for economic development.

4.1 Foundational Initiatives

There are a number of initiatives that the Village could pursue in order to strengthen its foundation for economic development by increasing community livability, and increasing the community's readiness for economic development.

4.1.1 MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

As previously mentioned the current municipal infrastructure is generally in good condition and is capable of serving more than double the current population of 1600. This opens up potential investment opportunities as there is capacity to provide services to new development provided land for development is available. Currently, the only major infrastructure deficiency is the need for a new water treatment plant to address water quality issues. However, the Village is moving towards sustainable capital and operating financing of its water infrastructure over the next 20 years by seeking grants for the water treatment plant upgrades and by having a long-term financial plan in place for its water infrastructure assets. Maintaining high quality infrastructure is pivotal to attracting commercial and industrial investment.



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**Action Items**

It is recommended that the following actions be undertaken to strengthen Ashcroft's municipal infrastructure:

- Seek funding to proceed with the design and construction of a new water treatment plant (currently applications have been submitted to Build Canada Fund and General Strategic Priorities Fund).
- Continue investment in ongoing maintenance and upgrades to infrastructure.
- Investigate the feasibility of extending water infrastructure services to areas such as Ashcroft Indian Band.

4.1.2 INFORMATION

Commercial and industrial business developers rely on good quality information to make decisions on where to invest. Often times, there is a desire for an online 'information warehouse' that can be accessed to obtain current information about a community before direct contact with the community. Information that is often helpful for investment decisions includes land availability; infrastructure servicing considerations; labour market statistics; demographics; taxation rates; community economic profile; description of key economic sectors; and a listing of key contacts in the community.

The Village of Ashcroft's website provides a solid foundation for learning about the community but could be strengthened to provide more pertinent and easily accessible economic development information. Consideration could be given to working with the Village of Cache Creek, Ashcroft Indian Band, and others to create an online regional economic development information hub.

While having the online information is important, it is also important to have a staff member who is well versed in economic development opportunities in Ashcroft and can communicate this clearly with potential investors. This role currently resides with the Chief Administrative Officer.

Action Items

It is recommended that the following actions be undertaken to improve the information that the Village provides pertaining to economic development:

- Consolidate relevant economic information on one web page and make it easily accessible. This would include: available land base (private and publicly owned); existing industry; infrastructure; labour force statistics; local business directory; and community attractions. Consider partnering with the Village of Cache Creek, Ashcroft Indian Band, and the TNRD to develop a comprehensive website related to economic development.

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Ensure that links are provided to economic development-related websites, and encourage local businesses to advertise here.

- Generate targeted marketing packages aimed at attracting those industries that would fulfill Ashcroft economic development objectives (i.e. agriculture, transportation logistics and manufacturing, tourism) as well as attracting younger people to live in the community.
- Support the development and evolution of the Love Ashcroft website.
- Ensure that at least one Village staff member is mandated with updating economic development information and being able to communicate this information to potential investors.

4.1.3 LIVABILITY

Ashcroft has an aging population with a significant proportion having reached retirement age. Ashcroft's climate, access to healthcare, affordability, central location within the Province, and access to community services makes Ashcroft an attractive community for retirement living.

As the general population of BC and Canada ages, there could be more opportunities to market Ashcroft's climate, community services and low cost of living to retirees. Further, making Ashcroft more age friendly could be facilitated through a number of initiatives, such as developing design guidelines that make housing more attractive for seniors, and promoting investments in infrastructure, such as sidewalks to enable mobility in the community.

At the same time as there are opportunities to market Ashcroft to retirees, there is a need to make Ashcroft a more attractive place for younger adults with families, particularly entrepreneurial-minded people, to live in order to support the operation of the school, to operate businesses, and to work in nearby businesses and industries. Having a community attractive for younger adults is critical to the economic development success and overall vibrancy of Ashcroft.

Action Items

It is recommended that the following actions be undertaken to enhance the livability of the community:

- Update community design guidelines to encourage development that enhances accessibility and mobility in the community.
- Encourage the development of a range of new housing including single family units and seniors housing.
- Develop a Trails Master Plan for Ashcroft which will identify the location of trails, types of trails to be developed, and possible funding opportunities.



