

TUMBLER RIDGE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

STRATEGIES FOR RESILIENCE

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE



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The CDI is proud to have had a long history of involvement in Tumbler Ridge and wish you every success for the future.

Marleen Morris, Clare Mochrie, Greg Halseth, and Phil Mullins
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ACCESSING THIS REPORT

This project report may be accessed through the Community Development Institute's website at: <http://unbc.ca/community-development-institute/research-projects>. The project report may also be accessed at the Tumbler Ridge Public Library.

Project Reports

1. **Tumbler Ridge Sustainability Plan: Strategies for Resilience:** Executive Summary
2. **Tumbler Ridge Sustainability Plan: Strategies for Resilience:** Community Profile
3. **Tumbler Ridge Sustainability Plan: Strategies for Resilience:** A Framework for Action

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TUMBLER RIDGE:

OUR BEGINNINGS AND WHERE WE ARE TODAY...

Since its establishment in 1984, Tumbler Ridge has evolved from a single resource-based economy to an increasingly adaptive and diverse community. Tumbler Ridge began as Canada's newest "instant town", built to service the nearby coal mines. It boasted new infrastructure and modern community design, a young energetic population, plentiful jobs, and expansive community programs and services.

When the town's main employer closed in the year 2000, change came quickly. Many residents moved away from the community, leaving an over-supply of housing and reducing demand for all public and private services. However, a core group of dedicated residents and community leaders kept the spirit of the community alive.

Eventually, the low cost of housing attracted an older population to the community and new large employers surfaced in the region. Nonetheless, this major economic downturn emphasized the need to establish a broader and more diversified economic base; efforts focused on pursuing opportunities to diversify the industries and businesses that support the Tumbler Ridge economy today.

The nature of its establishment and the fact that Tumbler Ridge is still a relatively new and small-sized community means it is still vulnerable to fluctuations in the price of coal, which influences the operational decisions of the community's largest employers. The most recent downturn in coal prices in early 2014 reinforces the need to advance a focus on economic diversification and firmly establish Tumbler Ridge as a modern and self-reliant community in a beautiful setting.



THE TUMBLER RIDGE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN: *A CALL TO ACTION*

Tumbler Ridge is an incredible story. Its continued existence is a testament to the indelible spirit, innovation, and resilience of the community.

This is a town that rebounded from the near collapse of their primary industry in the early 2000s – a downturn that saw the loss of more than 70% of local jobs and 65% of the municipal tax base. Since then, the District has strengthened and diversified its economy through the development of projects in the oil and gas, wind power, and forestry sectors. Through volunteer-run events, such as the Emperor’s Challenge and Grizfest, Tumbler Ridge has established itself an annual destination for many adventure athletes and music lovers in the region. Most recently, also through the work and dedication of volunteers, the town applied for, and won, membership to the Global Geoparks Network, placing itself on the map as having some of the most significant geological assets in the world.

These, and the many other achievements Tumbler Ridge has managed over its short and full 30-year history, are attributable to the efforts and perseverance of its residents. As a result of this communal strength, Tumbler Ridge is already on the path to becoming the community it wants to be: a town that draws strength and stability from multiple industries and in which people of all ages and cultures are able to live, thrive, and enjoy the stunning environment that surrounds them. Realizing this vision will, however, require collaboration, focus, and *action* by the entire community. The strategies and tactics contained in this plan define that action.

The strategies and tactics detailed in the *Tumbler Ridge Sustainability Plan* include a number of large undertakings that may take several years and multiple partners in order to implement. They also include many smaller incremental steps, which may be simpler to execute, but which are still pivotal to establishing the long lasting change and diversification that the community needs and wants to see. The implementation of the strategies and tactics do not rest with the District alone. Other levels of government, publicly-funded agencies, the voluntary sector, and individual residents all have a role to play. The sequencing of actions and priorities will have to be determined strategically. Some of them are already underway.

Full implementation of the plan will take time. The key, therefore, will be to remain focused and committed to implementation, to continually monitor progress, and to celebrate incremental success. While the imperative to act is always clear during down times, the work of diversification is just as important when times are good. Tumbler Ridge has demonstrated its capacity for ongoing, diligent action. This same commitment, passion, and cooperation will ultimately be what drives the plan forward to achieve a resilient, vibrant, and sustainable Tumbler Ridge.



Sunset Mountain, Tumbler Ridge

THE PROCESS – *AND THE PEOPLE* – BEHIND THE PLAN...

The *Tumbler Ridge Sustainability Plan* represents the culmination of hundreds of conversations with the community and the District over a period of 22 months.

The process from which the strategies and tactics outlined in this plan emerged was carried out between January 2013 and October 2014. It involved research and in-depth community consultations in eight different topic areas. In each topic area, the CDI led three tracts of information gathering:

- 1) *Research* – a compilation and analysis of relevant secondary data in each of the topic areas.
- 2) *Interviews* – with 10-15 individuals from the community involved in each of the different areas about what they saw as Tumbler Ridge's strengths, its challenges, as well as priorities for achieving sustainability in that area. All interviewees were asked the same set of questions. Input received through these interviews was compiled and presented at the workshops.
- 3) *Workshops* – eight workshops were held to bring together the people most knowledgeable and involved in each of the topic areas, to review some of the key findings from the research and interviews and discuss the issues and opportunities in each area. The main goal of each workshop was ultimately to identify strategies for achieving sustainability in the topic area.

Altogether, 89 interviews were conducted, eight workshops were held with the community, and six sessions were convened with District Council. As a final step, there was a community Open House. The draft strategies and tactics were presented at the Open House for review and comment by the entire community. Residents were encouraged to provide their thoughts about actions and priorities for achieving the Tumbler Ridge that they want to see in the future.



OUR STRENGTHS & CHALLENGES

Tumbler Ridge is fortunate to have a number of key assets upon which to build its future. These strengths have sustained Tumbler Ridge in the past and will enable it to remain sustainable in the future.

As with all communities, Tumbler Ridge must also confront a number of challenges. Understanding and addressing these will be key to realizing the potential of the community's strengths.

