



Village of Warburg

Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan

May 2021

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	2
1.1	Coal-Transition Spurring Change	2
2.	Study Background	2
3.	Current State Assessment.....	4
3.1	Historical Development.....	4
3.2	Population Trends	4
3.3	Urban Growth Trends	5
3.4	Community Demographics	5
3.5	Asset and Gap Analysis	10
4.	Strategy Development	22
4.1	Objectives and Principles	22
4.2	Vision for Economic Development	23
4.3	Strategic Approach	23
4.4	Supporting Existing Businesses	25
4.5	Attracting Outside Investment	27
4.6	Potential Retail Capture.....	37
4.7	Complimentary Activities	39
4.8	Regional Partnerships and Synergies	42
5.	Action Plan	46
5.1	Goals, Objectives and Associated Activities	46



1. Introduction

1.1 Coal-Transition Spurring Change

In November 2015, the Government of Alberta unveiled its Climate Leadership Plan which included phasing-out all coal-fired electricity generation by 2030. Subsequent slowdown and closure of the coal mines feeding the Genesee, Sundance and Keephills power plants has impacted communities within their spheres of influence, including the Village of Warburg (the Village). Warburg and its residents have had long standing relationships with the mines and generation facilities, based on jobs, investment and community supports.

Warburg recognizes that its economic future is dependent on diversifying its tax base and supporting a diverse economy which offers alternative employment options for residents. Until now, the Village has not had an explicit focus on economic development with this function previously handled by the Leduc Nisku Development Authority (LNEDA). LNEDA was appointed as administrator of the Government of Alberta's Coal Community Transition Fund financial support on behalf of Leduc County, the Villages of Warburg and Thorsby. Subsequently LNEDA was discontinued as an agency, and Warburg assumed responsibility for administering the remainder of its transition funding, as well as being responsible for economic development initiatives moving forward.

2. Study Background

2.1.1 Industrial Park Concept

Warburg's council-identified priority for the Coal Community Transition Funding was investigating the viability of an industrial park located at the Village's limit along Highway 39. In 2019, Nichols Applied Management Inc. (Nichols), in conjunction with B&A Planning Group and McElhaney Engineering undertook a viability assessment of an industrial park, to be developed either by the Village or a private developer. The study concluded that the Village is currently not in a position to finance the front-end investment required for the park. The Village could support a private developer, but in the absence of demonstrated demand, the likelihood of attracting an investor to bear the risk of 'front-ending' is currently low.

The study identified a list of potential sectors which may be interested in locating at or near the Village, given its location and cost base, primarily in the agribusiness (food/beverage processing, co-packing, milling, hemp processing cannabis production).

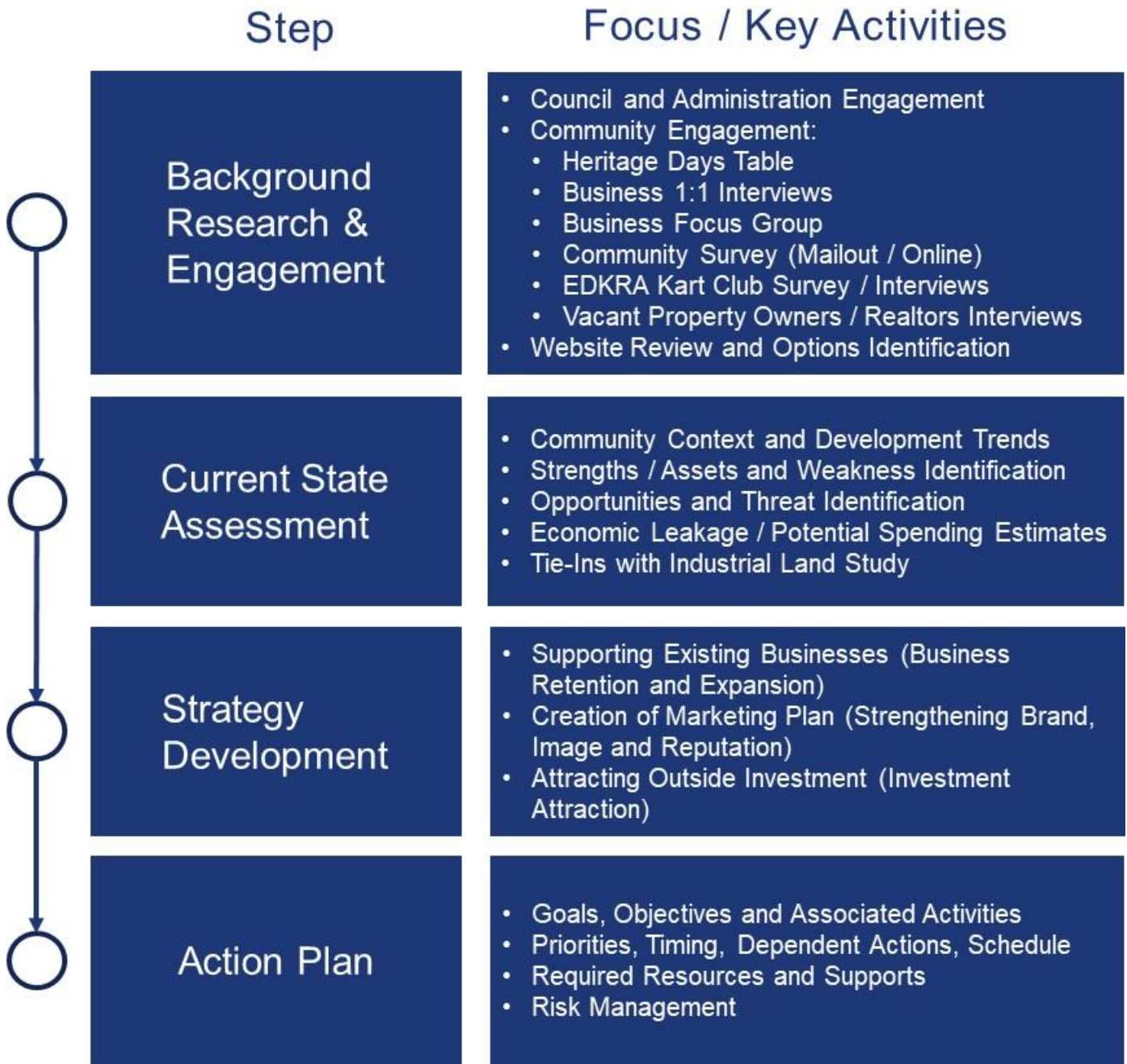
2.1.2 Development of a Broader Strategy

Attracting industrial investment at present is challenging, given economic conditions in the province. This is evidenced by the fact the Village is host to a number of vacant industrial lots located in proximity to the proposed site, many of which have been on the market for a year or more without movement.

Building on the learnings of the industrial park study, the Village commissioned an economic development study and action plan (this report). Taking a broader view on all aspects of the Village's and regional economy, the study's focus includes:

- assessing the current state of the Village economy, business base and demographics
- identifying and leveraging on existing assets and strengths and means to address key gaps and weaknesses
- strategies for retaining and supporting existing businesses including 'main street' revitalization
- approaches for attracting new investment including retail / commercial and industrial enterprises

Figure 2-1 Project Process



2.1.3 Regional Comparison

For comparative purposes and where possible, indicators for Warburg are compared against neighbouring communities in the region: Breton, Thorsby, Calmar and Leduc County as well as the provincial average. When applicable, some analyses consider other communities in the Edmonton Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) and Drayton Valley.

3. Current State Assessment

3.1 Historical Development

Warburg’s roots are as a farming community, serving as the commercial and human services for the surrounding agricultural region. The Village grew with the establishment of the rail lines in the region and was incorporated in 1953.

Introduction of coal mining to feed new area generating stations added new sources of employment in the region, including Warburg residents. Residents recall a time when the community, as an important local service centre. Even with a smaller population base of between 400 and 500 residents, the community housed a 3 grocery stores, a meat processing facility, lumber yard, hardware store and a watch repair shop.



3.2 Population Trends

3.2.1 Rural Population Shift

Over time, commerce conducted in the Village has been impacted due to the decreasing population base in its rural service area, as smaller family farms shifted to larger operations with reduced labour per hectare farmed. In the case of Warburg, mining operations has resulted in the relocation of a limited number of farms within its trading area as well.

Leduc County has seen a relative decrease of 42% in its labour force involved in agriculture between 2001 and 2016, with currently 15% of workers directly involved in farming. This echoes the broader trend being experienced across the province and across North America. Provincially, there has been nearly a 50% reduction in the relative share of the labour force directly working in farming over that same timeframe. How this population shift occurs within the region varies by area and is also influenced by non-farming movements as well, such as acreage developments.

The rural shift in population in the region over the last 15 years has impacted Warburg more than its neighbours. While the Breton and Thorsby have both seen growth in the rural population within their immediate trading areas, Warburg has seen a decrease of about 30 people, or 5% of its immediate rural trading area.

Table 3-1 Rural Population Changes in the Region

Rural Population (Within 7 km of Community)	Warburg	Breton	Thorsby	Calmar
2001 Population	610	430	440	630
2016 Population	580	490	580	610
Change in People (15-Years)	-30	60	140	-20
Change (%)	-5%	14%	32%	-3%

Note: Using a 5-mile / 7 km radius as a proxy for the immediate trading areas (essentially equidistant between adjacent communities)
 Source: PCensus based on Statistics Canada 2001, 2016 Federal Census

3.3 Urban Growth Trends

While the rural population base surrounding the Village has shifted, the urban population count grown. Over the past 25 years (1991 to 2016), the Federal Census indicates Warburg has grown by 260 people to 770 total residents, a 50% increase. The average annual growth rate of 1.7% is slightly lower than the provincial average of 1.9% over that timeframe.

Table 3-2 Community Population Growth Rates

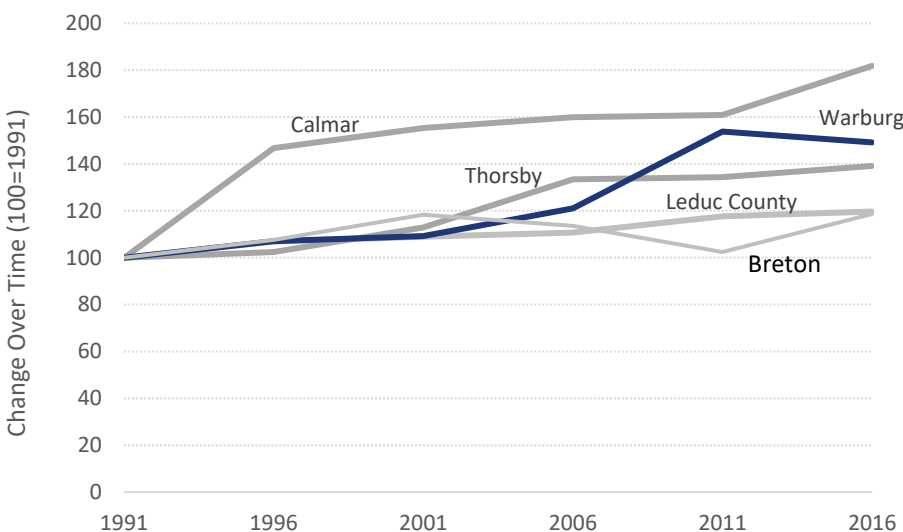
Community	Population 1991	Population 2016	25 Yr Change Population	Total Change (%)	Annual Growth Rate (%)
Warburg	510	770	260	51%	1.7%
Thorsby	710	990	280	39%	1.3%
Calmar	1,230	2,230	1,000	81%	2.4%
Leduc County	11,500	13,780	2,280	20%	0.7%

Source: Statistics Canada Federal Census

- Thorsby is slightly larger at 990 residents
- Calmar has seen strongest relative growth in the region (81%)

The region has benefited from the overall strong growth experienced in the Edmonton CMA and provincially, driven by heightened economic activity particularly from the year 2000 to 2014. Thorsby is 28% larger (220 more residents) but has seen lower overall growth (39%). Calmar experienced the most growth in the region, increasing by 1,000 residents over the past 25 years, an 81% increase. Leduc County as a whole grew by 20% over this timeframe.

Figure 3-1 Relative Change in Regional Population






- Warburg's relative growth rate has been higher than Thorsby and the County
- while the Village's population base is limited (less than 1000), it has 'held its own' as compared to its regional peers, despite population declines around its boundaries, indicating a good level of resiliency
- release of new census population data in 2022 will provide an updated picture of population trends for the Village and region



Source: Statistics Canada Federal Census

3.4 Community Demographics

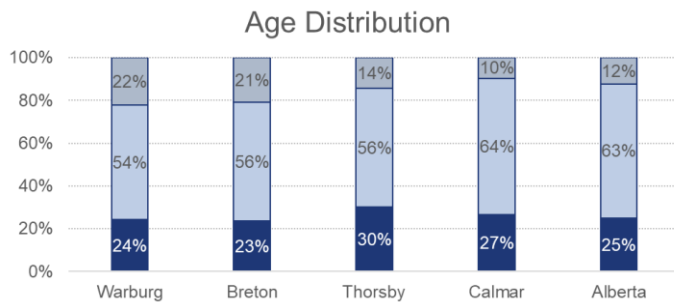
The following table summarizes key demographic characteristics of the Village, as compared to its regional peers.