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- Support the Wellness and Health Action Coalition in its work with provincial agencies to have investment in Ashcroft that will make it a centre of excellence in rural health care.
- Continue to lobby for health resources in the community.
- Establish a campaign to attract young families and entrepreneurs to Ashcroft by marketing access to technology, affordable living, employment and business opportunities, and central access within the province.
- Encourage the development of a daycare and other services for young families in the community.

4.1.4 PARTNERSHIPS

Establishing partnerships with surrounding jurisdictions such as Cache Creek, Ashcroft Indian Band, and the TNRD can strengthen economic development opportunities for the community. If it is recognized that what is good for one community is good for all communities in the area, then there is an opportunity to market the area as one and potentially be a stronger draw for investment. It is noteworthy that each community in the region has different strengths and weaknesses: Ashcroft offers a historic downtown, tourism potential, and excellent rail access, but has issues with land availability; Cache Creek has some land availability and direct access to the Trans-Canada Highway and Highway 97; and the Ashcroft Indian Band has direct access to Highway 97, a large land base and a younger population, but has challenges with infrastructure servicing.

Collaborating with regional neighbours in economic development will create opportunities for each community to build on its strengths. This cooperative approach will ideally create synergies across several industries in the region. For example tourism is likely to benefit from a regional approach where attractions and activities throughout the region can be marketed and advertised together, creating a sufficient draw for visitors. In addition, it may enable the hiring of a regional economic development coordinator to spearhead economic development initiatives.

Action Items

It is recommended that the following actions be undertaken to strengthen partnerships with nearby communities:

- Host a regional economic development forum with the Village of Cache Creek and the Ashcroft Indian Band to discuss economic development goals, potential synergies and a strategy for moving forward.
- Work with the Village of Cache Creek and the Ashcroft Indian Band to develop a Regional Investment Attraction Strategy. The Ministry of Jobs,

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Tourism and Skills Training provides a Business Attraction Toolkit, which contains tools and resources to assist communities in their business attraction and economic development efforts.

4.1.5 *BRANDING*

The Village, and the community at-large, has invested significantly in re-branding the Village with the slogan *Wellness Awaits You*. There is a significant desire in the community to build off this brand and have it permeate into the broader community as much as possible and align economic development programs with the brand. The Village has implemented a brand that the community has bought into. Leveraging this brand will ensure consistency in the approach to branding.

Action Items

It is recommended that the following actions be undertaken to leverage the community brand more effectively:

- Create a branding package that contains guidelines on how commercial businesses can leverage the brand and ensure consistency in approach.

4.1.6 *PLANNING AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT*

There is an opportunity to update the planning and policy framework to make it more attractive for business to locate in Ashcroft and to make it less cumbersome for potential developers to work with. While the plans and policies generally reflect the desires of the community, there have been a number of amendments made and changes in provincial legislation put some of these plans and policies at odds with provincial legislation. Further, the establishment of Ashcroft Terminal as an inland port facility could have significant impacts on the community that should be considered. Updating these policies and bylaws would make the development process more efficient and business friendly.

Action Items

It is recommended that the following actions be undertaken to create a more robust and effective planning and policy framework:

- Undertake a review of the Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw to incorporate past amendments and ensure that they are supportive of current economic development initiatives and reflect current best practices.
- Update the Subdivision Servicing Bylaw to make it more modern and consistent with current best practices.

4.1.7 *LAND REVIEW*

The Village has a lack of readily available commercial and industrial land for sale. This is due in part to the fact that much of the vacant commercial and industrial



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land is owned by a very small number of landowners who are not necessarily willing to make the land available for sale.

There may be an opportunity to work with the provincial government, local landowners, and Ashcroft Indian Band to identify developable land for industrial and commercial purposes and promote this land on the Village's website and other areas in order to generate investment. This could include a review of land that is currently within the Agricultural Land Reserve that could potentially be excluded to open up land for development.