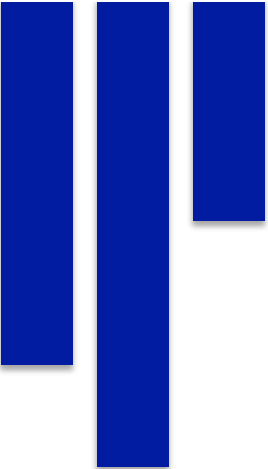
STRENGTHS

A Vibrant and Cohesive Community

Tumbler Ridge is a friendly, safe, and close-knit community. Residents care passionately about the community and give generously of their time to make it a great place to live. Volunteer organizations in the community are well-supported and have achieved a great deal, including the development of hiking trails, the delivery of social support programs, and most recently, the designation of Tumbler Ridge as a UNESCO Global Geopark. In times of economic challenge, it has been the people of Tumbler Ridge who have rallied to ensure that the community remains strong.

High Quality Community Amenities

Tumbler Ridge was a planned "instant town" constructed in the early 1980s to house workers from the nearby coal mines and their families. The town has a wide range of high quality community amenities including: a community centre, library, swimming pool, skating/hockey rink, playing fields, and golf course. Tumbler Ridge also has a number of large and small parks throughout the community, many of which have children's play equipment. Another important community amenity



is Tumbler Ridge’s downtown core, which is pleasant, walkable, and picturesque. In addition, residents can take advantage of the numerous outdoor recreation opportunities in the immediate vicinity of the town. These amenities contribute to the high quality of life available in Tumbler Ridge.

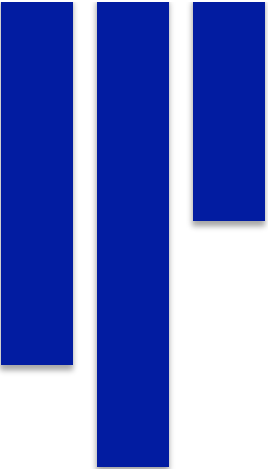
Set Within a Beautiful and Bountiful Region

Tumbler Ridge is set within a beautiful and bountiful region. Nestled in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, Tumbler Ridge is surrounded by a mix of landscapes – alpine lakes and meadows, forests, spectacular waterfalls, and glacial mountain peaks. Within this landscape are natural assets that can support five economic sectors: tourism, wind power, forestry, natural gas extraction, and mining. Tumbler Ridge has already embarked on realizing the potential of these assets and this sustainability plan will further that work.

C H A L L E N G E S

Accessibility

One of the key challenges facing Tumbler Ridge is lack of accessibility. Air travel is undeveloped. While there is a small airstrip, there are no regularly scheduled flights into the community. The nearest airport with regularly scheduled flights is Fort St. John, a two hour drive north. Vehicle traffic must detour off the main highways to travel to Tumbler Ridge; it is not a “drive-by” destination. For that reason, Tumbler Ridge has no bus service. Tumbler Ridge does have freight rail service; however, the rail line needs to be extended so that it may better serve local industry. The lack of accessibility means that Tumbler Ridge residents and businesses pay a transportation premium.



Staying the Course for Diversification

Among the greatest challenges faced by all resource-dependent communities is staying the course toward diversification. When industry slows down or idles, these communities will look for opportunities and strategies to diversify their economies. Progress is generally made, however, the identification with the resource industry is very powerful. It takes significant effort, particularly when there are signs that the industry is recovering, to continue to work on developing new sectors and creating new jobs.

Reliance on a Large Employer

Another challenge faced by resource-dependent communities is moving out of their relationship with, and reliance on, a large employer. When a large employer departs, communities will often look for another large employer to take its place; another major manufacturer or a public institution. While this may feel more secure, the community would be more resilient if the economy was based on a number of smaller, more diverse employers and businesses.

Making the Transition to Entrepreneurial Governance

Making the transition to entrepreneurial governance is another important challenge faced by resource-dependent communities. Local government in communities that are economically diverse and entrepreneurial must, themselves, be entrepreneurial. They must understand their community's assets in order to support and build on these. They must constantly look for new advantages and opportunities. And they must be prepared to market what they have. Engaging and networking with people in the community and beyond, building collaboration and partnerships with other communities and supporting others in the community to do the same, and investing strategically in the three community infrastructures: social, economic, and physical/environmental infrastructure, are key responsibilities of an entrepreneurial local government.



A STRATEGY FOR MOVING FORWARD ...

This Framework for Action consists of goals, strategies, and tactics in eight areas:

1. Economy
2. Education
3. Housing
4. Health and Social Services
5. Sports and Recreation
6. Arts and Culture
7. Land and Infrastructure
8. Civic Engagement

The strategies and tactics were developed by the residents: the workers, employers, business owners, service providers, volunteers, families, and seniors of Tumbler Ridge. The ideas evolved through the large number of conversations and group discussions held in the community around actions that could be taken – and must be taken – in order to build on the community’s assets and make Tumbler Ridge the community residents want it to be. Work on some of the actions has already started. Others will require preparation, coordination, and leadership to get underway.



ECONOMY

GOAL

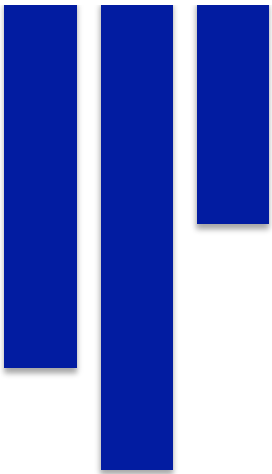
A stable economy that draws strength from a mix of different sectors and supports local businesses, jobs, and services for the community.

STRATEGY

Develop a comprehensive tourism strategy that involves building local capacity, products, and services around outdoor recreation assets in the region – and strategically marketing these products and services to the regional population.

Nestled in the foothills of the Rocky and Hart Ranges, above the confluence of three rivers, Tumbler Ridge is surrounded by terrain that offers a vast array of world-class outdoor recreation options. Residents know it to be a mecca for wilderness adventure/recreation activities. It is also home to some of the most significant paleontological assets in Canada.

The landscape and all season recreation opportunities that Tumbler Ridge has to offer are unique in the Northeast region. Given that this region has been the fastest-growing in the province, with incomes well above average, the community is well positioned to develop a vibrant tourism industry capitalizing on its natural assets.