Table 3-3 Key Community Demographics

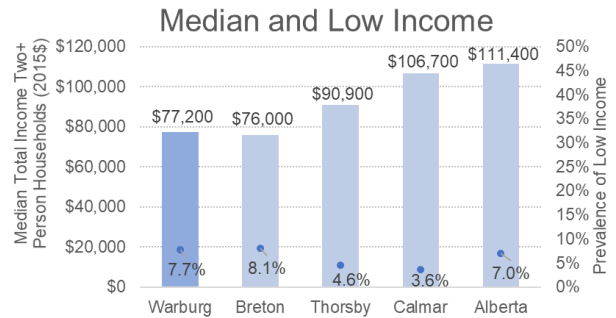
Characteristic	Indicator / Description	Observations / Implications
Age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warburg is an older community, with 22% of its population > 65 years (Alberta = 12%) Warburg's share of children and youth is on par with the provincial average the age distribution mirrors Breton's closely Thorsby and particularly Calmar are both younger, with a larger relative proportion of the population of working age (20-64) Warburg's working age population is relatively the lowest in the region and below the provincial average 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> major subset of population at or near retirement opportunities in servicing these needs while proportion of working age population is lower relative to peers, working age population (15-64) amounts to 450 people
Labour Force 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> participation rate (number of working age residents in the labour market) is lower than other comparators – with exception of Breton unemployment in Warburg is lowest within region, roughly in-line with provincial average 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> subset of the population is of working age, but has elected not to enter the workforce this may change given the coal transition; the release of the updated 2021 Federal Census in 2022 will provide indication those residents who do enter the labour market are having reasonable success finding work (and willing and able to commute)
Employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warburg residents are employed across a variety of industries (with positions located both inside and outside the Village) the Village's linkage to power generation is evidenced by higher levels of employment in mining and utilities (based on 2016 data) the largest sector of employment for residents is Mining, combined with Oil and Gas. Accommodation and Food make up the third largest employment sector, followed by retail and manufacturing the Village's employment levels, along with Breton in mining and utilities is much higher than other communities in the region, due to proximity to the coal-fired generation stations Village residents reflect lower employment in the retail, manufacturing and wholesale, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Village is closely tied and therefore more vulnerable to impacts to the mining and utility sectors than elsewhere in the region relatively high level of employment in the service sector (accommodation, food services, retail) as well as manufacturing, with the majority of work located in other communities this indicates an experienced workforce in these sectors, currently traveling outside their community for work (and may be interested in working closer to home) reasonably high levels of employment in mining, construction, utility and manufacturing sectors

Characteristic	Indicator / Description	Observations / Implications
	<p>warehousing and transportation sectors than regional peers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13% of Warburg’s labour force is self-employed. This is the highest level in the region (in-line with Thorsby) and slightly above the provincial average of 12% key employers in the Village include the Village of Warburg, the Warburg School, Martin Deerline, Warburg Seed Cleaning Cooperative and Apollo Concrete. Dalmac Oilfield Services was a major employer in the community until it recently ceased operation 	<p>indicates a workforce well suited to equipment operation, trades and potentially fabrication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> higher level of self-employment indicates an independent workforce, not reliant on a local-base employer. May indicate attractiveness of community for worker to settle in; may also be susceptible to relocation risk the community is underrepresented by medium-size employers (20+ workers) and larger
<p>Education and Training</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the region overall has lower education attainment levels than provincially in terms of high school diplomas or college / university. The region has above-average levels of apprenticeships and trades Warburg has the highest level of trades (15% of the 15 years+ population); above the provincial average (10%) the Village (along with Breton) has the highest proportion of adults with less than a high school diploma (34% as compared to 17% in Alberta) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> education levels include the entire adult population, and are potentially influenced by retirees with lower educational attainment the influence of the mine and power plant is reflected in the above average level of trade and apprenticeship certificates the higher relative proportion of skilled labour is a potential advantage (presuming they are still resident – the impending Federal census, with data released in 2022 will provide an updated picture)
<p>Income Levels</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> median income of two-person+ household in 2016 was \$77,200, 30% below the provincial average of \$111,400 median income in Warburg is near the lowest in the region – it is 2% higher than in Breton, while incomes are higher in Thorsby (18%) and Calmar (38%) 7.7% of households in 2016 were noted as being low-income. This rate is in line with Breton and the provincial average, and roughly double that of Thorsby and Calmar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> income levels drive retail interest by potential market segment. Market opportunities exist for servicing lower income needs (i.e., finding ways to deliver lower cost solutions than alternative options, including travel costs and limitations) higher end retail market less of interest income levels suggest lower wage expectation, attractive to cost sensitive producers such as labour-intensive manufacturing

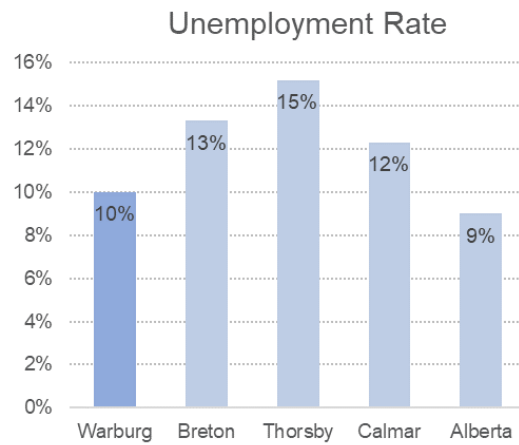
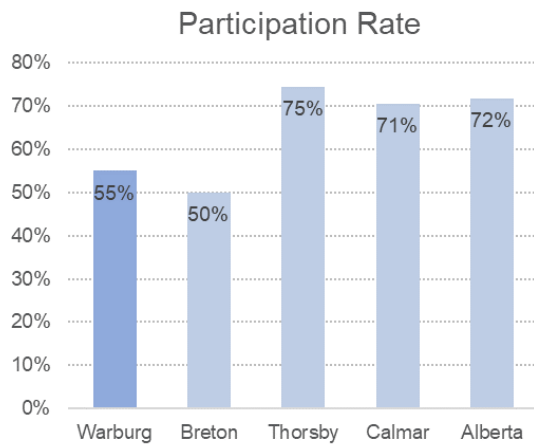
Age Demographics



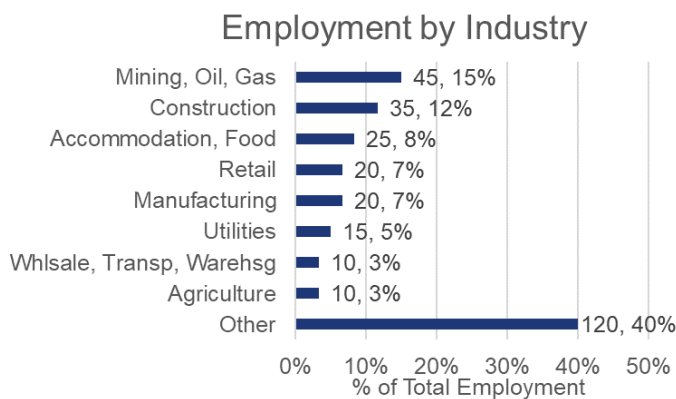
Income Levels



Labour Force

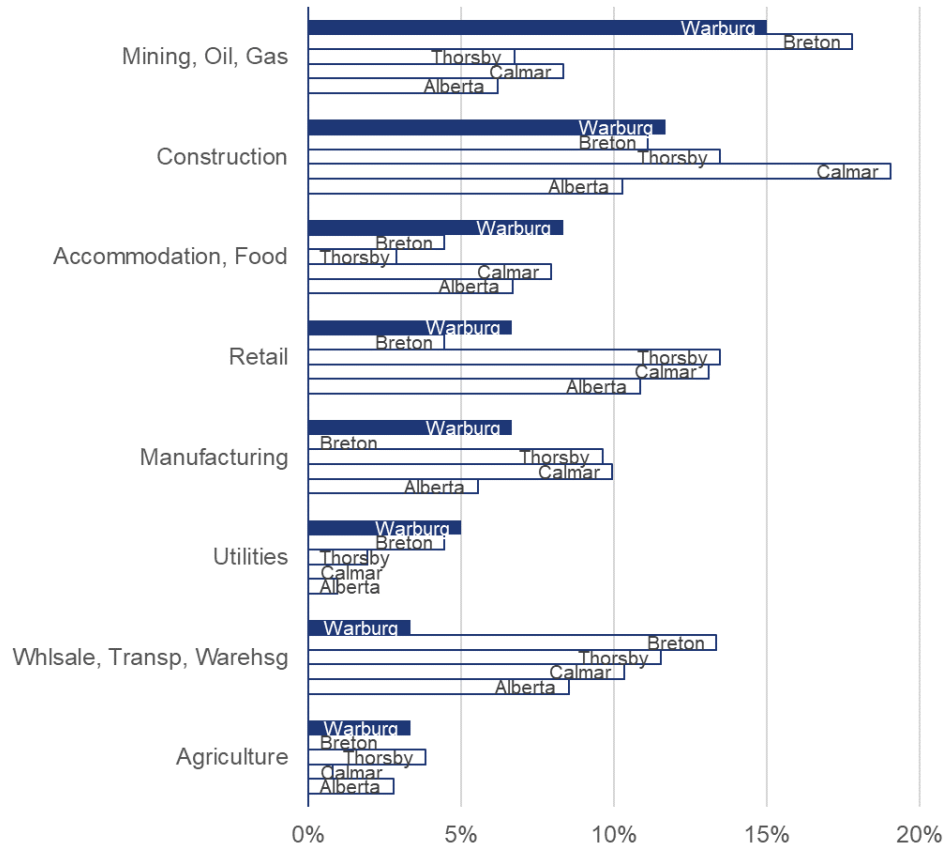


Employment

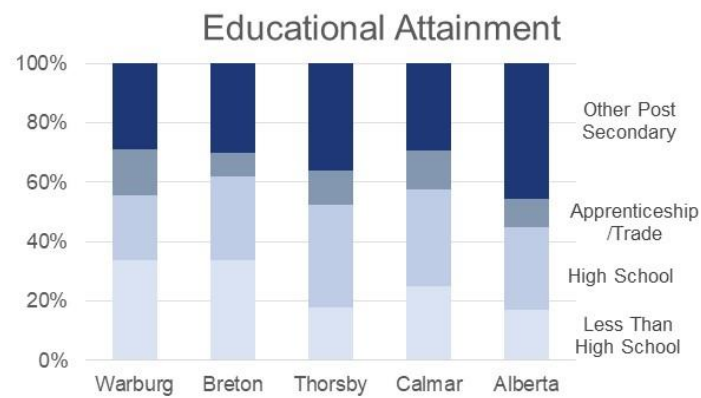


Community	# of the Labour Force that is Self-Employed
Warburg	13%
Breton	9%
Thorsby	13%
Calmar	10%
Alberta	12%

Employment by Industry and Region



Education Levels



3.5 Asset and Gap Analysis

Community Location and Land Base	
Strengths / Assets	Weaknesses / Gaps
<p>Within the Region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roughly equidistant to Leduc and Drayton Valley, two major centres within the region, both active in the energy and agriculture sectors • Located in the heart of prime agricultural land with a long-standing history of servicing the rural region • Close proximity to the Genesee power generating station, and reasonable proximity to Sundance and Keephills stations • Highway 39 is part of the Over-Dimensional Load Corridor, with traffic levels of 2,900 daily movements at the Village entrance <p>Local Setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large area provides ample space for residential, industrial, institutional and recreational uses • Good inventory of future supply for growth 	<p>Within the Region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While daily commuting to south Edmonton and Leduc area poses no challenge, the location is on the edge for many for viable daily commuting to/from Edmonton • Other options within region (Thorsby, Calmar) located closer to Leduc/Edmonton, offering an advantage for travel times and delivery costs. The extra 15 minutes between Thorsby and Warburg is challenging to convince commuters • Because of its location, Warburg has tended to be the last community to experience the 'boom' of a strong energy sector and the first to feel the 'bust' of slowdowns <p>Local Setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No visibility of Village from Highway 39 and absence of any signs or structures to engage passing drivers • Village sees essentially no drive through traffic due to roughly 1 km setback to beginning of core

Figure 3-2 Community Location within the Region



Community Location and Commuting Trends

While commuting levels in the region are fairly high, Warburg sees an overall higher level of commuting as compared to neighbouring communities, with nearly three-quarter of workers commuting at least 15 minutes. The average commute is estimated at approximately 30 minutes, or 38% above the provincial average.

Table 3-4 Frequency of Daily Commuting

Commute Time	Warburg	Breton	Thorsby	Calmar	Alberta
Average Daily Commuting Time (One-Way) in Minutes	30	28	25	25	21
Above the Provincial Average	38%	29%	19%	15%	-

Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Federal Census and Nichols Applied Management

Less Village residents are working within their local area (within 15-minute drive), and over 25% of residents commute over an hour every day.

In terms of driving time, Warburg is:

- 40 minutes to Leduc
- 50 minutes to south Edmonton
- 35 minutes to Drayton Valley

This degree of commuting presents a challenge in terms of retail leakage, with the majority of workers travelling daily to larger centres such as Leduc and south Edmonton.

Commercial Base	
Strengths / Assets	Weaknesses / Gaps
<p>Enterprise Base:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roughly 45 businesses in total as per the Village’s online directory • Two key agricultural service firms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Martin Deerline Dealership ○ Warburg Seed Cleaning plant • Number of home-based businesses • New manufacturing business opening (plastic guitar pic fabrication), e-commerce based • New grocery store and pharmacy noted as strengthening the commercial base <p>Shopping Patterns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some support for local products and services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Businesses and Village report procuring local whenever possible ○ Agribusinesses note customers in the region show good loyalty ○ Slight operating cost advantage for agribusiness compared to Edmonton 	<p>Enterprise Base:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite having a larger population base than in the past, the local purchasing has diminished and can support fewer businesses than in the past • A lack of commercial, personal and health services identified as a major gap. Thorsby and Breton have deeper retail sectors with more choices (gas, restaurants, coffee shops, hardware, services) • Identified gaps in essential commercial services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Car mechanic / service station ○ Hardware store • Agribusiness notes labour attraction and retention can be challenging • Closure of Dalmac Oilfield Services, a major employer <p>Shopping Patterns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents are aware that their shopping behavior has contributed to the current level of business activity in the Village

- 70% of Warburg residents work outside the community and shop in larger centres while travelling to work
- Potential customer base in Warburg may appear limited to potential investors

Another broad societal trend over that past 50 years which has impacted the Village's economy is the increase in workforce participation, double car families and commuting to other centres for work, like Leduc and Edmonton. This enables an expanded daily shopping pattern for residents, who no longer rely on local stores for daily needs. In addition, the growth in online commerce and home delivery, like Amazon, results in alternative retail choices for residents. These trends are impacting small-town retail nationally and beyond. It can be particularly challenging for communities within easy driving distance to major centres; more remote communities tend to be able to support more local retail through increased local capture of daily shopping needs.

The following table provides a comparison of retail 'density' for similar sized villages (roughly 30 minutes from a major service centre) as well as the two towns in the region.

Table 3-5 Retail Density in Small Centres

Community Name	Community Type	Population	Distance to Larger Centre	Total # Businesses With Employees	Businesses with Employees (Per 100 Capita)	# Retail Businesses
Warburg	Village	765	34 Min (Drayton Valley) 38 Min (Leduc)	N/A	N/A	6
Breton	Village	575	31 Min (Drayton Valley) 48 Min (Leduc)	N/A	N/A	?
Clive	Village	715	38 Min (Red Deer) 24 Min (Lacombe)	45	6.3	4
Beiseker	Village	820	31 Min (Airdrie)	43	5.3	6
Hythe	Village	825	42 Min (Grande Prairie)	66	8.0	4
Thorsby	Town	985	32 Min (Leduc) 39 Min (Edmonton)	99	10.1	13
Calmar	Town	2230	12 Min (Leduc) 24 Min (Edmonton)	80	3.6	8

Source: Canadian Small Business Pattern Data / Statistics Canada 2018 and Nichols Applied Management

- small business data for Warburg and Breton are unavailable (due to suppression in the data source); other similar size communities see between 3 and 10 businesses per 100 capita.
- a desktop-based count of retail-type businesses by community indicates that Warburg, with about 6, is in-line with comparator villages, which tend to have between 4 and 6 businesses

Thorsby shows a higher density of retail; while the population base is 28% higher than Warburg, the retail business count is 2.6x higher. This is likely linked to the presence of Arctic Spas, a major manufacturer located in the community which supports a number of jobs in the community.