Action Items

It is recommended that the following actions be undertaken to develop a land review:

- Work with partners such as the Ashcroft Indian Band, Village of Cache Creek and the province of BC to undertake a land review that would identify opportunities and constraints associated with vacant land and determine its availability.

4.2 Sector Based Initiatives

There are a number of economic sectors that Ashcroft could explore in greater detail to diversify the local economy. Some of these are existing sectors where Ashcroft already has some history, such as agriculture, while some are emerging sectors, such as transportation logistics. Finally, some of these sectors are areas where traditionally there has been little to no economic activity but there could be if the right opportunities were identified and explored. These sectors would include alternative energy and technology.

4.2.1 TOURISM

Ashcroft's tourism capacity is limited, but could expand. Ashcroft's history, arts community, and access to natural areas could be primary drivers for tourism in the area; particularly if partnerships with Ashcroft Indian Band were considered to develop Aboriginal-based tourism and more local attractions.

While there are opportunities to develop tourism in Ashcroft, there will need to be work undertaken to provide a better variety of accommodations. Tourism in Ashcroft could also benefit from having a central location for arts, and strengthening partnerships with regional organizations and jurisdictions to co-promote tourism in the area; as to provide a critical mass of attractions.

Action Items

It is recommended that the following actions be undertaken to enhance tourism as an economic development sector:



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- Develop signage directing people to the community from Highway 1 including working with the Ashcroft Travel Centre to have signage available there.
- Continue to partner with neighbouring communities through the Gold Country Communities Society to develop new attractions and harmonized marketing taking advantage of Ashcroft's importance in history in tourism marketing and promotion.
- Develop local and regional visitors' guides and brochures summarizing local tourist attractions and accommodation facilities.
- Continue supporting the Ashcroft Museum.
- Work with community partners to review the feasibility of re-opening the Opera House.
- Continue supporting the arts community and events and festivals.
- Continue to operate and enhance the municipal campground.
- Continue to undertake downtown revitalization efforts through the Business Façade Program.

4.2.2 ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

The Ashcroft area has a range of potential alternative energy opportunities that could support economic development. These potential energy resources include wind, solar, biomass, and, in the broader area, micro-hydro. For example, Wastech, the operator of the Cache Creek landfill, plans on developing a methane capture system at the landfill, which, when burned, will provide enough renewable energy to power the villages of Cache Creek and Ashcroft two times over, as well as feed additional electricity into the provincial grid.

While it is unlikely that the Village of Ashcroft would develop and own an alternative energy project, with the exception of integrating alternative energy solutions, such as solar energy, on its facilities, there may be opportunities to promote alternative energy in the Village and the region as a means of developing utility taxation revenue and promoting employment and investment opportunities in the community.

Action Items

It is recommended that the following actions be undertaken to develop alternative energy as an economic development sector:

- Work with community partners such as the Village of Cache Creek, Ashcroft Indian Band, TNRD and Bonaparte Indian Band to determine their interest in participating in a regional clean energy scan.



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- Undertake a clean energy scan to determine energy development opportunities within the municipal boundaries that could be explored further.

4.2.3 ARTS

The Village of Ashcroft is home to a growing arts community and the low cost of living and scenic, peaceful lifestyle is a potential advantage in attracting artists to live in the community.

The presence of an established artistic community represents an opportunity for Ashcroft to promote itself as an artistic centre and generate tourism opportunities in the region. Many small communities in BC and elsewhere have capitalized on the development of an arts-related community to generate economic development. Examples of communities that have established themselves as arts communities include Wells, BC; Dawson City, Yukon; and Bloomfield, Ontario.

Action Items

It is recommended that the following actions be undertaken to develop arts as an economic development sector:

- Support artists by making investments in locally produced public art to be placed in civic facilities.
- Work with community partners to investigate the desirability of having an artist's residency program in Ashcroft.