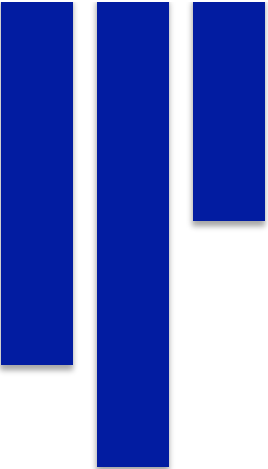


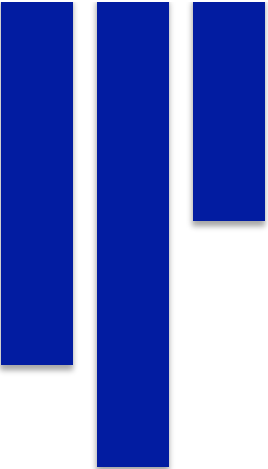
Attracting tourists to the area will require improving access to the trails, streams, lakes, waterfalls, and mountains around Tumbler Ridge at a level akin to those seen in communities such as Valemount and Revelstoke. It will entail attracting/nurturing local business and creating products and services associated with outdoor recreation activities. Cultivating a local workforce with skills and expertise in hosting, selling products, and delivering services to tourists will also be important. Expanding and enhancing the local airstrip to enable tourists (and others) to fly directly to and from Tumbler Ridge should also be explored.

The development of a robust and sustainable tourism industry will take time. However, a focus on tourism has significant potential to establish an economic strong point in Tumbler Ridge that will offset the community's reliance on natural resource industries.

T A C T I C S

- Work together – the District, the business community, and local organizations – in order to maximize the economic potential of established community events such the Grizfest and Emperor's Challenge, including, for example, activities such as a local art and artisan's fair, food fairs, specialized markets for related goods, guided hikes, and dinosaur discovery walks.
- Building on the success of Grizfest and the Emperor's Challenge, establish a new winter sports/recreation festival/event.
- Expand and diversify the supply of accommodation, restaurant, and other tourist services, focusing first on lower cost, flexible options such as B&Bs and guest rooms that also provide a source of revenue.

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- Conduct an assessment of signage in town and make improvements to ensure visitors to the community are able to locate key sites and services.
 - Explore tourism opportunities associated with local First Nations history and artifacts.
 - Groom some of the backcountry sledding and cross-country ski trails in order to provide safe and appropriate experiences for a broad range of skill levels.
 - Explore opportunities for developing tourism attractions in connection with outdoor recreational amenities, i.e. zip line, BMX track, sledding huts, downhill/cross country ski facility.
 - Seek information from other communities that have developed their recreation assets to learn from their experiences; consider a ‘visiting exchange’ with these communities, for example Valemount, McBride, and Revelstoke.
 - Provide space in the Visitor Information Centre for local tourism-related services to have a presence and sell their services (i.e. winter and summer guiding services, jet-boat tours, helicopter tours).
 - Provide space in the Visitor Information Centre for local artists and artisans to display and sell their creations. Hire local artists and artisans to design branded Tumbler Ridge merchandise.
 - Enhance local camping facilities and explore the potential of a high-end RV park.
 - Develop accessible trails in close proximity to the town to make it possible for seniors, families with young children, and those with mobility challenges to enjoy an outdoor experience.

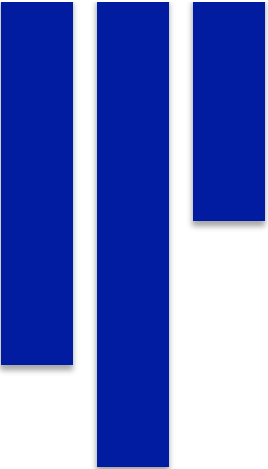
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- Use computer, smart phone, and Internet-based technology to allow visitors and those planning a visit to access information about the experiences available (i.e. maps, photos, and videos of the trails, accommodations, and services available).
 - Enhance the street appeal of the downtown core and the entrance to the community through erecting banners and seasonal street plantings (e.g. flowers in summer, trees with lights in winter).
 - Explore the potential of upgrading the airstrip and associated facilities and attracting a carrier to enable air travel to and from Tumbler Ridge.

STRATEGY

Explore business opportunities that would serve currently untapped local target markets.

As with all primary resource towns, Tumbler Ridge has a large number of workers who are long-distance labour commuters (LDLC). Particularly since the mines moved to a seven-day shift rotation, a significant portion of the workforce is in town for seven days at a time. When not working, they return to their home communities. Many long time, permanent Tumbler Ridge residents are frustrated by the fact that, while these individuals reside in town and work in the area, they hold very little interest in the long term well-being of the town. However, while LDLC workers may not have much interest in or time to contribute to the social fabric of the community, they do make a significant contribution to the local economy.

Tumbler Ridge also has a growing population of international residents, particularly people from Asia, including the workers at HD Mines. In many communities, businesses have played a key



role in welcoming international residents by carrying goods such as specialized foods, including vegetables and spices, ‘home’ language newspapers and magazines, and traditional clothing.

Both of these populations – LDLC and international residents – could be an even more significant economic driver if there was a conscious effort on the part of business to recognize them as a specific target market.

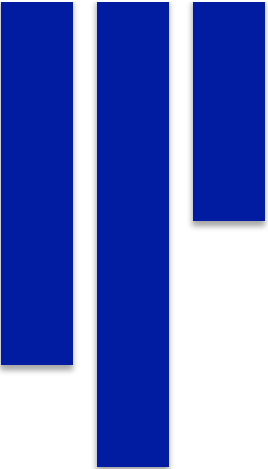
T A C T I C S

- Conduct a survey to develop an understanding of the product and service needs of LDLC and international/ethnic communities in town.
- Share the survey results to raise awareness in the business community about opportunities to address the product and service needs of LDLC and international/ethnic communities.

S T R A T E G Y

Capitalize on economic opportunities related to Tumbler Ridge’s designation as a Global Geopark.

The recent designation of Tumbler Ridge as a ‘Global Geopark’ presents a wide range of opportunities for raising awareness about the region, attracting tourists and research expertise, and for building partnerships both locally and internationally. The Geopark designation is granted to areas that exhibit geological heritage of international significance. Areas that receive this designation join a Global Geoparks Network (GGN), which is supported by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). There are approximately 100 Geoparks worldwide today; however Tumbler Ridge is only the second in North America.