Spending and Leakage

Figure 3-3 Average Weekly Household Spending – Village Residents (Per Household)

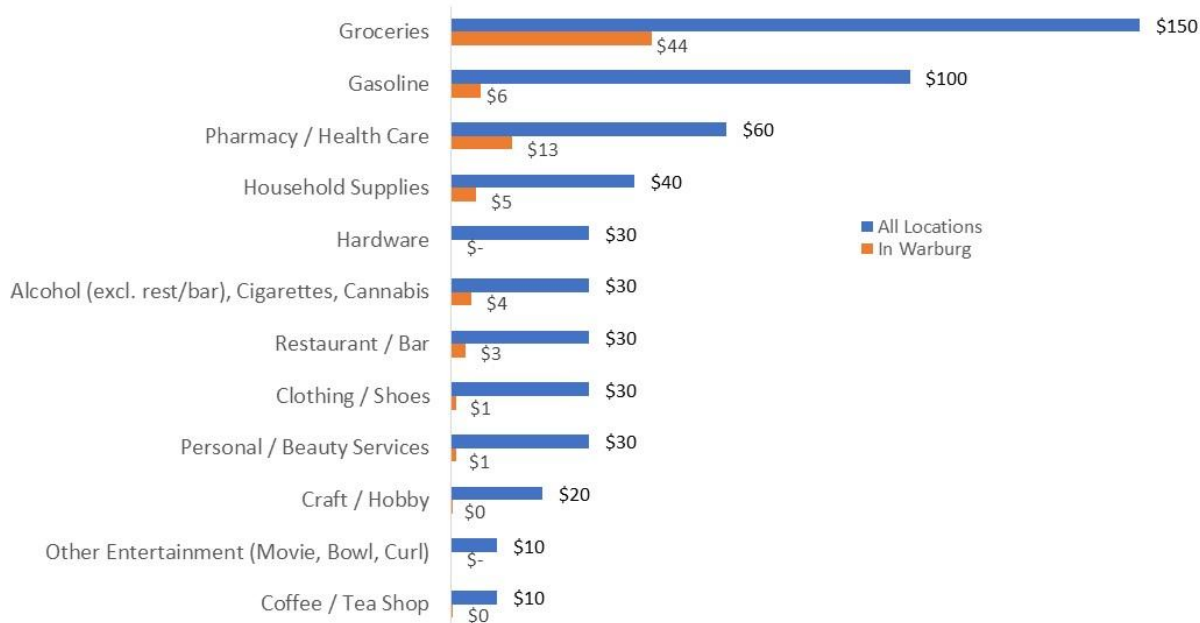


Table 3-6 Average Weekly Household Spending

Category	All Locations	(Capture)		(Leakage)
		Warburg	Warburg	Warburg
	\$	\$	%	\$
Gasoline	100	6.35	6%	93.65
Groceries	150	43.75	29%	106.25
Household Supplies	40	5.45	14%	34.55
Pharmacy / Health Care	60	13.35	22%	46.65
Personal / Beauty Services	30	1.05	4%	28.95
Clothing / Shoes	30	1.00	3%	29.00
Craft / Hobby	20	0.05	0%	19.95
Coffee / Tea Shop	10	0.40	4%	9.60
Restaurant / Bar	30	3.05	10%	26.95
Other Entertainment (Movies, Bowling, Curling, etc.)	10	-	0%	10.00
Alcohol (excluding restaurant or bar), Cigarettes, Cannabis	30	4.40	15%	25.60
Hardware	30	-	0%	30.00
Other	5	-	0%	4.55
Total Average Spending	545	80	17%	465

Table 3-7 Total Capture / Leakage

Village of Warburg	Annual
Total Households in Village (2016 Census)	300
Current Estimated Total Household Spending	\$ 8,480,000
Estimated Total Spend in Warburg	\$ 1,250,000
Spend Capture (%)	15%
Spending Leakage	\$ 7,230,000

- Average spending of \$80 per week per household in the Village, ~15% of total weekly spend is captured in Warburg
- Highest expenditure categories are groceries, pharmacy / health care, gasoline and alcohol
- Linked to the limited retail base, ~85% of weekly spending leaks out of the community
- Analysis does not consider business spending

Willingness to Support Local

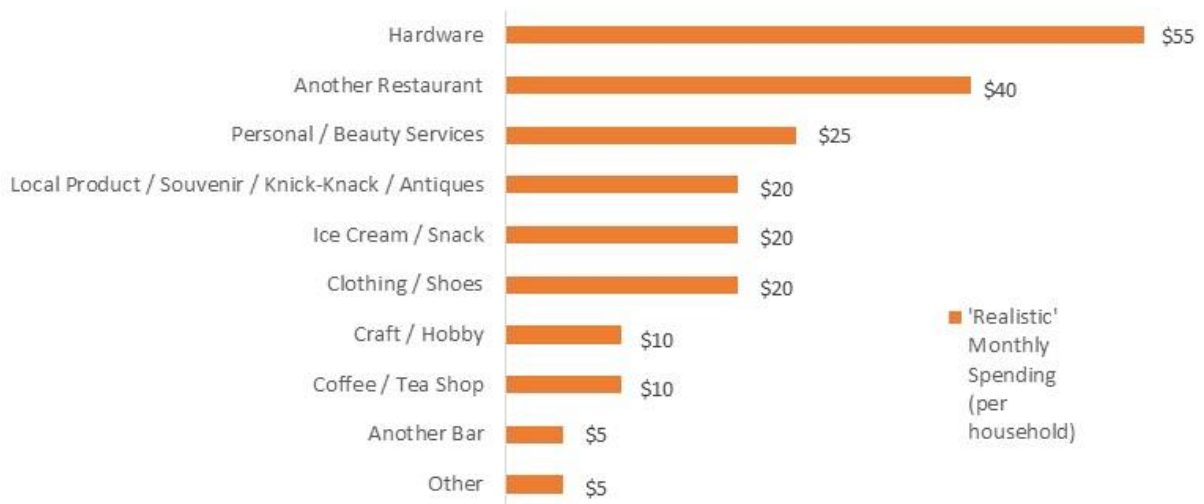
- Residents feel having local shopping choice is important:
- 62% indicate having local shopping options is very important, while 38% feel it is somewhat important

- Resident survey identifies a willingness to pay a premium to support local – averaging 13% above 'big city prices' across respondents

Figure 3-4 Willingness to Pay Premium for Local Options



Figure 3-5 Willingness to Support New Local Business



See Section 4.5.1 for an estimation of the potential commercial trade which could be captured (including from EDKRA members), with the addition of new retail options in the Village.

Affordability and Availability of Commercial / Industrial Land and Buildings

Strengths / Assets	Weaknesses / Gaps
<p>Inventory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable inventory of land and building parcels serviced and ready, as well as greenfield, to meet a variety of potential investor needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 5 large-scale lots (4 serviced) and available immediately with proximity to Highway 39 ○ 5-7 commercial buildings and 9 vacant commercial lots serviceable and immediately available in the Village core <p>Price:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial / industrial land and buildings in the Village are economically priced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Commercial building for sale (e.g., 1,000 ft² building on serviced lot for under \$60,000) ○ Commercial building for rent (e.g., 1,000 ft² building for under \$900/month) ○ Commercial lot for sale (e.g., serviced lot for under \$20,000, some near \$10,000) ○ Industrial / commercial buildings near highway (e.g., 5,000 ft² building and up to 5 acre fully serviced lot for sale <\$400,000) ○ Industrial / commercial lots near highway (e.g., one acre fully serviced lot for sale <\$30,000) 	<p>Inventory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very limited options for firms requiring visibility from Highway 39. • Absence of a modern-style industrial park may be seen by some as a weakness • Dated looking commercial stock in the Village core; many in need of maintenance or a major renovation • Vacant buildings, as well as building occupied as storage with no outward face impacts the commercial sector: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Detracts from the Village’s look, diminishes the energy out of the commercial core ○ Impacts ability to generated momentum towards a vibrant ‘main street’ feel <p>Price:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No identified gap

Vacant Property Analysis

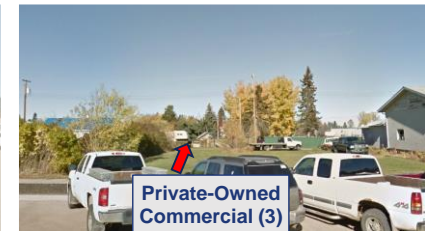
Properties Occupied as Storage



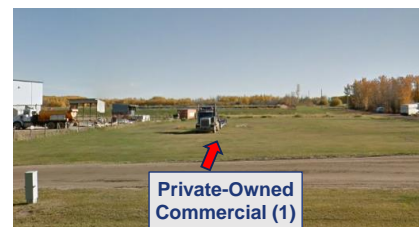
Vacant Commercial Properties



Vacant Commercial Lots



Vacant Commercial / Industrial Lots



The issue of vacant properties was identified in the Business Focus Group, where it was noted as a priority in terms of trying to introduce momentum towards revitalizing the Village's economy, particularly the retail sector. The

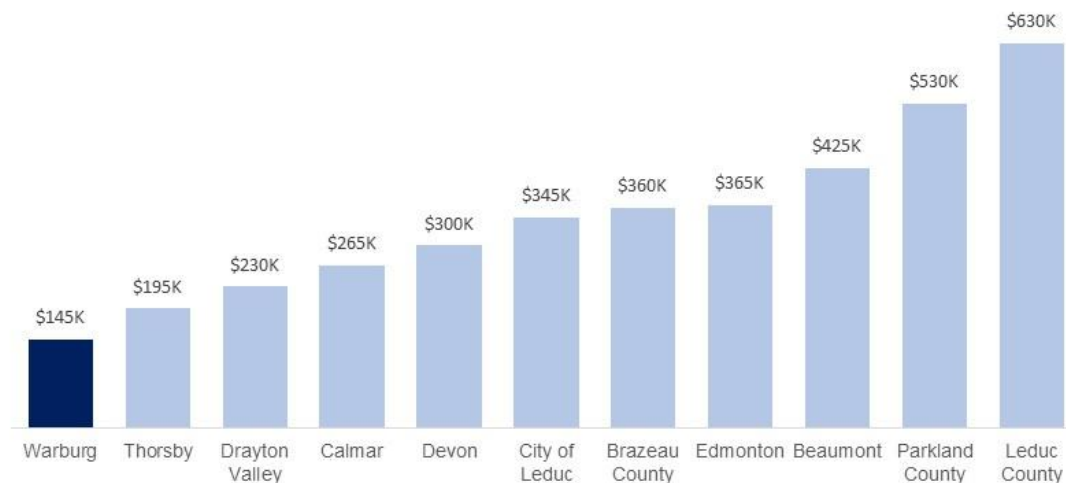
Village felt paralyzed in a sense as the property owners are paying taxes, and the degree to which the properties could be available for other use, like subletting, or for sale was unknown. Through this project, owners of currently vacant commercial and industrial lots and buildings were contacted and discussions held:

- history of ownership, future intentions and potential interest in economic development activities or selling was explored
- good participation was seen – all owners were happy to discuss the initiative and share their intents
- nearly all properties are available for sale, at reasonable prices

Knowing this, the Village is now in a position to actively promote opportunities regarding its underutilized supply of land and buildings, giving more certainty to that economic development activity.

Affordability and Availability of Housing	
Strengths / Assets	Weaknesses / Gaps
<p>Housing Supply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good selection of housing types, ranging from detached to trailers. Generous lot sizes of 50x120 ft • Total housing stock of approximately 325 dwelling units, with 5 – 15 units typically for sale at any time <p>Housing Costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average house sales price (all residential properties) in 2020 was \$145,000, roughly one-third of the Edmonton regional average and lowest in region: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 25% lower than Thorsby, 45% lower than Calmar ○ 66% lower than Edmonton regional average 	<p>Housing Supply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior-specific housing choice • Lacking variety in built form (e.g., multifamily) <p>Housing Costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No gap identified

Figure 3-6 Cost of Housing – Regional Comparison



Notes: Average sales price (000's) in 2020, all residential units. Source: CREA.