4.2.4 AGRICULTURE

There are several existing agricultural operations in the area and the rich volcanic soils found in the area are highly productive, as long as water can be provided. The climate is also good for agriculture, as Ashcroft receives over 2400 hours of sunlight annually. Further, the presence of several water sources, including the Bonaparte and Thompson Rivers and a large agricultural land base support this, much of which is located in the Agricultural Land Reserve, support the agricultural industry.

There are opportunities to expand the agricultural capacity of Ashcroft, particularly as other food growing regions, such as California, experience significant issues with drought. Further, an increased market and desire for locally produced food and agro-tourism experiences may create new opportunities.

Action Items

It is recommended that the following actions be undertaken to further develop agriculture as an economic development sector:

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- Promote Ashcroft as an agricultural centre due to climatic conditions and available land base.
- Work with community partners to develop a Local Agriculture Area Plan which will identify land availability, key gaps in maximizing agriculture as an economic development opportunity, and reviewing potential agricultural products that could be developed.
- Continue to support the Farmers Market.

4.2.5 TRANSPORTATION LOGISTICS

Ashcroft's excellent access to highway and rail infrastructure makes it an appropriate location for transportation logistics businesses. This economic development opportunity is primarily driven by the expansion of the Ashcroft Terminal and leveraging Ashcroft's location on the CN and CP rail lines and its proximity to major highways. The most recent expansion to the Ashcroft Terminal was completed in 2014 through the Asia-Pacific Gateway and Corridor Initiative (APGCI). The project involved adding base rail infrastructure, improving grade separations, and constructing new intermodal facilities. As part of the APGCI, Ashcroft Terminal is, and will continue to be, an important link in the Canadian transportation supply chain and it is likely to continue its expansion as warranted. Currently, they are developing a warehouse and grain storage facility, as well as adding high capacity cranes to load rail cars.

Action Items

In addition to updating the OCP and Zoning Bylaw to be more supportive of the establishment of transportation logistics businesses as well as undertaking a land review for industrial and commercial land, it is recommended that the following actions be undertaken to further develop transportation logistics as an economic development sector:

- Work with existing businesses to promote Ashcroft as transportation logistics hub through the Village's website.
- Continue to look for new opportunities through the Asia Pacific Gateway Corridor Initiative.

4.2.6 TECHNOLOGY

Ashcroft is in a fortunate position that it has access to fibre optic technology within the community. This could be leveraged to attract entrepreneurs to the community who might be able to build businesses in Ashcroft with less risk due to lower living costs. This could include entrepreneurs dedicated to creating new apps, and possibly taking advantage of the transportation logistics in Ashcroft to distribute goods from online purchases.



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Action Items

It is recommended that the following actions be undertaken to further develop the technology industry as an economic development sector:

- Lobby for the extension of all private sector fibre optic lines into Ashcroft.
- Develop a marketing package to promote the availability of fibre optics to potential entrepreneurs.
- Investigate the feasibility of establishing a technology hub in Ashcroft similar to the Kamloops Innovation Centre where there is shared space that technology-based entrepreneurs can work to develop their businesses and collaborate on ideas generation.



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5.0 Implementation Strategy

The Village is currently provided \$50,000 per year from NDI to spend on economic development initiatives. This can be supplemented from other sources including municipal revenue, and, in some cases, this makes sense due to the multiple objectives that can be achieved (i.e. while updating the OCP would have an important economic development component, it would also be useful to update for other municipal objectives). In order to provide a road map for how this funding can be spent, as well as how to leverage other funding opportunities an implementation strategy has been developed. For each action item, the following information is provided:

- Type of Work – this describes the type of work the action entails and includes:
 - Planning (i.e. developing a feasibility plan or strategy)
 - Marketing (i.e. undertaking a promotional campaign)
 - Advocacy (i.e. political lobbying for resources to be invested into the community)
 - Physical Works (i.e. construction)
 - Programming (i.e. offering a specific program)
- Priority – identifies the relative priority of the action
- Timeline – identifies when the Village should consider implementing the action
- Costs – provides a potential cost estimate for undertaking the initiatives
- Potential Funding Resources/Funders – identifies what funding sources should be considered to pay for the action