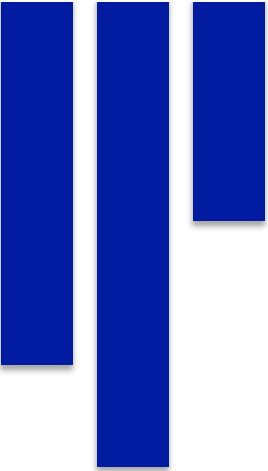


The Tumbler Ridge Geopark spans nearly 8,000 square kilometres and encompasses a rich array of assets including dinosaur tracks, mountain trails, canyon falls, and wetlands. Social and recreation uses of Geoparks are encouraged and can be advanced through the GGN. The Geopark designation might, therefore, be used as a platform upon which to advance the development of infrastructure to enable better access to the various outdoor amenities around Tumbler Ridge. The designation will also raise the area's profile as a research destination and therefore help to expand the existing cohort of students and geological experts in the area.

Membership in the GGN creates extensive opportunities for partnerships with other parks around the world and opens doors to attracting tourists from these locations. There are opportunities to build relationships with other communities and First Nations in the region and extend the benefits of the Geopark status by establishing satellite Geopark locations that encompass other significant sites in the region, such as Charlie Lakes Caves close to Fort St. John. In addition, while the Geopark application process was managed by a relatively small group of volunteers within Tumbler Ridge, there is now an opportunity to expand this group and involve more members of the community.

T A C T I C S

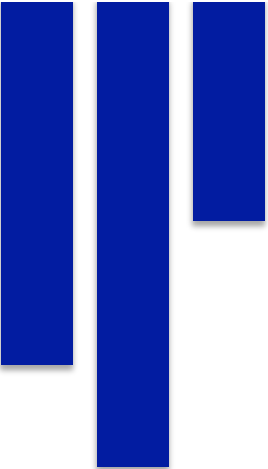
- Use the existing Museum, Dinosaur Discovery Gallery, and track sites as the basis for developing a range of tourist products and services to make these assets accessible and appealing to families and people of all ages.
- Enhance directional signage in the community to the Museum and Dinosaur Discover Gallery.
- Enhance signage and the appearance of the front entrance to the Museum and Dinosaur Gallery.

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- Build on the work undertaken by the Tumbler Ridge Aspiring Geopark to establish partnerships both regionally and internationally and to attract tourists and investment to the community.
 - Build on the work undertaken by the Tumbler Ridge Aspiring Geopark/Museum Foundation to establish Tumbler Ridge as a hub for both academic research and employment in connection with the area's paleontological assets.

STRATEGY

Explore opportunities to diversify the District's industrial base.

While Tumbler Ridge retains a reputation as coal mining town, the District has seen a significant diversification of its industrial base over the past decade. Today, natural gas, forestry, and wind power are all important contributors to Tumbler Ridge. However, more could be done to expand the number and mix of industries – and there are a variety of opportunities to do so. One key avenue for diversification, employment, and educational opportunities lies with the Tumbler Ridge Community Forest. Community forests are a valuable asset to a community, being exempt from stumpage fees and structured so that all revenue from the forest flows directly back to the community. However, as is the case with many rural community forests in northern BC, the Tumbler Ridge Community Forest is unviable in the longer term at its current size of approximately 20,000m³. Expanding the plot size is, therefore, critical to maintaining this resource – and to maximizing its economic impacts. Exploring options for reducing the Community Forest's costs and expanding its market base will be key to strengthening revenues and enabling the forest to employ more people. An alternative transportation corridor, for example, might be worth exploring given that road transportation is the only option available for local industries importing supplies and exporting their goods.



There may also be opportunities to diversify in connection with some of the other industries that are active in the area, such as the natural gas industry. The region around Tumbler Ridge has also been highlighted as having extensive potential for wind power.

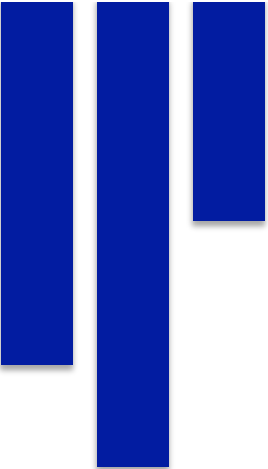
TACTICS

- Continue to advocate for an expansion of the Community Forest plot size to enable greater economic benefits from the forest.
- Support and work with the Community Forest to explore options for maximizing the economic spin-offs and job creation potential of the forest.
- Encourage the development of wind power opportunities in the region.
- Explore the potential of expanding and enhancing rail service to meet the needs of industry in Tumbler Ridge.

STRATEGY

Develop a plan for revitalizing the downtown, supporting local entrepreneurs, and attracting new businesses to town.

The development and diversification of Tumbler Ridge's economy will require a multi-pronged approach that includes nurturing businesses from within and attracting businesses from outside. Key to both approaches is the availability of affordable and well-positioned space in town for businesses to locate and/or market themselves. A vibrant commercial hub that offers a mix of retail is also vital to making the community an appealing place to live and to visit.



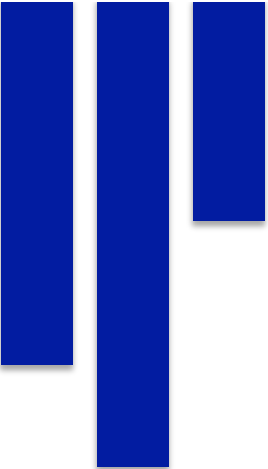
The small population and remote location of Tumbler Ridge impede its ability to attract and retain businesses. High rents in the downtown core of Tumbler Ridge also make it prohibitive for smaller businesses to locate in this area. As a result, the majority of residents source most of their needs through online shopping or from the retail and service centres of Dawson Creek and Chetwynd. The necessity to travel is a significant burden for lower income residents and those with mobility challenges. These difficulties are magnified in the winter months.

Attracting business to town – and revitalizing the downtown core – would, therefore, have a significant positive impact on quality of life in Tumbler Ridge. Creating opportunities for local business people to set up shop would help create employment, localize the economic benefits of these commercial dealings, and help diversify the economy.

Similarly, while the economy in Tumbler Ridge has traditionally been supported by larger businesses from outside, there is a growing potential for local entrepreneurs to play a larger role. Micro initiatives can play a key part in diversifying a town's economy. Small, locally-owned businesses that support a family and have one or five or ten additional employees, are the heart of small, remote communities. With the male members of many families leaving town to work elsewhere in the region or in camps, Tumbler Ridge may see a growing number of women in the community over the next few years who would benefit from a small business undertaking and second income. Small entrepreneurs could also help establish services and products to support the tourism industry in Tumbler Ridge.