Municipal Infrastructure and Essential Services

Strengths / Assets	Weaknesses / Gaps
<p>Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide boulevards – right ‘bones’ for an attractive ‘main street’ layout • Sidewalks and roads generally in very good condition <p>Essential Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible zoning where applicable and open-minded service delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Businesses cite examples where municipality goes beyond to be helpful ○ In general, good openness to business, supporting development • Overall competitive municipal taxes • Municipal website look and content at high end of village comparators • Snow removal reportedly better than service provided in Edmonton 	<p>Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closest rail service is Sunnybrook, 10-minute drive northwest <p>Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacking high speed internet service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ available service is cell-tower based (15 MBPS speed) ○ high speed (Supernet) available as the school, library and registry. Although Supernet is available for connecting by local business, it is understood no businesses are connected, presumably due to connectivity cost • Website lacking an economic development lens throughout all material, and specific information regarding opportunities including land and buildings

Small-Town Lifestyle

Strengths / Assets	Weaknesses / Gaps
<p>Community Attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community has maintained its size, and on a relative basis has outgrown its regional peers • Warburg is friendly, quiet and family oriented • Has essential community infrastructure at a good quality level compared to other villages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ K-12 School ○ Health centre with a primary care network, public health nurse, rotating doctors and new pharmacy ○ Hockey arena, curling rink, large hall, playgrounds • Active volunteer society and clubs including Cultural Society, Museum Society, Ag Society, area 4-H clubs, EDKRA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Seniors remain in community 	<p>Community Attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population base of 765 limited in terms of local retail and commercial services which it can support • Its distance to Edmonton precludes it from seeing growth like other centres within the CMA • Limited social and educational options for older youth • Limited selection of dining and entertainment (cinema, theatre, nightclubs) • Elevated level of property crime: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cited by numerous respondents as an issue, endemic in the region and rural Alberta in general, exacerbated by the economic slowdown ○ Business owners cite impacts, including decisions not to invest until issues solved



Edmonton & District Kart Racing Association

Strengths / Assets

Racetrack and Membership:

- History of car and kart racing in the region
 - Dowler family, of national stock car racing fame, founded track and club. New track constructed nine years ago
- karting specific racetrack, estimated to be in the top 2 tracks in North America
 - European karting representative recognized track as a unique asset as compared to European locations, expressing interest in future event participation
- Active club managing the facility, with over 110 active racers representing roughly 70 households. Club operates ~19 races over summer weekends (Saturday & Sunday), and ~14 mid-week events
 - Average attendance 120 per race weekend, peaking at up to 300 people for major events
 - Total annual estimated visitorship to track of 3100 person-visits (person per day on site)
 - Club members include business owners including in Leduc/Nisku oil patch, executives, skilled trades and others
- Members race from around the Edmonton region, visitors include Calgary and out-of-province
 - Not-for-profit structure of club keeps racing costs lowest of comparator group
- Membership has reasonable awareness of Village and desire to participate in shared events

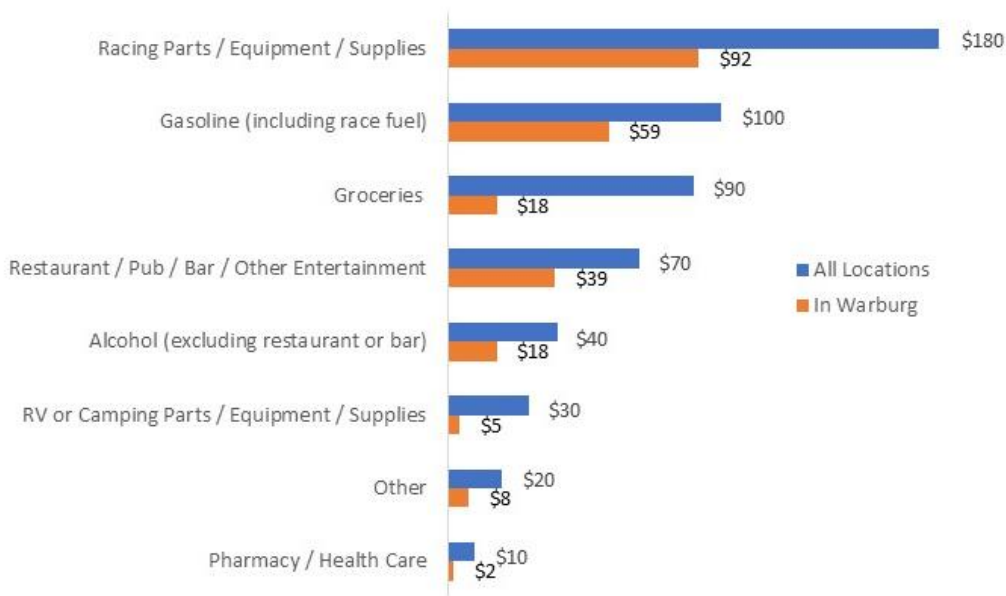
Weaknesses / Gaps

Racetrack and Membership:

- Track issues to be addressed include:
 - Connection to Village water supply (priority)
 - Paving of road
 - Installation of permanent buildings (club currently planning project)
 - Highway signage
 - Courier site in town for parts deliveries
- Crime an issue, with various members property being stolen or vandalized
- Land limitation for expanding the track
- Openness in members and visitors to spend more locally, lacking options for food, entertainment
- Lack of awareness in some members on land, building and housing options available



Figure 3-7 Club Member Average Weekly Spend During Race Season



- according to karting club survey responses, EDKRA members spend nearly half of their weekly race-related expenditures in Warburg

- 63% of this spending is related to gasoline as well as racing parts, accruing to the new race equipment business which relocated to the Village

- weekly expenditures during the race season average \$540 per club member household, of which an estimated \$240 is spent in Warburg

EDKRA Club Spending Impacts:

- During the race season, the average club member household spends between \$1700 and \$2600 with Village businesses (excluding race parts) - the average spend is estimated to be **\$2100 per year per member household**
- Including visitors who also attend training nights and race weekends, the club is estimated to generate over \$250,000 in annual expenditures to Village businesses
 - Excluding race parts, the spend is estimated at over **\$160,000 per year to Village businesses**
- The club generates an estimated 3100 person-visits to the track annually

Membership Connection to the Village

Figure 3-8 Frequency of Visiting the Village During Track Trips

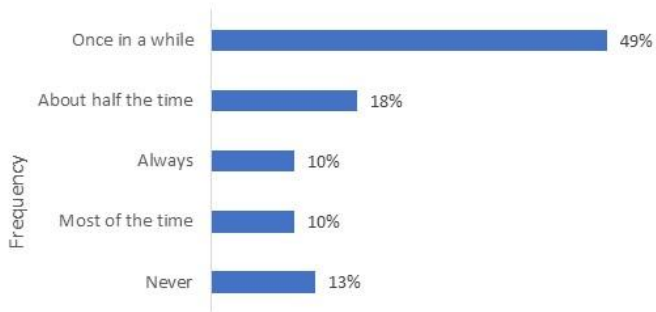


Figure 3-9 Awareness of Services in Warburg

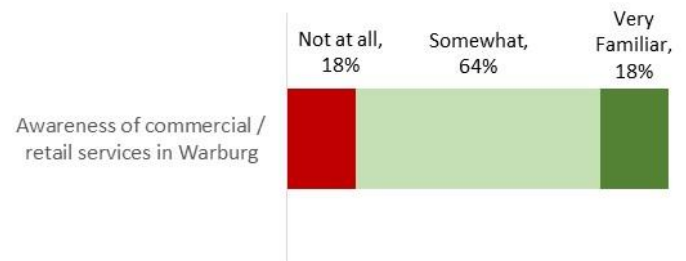
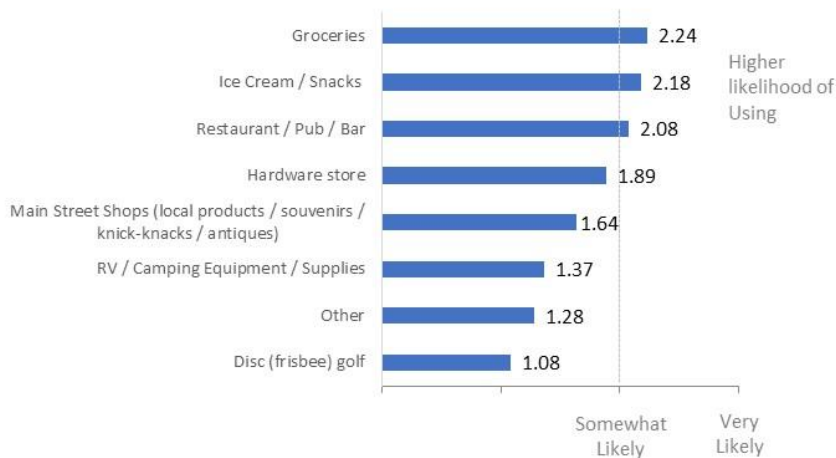


Figure 3-10 Awareness of Services in Warburg



- Club members express a willingness to shop more locally in general with more options
- The highest demand is for groceries, ice cream / snacks and restaurant / pub / bar
- Hardware store is also a priority for some members, including oil, tools, RV repair materials
- Some members have interest in 'main street' retail

4. Strategy Development

4.1 Objectives and Principles

Objectives of the Economic Development Strategy:

- Provide an **overarching vision** for economic development in the region
- **Prioritize** research, planning and action steps that will support the attraction, retention and growth of business activity
- Identify immediate, short, medium and long-term **goals to pursue**
- Outline **roles, responsibility** and budgetary considerations
- Provide an **action plan for executing** objectives, including indicators for monitoring

Key Principles and Approach Incorporated in Strategy Design:

- **Realizable** – the identified goals are intentionally of an achievable scale to be undertaken by a village with limited financial resources. Longer-term objectives are outlined as aspirational and can be pursued as momentum and resources increase over time
- **Collaborative** – a cooperative approach is envisioned, within the region through the 39/20 Alliance as well as with Leduc County, businesses, clubs and support agencies active in the region
- **Adaptive** – the strategy is intended to be a starting point, based on current conditions. As the region continues to evolve, the Strategy will also need to adapt to address new challenges and opportunities
- **Optimistic** – the Current State Assessment identifies assets, positive trends and opportunities observed in the Village. To capitalize, positive support and collaboration is required, including government and business leadership. Passion and support for the community is observed in elected leadership, Village administration, business owners and residents, providing a level of energy to be tapped

As the Village makes decisions as to how best deploy its assets (such as vacant buildings and land, tax rebates, time and effort, in-kind, etc.) to support economic development activity, priority should be given initiatives which support the following outcomes:

Priority for Economic Development Initiatives:

- create employment for Village and area residents
- retain investment over time
- have potential for expansion or spin off investment over time
- ability to generate complimentary activity / synergies
- generate tax revenues (immediate or future)

4.2 Vision for Economic Development

The Village of Warburg is a great place to make a life. We have the space, infrastructure, location and people to help businesses thrive. We are proud of our community and the amenities that contribute to our quality of life, and we support local. Our economic roots are in agriculture, energy and serving our local trading area while we look to the future through increasing connectivity and diversification. Interested investors will find an authentic community and leadership with a ‘can do’ attitude that wants to partner in success.

4.3 Strategic Approach

4.3.1 General

As identified in the previous section, the Village faces various challenges in attracting investment, given its location and existing industrial base and compounded by the closure of area coal mines. It also has a number of assets and quality of life features which can be capitalized upon. When evaluating the ‘total package’ with which the Village has to work, a recommendation emerges for a simple approach - starting small and building upon successes. The good news is, major changes are not required – small wins make enough impact to be noticed, with the intent to show progress and build momentum. Expansions of existing businesses, introduction of a handful of new retail and service businesses and investment by one new industry in the Village will make a big difference in the community’s economic development direction.

Over time, with an increasing industrial base, the Village can develop the momentum to work on larger-scale initiatives:

- development of the industrial park, through identification of ready clients and a willing developer
- larger incentives and industrial improvement projects to attract target industries, drawing on increased tax revenues set aside through an increasing tax base

4.3.2 Expectations and Tracking Progress

Setting realistic expectations as to what economic development can achieve is critical. Local governments have limited levers with which to influence investment and businesses are impacted by a wide array of factors, most of which are outside a municipality’s control. Villages like Warburg have limited financial and administrative capacity to execute strategies and part-time elected leadership are also limited in time which can be allocated to this portfolio.

This emphasizes the importance of:

- keeping things simple
- targeting slow, steady growth through small wins.
- leveraging assistance from other groups

Figure 4-1 Strategy Approach outlines the recommended approach for the Village in executing the economic development strategy. It should be noted that this is not a purely linear process, with various steps being undertaken concurrently. Some steps have already been initiated in varying degrees, reflecting the work accomplished to-date in strategy development. Progress achieved along each step should be tracked and reported on with leadership, and major milestones shared with the business community and residents.

Being noticed by investors is more challenging than ever for communities, and a mix of approaches in gaining potential investor and resident attention is outlined in the strategy. These approaches will see varying levels of success, and some will not work; however, it is important to try, measure results and adjust plans accordingly.

It is critical to recognize that undertaking economic development implies taking risks. Directly linking activities to future successes may not always be possible and much depends on macroeconomic trends and sometimes just plain luck.

Keeping all this in mind helps elected leadership, administration, businesses and residents to maintain perspective on how economic development efforts should be judged. Leadership of both large and small municipalities in the province have noted that, regardless of the challenges implied, it is a priority for their communities to work towards economic development as an important aspect to ongoing community viability. So, while there may be missteps or lack of identifiable impacts along the way, the cost of doing nothing far outweighs these potential downsides.

Figure 4-1 Strategy Approach



4.4 Supporting Existing Businesses

4.4.1 Ease of Doing Business

Discussions with area businesses indicate that overall, Warburg is easy to deal with and supportive of local businesses. Village administration is noted as being open to initiatives, responsive to requests and flexible in terms of identifying win-win situations. Current council is identified as being supportive; some respondents note that historically councils have not always been supportive, including a potentially missed opportunity when Arctic Spas engaged with the Village about locating in the region.

Businesses note the need for Village leadership to remain open and flexible is critical if the community is going to catch the attention and convince new businesses to invest. By all accounts, the Village is ‘business friendly’ and does not introduce a number of unnecessary irritants or barriers to existing or new investment, an important first check mark in terms of strategy development.

No need has been identified for the Village to address ‘business friendliness’ within its operations. No immediate barriers to investment have been identified, and Administration is noted as being flexible and supportive to local business.

4.4.2 Local Business Supports

No immediate business support needs were identified by the agribusiness / industrial sectors. Discussions with company representatives support the need to revitalize the commercial sector and effectively promote Warburg as an attractive community to live and work. This has the objective of increasing the resident and workforce base, as well as attracting in other firms to broaden the business base in the community.

Existing businesses have not identified pressing needs in terms of municipal supports. Leadership should continue being champions for the community and remain attentive to supporting businesses sustainably.

4.4.3 Revitalizing the Commercial Sector

Importance of a Vibrant Commercial Sector

Revitalization of the Village’s commercial core has been identified as a priority. As anchor industry businesses note, even though their operations are not reliant on the sector, interest in the Village by current and potential residents, employees and investors is heavily influenced by the state of the commercial sector, which is currently lacking. Of course, the viability of the commercial sector, involving retail and personal and professional services, is very much dependent on the customer demand present.

The Village’s population and employment bases can support some commercial growth through more explicit support of local business; however, at their current size they would be hard-pressed to support large-scale growth. Therefore, commercial growth needs to occur in harmony with employment, visitor and population growth.

Availability of Affordable Space

A key element in place to support revitalization is the Village’s current supply of vacant space, available at competitive rates for rent or purchase. Businesses willing to test viability in the Village can source affordable space available immediately. Once market viability has been proven, alternative spaces or vacant lots for new developments are available at competitive rates. Fortunately, small changes can make a big impact – a handful of new businesses can make a noticeable impact in the Village, breathing more life into the commercial core.

Support Local Program

A support local program is also valuable in reminding and encouraging residents to give their business, when possible, to local businesses. This initiative can also include rural residents within the Village’s trading area, which expands the Village’s population base from 770 to 2,700 (1950 additional residents within a 15-minute drive), increasing up to 13,300 residents within a half-hour drive (including the Village). Survey results indicated residents are supportive of buying local, with a willingness to pay on average a 13% premium above ‘big city’ prices in exchange for the convenience of local goods and services. This initiative involves informing/reminding the catchment area of options available and promoting messages of solidarity in supporting local with a longer-term vision of strengthening the overall commercial sector.

