
REPORT NAME

Economic Development Monthly report - April 2024

RECOMMENDATION

That the Governance and Priorities Committee receive as information the Economic Development update report.

IMPLICATIONS

Reason: Administration is updating Council on Leduc County's Economic Development activities for March 2024

Authority: (MGA section/bylaw/policy number): 2022-2025 Strategic Plan

Amount of funding required: n/a

Funding source: n/a

BACKGROUND

Leduc County's Economic Development activities align with Council's strategic vision and expectations through the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan and Leduc County Investment Strategy.

ACTIVITIES AND CONNECTIONS

Administration attends and contributes to regional economic events that support our clients, partners and the business community as part of the Investment Strategy- *Priority 4: Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships*.

The following highlights some recent engagements attended by the Economic Development team.

The County's new Fire Hall grand opening. This asset also provides economic benefit to the County for fire intervention and protection of property, which makes the area more attractive for new investment.

Blackjacks Hydrogen Refueling Station, the first commercial station in Canada, held its grand opening in Nisku and received positive news coverage. It adds another sophisticated business sector, which will showcase Nisku as a location for new and modern investments.

The 2024 Chamber awards saw five Leduc County businesses winning the award for their category:

Large Business of the Year: AFD Petroleum Ltd

Small Business of the Year: Alternate Route Coffee Co.

Legacy Business of the Year: Alta-Fab Structures Ltd.

Agriculture and Food Business: Old Station Honey & Mead

Tourism/Hospitality Business of the Year: Renaissance Edmonton Airport Hotel

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Reviewed by: Bryanna Kumpula-Yung, Economic Development Coordinator

Date: 03/22/24

Innovate Canada (business development & consulting service and technology startup) partner reception event brought representatives from destination Canada Business Events to discuss the upcoming Innovate Canada agribusiness event to be held in November and awareness for the regional partners.

The primary goal of the *Emerging Tourism Operators and Experience Providers roundtable* event was to bring together a diverse mix of emerging tourism operators and established providers to create a tourism ecosystem for the Edmonton Region.

The *Ville Aero Conference* focused on innovation, technology, and sustainability in the manufacturing and logistics sectors. International experts from aircraft and satellite manufacturing, avionics, and unmanned aerial systems (UAS) spoke about the pivotal role in meeting the growing value chain requirements in Western Canada and the Pacific Northwest. This aligns with the County's joint economic strategies with the airport (YEG) identified in the Investment Strategy.

Business and Entrepreneur Centre (BEC) Events and Meetings

The BEC continues to see increased visitor traffic and awareness for Alternate Route Coffee Shop, Mother Bakery by Chartier and the additional lunchtime pop-ups with new food vendors. We are also seeing the local business community come into the BEC to work remotely, have business meetings, and meet other resident visitors.

We receive a regular number of inquiries for booking both the social space as well as offices, workshops or other possibilities and continue to look for ways to partner with others to continue to support businesses out of the BEC and the Economic Development Team.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Economic Development upcoming activities

April 20-21 is the Chamber's 2024 Expo and Job Fair. Economic Development and Human Resources are attending together on behalf of Leduc County.

May 6-10 is Economic Development Week with events scheduled (below).

May 8 *Career Connector Symposium* continuation (part 2), focusing on *Business Attraction, Retention and Culture Strategies*. This topic was chosen based on feedback from the initial Symposium event in November 2023 and aligns with the County's investment strategy. This will support regional businesses with workforce challenges. This event will be from 11am to 1pm at the Business and Entrepreneur Center (BEC). This will feature a business panel and Michelle Devlin from *Creating People Power* as a keynote speaker. Tickets are available through the Chamber's website.

May 10: A Celebration of Economic Development at Century Mile Racetrack
Collaborating with the Edmonton International Airport (YEG) Leduc County will celebrate the economic community with the greater regional economic development municipalities and groups. The event will

encourage business networking and celebration of our region combined with supporting the kick-off of the horse racing season.

May 15 Biz exchange meeting is planning an open meeting to encourage new members to join for fall cohorts.

Business Retention and Expansion program

Administration has assessed our statistics for 2023 in direct relation to the initial projected totals that were presented in June 2023. In all cases, projections for engagement were met or exceeded.

Local Businesses met with	96
Local Business inquiries	39
Local Business-focused events	19
Number of businesses (participated in County economic events and programs)	114

We continue to work with Leduc County businesses, grow our programs and add support on an ongoing basis based on inquiries and feedback from our business community.

Creating Connections

Partnerships and connections are like superchargers for growth but are challenging to track or value in a traditional sense. Often, we are not aware of the outcomes for long periods after the connection we facilitate. Administration is highlighting a few of these connections that have occurred over the first quarter of 2024.

Directly resulting from the Business and Entrepreneur Centre (BEC) operating businesses, two of the companies solved a staff issue by job-sharing an employee. This employee's knowledge has created cross-promotions and furthered the connection between these two companies.

Through programming and workshops at the BEC, we have seen business leaders begin to work together and share products that increase customer reach for all involved. One example was an employee of one company using one company's product for an international competition. Instead of a generic store-bought ingredient, a Leduc County product was featured internationally.

Some similar business connections have occurred through the Leduc County's Business Retention and Expansion Program and ongoing business visits.

During one business visit, a company expressed a challenge in finding short-term staff. Administration connected them to a service provider with a potential solution to this company's issue. Administration knew of the service provider's program for staffing, through an event. Both companies have expressed how great the new partnership is and how this has helped underemployed residents find work and grow production for the company.

Investment Strategy

The Leduc County Strategic Plan and the Leduc County Investment Strategy have expected economic-related outcomes and timelines identified. The team internally delivers and continues to complete the expected activities.

Priority 1: Competitiveness, Objective 1: Optimize the County's Policy Framework toward Positive Economic Outcomes

Review and provide new recommendations towards Leduc County's policy frameworks through an "economic lens" by targeting investment competitiveness and economic growth by Q3 2023 year one. Provide Council with potential policy and bylaw amendments options by Q1 2024 Under competitiveness.

The Economic team has and continues to work closely with the County Planning group, businesses, and agents on potential bylaw amendments for the Land Use Bylaw review with potential revisions that address modern business needs and development certainty. Some possible items may involve non-residential uses, zoning certainty, agriculture and tourism business uses. Since the summer of 2022, the Planning and Economic groups have continued to work together on current and long-range planning items for long-term benefit.

Priority 1: Competitiveness, Objective 1: Optimize the County's Policy Framework toward Positive Economic Outcomes

Initiate a new economic investment action plan for Leduc County, and engage a feasibility study for new and innovative economic development targets and potential new sector development within Leduc County. This internal Leduc County investigative study is to be completed by Q1 of 2024

The Economic Development team will continue refining its internal investigative study of new development targets and sector attraction tactics. This review of existing and potential infrastructure and long-range planning forecasts is integrated within the team's work and the partnerships with other agencies and various levels of government.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Economic Development Activities Report