



building communities together

2024 Business Plan Central Cariboo and Chilcotin Economic Development (1025)

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Working in partnership with communities large and small to offer local, sub-regional, and regional services to ensure that the Cariboo Chilcotin is a socially, economically, and environmentally desirable region.

Department/Function Services

The Central Cariboo and Chilcotin Economic Development function was established through Bylaw No. 5244 in 2019. The purpose of the service is to provide funding support through contributions for economic development activities in the service area, including Electoral Areas D, E, F, J and K.

Prior to the establishment of the Central Cariboo and Chilcotin Economic Development service, there were five separate functions in the Central Cariboo. Each of these functions was created through Electoral Areas bylaws as follows, Area D (No. 3855, 2003), Area E (No. 5235, 2019), Area F (No. 3706, 2002), Area J (No. 5016, 2016) and Area K (No. 5017, 2016). The budgets and business plan goals for these functions have been merged into this plan to encourage cooperation and efficiency.

The new service was created to support and promote economic development in the Central Cariboo and Chilcotin and work in important sectors such as tourism, agriculture, natural resources development and the retention and attraction of businesses and residents. This service is provided through contracts for various economic development initiatives, which currently include Visitor Information Services support agreements with the Williams Lake and District Chamber of Commerce, the Horsefly Board of Trade, the Likely Chamber of Commerce and the 150 Mile Greenbelt, Trail and Heritage Society (2024-2026) and the Community Services and Development Society of Alexis Creek (2024-2026).

Currently, there is a contribution to the McLeese Lake Farmers Market Association (2022-2024) to support the promotion and operation of the Farmers Market at Alexandria. This contribution is shared between the Central and North Cariboo Economic Development functions.

This function also leads Regional Economic Development Roundtables to share resources, initiatives, strategies, challenges, and best practices and supports the Cariboo Agricultural Development Advisory Committee.

Electoral Areas D, E, F, J and K participate in the service and taxation is based on the assessed value of land and improvements. There is no requisition limit for this service.

The Directors of Electoral Areas D, E, F, J and K are responsible for the governance of this service.

Business Plan Goals, Rationale & Strategies

2024 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Support the Regional Wood Innovation Training Hub initiative.
Rationale: With changes in the forest industry, a provincial appetite for sustainable harvest and value-added wood products, and international recognition for log and timber frame home building, a diverse group of stakeholders has come together to form an initiative focused on sustainable wood-based education and training. This initiative will support regional small and medium sized businesses by building a skilled employment base, and drawing regional, national, and international participants to the region.
Strategy: Work with Fraser Basin Council and the advisors group to help direct efforts and identify funding.
- 2. Goal:** Support tourism infrastructure at Quesnel Forks.
Rationale: Quesnel Forks is a unique heritage site in the Central Cariboo. Without staff interpreters it is difficult for tourists to understand the value of the site. Signage will help engage tourists and help them understand the rich history of the site.
Strategy: Work with Likely to develop and install signage for a self-guided tour at Quesnel Forks.
- 3. Goal:** Support tourism infrastructure on the Goldrush Trail.
Rationale: Horsefly is a key access point to the Gold Rush Trail year-round. With the existing parking lot privately owned and no longer accessible, it is important to develop a new parking/staging area to access the trail. RSTBC has identified a lot on crown land.
Strategy: Financial support to Horsefly to help offset the cost.
- 4. Goal:** Support the development of a circular economy in the Cariboo.
Rational: A circular economy conserves resources, creates jobs, and reduces waste, fostering local resilience while minimizing environmental harm.
Strategy: Work with the Environmental Services Department at the CRD to tap into provincial/federal funding to create a strategy to build the regional circular economy.

- 5. Goal:** Work with the Big Lake Community Association to develop a three-year contribution agreement to support maintenance of the Big Lake heritage site.

Rationale: In 2022, the Big Lake Community association secured an NDIIT grant, with financial support from the Cariboo Regional District, to upgrade their heritage site. Site maintenance will provide economic opportunities to the community of Big Lake and rural businesses. The CRD has similar agreements in place with other rural community groups to maintain assets. Funding has been allocated in the Central Cariboo Economic Development budget with no change to the requisition.

Strategy: Staff will work with the Big Lake Community Association to develop and execute a three-year agreement.
- 6. Goal:** Investigate the idea of a pilot project heritage tour.

Rationale: Heritage societies and community groups identify, maintain and develop heritage sites which attract tourists. Linking heritage sites within a small area (i.e. Likely area, 108 Mile Heritage Site) may offer increased tourism and business opportunities for rural areas.

Strategy: Engage with community groups to determine if there is sufficient interest in undergoing a pilot project. Continue working with the Heritage Steering Committee. Further develop the Cariboo Chilcotin Historic Driving Tour Guide & Map.
- 7. Goal:** Support the development of disc golf course at the spawning channel in Horsefly.

Rationale: Disc golf is a fast-developing sport. Supporting community groups to build and upgrade courses in the region will encourage tourism and create another outdoor lifestyle amenity to attract and retain residents.