Commercial-Specific Business Attraction

Opportunities for local business can be formally packaged and promoted. Existing residents make a natural target audience, as they are already committed to the community and may be looking for employment and business opportunities close to home. The resident survey indicated a limited number of residents potentially interested in commercial opportunities in the Village. Investment opportunities can also be shared outside the community, targeting specific business types.

Priorities identified by residents and businesses for local services include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicle Mechanic / Gas Station 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coffee Shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ice Cream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hardware Store 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restaurant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food truck

Commercial Zone Improvements

This opportunity is widely-cast, looking at the retail choices with observable street life as a combined experience. It involves a mix of supporting existing businesses in putting a fresh face forward such as facades/signage, ideally with a sense of coordination, and supporting hard infrastructure like beautification, lighting, benches and mood creation like music and tying into existing special events. Ideas include:

- **incentives for improving property standards** – observers note the quality of building stock in the Village is dated and needs refreshing. A number of communities, such as the Town of St. Paul, have effectively utilized a façade improvement program to improve its ‘main street’ look. The program is match-based (50/50 with the business owner) and involves tax breaks over time based on increased assessment linked to façade and signage improvements. It has proven to be an affordable way to incent revitalized look in commercial areas
- **better utilize existing, vacant-looking buildings** – this effort is underway with building owners engaged by the consultants and verifying openness to leasing or selling buildings at affordable rates. These buildings can be marketed as opportunities for prospective investors. Once filled, they represent new choice and remove the blank face which currently undermines energy in the core.
- **land incentives** – the Village owns a number of residential and some limited commercial lots, which can be marketed at attractive rates to potential business owners, with a caveat of development occurring agreed upon immediate and longer-term commitments (develop and stay)
- **business residential zoning** – some business owners have noted zoning which permit owners living above their businesses would be attractive and help differentiate the community from within the Edmonton region. This is particular pertinent given the elevated levels of crime in the region and concerns business owners have for their establishments’ security

Stimulating the Commercial Environment



- **seasonal markets** – creating space and inviting local and area producers can create additional commercial activity that does not require 24/7 year-round commitments, which is attractive to some enterprises. Farmers or street markets, seasonal like Christmas markets are attractive to residents of the region as well as from the Edmonton area, who seek interesting day outings. This ties in with the tourism and agri-business strategies, whereby area producers including potentially Hutterites and Mennonites in the region have a venue to sell their products. These markets can occur inside or outdoors and be

planned to align with community event days for extra traffic



- **pop up stores** – similar to markets, space can be identified and made available at low cost for rotation or sharing amongst nascent business owners or home-based businesses who desire a public place to show their wares. This space adds some energy to the commercial area due to its constant changing

Home-Based Businesses

- **supporting and promoting home based-businesses** – the Village is host to a number of home-based businesses, but little is known about these ventures. Some of these ventures could eventually grow to a place of needing pop-up or permanent commercial space Home business growth is accelerated by the massive societal shift underway during the Covid pandemic with videoconferencing enabling many people to work from home as needed. This trend has also led to an outmigration from major urban centres to smaller communities and rural areas as people take advantage of workplace flexibility and seek more space at a lower cost. The Village is well-situated to serve these potential new residents with some of the lowest cost housing in the region, and its proximity to Edmonton for ease of visits as necessary. Ensuring high speed internet is critical in capitalizing on this opportunity

4.5 Attracting Outside Investment

4.5.1 Target Sectors

Both primary (industry) and support sectors (commercial/retail) of the economy are identified by Council as priority, in that each supports the other. Key employers in industry for example drive population growth and demand for daily services and entertainment, and that strong demand supports a vibrant commercial sector which helps attract residents. While certainly growth in any sector is welcome, the following sectors have been identified through the industrial land study and this economic development strategy as aligning most closely with the Village’s existing strengths and assets. A variety of weaknesses and gaps are acknowledged, which must be addressed in order for the Village to be seen as competitive.

The recommendations place priority on well-established sectors of the provincial economy to which the Village’s workforce, land assets and cost advantage can be brought to bear in differentiating from regional competition. Within these sectors a fairly wide net is cast to maximize options, as any subsectors within are logical potential targets. General supports and partnerships can benefit other sectors of the economy, including emerging areas like

home-based intellectual or technology-based businesses – however these will likely be limited until the Village achieves major internet connectivity – a priority for all businesses.

Agri-Business

Warburg’s proximity to primary agriculture production and key transportation infrastructure provides a number of opportunities for the attraction of firms active in the agribusiness in the short to medium term. The following is a list of specific opportunities in the agri-business sector, a number of which were identified in the Industrial Park Study¹:

Farming Inputs



- The region is currently lacking crop input retailers. Three different suppliers are located near the Devon turnoff (Nutrien, Cargill, Coop). RayAgro is reportedly looking at Thorsby has not broken ground. Fertilizers used to be provided at Sunnybrook but that location closed two years ago, with Calmar being the closets location now. Introducing essential inputs could help attract some of that business to the Village. Engagement with area farmers could help with testing interest and volume levels as well as appropriate product identification.

Cannabis



- opportunities exist for production and processing of cannabis flower as well as oil extraction and value-adds like edibles and other Cannabis 2.0 products. Analysis of the sector indicates one investor group with potential interest in a location in the region. Leduc has had good success in attracting major cannabis production investment, but producers have struggled as the market adjusts production to match demand. Production is now highly focused on cost controls, advantageous to a lower-cost location. Some small-scale producers have found success tapping into typically underutilized labour in small communities, aligning with the region’s workforce characteristics

Hemp



- associated with cannabis production and used for food, oil, and textiles production, hemp production is a growing industry worldwide. Cannabis legalization removes a barrier regarding plant use, with a new operator locating in Nisku. The Leduc-Drayton Valley-Brazeau corridor is being planned as a regional center of excellence for industrial hemp products, aligning ideally with Warburg’s location

Food and Beverage Processing



- the Edmonton region has a vibrant food and beverage processing sector that often goes unnoticed. The Food Processing Development Centre in Leduc ‘graduates’ successful start-ups on a regular basis, who are looking to establish a business around their proven product concepts. These businesses are hyper-sensitive to operating costs and are already familiar with the region. The Village’s location is in reasonable proximity to the centre, the high quality of agricultural inputs produced in the region and the community’s low housing costs and under engaged workforce all align with these start-up’s needs. A key consideration is facility requirements which meet Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) standards

¹ See the referenced study specific business case information for each opportunity

Co-Packing Facility



- linked to food and beverage processing, many new producers lack the capital or expertise to develop the product packaging and distribution side of their businesses. Co-packing services exist to meet these needs, and can either be a pure merchant model or owned and managed by an existing producer as another revenue stream

Milling and Processing



- opportunities exist for small-scale milling in the region for wheat and other grains can be used in baking and cooking, as well in distilleries and breweries, a growing sector in the province and the Edmonton region. This ties in to food and beverage processing opportunities and the Village's existing successful seed plant, presenting the opportunity to develop a cluster. The region has an abundance of grain production in providing easy access to high-quality inputs. Larger-scale opportunities exist for pulse fractionation in Western Canada; however, Alberta may be seen as less competitive than other provinces. Regardless, it presents a (ambitious) opportunity.

Manufacturing

The Village's lower cost land values and potentially under-utilized labour force are two key elements attractive to potential investors. This fact is demonstrated by Arctic Spas' decision to locate in Thorsby. One investment decision like that is sufficient to make a material positive impact in a village-sized community. While many different subsectors may be potentially interested in the Village, the following is a shortlist of manufacturing felt to be of most relevance to Warburg:

Transportation Equipment / Trailers



- manufacturing of truck trailers and non-commercial trailers, which can be sold as is or assembled on site. The Village recently saw serious interest from a trailer company which purchased land but has subsequently decided post-pandemic to focus on existing operations in Calgary and the Okanagan. This interest clearly demonstrates the community's attractiveness to this type of manufacturing subsector

Wood / Furniture Products



- this includes furniture and cabinetry making, signage and other wood products. While this wood products is more limited in the Edmonton region than other manufacturing subsectors, the Village is host to one wood product maker already. This subsector has tended to be more cost-conscious than steel manufacturers buoyed by higher industry rates, and therefore potentially more interested in the Village's lower cost base, including labour

Fabricated Metal Products

- companies in this subsector are engaged in forging, stamping, forming, turning and joining processes, architectural and structural metal products, boilers, tanks and shipping containers and hardware, turned and wire products. Nisku and



south Edmonton are host to a sizeable cluster of fabrication shops and manufacturers, with the majority historically active in the energy sector. Many producers have struggled enormously since the 2015 economic slowdown, seeing largescale workforce reductions and cost cutting, with some firms pivoting to exports or new products/industries to stay viable. This sector is poised for a recovery with a rebound of the energy sector post-pandemic, but cost-efficiency remains top of mind. Some producers will likely be interested in contemplating a lower-cost location like Warburg.

Plastics and Rubber Products



- Edmonton is home to a vibrant plastic manufacturing sector, producing tanks, trays and other products used in a variety of sectors, including energy production. The majority of plastic and rubber manufacturers are located in West Edmonton along the Yellowhead Highway east and south Edmonton and to limited extent, Nisku. Plastic manufacturers have lower-cost production models than steel fabricators and may have interest in a lower-cost area with a potentially untapped labour force. This may be offset to some extent by a desire to be near key inputs.

Transportation and Logistics

The Village has past experience hosting transportation firms as well as service companies like bulk fuel. Large lot sizes, good highway access and location along a relatively busy transportation corridor has driven this interest. Highway 39 currently sees 3200+ vehicle movements on a daily basis and is part of the province’s Over-dimensional Load Corridor, a key asset in the transportation realm. Bolstering the transportation sector in the Village is also advantageous in that it can serve as an enabler to other potential sectors like manufacturing and agri-business, in addition to offering better service to existing businesses. Subsectors of interest include:

Trucking



- this opportunity focuses on both local and long-distance trucking of general freight. While specialized transportation is an option, and could come in to play given, for example food production in the region, the primary focus is general transport handling a wide variety of commodities. Freight is generally palletized and carried either in boxes, containers or trailers. As proven already, the Village is attractive due to the large lot sized, ease of access to the highway and lower land values.

Light Industrial Laydown / Storage



- opportunities associated with transportation are often packaged with warehousing and logistics. In the Edmonton region this is centralized in west Edmonton / Acheson Industrial area as well as south Edmonton / Nisku / EIA. While the Village location is likely of less interest in warehouse citing due to the need to be close to inputs, markets and major transportation routes, the community’s large lot sizes and lower costs are attractive for large-scale storage needs, such as staging areas and industrial lay-down yards. The Village has existing experience in this area, having previously hosted Dalmac Oilfield Services. Its location offers a lower cost alternative for Nisku-based operations, particularly with business activities westward.

Retail / Commercial

Warburg's current commercial and retail service sector is limited, resulting in a high proportion of daily spending leaking out of the community. Even as some residents want to shop more locally, they have few options to do so. Residents and business owners note the lack of a vibrant 'main street' which sees activity including foot traffic. An active 'main street' provides a sense of energy to a community and helps support concepts like community pride, social interaction and interest generation in visitors. As some business owners observe, the total package the Village offers in order to attract companies to set up, and new residents to live, goes beyond a business location but is also dependent upon services available and retail vibrancy. To that end, the retail commercial opportunities identified align with interested expressed in the resident survey and business and council discussions.

'Main Street'-Type Retail



- retail opportunities include a mix of products required on a daily basis as well as special interest / 'knick-knack' style shops. According to resident input, the former is of more interest than the latter; however, specialty shops can serve as a draw for visitors from outside the community when effectively marketed. Businesses which serve interests and are unique throughout the region reflect better potential, as the ability of the Village's population base to sustain a variety of shops is limited. Examples of potential target businesses include bakery, coffee shop, interesting eateries/snacks, area food products, hairdresser, ice cream. Local food and beverage production also has potential synergy with this opportunity if they have store front services.

Commercial Services



- two priority areas identified by residents are an auto mechanic to replace the retiring business, and a hardware store. The market for a mechanic already proven as viable. The Village has been host to a hardware store in past years, which reportedly closed due to being unviable. Ongoing demand for one in the community, as well as neighbouring Breton's ability to support multiple hardware stores, suggests potential may exist for a small-scale store.

Tourism

Tourism has historically not been a significant contributor to Warburg's economy. Residents note its location, out of sight from Highway 39, results in the Village not being well known and rarely explored on a random basis by passing traffic. This factor contributes to the community's peacefulness, a desirable asset; but on the other hand, results in missed opportunities of intercepting passer's by in becoming familiar with the community and patronizing local businesses. While not a major opportunity, generating even a small degree of visits helps put the community more on the map and increases the volume of retail spending, supporting the viability of shops in the Village, benefiting full-time residents and businesses.

Impromptu Visits



- this opportunity involves capturing a subset of travellers passing the Village entrance to turn in and explore the community. A key element to this is development of attractive signage and other gateway effects which spark curiosity and entice stopping. The expected number of visits is admittedly low, but adds up over time, leveraging on the reasonable busyness of Highway 39. As a passive approach, any visits can be looked upon as a 'bonus' for local retailers. It can also be complimented by broader marketing, discussed below.

Thematic and Event-Driven



- The Village is already host to annual events, like Heritage Days as well as special events like community bar-b-ques. Wider promotion and tying these events into commercial zone experiences like seasonal markets can help drive turnout and increase community awareness. Themes, linked to brand development of the Village, can help grab attention. Partnering with county agribusinesses and developing a small cluster of destinations which justify a day-outing from Edmonton would capitalize on high demand for interesting outings within a one-hour drive, a perfect fit for the community's location.



4.5.2 Available Property Promotion

Develop Available Property and Investment Opportunity Packages

Investment opportunity packages of specific available properties for sublease and/or sale should be developed. This requires reconfirming with existing owners' their approval for the Village to promote land and building opportunities within its boundaries (nearly all property owners engaged with gave verbal permission for Village promotion of their properties).

Opportunities can include suggestions regarding potential use types and best fit for market interest (e.g., retail, bakery, industrial/laydown, manufacturing). The promotional pieces should include the investment case for why investors should consider Warburg, highlighting its competitive cost advantage. The pieces should mirror commercial-broker style promotional brochures, using professional but simple templates which allow for Village administration to update on an ongoing basis.

Property-Specific Targeting



A key asset the Village currently has is the single-story commercial property located at 5004 – 50 Street, which it inherited through tax default sale. The building is 3,120 square feet in total, 78 x 40 ft (3,120 ft² total), subdivided into 3 bays of roughly 26 x 40 feet each.