T A C T I C S

- Explore opportunities for attracting new business to town on a temporary basis, as a way of establishing longer term tenants, i.e. pop-up business opportunities, District-owned incubator spaces, trade shows, etc.

- 
- Enhance the street appeal of the downtown core and the entrance to the community through erecting banners and seasonal street plantings (e.g. flowers in summer, trees with lights in winter).
 - Work together locally – and with other levels of government – to encourage and support small business development and local entrepreneurs, particularly women.
 - Expand the supply of land for commercial development by exploring options for purchasing Crown Land.
 - Explore opportunities to attract a public institution or other large employer, i.e. call centre, distillery, correctional facility.
 - Attract trades to locate in Tumbler Ridge (e.g. build commercial space for construction trades; actively recruit a core group of construction industry businesses).



EDUCATION

GOAL

A diversity of education, training, and lifelong learning opportunities to equip our children and our adults with the skills they need to succeed in the future.

STRATEGY

Establish education and training opportunities to support the development of a vibrant outdoor tourism recreation industry.

Diversifying the economy and building a local tourism industry requires a capable local workforce with a cross section of applicable skills. This, in turn, requires a robust array of secondary and post-secondary course offerings – delivered locally – to provide people with the training and certifications necessary to manage, operate, and service commercial tourism enterprises.

Local institutions such as Northern Lights College and the Gwillim Lake Facility stand to play a key role in the delivery of such offerings. Partnerships with post-secondary institutions, such as the Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management Program at UNBC, should be pursued with a view to facilitating local access to these programs. Tumbler Ridge Secondary School can also be engaged.



TACTICS

- Establish course offerings in tourism fundamentals, i.e. service/host management, small business/entrepreneurial skills, marketing, and financial planning.
- Offer tourism and hospitality courses locally for frontline staff, i.e. Tourism BC's SuperHost Program.
- Build course offerings in transferrable skills, i.e. project management, supervision, safety, conflict resolution.
- Link with the UNBC Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management Program for possible graduate student opportunities.
- Explore opportunities with School District 59 to utilize the Gwillim Lake Pat O'Reilly Outdoor and Environmental Studies Centre for outdoor recreation education and training.
- Explore opportunities to partner with the foreign student program at School District 59 and build course and program offerings in ESL education and outdoor recreation.



STRATEGY

Align local training offerings with the needs of local employers.

There are a number of skills/certifications that are in particularly high demand by local employers. While, in many cases, local residents are forced to leave Tumbler Ridge in order to access training in these areas, stronger partnerships between employers and local training institutions might help to ensure local workers are able to access the training they need without leaving town. These partnerships would also help ensure that the college has the critical mass of students it requires in order to make the provision of training feasible.

Structuring courses that align with the different types of generic skills and capacities that employers are looking for would also be beneficial. Training in these areas would help people develop transferrable skills, applicable to various industries and, therefore, key to expanding their job options.

TACTICS

- Work with employers to plan and develop course offerings in specific areas (i.e. longwall mining) and to provide relevant transferrable skills (i.e. project management, supervision, safety, conflict resolution).

STRATEGY

Build education and training to match gaps and opportunities in the economy/job market.

At present, there are a number of different products and services that are not offered locally in Tumbler Ridge – or which are in very short supply, such as building trades and human services workers. As a result, residents end up either having to go elsewhere to access these services or pay more for them. Addressing these gaps would help to increase the quality of life for residents in Tumbler Ridge. The gaps also represent strategic career options for those living in town.

Establishing education and training options aligned with these various areas of service such as the building trades, is critical to addressing these gaps. Supports to help increase awareness and attract people to these different career options will also be key.

TACTICS

- Recruit local residents into trades training (i.e. implement a recruitment campaign; partner with training institutions; encourage high school students, women, and people in career transition to participate).
- Recruit local residents into human services careers (e.g. home care worker, Early Childhood Educator).
- Provide local assistance for resume writing, cover letters, job search, skills assessment, etc.

STRATEGY

Build partnerships and increase the involvement of the broader community, First Nations, business, and industry in the planning and delivery of skills and training opportunities.

Education is not the responsibility of the education institutions and system. Particularly in smaller communities, everyone has an interest in – and stands to benefit from – being engaged in the planning and delivery of learning opportunities. In creating work placements, businesses offer unparalleled opportunities for project-based, practical learning for students. At the same time, this hands-on training helps develop a labour force that understands what is required and has the skills they need. Similarly, building different cultural learning opportunities helps nurture an appreciation for different ways of living and knowing.

TACTICS

- Pursue opportunities for project-based activities involving the Community Forest and the high school, i.e. the development of an interpretative trail.
- Develop a pool of apprenticeship, on-the-job training, and project-based learning opportunities for high school students within the community – and build continuity with these placements.
- Reach out to employers in order to match course offerings with what they need – and build a critical mass of students to justify course costs.
- Strengthen connections with First Nations elders and increase opportunities for building awareness about traditional land-based activities.



STRATEGY

Extend education and learning opportunities to all members of the community.

As in all small communities, it is a challenge to offer a diverse array of learning opportunities to suit a variety of interests and training needs. Technology, however, is rapidly reducing these barriers by enabling affordable access to a wide array of high quality formal and informal course offerings. Online options can also help those in the community who have mobility limitations to access learning opportunities.

Basic literacy skills also present a critical barrier to higher levels of learning and employment. While our population in Tumbler Ridge is highly skilled, there is a sizable portion of our community that lacks some of these essential building blocks. These individuals are among the most vulnerable in the face of economic downturns.

TACTICS

- Maximize education and learning opportunities available through online learning at the secondary and post-secondary levels.
- Bring together organizations in the community to understand needs and explore ways to expand learning opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Bring together organizations in the community to understand needs and explore ways to expand literacy services, especially for adults.



HOUSING

GOAL

Quality housing suited to the needs of the community, including permanent, temporary, and fly-in/fly-out residents.

STRATEGY

Ensure the range of housing options in Tumbler Ridge meets the needs of residents in terms of design, cost, and tenure.