Table 5.1 - Implementation Strategy

| Action Items | Type of Work | Priority | Timeline | Cost Estimate | Potential Funding Resources/ Partners |
|---|----------------|----------|--------------------|---------------------|--|
| Foundational Initiatives | | | | | |
| Infrastructure: strengthen Ashcroft's municipal information | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek funding to proceed with the development of new water treatment plant. | Physical Works | High | Ongoing | \$8 million | Building Canada Fund Strategic Priorities Fund |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue investment in ongoing maintenance and upgrades to infrastructure. | Physical Works | High | Ongoing | High | Municipal Revenue |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the feasibility of extending infrastructure services to areas such as Ashcroft Indian Band. | Planning | Medium | Ongoing | \$25,000 - \$50,000 | Ashcroft Indian Band, AANDC |
| Information: improve the quality of economic development information being provided | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidate relevant economic information on one web page and make it highly accessible. Consider developing a regional economic development website | Marketing | High | Within 1 year | \$10,000 - \$20,000 | NDIT Funding |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate targeted marketing packages aimed at attracting industries and younger people | Marketing | High | Within 1 year | <\$10,000 | NDIT Funding |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development and evolution of the Love Ashcroft website. | Marketing | Moderate | Ongoing | <\$5000 | N/A |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that at least one Village staff member is mandated with updating economic development information and being able to communicate this information to potential investors. | Marketing | High | Ongoing | <\$5000 | Staff time |
| Livability: enhance the livability of the community | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update community design guidelines to encourage development that enhances accessibility and mobility in the community (incorporate with update to OCP). | Planning | Low | Within 1 – 2 years | \$10,000 | Age Friendly Communities Grant Funding |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage the development of a range of new housing including single family units and seniors housing. | Advocacy | Low | Ongoing | N/A | N/A |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Trails Master Plan for Ashcroft which will identify the location of trails, types of trails to be developed, and possible funding opportunities. | Planning | Moderate | Within 1 – 2 years | \$15,000 - \$25,000 | Cycling Infrastructure Partnership Program/Age Friendly Communities Grant Funding |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the efforts of the Wellness and Health Action Coalition. | Advocacy | High | Ongoing | N/A | N/A |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to lobby for health resources in the community. | Advocacy | High | Ongoing | N/A | N/A |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a campaign to attract young families and entrepreneurs to Ashcroft by marketing access to technology, affordable living, employment and business opportunities, and central access within the province. | Marketing | High | Within 1 year | \$5000 - \$10,000 | NDIT Funding |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage the development of a daycare and other services for young families in the community | Advocacy | High | Ongoing | N/A | N/A |