Adjacent to the site are three vacant commercial lots:

- Closest to the building is a privately-owned lot, available at a low price
- the Village owns the next two lots. The Village recently received an interest offer from a private investor, with plans forthcoming



- taken together, the property represents significant size, covering nearly half a Village block. The ability to plan and develop continuous parcels like this carries additional value; the Village should endeavour to market the combined package to test interest, before selling individual pieces, if possible.

As owner, this commercial building provides the Village with a tool it can use for promoting investment activity. With ample road access front and back, back yard space and available vacant lots adjacent, this property has a number of assets which make it marketable for a variety of purposes.

Three potential opportunities are identified in this strategy with how this space could be contemplated and marketed, to drive economic activity:

1. **Food Processing Hub**
2. **Small-Scale Manufacturing Space**
3. **Retail Space (existing use)**

Table 8 Commercial Space Options to Generate Economic Development Activity

Considerations	Option 1 Food Processing Hub	Option 2 Manufacturing / Assembly Shop
		
Target Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leduc food processing incubator 'graduates' • area entrepreneurs interested in food • small-scale producers in other areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small-scale light manufacturers • product assembly • sewing / cloth material production • wood, plastic, electronics
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • production, retail outlet, shipping • co-packing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • production, assembly, shipping
Synergies with Overall Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opportunity for outdoor seating area in adjacent lot • ample parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ease of access for large trucks • alley access • adjacent lots could be combined for expansion, storage, laydown • close proximity (~100m) to Supernet fibre optic connection node
Tie-Ins to Broader Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opportunity for local input sourcing with area producers • future tenants for pop-up stores, seasonal markets • products can tie in with events / themes • generate future tenants of other commercial spaces, links to 'Main Street' revitalization • 'graduation turnover' can generate new businesses on ongoing basis • agri-tourism (event hosting, daytrip circuit, destination space) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manufacturing focus • potentially aligning with target markets (metal, wood, plastic) • potential entry point for small-scale firms, with future 'graduation' to highway industrial park

A third option with the property is general commercial, including priority businesses like a hardware store and attractive retail. This would serve to help energize the local retail setting but has less ties with the broader economic development strategy. It also represents essentially the status quo – the building is available for purchase for interested retailers, which to-date has seen limited interest.



- Interesting property opportunity
- 3-bay building with back yard
- 3 adjacent lots
- Village Owns 3 of the 4 properties
- Privately-owned lot next to building, owner open to selling at reasonable price
- High visibility location, ample parking, back alley access

Incentive Options and Considerations for Village:

- Tax incentive –tax reduction or total forgiveness, based on size of venture and time commitment. Education tax requisition will be charged as flow-through to Province. No net cost to municipality over current situation (no tax revenue)
- Utilities – tenant would cover utility costs
- Rent free or rent-to-own – building is offered at reduced or no rent, based on size of venture and time commitment. Option for rent-to-own can be negotiated. Cost to municipality limited to asset value already in hand
- Oversight – if building were to be used as Option 1 a type of small-scale food production incubator, with the hopes of graduating tenants into full time businesses, trade-off for current taxes is ideally recovered in future property taxes. Would require oversight by Village in terms of building and tenant management

Other Types of Support:

Funding supports can be explored to assist in realizing either of these options. Potential ideas include:

- funding specific to development of commercial kitchen / food processing area – through Alberta Economic Development and/or Alberta Agriculture
- labour-market study specific to either sector (option 1 or 2), funded by Alberta Labour
- Western Economic Diversification funding for specific needs. While not known yet what is eligible, initial ideas worth exploring include: internet connectivity for manufacturing business to Supernet, façade improvements, building upgrades, hub promotion and client acquisition
- refer to Section 4.8 for further details on potential government support programs

The existence of a building and adjacent land parcels provides a tangible asset with which investment in the Village can be promoted. The addition of an attractive incentive package can be a powerful message to get the attention of

prospective investors, critical in being noticed in the crowded space of investment attraction. Such a concept will allow

Conduct Targeted Promotions to Priority Sectors

Drawing on the investment opportunity information, outreach strategies can be designed to connect with potential investor targets within the identified priority sectors.

Suggested avenues for identifying target firms include:

- Business support agencies (business incubators, Community Futures, Business Link)
- Industry associations and government databases
- Chambers of Commerce and sector-based organizations

A combination of approaches in communicating information is recommended recognizing the diverse array of audiences and preferences for receiving information.

In general, a recommended cost-effective approach for **lead generation** includes:

- Identification of potential firms within priority sectors
- Identification of general and manager/owner contacts – name, email, phone number
- Email letter initiating contact, introducing the Village, opportunities and key competitiveness points with periodic follow-up emails
- Follow-up telephone call with manager following a semi-scripted guide, including questions about their business operations which can facilitate a dialogue
- Identify soft leads (shows some potential interest) and hard leads (demonstrates genuine interest) and link to follow up events (follow-up call by Village representative or broker, property tour / community visit, physical mail out of professionally printed brochures, invitation to special event / investor target day)
- Maintain contact, provide subsequent information as requested and track progress

One key strategy for facilitating conversations is leveraging on and developing new relationships with sector ‘insiders’. For instance, a representative of an industry association can quickly identify firms which they know would be more likely interested than others in Warburg, or which may be looking to relocate. Representatives of Village businesses can also suggest businesses which may be interested in exploring the Village.

The above-described lead generation approach is labour intensive, and requires the right skill set to engage with people quickly to avoid a quick end to the conversation. It is more active than a simple mailout campaign, which typically sees very low take up and results in wasted resources. With an adept approach, a conversation can be ignited and the potential for Warburg to help businesses solve issues they face can be held in a genuine manner. Correspondingly, for those contacts where the Village presents no value, a brief but informative conversation can leave the respondent with a positive impression of the community. This is important as word-of-mouth suggestions from contact points represent a valuable source of future leads, and one never knows what a conversation might lead to over time.

The Village can examine the capacity of its existing staff to undertake these calls or look to engage contract support. It is important that when a soft or hard lead is generated, the opportunity is capitalized on. This requires

responsiveness of the CAO and Mayor and/or Councillors. Provision of information in a timely manner demonstrates responsiveness and interest, which contributes to momentum in terms of an investment decision.

Follow-Up Engagement with EDKRA Membership

Kart club members represent potential future residents and/or business owners. Currently a small subset of the club's membership is resident to Warburg. As evidenced through responses to the club-specific survey, roughly half (54%) of members have a reasonable awareness of commercial and residential properties available in the Village. Specific follow-up should be undertaken with the club, as a limited number of members expressed interest in Village properties:

- 2 respondents are “very interested” in vacant lots and 1 respondent is “very interested” in commercial/industrial lot/building
- 3 respondents are “very interested” in houses
- a handful of respondents express being “somewhat interested” in residential or commercial opportunities

Note that in some cases the same respondents may be indicating interest across various options. Some respondents provided personal contact information while others did not; the Village should coordinate with the club and look for an opportunity to promote opportunities through a general mailout as well as combined event.

Property / Village Tours

Typically handled on an individual basis, tours can be arranged for identified potential investors (hard leads, but occasionally soft leads as well). These tours can be hosted by the Mayor / Councillor and/or the CAO, as schedules permit. Area realtors would also likely be involved. Village business owners can be identified who are willing to serve as Village ‘champions’, spending a few minutes with potential investors sharing their experiences and responding to questions on a business-to-business level. Lunch is typically provided as compensation and incentive for potential investors making the trip. Any outstanding questions or information requests should be followed up promptly by Administration.

Engage with Property Managers and Investor Groups

One option to consider for difficult-to-fill properties is identifying an investor group or property manager interested in managing or owning the properties and who would be responsible for finding tenants and owners. This should be seen as a secondary option as the preferred approach is for the Village to target priority sectors as identified above.

4.5.3 Industrial Park

As noted in this report's introduction, the viability of a greenfield industrial park located at the Village entrance is not currently viable; however, the premise is still valid once sufficient interest and a development partner is identified. A number of potential clients have already been identified through development of this strategy to-date, including the Warburg Seed Cleaning Plant, which is considering future expansion, a local plastics manufacturer which is just moving into production. Some EDKRA members, which own oilfield companies in Nisku, may be interested in the park for oilfield equipment storage.

As part of targeted outreach for property promotions, firms can also be probed for potential interest in a greenfield park development. Over time as momentum builds in terms of firm attraction, the Village will be in a position to present developer partners with a list of existing and potential committed clients. The initial engineering costs and financial viability assessment can be refreshed at that time to ensure the updated concept remains viable.

4.6 Potential Retail Capture

Regardless of whether investment comes from existing business owners or residents or newcomers to the community, enhanced retail offerings will allow for increased capture of spending in the community. Drawing on survey responses of residents and the EDKRA club membership regarding what they would ‘realistically’ spend on new or enhanced retail options in the Village, an extrapolation to the overall population has been generated. This is based on the entire Village population (300 households) as well as the total karting club membership (70 households).

Table 4-9 Potential Additional Retail Expenditures – Village-Based

Select Retail Services	Current Annual Spend All Locations	Spend in Warburg	Current Capture	Additional Potential Spending	Total Potential Spend in Warburg	Potential Capture
Personal / Beauty Services	468,000	16,000	3%	90,000	106,000	23%
Clothing / Shoes	468,000	16,000	3%	72,000	88,000	19%
Restaurant / Bar	553,000	95,000	17%	175,000	270,000	49%
Hardware	504,000	5,000	1%	207,000	212,000	42%
Craft / Hobby	312,000	1,000	0%	36,000	37,000	12%
Coffee / Tea Shop	156,000	6,000	4%	36,000	42,000	27%
Other	95,000	9,000	9%	31,000	40,000	42%
Total	2,556,000	148,000	6%	647,000	795,000	31%
Local Products / ‘Knick-Knacks’				79,000	79,000	
Ice Cream / Snack				79,000	79,000	
Total				805,000	953,000	
Potential Increase Over Current Spend					644%	

Notes: Additional interest represents potential increased spending (annual) by residents and EDKRA club members, based on new / enhanced retail options emerging. Estimates based on household expenditures as reported by survey respondents. Club expenditures during race season averaged over the entire year period. Potential spending on local products / ‘knick knacks’ and ice cream / snacks (essentially non-existent) included in potential interest question of survey and represents other potential spending.

Resident and kart club households currently spend an estimated \$148,000 collectively on the above-listed retail goods and services, or roughly 6% of their total annual expenditures on these categories. These two groups indicate an additional \$647,000 in *likely* additional annual spending with enhanced or new retail offerings in the Village. Spending at this level would increase the local capture factor from 6% to 31% in these categories. With the introduction of other new offerings, such as local products / ‘knick knacks’ or ice cream / snack stand or shop, an additional estimated \$158,000 could be spent in the Village, bringing the local retail expenditure to \$953,000 million annually; roughly a five-fold increase over current spending in these categories.

The above analysis does not consider all existing retail / commercial spending occurring in the Village, rather is focused on new options which might be of attraction to residents and kart club members. For instance, gasoline purchases are currently significant in the Village, with a number of respondents noting were prices to be lower, additional purchases would occur. Kart club members indicate potential increased expenditures of \$14,000 annually on enhanced grocery options.

As noted previously, the retail / commercial sector in the Village relies not only on the resident population and the kart club, but also on patronage from residents in the broader region which relies on Warburg as a service centre. The following table summarizes estimates of additional potential spending which could accrue to the Village with enhanced retail options, when considering the broader trading area impacts.

Table 4-10 Potential Additional Retail Expenditures – Village and Trading Area

Select Retail Services	Additional Potential Spending (Annual)				
	Households Within 15-Min Drive	Households Within 30-Min Drive	Total 30-Min Drive Trading Area	Village Residents and Kart Club	Total Resident Base
Personal / Beauty Services	103,500	198,450	302,000	90,000	392,000
Clothing / Shoes	82,800	158,760	242,000	72,000	314,000
Restaurant / Bar	186,300	357,210	544,000	175,000	719,000
Hardware	227,700	436,590	664,000	207,000	871,000
Craft / Hobby	41,400	79,380	121,000	36,000	157,000
Coffee / Tea Shop	41,400	79,380	121,000	36,000	157,000
Other	20,700	39,690	60,000	31,000	91,000
Local Products / Knick-Knacks	82,800	158,760	242,000	79,000	321,000
Ice Cream / Snack	82,800	158,760	242,000	79,000	321,000
Total	869,400	1,666,980	2,538,000	805,000	3,343,000
Resident / Trading Area Share			76%	24%	

Notes: Trading areas are additive (i.e., 30-min. radius excludes 15-min. radius and Village counts). Potential spending for trading area households based on likely spending patterns of Village respondents, adjusted for distance (50% for 15-minute radius and 15% for 30-minute radius), reflecting proximity to other commercial options. Household counts derived from PCensus, and estimated at 690 households (15-min, excluding Village), and 4410 (30-min, excluding 15-minute and Village).

- potential spending to be captured from the broader trading area regarding enhanced retail offerings in Warburg is estimated at \$2.5 million annually
- when combined with potential spending within the Village, the total amounts to \$3.3 million

While the broader trading area is less likely to spend in the Village than current residents, the larger number of households captured translate to more potential spending – 3:1 as compared to Village respondents. This serves as a reminder of the importance of engaging with the rural population, encouraging visits to Warburg.

The above analysis indicates that potential exists to support more retail and commercial activity in the Village – up to \$3.4 million in additional spending with the right offerings. Demand of this magnitude is sufficient to support a handful of new retail offerings, which would be sufficient to ‘energize main street’ in the Village, with the potential to spillover in increased spending with existing businesses. It would also increase the community’s desirability in terms of live and work which supports broader economic development objectives.

Of course, demand of this nature must align with supply brought forth. Shop owners will need to execute basic business essentials for success, including:

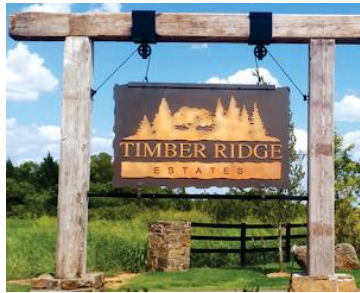
- offering quality products and services at reasonable prices
- ensuring clients are aware of their offerings

The region’s retail sector is not overly deep, meaning new entrants in the Village are not facing as tough a battle to be noticed as in more crowded markets. For many categories, a new entrant may be the only service for 50km, allowing it a bit of a ‘captured market’, which drives visits.

4.7 Complimentary Activities

4.7.1 Signage

The need for improved signage at the Village’s entrance has been identified to raise awareness of both the Village in general as well as specific opportunities available.