Tumbler Ridge was established as an “instant town” in the early 1980s to accommodate the workers in the nearby coal mines and their families. As a result, the vast majority of the housing stock is comprised of single-family dwellings that date to this period. Since Tumbler Ridge was constructed, the population and housing preferences have changed, which indicates a need for a better understanding of current and future housing needs. There are, for example, more seniors in the community today, which may increase the need for accessible housing in locations that make it easy for the residents to access services. There may also be a demand for new or renovated single-family housing that better meets the needs of today’s families in terms of design and amenities.

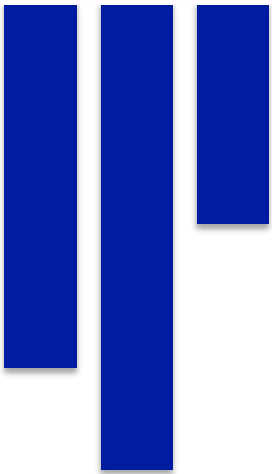
TACTICS

- Conduct a housing inventory to identify the age, design, condition, and tenure arrangements for existing housing.
- Develop a community profile to identify current and future housing needs, and identify priorities, including seniors, workforce, and acreage housing.
- Research best practices for housing location and design.
- Develop a comprehensive housing plan that draws on best practices to address the housing supply gaps identified by the inventory and needs assessment.
- Develop a range of programs and services that will allow seniors to remain in their homes for as long as possible as they age (e.g. home maintenance, home cleaning and laundry, yard care, snow shoveling, grocery delivery, transportation services).
- Zone and bring parcels to market to accommodate housing needs.

STRATEGY

Enhance the existing housing stock in Tumbler Ridge.

The majority of the housing stock in Tumbler Ridge is around 30 years old. This is the age at which housing begins to need major repair or it goes into decline. Encouraging renovations would extend the lifespan of the housing that is in place and make the community more attractive. It would also be an opportunity to incorporate energy efficient products and technology into existing homes and could help seniors with renovations that would allow them to stay in their current homes as they age.



TACTICS

- Encourage renovations that prolong the economic life of the housing stock (e.g. provide incentives, promote renovations for energy efficiency, etc.).
- Encourage renovations that enable seniors to “age-in-place”.

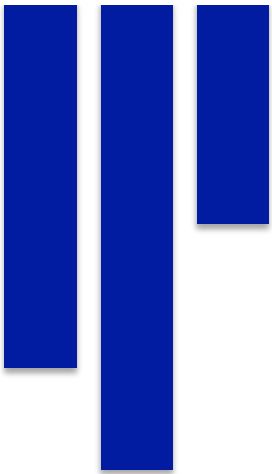
STRATEGY

Reduce property development and purchase risk in Tumbler Ridge.

Many investors are reluctant to develop property in resource-based communities because they fear getting caught in a downturn. Without this investment, however, resource-based communities find it much harder to diversify their economies so that they are less susceptible to commodity cycles. Finding ways to share or mitigate investment risk could provide the incentive that developers need to undertake developments that could enhance Tumbler Ridge’s long-term sustainability.

TACTICS

- Enhance investor confidence through mechanisms to mitigate or share development risk (e.g. bring potential investors to the community, establish partnerships with lenders and developers, etc.).



STRATEGY

Improve Tumbler Ridge neighbourhoods.

Attractive neighbourhoods, yards, and streets can create a sense of community and encourage a culture of community pride. If neighbourhoods are pleasant, people will come out of their homes – children to play, adults to gather. In Tumbler Ridge, many residents own multiple recreational vehicles, including snowmobiles, dirt bikes, boats, trailers, and motor homes, which are often parked on the residential property or on the street. Providing a community storage facility for these vehicles and then enforcing existing parking bylaws would enhance the attractiveness of Tumbler Ridge’s neighbourhoods.

TACTICS

- Develop commercial storage for recreational and industrial vehicles.
- Enforce parking regulations that prohibit large vehicles being parked in residential neighbourhoods.
- Maintain and enhance neighbourhood park space and play areas.



HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

GOAL

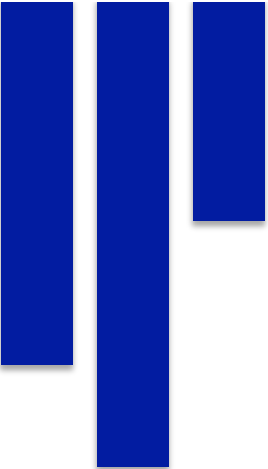
A comprehensive range of services and programming to support a healthy and vibrant community.

STRATEGY

Ensure access to medical and support services that meet the needs of the population in Tumbler Ridge.

In many small communities, it is a challenge to provide the full range of medical and support services that are offered in larger centres. Yet, the ability to access these services is often a determining factor in an individual's or family's decision to move to a small community. The health authority, industry, and the non-profit sector all have a role to play in providing these services in a small community. Working together, much can be done.

Technology can also play a key role in the delivery of some services. Virtual face-to-face specialist consultations and counselling sessions are possible using web technology. More sophisticated uses include the ability to conduct diagnostic procedures and share files securely.



Building on existing services and partnerships, a collaborative and integrated approach to developing health service plans that anticipates both upswings and downturns would help provide stability and reassurance to people in the community.

TACTICS

- Work with Northern Health Authority, industrial employers, and non-profit service providers to identify the medical and support service needs in the community, considering the community's demographic and employment profile.
- Develop a plan for medical and support service delivery that ensures primary health care and other services needed are available locally, and access to services outside the community is timely and responsive.
- Explore opportunities for partnership with industrial employers to recruit and retain allied medical professionals (e.g. physiotherapists, occupational therapists, paramedics, drug and alcohol counsellors) needed by workers in order to reduce travel costs and downtime for industry and enhance local access for other residents.
- Develop flexible service plans that will enable service providers to remain in the community even during an industry slow-down so that recruitment and retention is not a cyclical issue.
- Support community non-profit volunteer organizations in providing services that enhance the continuum of care and services available in the community (e.g. local respite and home care services.)
- Explore the use of technology to deliver medical and counselling services.
- Continue to support and enhance emergency and non-emergency transportation services.
- Conduct a community needs assessment for disability services.



STRATEGY

Make child care available that supports the needs of families and workers in Tumbler Ridge.

The availability of quality, affordable, and appropriate child care has the potential to open up options for adults of working age who may wish to enter the workforce. In resource-based towns, however, child care providers can find it difficult to adapt to changing community demand, particularly with regard to the number of spaces and hours in care.