Strategy: Funding is allocated to support communities to develop and upgrade disc golf facilities and provide potential leveraging for external grant opportunities.
- 8. Goal:** Support obtaining grant funding to reinvigorate Penstocks at the Bullion Pit historic site near Likely.

Rationale: Building heritage tourism assets has proved to attract regional, national, and international tourists. The Bullion Pit site is popular with cultural explorers.

Strategy: The Bullion Pit site is operated by the Likely Xat'sull Community Forest, which will submit grant applications with support from the Regional District.
- 9. Goal:** Support tourism opportunities in the Chilcotin.

Rationale: Volunteer community groups provide infrastructure and maintenance to crucial tourism infrastructure that supports their rural economies. Supporting this work will help build the tourism economy.

Strategy: Staff will work with community associations to establish and execute three-year contribution agreements.
- 10. Goal:** Work with rural communities to develop, maintain and improve trails and sites for tourism activity.

Rationale: Rural communities continue to implement tourism strategies, including the development of infrastructure to continue a long-range plan to promote tourism and local economic development. Trails are proving to be a very important natural asset to rural areas that can be developed and promoted. Locations under consideration in 2024 include upgrades to the trail to the Duck Pond Trail in Horsefly, the Brown Top Trail near Likely, and the Big Lake Heritage Site.

Strategy: Trail projects will be led by various partner groups including but not limited to the Horsefly Board of Trade, Likely Chamber of Commerce and Big Lake Community Association, with updates to and advice from Regional District staff.

- 11. Goal:** Support development of promotional materials for tourism activities in the Central Cariboo.

Rationale: Promotional materials such as brochures, website, maps, and videos are important tools to reach potential visitors and promote tourism opportunities in the area.

Strategy: Promotional projects will be led by various partner groups including but not limited to the Horsefly Board of Trade and the Likely Chamber of Commerce, with updates to and advice from Regional District staff.

- 12. Goal:** Contribute to site improvements, marketing, and promotions for the Xat'sull Heritage Village.

Rationale: The Xat'sull Heritage Village is an award-winning tourism attraction which provides educational and recreational opportunities for visitors, centered around the culture and heritage of the Xat'sull First Nation. This tourism attraction contributes positively to the local economy by encouraging travelers to visit our region and by providing employment to area First Nations.

Strategy: Projects and initiatives will be led by the Xat'sull First Nation with updates to and advice from Regional District staff.

- 13. Goal:** Invest in capital improvements or marketing and promotional activities at the Bull Mountain Cross Country Ski Area.

Rationale: Ongoing projects to improve trail signage and promote events at Bull Mountain are reasonable opportunities to generate local economic activity. The goal is to bring out-of-town recreational skiers to the facility. Bull Mountain is a premiere cross-country skiing destination in the Central Cariboo; however, it remains a local "secret" due to limited promotion and signage on the highway. Bull Mountain is managed by volunteers through a non-profit society.

Strategy: Projects will be led by the Williams Lake Cross Country Ski Society with updates to and advice from Regional District staff.

- 14. Goal:** Sponsor conferences and events in the Central Cariboo.

Rationale: Conferences and events draw visitors to the Central Cariboo and encourage economic development in the electoral areas.

Strategy: The resources necessary to provide limited sponsorship to conferences and events are included in the function financial plan.

- 15. Goal:** Market the economic development landing pages ‘Make the Move’ to attract new residents in key labour sectors.

Rationale: To help fill labour gaps in key sectors the Cariboo Regional District has developed webpages to provide regional information including resources, education, lifestyle, and opportunities. A marketing campaign is necessary to engage and drive potential new residents to the site.

Strategy: Work with the regional stakeholders to allocate funding and execute a unique marketing campaign.
- 16. Goal:** Support the Explore Cariboo marketing tactics and explore developing a multi-year contribution agreement.

Rationale: Now entering its fifth year, the Explore Cariboo marketing campaign has built momentum and proved to be a strong marketing tactic. It includes a website, social media posts, media influencers, published content, and advertising. Developing a multi-year agreement provides ongoing support and allows for long term planning.

Strategy: Provide both financial and strategic support to the project ensuring communities, attractions, and businesses from throughout the region are included resulting in enhanced increased tourism. Work with stakeholders to develop a multi year agreement.
- 17. Goal:** Monitor and support agritourism.

Rationale: With a growing demand for farm-to-table products and services, and experiential tourism, there is potential for agricultural businesses to diversify their revenue by offering tourism experiences.

Strategy: Distribute the agritourism document developed in 2023. Engage with ADAC and regional agricultural businesses and support development as requested.
- 18. Goal:** Review the McLeese Lake Farmers’ Market Agreement.

Rationale: The current three-year agreement will expire on December 31, 2024.

Strategy: The current agreement will be reviewed by staff and partner organizations and renewed if there are no material changes to the terms and conditions.
- 19. Goal:** Consider disposition of the heritage property at 150 Mile House.