- General Village Signage** – Warburg currently lacks signage beyond the generic Alberta Transportation signs. Due to its location setback out of sight of Highway 39, the Village is literally invisible to passers’ by. Some type of permanent, eye-catching signage can serve as a ‘gateway’ to the Village, gaining notice and enticing some visitorship curious to explore the community. It also helps to solidify the community’s image, increasing its credibility and reputation as a place to do business. Development of signage should be coordinated with the Village’s brand and underlying themes used in promotion. Partnerships with community businesses and potential infrastructure grants may be used to help offset this cost.



- Investment Opportunity Sign** – taking advantage of the 3,200+ daily vehicle movements that pass by the Village entrance, a sign highlighting specific investment opportunities should be developed on Village land fronting Highway 39. Area realtors are supportive of this idea and are interested in cost sharing its development with the Village. It is recommended to start by highlighting specific investment lots and buildings with attention grabbing phrases emphasizing value opportunities. Later, rotating messages can be considered highlighting various initiatives or specific opportunities which emerge. Presenting fresh information will engage passing traffic, many of whom will look for new messages, increasing views and message retention. This is a simple but potentially effective strategy for engaging potential investors, who are already in the region.

4.7.2 Marketing and Promotion



Logo and Branding Refresh

Through development of the Industrial Park study and the Economic Development Strategy, initial work has been completed regarding updating the Village’s logo and branding. The theme of **Authentic Living** resonated with Council, as it sums up the lifestyle and nature of residents who call Warburg home. This slogan initiates a theme upon which branding, and marketing can be developed. A consistent and attractive community image is critical in catching attention in an increasingly busy world and emphasizes credibility to current and potential investors.

The Village can begin to integrate its new logo, commencing first with its digital presence requiring minimal effort. Longer term, the Village can incorporate the logo into its signage throughout the community, which will require more resources. The launch of a new logo and brand can generate excitement and energy around resident and business engagement for initiatives such as Support Local and community events.

Theme for Consideration

Ideas suggested through the resident survey worth considering include:

- a focus on **Vintage** – highlighting the region’s historical development and ties to the land. Vintage suggests character and worth over time, aligning with ‘authentic living’. Suggestions include beautification and points of interest designed around that theme



- a theme allows for consistent and interested branding and design opportunities throughout the Village’s communication, including letterhead, highway signage, website, social media and events. It can attract visitors who are seeking interesting and memorable experiences, building the Village’s reputation and leveraging on these visitors as they spread the brand to others. It can inform supporting ideas to re-energize the commercial sector, such as food, entertainment and pop-up stores
- it is likely residents of the region, clubs and groups like the Agricultural, Museum and Cultural Societies will be able to identify, restore and donate appropriate items for the Village to use in this theme development
- murals can also contribute to the overall theme, which communities such as Lacombe have developed as effective marketing draws, including self-guided walking tours. Communities in the region have also effectively used murals, including Calmar and Thorsby. In the case of the Village, murals could play a supporting, rather than central role to a theme

- another idea aligning with this theme which could help differentiate the community and attract visitorship is hosting drive-in style movies in the summer months, linked to entertainment and food opportunities. Inviting classic car clubs would add to the overall celebration of vintage



- a number of other communities have 'historic' themes, which can include similar concepts and images. Vintage can be distinguished through descriptors like 'classic', 'of value', 'best' and 'most characteristic'. Effort can be made to emphasize that while the Village celebrates the best of the past, it also maintains an eye on the future

4.7.3 Website Redesign and Social Media

A review of websites for 15 other Alberta villages and towns was conducted as part of assessing the Village's current website. The community sizes ranged from 575 to 5200 people, and has sites of similar content, menu sizes and options. Many of the websites have rather dated looks, based on older HTML type design. In comparison the Village's existing website shows as one of the most professional-looking, with a good range of information and reasonable look. That said, the website would benefit from an upgrade in terms of look and functionality, which positively impacts the municipality's reputation, including first impressions from potential visitors and investors.

As part of the planned website redesign a section specific to economic development should be added, with a focus on:

- community overview including growth trend, workforce and demographics
- key sectors of focus and synergies achievable
- available properties
- incentives and other supports available
- a focus on local commercial sector, highlighting existing and target businesses and the overarching revitalization focus

The remainder of the site should also be reviewed with an economic development lens to ensure other aspects of relevance align with the overarching objective of being business and resident friendly.

Facebook, Twitter and other social media used by the Village should be updated to align with a new theme and logo and promote periodically investment, shopping and residential opportunities available.

4.7.4 Broadband Internet

Hi-speed internet connectivity is emerging as an essential service for communities to offer. For home realtors, it is reportedly the second-most important criteria identified by prospective buyers. With the roll-out of fibreoptics,

speeds of up to 1 giga-bytes per second (GBPS) are becoming standard in communities which have it; the national average for internet speed is currently 100 mega-bytes per second (MBPS), with fibre optics being up to 10x faster. Communities are viewing internet connectivity as a major investment tool and way to differentiate from comparator locations, locally and globally. For instance:

- the Town of Beaumont has plans to develop an ultra-high speed broadband network connecting all homes and businesses in the community, involving a consortium of internet provider and engineering / construction management firm. The community aims to be the first in Canada with 10G connectivity (10 GBPS), helping position Beaumont as a hub for technology innovation and knowledge-based industry
- Lac La Biche County is partnering with TELUS to bring fibre optic network to the region, enhancing wireline Internet connectivity, constructing cell towers and preparing for 5G technology in the years ahead. The project is being cost shared between the partners, with the County contributing \$2.3 million annually for three years, representing 44% of the total capital cost. Lac La Biche County sees this investment as critical in its aim to be a leader in rural connectivity with the objective of attracting new investment and helping to diversify its economy

The investment in improved internet benefits both existing businesses and residents, as well as help to attract new entrants. A key asset for the Village is the presence of the Alberta Supernet to the school and library, bringing a connection node right in the Village core. Axia (now owned by Bell Media), who manages the Supernet facilitates connections for private companies and municipalities to the fibreoptic line. The cost of connection is driven by the distance to the client. For existing businesses in the core, connectivity will be expensive but not prohibitive, particularly ground works are shared across multiple firms.

Running fibre optics to the industrial area near Highway 39 would be more costly. Its inclusion as an essential service to a potential future industrial park should be considered mandatory, as it is an expectation of potential industrial, transportation, logistics and warehouse tenants, with ever-increasing connectivity needs.

A number of home-based businesses also likely require high-speed internet and may be interested in co-sharing connections. The Village is currently examining broadband internet options; this work should remain a priority for the Village to avoid losing pace with other communities for this now essential service.

4.8 Regional Partnerships and Synergies



39/20 Alliance

The 39/20 Alliance is a regional partnership formed by the Towns of Calmar and Thorsby and the Villages of Warburg, Breton. Thorsby subsequently exited the partnership. The Alliance aims to promote economic development opportunities within the region through improved municipal cooperation in service delivery. The Alliance is currently developing videos highlighting the region and individual members, which the communities can use in self-promotion. This material will be valuable inputs into the Village's promotional material as it engages with outside investors and residents. Use and promotion of the Alliance's online business directory should also continue, complimenting the Village's own online directory.

Policing and Crime Prevention



Addressing property crimes including theft and vandalism is a key priority for Village businesses. Multiple business owners indicate being victims of crime in the Village, with the problem influencing decisions to invest further, signaling a major warning flag. As stated earlier, this situation is not unique to Warburg, but is endemic across Alberta, having grown worse during the economic slowdown. The level of police presence including response times is insufficient to act as a deterrent. This is a result of detachments being based in Thorsby and Breton, with limited patrolling resources stretched across broad coverage areas.

With the shift in the Provincial policing funding formula, Warburg as a village will now be responsible for a portion of the costs, including an increasing commitment over time. The irony is this cost increase will likely come without a change in service level. Community and business leaders must continue to meet with the RCMP and develop joint strategies for reducing crime activity, including active neighbourhood watch. Property security is a key consideration for investment attraction and retention.

Local Business Network

Warburg has no active Chamber of Commerce. Local businesses indicate participation in other Chambers in the region was not perceived as valuable. Through engagement in the development of this Economic Development strategy, businesses have participated in one-on-one and a focus group meeting. Discussion indicated a desire to continue meeting on a periodic basis to address common issues, learn more about each other and look for opportunities for mutual support. Local enterprise owners represent a valuable source of information on business conditions, municipal business ‘friendliness’ and networks of other potential investors which could be targeted. The Village should continue to support in kind ongoing collaboration with this group, with the hope that, over time, growth of the business sector can lead to establishment of a permanent Chamber of Commerce.



Capital Power

The Genesee Generating Station remains an important employer in the region and Capital Power has supported community initiatives over the years. A conversation with facility management should be initiated to discuss any employment and procurement opportunities related to its updated operation. Community support requests can also be targeted to priority initiatives which also provide recognition opportunities, such as a highway community sign.

EDKRA Club

With a track which holds some of the biggest kart races in Canada, the EDKRA club is an important actor and potential partner in the Village. Key needs identified include water connection, road upgrades, ability to expand the site and security. Opportunities for collaboration include road signage on the highway, joint event promotions, marketing investment opportunities to the membership and attracting track visitors to the Village core for retail / commercial activity. The club and Village leadership have been strengthening their relationship, which should be continued in order to enhance benefits to all.

Business Support Agencies

A variety of support agencies exist providing support to businesses.

Community Futures – an agency with a mission to support small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) with friendly-term loans and support programs. The Capital Region Community Futures office in Stony Plain provides coverage for Warburg, and advisors are available for one-on-one interviews as well as group workshops for the business sector.

Alberta Innovates and the **National Research Council of Canada** - support innovation, including through the well-known Industrial Research Assistance Program (NRC IRAP) program. These agencies provide advice, connections, and funding for innovation and technology-related initiatives.

Business Link - an organizational which provides a number of supports to new and established businesses. On-line and in person resources are available for needs such as business planning, small business basics, procurement among others.

County of Leduc

Warburg collaborates on an ongoing basis with the County of Leduc on various initiatives. With the dissolution of LNEDEA, economic development is being handled by individual municipalities in the region. The Village should continue to coordinate with the County on economic development initiatives. Examples include:

- serving as a lower cost option for prospective clients priced out of the Nisku business park
- partnering on the Local Food initiative, identifying area destinations and coordinating marketing to include Warburg as a stop on local tours, as its agribusiness sector grows

Provincial and Federal Governments

Alberta Labour and Immigration

Labour Market Partnership Program (ongoing) – this program is designed to support employers and employees in addressing labour market challenges, including needs analysis, skills shortages, labour attraction and involvement of under-represented groups. This program funds community-specific labour market studies and support initiatives, which could be used to address the current information gap on the existing labour force supply, interest and availability and potential skill shortages. Initial discussion with a program representative indicates good likelihood of the Village qualifying for such a project.

Source: <https://www.alberta.ca/labour-market-partnerships-program.aspx>

Other Provincial Government programs of potential relevance include:

- **Community Initiatives Program (CIP)** - funding for organizations that create opportunities for Albertans to engage with and help develop their communities. Can include operating as well as capital grants, project or event-specific, with a focus on community-driven benefit
- **Alberta Export Expansion Program** – funding of up to \$25,000 per year to support inbound and outbound international business travel, tours, trade shows. Should the Village proceed to the point of targeting international investment, this program can help offset inbound hosting costs. Correspondingly, it can support a local entrepreneur when reaching the point of exploring export opportunities
- **Innovation Employment Grant** - supporting small and medium-sized businesses investing in research and development (R&D) with a grant worth up to 20% of qualifying expenditures
- **The Food Processing Development Centre (FPDC) and Agrivalue Processing Business Incubator (APBI)** engage with clients and tenants in the development of food products, food manufacturing processes, pilot plant development, interim processing and food processing business incubation. Local agribusiness start-ups interested in support can approach the centre; correspondingly centre 'graduates' are a target market for Village location

Western Economic Diversification – Government of Canada

Canada Coal Transition Initiative (CCTI) (Expires March 31, 2023) - WD received \$25 million in Budget 2018 to establish the CCTI, which helps impacted communities in Alberta and Saskatchewan transition their economies away from coal-fired electricity generation. This is a key commitment made under the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change. Through this program, WD's investments support capacity-building, entrepreneurship support, business start-up and expansion, and supply chain development. Budget 2019 announced a further \$105 million for WD to help address infrastructure needs in coal-affected communities. While the infrastructure funding is fully committed, funding remains under the existing CCTI program which could be used to support initiatives outlined in the economic development strategy.

Source: <https://www.wd-deo.gc.ca/eng/20011.asp>

Community Revitalization Fund (New) - WD is rolling out a new program supporting communities in revitalization needs, including some elements of infrastructure. This project can be explored to fund concepts related to tourism generation and 'main street' revitalization, including potentially streetscapes, signage, way-finding and points of interest.

WD programs are structured as contribution agreements (not grants) and selection examines contributions sourced from other parties, including in-kind with expectations of measuring and reporting on outcomes.