Offering the right number of spaces can be a challenge because the cyclical nature of resource sector employment can result in wide and rapid swings in demand for child care spaces. A childcare centre that has a waiting list one month can have vacant spaces the next if there are slow-downs and layoffs. These swings in demand also make it difficult to attract and retain Early Childhood Educators. Another challenge for parents and child care providers in Tumbler Ridge is the mismatch between the maximum hours in care allowed under the Child Care Regulations, which is 13 hours, and the shift length in industry, which is 12 hours. This does not allow enough time for parents to travel to and from work within the hours available.

TACTICS

- Enhance the capacity to flex the number of child care spaces to accommodate variable community demand that emerges as a result of economic upswings and downturns.
- Recruit and retain more Early Childhood Educators (ECE) – and support the ECE certifications of local residents already working in this field.
- Explore the possibility of obtaining an exemption under the Child Care Regulations that would allow for additional hours in care to accommodate parents working 12-hour shifts.



SPORTS & RECREATION

GOAL

Infrastructure, services, and supports to enable people's involvement in sports and recreation activities.

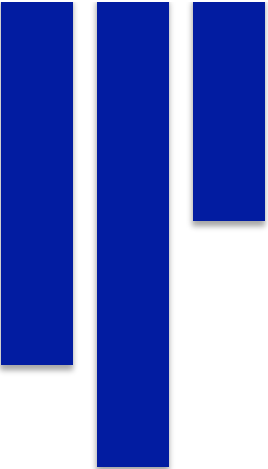
STRATEGY

Improve information and enhance promotion and communications about sports and recreation programs, services, and events available in Tumbler Ridge.

Tumbler Ridge has a wide range of sports and recreation programs and services available to residents, supported by vibrant and committed organizations and volunteers. Bringing these organizations together to share information about what they are doing, schedule programs and services to minimize overlaps and conflicts, and providing this information to the community in a coordinated fashion using a variety of channels, would enhance attendance and involvement for all organizations.

TACTICS

- Bring together community groups and District of Tumbler Ridge staff involved in sports and recreation programming to share information about what they offer.

- 
- Create a process to regularly gather and update information on available sports and recreation programs, services, and events.
 - Provide information about sports and recreation programs, services, and events to residents, using multiple channels (i.e. website, bulletin boards, school newsletters).
 - Develop a process by which people who are new to the community receive information about available recreation and sports programs, services, and events.
 - Create a single 'hub' for information on sports and recreation programs and events in the community.

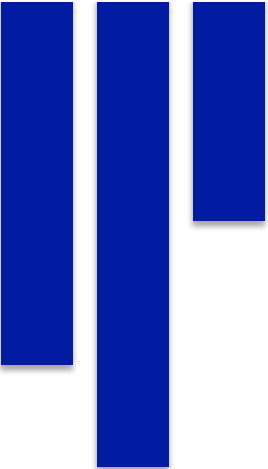
STRATEGY

Make available facilities that support recreation and sport programming.

The interest in sports and recreation programming in Tumbler Ridge has created a demand for facilities and space that exceeds the available supply of District-owned space. For this reason, the community should explore the possibility of using non-traditional spaces for sports and recreation programming. This would require developing an inventory of both traditional and non-traditional spaces, and then matching the inventory with space needs in the sports and recreation community. In this way, the community could offer more programming without having to construct expensive new facilities.

TACTICS

- Conduct a space 'needs' survey of groups involved in sports and recreation programming to identify the types of space they require.

- 
- Conduct a space ‘availability’ inventory, including traditional and non-traditional spaces (i.e. churches, Royal Canadian Legion, Hartford Court), to identify options and match groups to appropriate spaces.

STRATEGY

Make available recreation and sports programs and services that respond to the needs and preferences of Tumbler Ridge residents.

Providing sports and recreation programs and services that the community wants can be challenging at the best of times. Doing this in a community that includes shift workers and long-distance labour commuters, is even more challenging. For that reason, it is important for those who are providing the programs and services to understand their market; what people want, how it should be offered, when it should be offered, and where. This has the potential to increase participation and revenues. This could mean, for example, having facilities open earlier or later than usual or repeating classes to accommodate people who are not in the community full-time.

TACTICS

- Conduct a survey of residents to determine sports and recreation priorities and interests, as well as identify potential volunteer instructors or program leaders.
- Provide programs, services, and events that align with the interests identified, with particular attention to programming for all ages and abilities.
- Ensure scheduling of sports and recreation activities and events considers work and shift hours and residents who do not live in Tumbler Ridge full-time.
- Develop partnerships with major employers that would engage their workers in sports and recreation activities.



ARTS & CULTURE

GOAL

A vibrant arts community and range of services to support people's involvement.

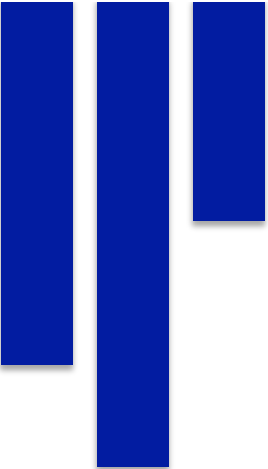
STRATEGY

Improve information and enhance promotion and communications about arts and culture programs, services, and events available in Tumbler Ridge.

Tumbler Ridge has a vibrant arts and culture scene comprised of both groups and individuals. Bringing this community together to share information about what they are doing, plan events and programs, and providing this information to the community in a coordinated fashion using a variety of channels, would enhance awareness of and support for artists and the arts and culture community.

TACTICS

- Bring together individuals, community groups and District of Tumbler Ridge staff involved in arts and culture to share information about what they offer.

- 
- Strengthen connections with First Nations and other cultural groups in the community to build awareness and develop inclusive programming in the arts.
 - Create a process to regularly gather and update information on available arts and culture programs, services, and events.
 - Provide information about arts and culture programs, services and events to residents, using multiple channels (i.e. website, bulletin boards, school newsletters).
 - Develop a brochure that would serve as a guide to artists and artisans in the community who wish to sell their creations and make this guide available to tourists and residents.
 - Create opportunities for artists and artisans to market their creations at community events and through central locations, such as the Visitor Information Centre.
 - Develop a process by which people who are new to the community receive information about available arts and culture programs, services, and events.
 - Create a single 'hub' for information on arts and culture programs, services, and events in the community.