| Action Items | Type of Work | Priority | Timeline | Cost Estimate | Potential Funding Resources/ Partners |
|---|----------------|----------|--------------------|----------------------|--|
| Partnerships: strengthen partnerships with nearby communities | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host a regional economic development forum with the Village of Cache Creek and the Ashcroft Indian Band to discuss economic development goals, potential synergies and a strategy for moving forward. | Advocacy | High | Ongoing | <\$5000 | UBCM Community to Community Forum Funding |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Village of Cache Creek and the Ashcroft Indian Band to develop a Regional Investment Attraction Strategy. The Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training provides a Business Attraction Toolkit, which contains tools and resources to assist communities in their business attraction and economic development efforts. | Planning | Moderate | Within 2 – 3 years | \$25,000 - \$35,000 | NDIT Funding |
| Branding: leverage the community brand more effectively | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an Ashcroft branding package which contains guidelines on how commercial businesses can leverage the brand and ensure consistency in approach. | Marketing | High | Within 1 year | <\$5000 | N/A |
| Planning and Policy Development: create a more robust and effective planning and policy framework | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a review of the Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw to incorporate past amendments and ensure that they are supportive of current economic development initiatives and reflect current best practices. | Planning | High | Within 1 – 2 years | \$50,000 - \$100,000 | NDIT Funding/ Municipal Revenue/BC Age Friendly Communities Grants |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the Subdivision Servicing Bylaw to make it more modern and consistent with current best practices. | Planning | Low | Within 3 – 4 years | \$30,000 - \$60,000 | Municipal Revenue |
| Land Review: review land resources for commercial and industrial land development | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners such as the Ashcroft Indian Band, Village of Cache Creek and the province to undertake a land review that would identify opportunities and constraints associated with vacant land and determine its availability. | Planning | Moderate | Within 2 – 3 years | \$25,000 - \$35,000 | NDIT Funding/Municipal Revenue/ Funding from Project Partners |
| Tourism: enhance tourism as an economic development sector | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop signage directing people to the community from Highway 1 including working with the Ashcroft Travel Centre to have signage available there. | Physical Works | High | Within 1 Year | \$10,000 - \$20,000 | NDIT Funding/ Municipal Revenue |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to partner with the Gold Country Communities Society to develop new attractions and harmonize tourism marketing. | Marketing | Moderate | Ongoing | <\$5000 | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop local and regional visitors' guides and brochures on local tourist attractions and accommodation facilities. | Marketing | Moderate | Ongoing | <\$5000 | NDIT Funding |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue supporting the Ashcroft Museum. | Programming | High | Ongoing | \$10,000 - \$20,000 | Municipal Revenue |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with community partners to review the feasibility of re-opening the Opera House. | Planning | Moderate | Within 1 – 2 years | \$20,000 | NDIT Funding |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue supporting events and festivals. | Programming | High | Ongoing | <\$10,000 | Municipal Revenue |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to operate and enhance the municipal campground. | Programming | Moderate | Ongoing | <\$10,000 | Self-financed |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to undertake downtown revitalization efforts. | Physical Works | High | Ongoing | \$10,000 - \$20,000 | NDIT Funding |

| Action Items | Type of Work | Priority | Timeline | Cost Estimate | Potential Funding Resources/ Partners |
|--|----------------|----------|--------------------|---------------------|---|
| Alternative Energy: develop an alternative energy sector in Ashcroft | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with community partners to determine their interest in participating in a regional clean energy scan. | Advocacy | Moderate | Ongoing | N/A | N/A |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a clean energy scan to determine energy development opportunities within the municipal boundaries that could be explored further. | Planning | Low | Within 4 – 5 years | \$25,000 - \$35,000 | NDIT Funding |
| Arts: develop an arts community in Ashcroft | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support artists in the community by making investments in locally produced public art. | Physical Works | Low | Within 4 – 5 years | \$5000 - \$10,000 | Municipal Revenue |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with community partners to investigate the desirability of having an artist's residency program in Ashcroft. | Planning | Moderate | Within 2 – 3 years | <\$5000 | NDIT Funding |
| Agriculture: promote Ashcroft as an agricultural centre | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with community partners to develop a Local Agriculture Area Plan which will identify land availability, key gaps in maximizing agriculture as an economic development opportunity, and reviewing potential agricultural products that could be developed. | Planning | Moderate | Within 2 - 3 years | \$50,000 - \$75,000 | Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support the operation of a Farmers Market. | Programming | High | Ongoing | <\$5000 | N/A |
| Transportation Logistics: leverage Ashcroft's proximity to rail and highways to develop a transportation logistics industry | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Ashcroft as transportation logistics hub. | Marketing | High | Ongoing | N/A | N/A |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to look for new opportunities through the Asia Pacific Gateway Corridor Initiative. | Programming | High | Ongoing | N/A | N/A |
| Technology: utilize fibre optic access to promote technology business development in Ashcroft | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobby for the extension of all fibre optic lines into Ashcroft | Advocacy | Moderate | Ongoing | N/A | N/A |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a marketing package to promote the availability of fibre optics to potential entrepreneurs | Marketing | Moderate | Ongoing | <\$10,000 | NDIT |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the feasibility of establishing a technology hub in Ashcroft | Planning | Low | Within 4 – 5 years | \$10,000 - \$20,000 | NDIT |