Rationale: The property was acquired by the Regional District from the Ministry of Transportation during highway reconstruction through 150 Mile. The 150 Mile Greenbelt, Trails and Heritage Society has had an occupancy agreement for the land since 2013 with a plan to develop it into a heritage tourism asset; however, the site does not have access from the highway nor through neighbouring properties, limiting its potential. No improvements at the site have been undertaken since it was acquired. The occupancy agreement expired in 2023 and was not renewed by the Society.

Strategy: The heritage status of site will be reviewed by the Regional District Heritage Committee. Options for disposal will include transfer or sale to owners of the neighbouring parcels.

Overall Financial Impact

The 2024 requisition remains unchanged from the 2023 requisition of \$100,000 and this level is maintained in the five-year financial plan.

Significant Issues & Trends

In 2023, due to an oversubscription of the NDIIT Cariboo-Chilcotin/Lillooet Regional Development account, the Business Façade Improvement Program was suspended by the Regional Advisory Committee, leading to a lack of funding for local small businesses. However, following discussions between Regional EDOs and NDIIT, the program will resume in 2024.

Due to wildfires and rural firefighters and equipment being hired out to other regions, communities, such as Horsefly, were unable to accomplish a few of their 2023 goals.

During the last few years, the Province of BC has focused funding efforts on economic recovery and infrastructure. This is changing and provincial funding programs are now geared towards bolstering the value-added forest industry, supporting skills training, fostering clean and sustainable development, and advancing technology and innovation.

Low volunteerism in rural areas strains organizations, impacting community services and creating challenges for sustainability and growth. This is reflected in the collapse of the West Chilcotin Tourism Association.

The Cariboo Regional District is a signatory on the Province of BC/UBCM Climate Action Charter and has committed to continuing work towards carbon neutrality in respect of corporate operations.

Measuring Previous Years Performance

Goal: Review the Visitor Information Centre agreements with the Williams Lake and District Chamber of Commerce, Horsefly Board of Trade, Likely Chamber of Commerce and the 150 Mile Greenbelt, Trail and Heritage Society to support tourism and development in the Central Cariboo.

- Completed. The agreement has been renewed at current terms and conditions.

Goal: Review the Visitor Information Centre agreement with the Community Services and Development Society of Alexis Creek to support and encourage tourism along Highway 20.

- Completed. The agreement has been renewed at current terms and conditions.

- Goal:** Support the development of disc golf courses at the spawning channel in Horsefly and at Chimney Lake.
- Not completed. Deferred to 2024.
- Goal:** Support obtaining grant funding to relocate the historic steam shovel from Quesnel to the Bullion Pit historic site near Likely.
- Not Completed. The City of Quesnel chose to keep the steam shovel.
- Goal:** Work with rural communities to develop, maintain and improve trails and sites for tourism activity.
- Completed. Trail work at Upper, Middle and Lower Horsefly Falls, and Quesnel Forks.
- Goal:** Investigate the idea of organized heritage tours.
- Completed. Worked with the Heritage Steering Committee to distribute and track the Cariboo Chilcotin Historic Driving Tour Guide & Map.
- Goal:** Support development of promotional materials for tourism activities in the Central Cariboo.
- Completed.
- Goal:** Contribute to site improvements, marketing, and promotions for the Xat'sull Heritage Village.
- Not completed. No opportunities were brought forward in 2023.
- Goal:** Invest in capital improvements or marketing and promotional activities at the Bull Mountain Cross Country Ski Area.
- Completed. Supported upgrades to their website.
- Goal:** Sponsor conferences and events in the Central Cariboo.
- Completed. Supported the Speaking Our Truth Powwow at Williams Lake First Nation and the Williams Lake Chamber of Commerce business expo.
- Goal:** Market the economic development landing pages 'Make the Move' to attract new residents in key labour sectors.
- Completed. Designed and printed bookmarks with QR codes to drive traffic to the Make the Move site. These will be distributed in books for interregional library loans.
- Goal:** Support the Explore Cariboo marketing tactics and explore developing a multi-year contribution agreement.
- Completed. Contributed both financially and strategically to the 2023 water activities campaign.
- Goal:** Support the Regional Wood Innovation Training Hub initiative.

- Completed. Worked with the Alex Fraser Research Forest, City of Williams Lake, and Fraser Basin Council to submit a REDIP application to develop the project.

Goal: Develop an agritourism study.

- Completed. Engaged with stakeholders from across the region as well as CRD planning, ADAC, and the province, to understand opportunities and challenges in the agritourism sector. This engagement highlighted the need for, and inspired the creation of, a Cariboo Chilcotin Guide to Agritourism.

Other Accomplishments

Organizations and businesses in the Central Cariboo are moving forward to develop a Wood Innovation Training Hub to support and build the value added wood sector. The Fraser Basin Council, in partnership with the CRD and the Alex Fraser Research Forest, has submitted a REDIP application for stakeholder engagement, to hire a coordinator, and offer trial courses.

The Economic Development Department has taken on the CRD's Grants for Assistance Programs.