5. Action Plan

5.1 Goals, Objectives and Associated Activities

Table 5-1 Economic Development Action Plan

✓ Denotes task completed ★ Denotes priority task

Step	Focus / Objective	Activities	Responsibility	Intended Results / Indicators	Status / Comments
1.	Confirm Vision	Vision and Expectations: ✓ Discuss community vision with Village leadership (kick off meeting) ✓ Understand community priorities (Heritage Days table, resident survey) ✓ Understand business priorities, needs and vision (focus group, 1:1 interviews)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved plan (forthcoming) • Guiding statement and plan for ec dev activities • Identification of resources allocated to ongoing implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation of vision / strategy by Council in May 2021 • Resourcing to be confirmed
2.	Refresh Brand	Brand: ✓ Develop logo options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify theme ideas (marketing, visitor attraction, branding) • Select new logo / brand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant / Designer • Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated brand / logo • New theme for Village • Enhanced programming and marketing • Increased attention and interest for opportunity promotion • Increased visitorship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council to decide on new logo • Council discussion on thematic ideas
		Website: ✓ Identify and assess firms for website upgrade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresh website including ec dev information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant • Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Village website, with explicit ec dev content • Increased and longer website visits • Increased calls to Village for investment opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village finalizing quotation from vendor • Consultant to develop ec dev material
		Social Media: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reactivate or start Village's Twitter account • Update Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of Village, ec dev and tourism opportunities, theme development • Increased visitorship and calls for information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalized branding and theme(s) to be incorporated into communications
3.	Articulate Value Proposition	Asset Identification: ✓ Research and identify existing assets and strengths supporting ec dev in Village ✓ Commercial and residential property value and tax rate comparisons in region ✓ Engagement with existing businesses ✓ Align propositions with findings from the Industrial Park Feasibility Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a compelling business investment case designed to lever identified strengths and assets • Further identification of target firms based on priority sectors aligning with strengths • Increased understanding and interest levels in existing businesses and residents regarding investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalizing residential and commercial / industrial land value and tax advantage analysis • Monitor development of new assets or changing conditions which impact the identified value proposition(s) in the Village, and adjust accordingly

Step	Focus / Objective	Activities	Responsibility	Intended Results / Indicators	Status / Comments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Engage with area realtors and property owners to develop inventory of properties available 		opportunities and general supports to the business sector	
		<p>Information Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Conduct analysis of local labour market ★ Confirm Property Options / Incentives ★ Explore Business Residential Zoning • Other ad hoc analysis as required to address future information gaps identified by potential investors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant • Village • Other partnering entity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased knowledge of local labour force availability, skillsets and interests • Increased engagement in the labour market by potentially under-engaged residents • Increased interest in investors of a potentially- untapped labour supply • Introduction of new flexible zoning driving interest in investment and residential opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local available labour force is an existing information gap – possibility exists to secure GOA grant for community-specific labour market study and complimentary activities (training, attraction, etc.) • Targeted property marketing provides tangible ‘attention getter’ / theme linked, increasing chances of being noticed
		<p>Support Identification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Research and identify support programs from other agencies (GOA, WD, area industry) ★ Investigate and design investment support programs (tax rebates for locating, façade improvements) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant • Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased resources available for ec dev initiatives identified in this strategy • Increased investment (internal and external) linked to tax-based and other incentives • Increased visitorship, expenditures and ‘main street’ ‘energy’ with site improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good potential identified to support signage, beautification / place-making / tourism and labour market initiatives • Incentive program design should account for regional comparator use, ongoing sustainability and avoiding zero-sum competition
4.	Engage the Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Resident engagement (Heritage Days table, resident survey) ✓ Business community engagement (focus group, 1:1 interviews) ★ Follow-up engagement with public and business sector, including progress update, results from resident survey and kart club surveys ★ Launch Support Local initiative • Assisting Support Local initiative on ongoing basis • Regular updates to residents and businesses how Village initiatives are supporting diversification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant • Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated awareness of project process • Increased awareness of local spending patterns, local commercial / retail opportunities, interest and imperative for supporting local • Increased awareness of Village support initiatives and efforts to strengthen and diversify Village economy • Increased investment by existing and potential resident businesses and increased local expenditures • Increased engagement between residents, businesses and EDKRA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong interest displayed by business sector in focus group discussion. Participants indicated desire for ongoing meetings for information exchange and mutual support • Follow-up survey after ‘main street’ revitalization efforts can be undertaken to measure changes to local spending patterns and economic activity capture

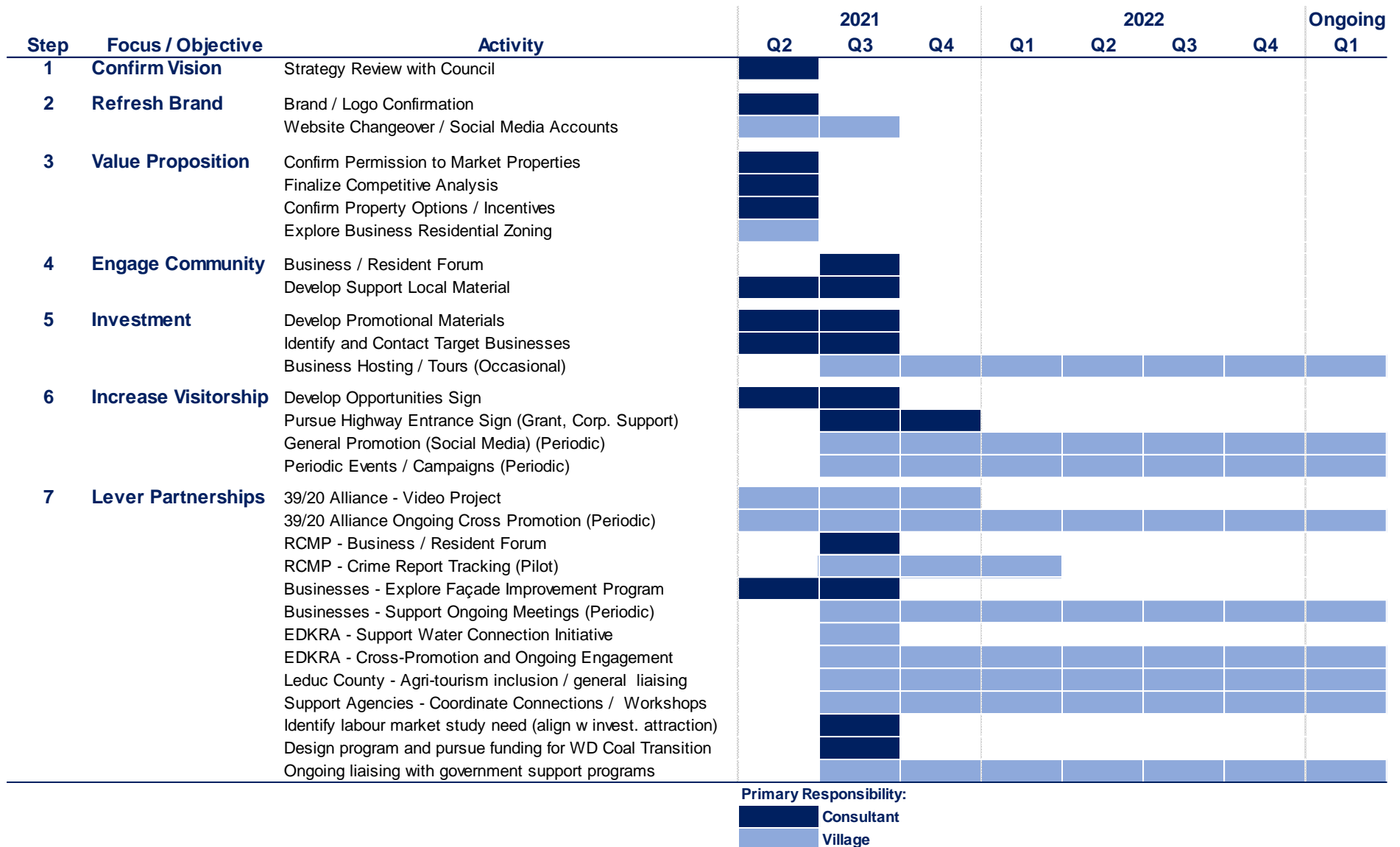
Step	Focus / Objective	Activities	Responsibility	Intended Results / Indicators	Status / Comments
5.	Promote Investment Opportunities	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Verify commercial gaps of priority to residents ✓ Identify strategies for commercial sector revitalization ✓ Identify priority sectors for outside investment targeting ★ Develop investment opportunity descriptions for specific business opportunities desired in Village ★ Promote investment opportunities, highlighting available properties • Explore opportunities for seasonal markets and pop-up / rotating stores • Increase knowledge of and ways to promote and support home-based businesses <p>External-Focused:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Identify industry 'insiders' and key contacts for company leads ★ Conduct targeted promotion to priority sectors ★ Specific engagement with EDKRA membership on investment opportunities • Identify existing business owners willing to serve as Village 'Champions' and discuss realities with targeted prospective clients • Mayor or Council member and CAO make themselves available to host prospective investors invited for community tour • Explore interest from investor groups and property managers regarding underutilized buildings • Track interest of existing and potential new companies and developers in the highway industrial park concept for future development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant • Village <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant • Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verified interest in specific businesses in the Village • Quantification of potential demand for local spending • Increased investment in priority commercial businesses • Increased activity and expenditures in commercial zone • Broadened retail sector with changing products generating increased visits • Increased number of home-based businesses and increased associated economic activity • Increased awareness of Warburg as a work-from-home community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased involvement of EDKRA members with Village • Increased exposure of Village to potential investors • Increased outside investment levels • Verified list of potential clients for a future industrial park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to tie-in investment promotion and seasonal / rotating opportunities with branding theme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing businesses and residents can provide suggestions and introductions to potential investors with known ties to community • Investment attraction efforts should focus both on filling available lots and buildings as well as identifying potential clients and developer for future industrial park
6.	Increase Visitorship	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Village social media channels to visitors for information on future events and promotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant • Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased visitorship and commercial activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Step	Focus / Objective	Activities	Responsibility	Intended Results / Indicators	Status / Comments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lever on partner communication channels, like Leduc County for expanded promotion Introduce theme with updated branding with accompanying interest points 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced awareness of community and opportunities 	
		<p>Agri-Tourism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote opportunities and identify area agribusinesses interested in partnering on initiatives (farm tours, U-Picks, farm dinners, sales outlet, pop-up stores, special events, seasonal markets) Develop tour itinerary for Edmonton area and other visitors to draw visitors to region including Village Develop partnerships with existing and future food processors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased visitorship to Village tied to agriculture-related tours and events in region Increased partners identified for local retail and special event opportunities Increased interest in Village as potential investment location for food and agri-business processing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with Leduc County's existing local food and agritourism map / initiative Agri-tourism promotions can create synergy with attraction strategy for food and beverage processors (product testing / promotion, tours) Partnering with target outside firms can put Village on their 'radar'
		<p>Commercial Sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Incent and promote simple destination businesses like ice cream, restaurants, coffee shops, bakery, butcher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultant Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased visitorship and commercial activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A review of existing businesses in regional trading area can help justify business cases
		<p>Signage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Explore possibility of Village entrance sign (funding opportunities, partners) ★ Undertake entrance sign project ★ Design and install opportunity advertisement sign (with area realtors) Use rotating signage highlighting periodic opportunities like events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultant Area Realtors Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of Village Increased awareness of specific opportunities Increased visitorship (tourist) Increased calls regarding investment opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once potential entrance sign partners identified, Council to decide matching resources Consultant to develop opportunity sign with realtors, Village in-kind contribution of installation Sign can be refreshed periodically (ongoing)
7.	Lever Partnerships	<p>39/20 Alliance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Produce regional and community-specific videos on living and business opportunities Cross-promote tourism opportunities (agritourism, daytrip map) Explore potential synergies for business supports and attraction on ongoing basis and shared needs (i.e., crime prevention) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced marketing tools leading to increased interest in exploring opportunities in Village Increased visitorship Increased business for participating area business in cross-promoted activities Enhanced engagement by area businesses in strategic initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Still photos from video project can be used to populate new website and promotional materials
		<p>RCMP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Engage with area RCMP on issue ★ Invite RCMP to community engagement session to share business concerns, priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultant Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased coverage by area RCMP, with business-specific needs Increased confidence in potential investors of enhanced security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential/commercial zoning (live above businesses) increases presence of residents during after-hours

Step	Focus / Objective	Activities	Responsibility	Intended Results / Indicators	Status / Comments
		<p>in strategic plan and possible solutions to area crime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider Village tracking of reported crimes from businesses and residents, for additional support case Maintain ongoing liaising with area detachments, exploring community / business partnerships on crime reduction 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved information on crime issues in community Reduced criminal activity through collaborative monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active reporting and tracking of incidents bolsters case for increased supports Include EDKRA in incident tracking and initiatives Crime reduction is a top priority in executing the ec dev strategy
		<p>Businesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Determine local business support for proposed initiatives (façade improvements, contributions to community projects, signage, etc.) ★ Review historical supports by Capital Power and engage regarding potential initiative support Encourage ongoing meeting of local business sector Support establishment of formalized group ('main street' association and/or Chamber of Commerce) once business base hits critical mass Maintain ongoing interactions with business group to understand needs, identify potential investor contacts and other opportunities Explore with business owners, service providers and government possibilities for increased broadband internet service in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultant Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased investments by existing and future businesses Improved look to business sector and increased 'main street' vitality Strengthened local business sector Strengthened perspective regarding Village support to local businesses Increased resources for Village to invest in support and improvement projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ad hoc meetings of existing business group should continue to maintain momentum Knowing how many area residents were affected by mine closure, as well as those continuing to work at Genesee Generating Station is helpful in framing ongoing community support
		<p>EDKRA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Share club expenditure impacts to potential demand for specific business types ★ Investigate signage opportunity at highway ★ Share specific investment opportunities with membership list and engage directly with members expressing potential interest Support as possible initiative of Village water connection to track Explore land swap concept to enable potential future expansion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultant Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of the racetrack Increased connection and interest between club members and Village residents Enhanced potential for club to expand, increase visitorship and reputation Increased local spending by members and support for Village initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Club members are a natural focus for investment promotion due to pre-existing tie to the Village

Step	Focus / Objective	Activities	Responsibility	Intended Results / Indicators	Status / Comments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain good relationship between Village and club leadership and look for opportunities for joint events of interest (e.g., pig roast, family dance, fireworks, drive-in movies, etc.) 			
		<p>County of Leduc:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with County Ec Dev department regarding ongoing promotion of Village lands as lower-cost option, cross-promoting events Partner on local food initiative, ensuring area agribusinesses are included in County map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased interest in investment opportunities from Leduc region Increased business and visitorship linked to agri-tourism Strengthened value proposition for attracting food processors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Village needs to take initiative in maintaining active relationship with County on ec dev
		<p>Business Support Agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Include listing of relevant agencies on Village ec dev webpage Liaise with support agencies to participate in future business gatherings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultant Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased access for available supports by existing businesses Strengthened and expanding local business sector Enhanced sector gatherings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Futures can provide useful supports to existing businesses in improving and potentially expanding operations
		<p>Provincial and Federal Governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Identify provincial and federal grants and support programs for ec dev related initiatives ★ Design and pursue funded labour market study (supply, gap, supports) through Alberta Labour ★ Design program and pursue funding supports available under WD Coal Transition program Remain informed and communicate information regarding future government support programs and initiatives of interest to area business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultant Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased understanding of potential support programs Increased information on community-specific labour force, interest levels, skill gaps and supports available Increased interest in potential investors given workforce initiative Increased resources available for execution of ec dev strategy priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial investor engagement to identify potential sectors of interest can inform design of a labour market study including required supports Council input required to identify priorities in ec dev strategy to pursue through remaining coal transition funding

Figure 5-1 Implementation Schedule





Nichols
APPLIED MANAGEMENT INC.

Nichols Applied Management Inc.

Management and Economic Consultants
Suite 302, 11523 – 100 Avenue NW
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0J8

Main Contact: Ian Gray, Principal
Office: (780) 424-0091 / Direct: (780) 409-1761
Email: i.gray@nicholsappliedmanagement.com
www.nicholsappliedmanagement.com

MANAGEMENT & ECONOMIC CONSULTANTS