STRATEGY

Make available facilities that support arts and culture programming.

The interest in arts and culture in Tumbler Ridge has created a demand for a variety of spaces, including performance, practice, gallery, display, and studio spaces. Access to more space could facilitate and support arts and culture in the community. For this reason, the community should explore the possibility of using non-traditional, as well as traditional, spaces for arts and culture programming. This would require developing an inventory of both traditional and non-traditional spaces, and then matching the inventory with space needs in the arts and culture community. In this way, the community could offer more programming without having to construct expensive new facilities.

TACTICS

- Conduct a space ‘needs’ survey of groups involved in arts and culture programming to identify the types of space they require (i.e. performance, practice, teaching, display space).
- Conduct a space ‘availability’ inventory, including traditional and non-traditional spaces (i.e. churches, Royal Canadian Legion, Hartford Court, Visitor Information Centre), to identify options and match groups to appropriate spaces.



STRATEGY

Make available arts and culture programs and services that respond to the needs and preferences of Tumbler Ridge residents.

Providing arts and culture programs and services that the community wants can be challenging at the best of times. Doing this in a community that includes shift workers and long-distance labour commuters is even more challenging. For that reason, it is important for those who are providing the programs and services to understand their market; what people want, how it should be offered, when it should be offered, and where.

TACTICS

- Conduct a survey of residents to determine arts and culture priorities and interests, as well as identify potential volunteer instructors or program leaders.
- Provide programs, services, and events that align with the interests identified, with particular attention to programming for all ages and abilities.
- Ensure scheduling of arts and culture activities and events considers work and shift hours and residents who do not live in Tumbler Ridge full-time.



LAND & INFRASTRUCTURE

GOAL

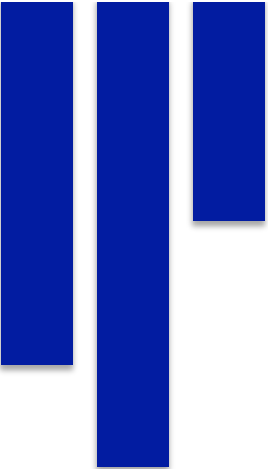
Infrastructure and land assets that are safe, well-functioning, and reliable and which support economic development, citizen safety, and quality of life.

STRATEGY

Establish a sound and robust strategy to ensure the ongoing maintenance of municipal infrastructure.

Municipal infrastructure consists of the roads, buildings, equipment, parks, utilities, water, and sewer systems that support homes, businesses, and community recreation in Tumbler Ridge. Functioning and reliable public infrastructure is central to a community's prosperity and quality of life for residents. Investing in and maintaining this infrastructure on an ongoing basis is vital to supporting the population growth and local business development. It also creates jobs.

Having been constructed only 30 years ago, Tumbler Ridge is fortunate to have a base of original municipal infrastructure that is relatively modern in design and still functioning well. The current population is well below the projected population of 10,000 that the town was built to support, so there is ample capacity to grow. The majority of the District's infrastructure is presently in



good standing; however, all of these systems will reach of the end of their lifecycles eventually – and in some cases, this could be within the next five years.

A maintenance strategy that plans and budgets for the repair and replacement of maintenance infrastructure over a ten-year period mitigates against unexpected costs. It also enables the District to strategize this work by location in order to minimize costs and disruptions. The schedule for road repairs, for example, can be aligned with that for underground sewage and water system maintenance. It will be necessary to work with other utility providers as well to ensure maintenance schedules are coordinated.

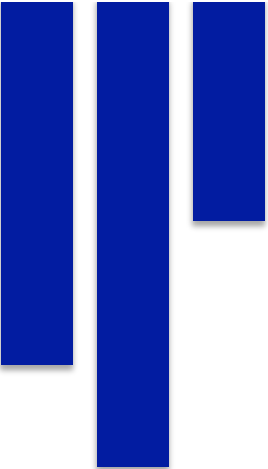
TACTICS

- Establish a comprehensive maintenance strategy and budget for all aspects of municipal infrastructure to ensure it is operating efficiently and is well maintained.
- Strengthen partnerships with external utility providers to ensure coordination between maintenance strategies and timelines.

STRATEGY

Build the skills and expertise of District staff to support and maintain municipal infrastructure.

A critical element of a community’s land and infrastructure is the people who run and maintain those assets. People have to have the training and skills necessary to be able to operate District buildings and equipment, troubleshoot issues, and make repairs as necessary. Some of these skills are specialized and may require outside expertise; however, making the investments



necessary to have this expertise based locally is more cost effective. It also helps to build capacity in the local economy.

TACTICS

- Invest in training and professional development to ensure staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to operate, fix, and maintain municipal infrastructure.

STRATEGY

Strengthen existing knowledge and information tools pertaining to District land and infrastructure.

Developing a comprehensive maintenance strategy for District land and infrastructure requires a strong base of knowledge and understanding about those assets. It requires information about the rate at which infrastructure is being used and is deteriorating. The coordination and prioritization of maintenance schedules also requires systems that will align and consolidate the information about the various different types of infrastructure.

The District of Tumbler Ridge has recently acquired the systems necessary to compile and map municipal infrastructure data. Populating and maintaining these systems will be essential to support strategic decisions and plan accordingly.

TACTICS

- Develop and maintain a robust base of information pertaining to District and municipal infrastructure – as well as the systems necessary to use this information to support decision making on maintenance and replacement.



STRATEGY

Ensure an adequate share of benefit from adjacent industrial developments.

Northeast BC, where Tumbler Ridge is located, has seen immense growth and development over the past decade. The region has an abundance of renewable and non-renewable resources and these represent critical drivers of the provincial economy. The province is also on the cusp of an industrial boom in connection with the development of a liquid natural gas industry in BC.

The area around Tumbler Ridge is best known for its rich coal reserves; however, in recent years, it has also gained attention for the opportunities it presents for wind energy, forestry, and natural gas. The growth of these other industries has had a major impact on diversifying the economy of Tumbler Ridge. Going forward, it will be important to ensure that the community continues to benefit from the industrial developments in the region. In addition, it will be key to ensure that the District receives adequate compensation from adjacent industry to cover the costs of providing and maintaining the infrastructure that will support this development.

TACTICS

- Examine opportunities to expand District boundaries to encompass adjacent wind, coal, and oil and gas developments.



CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

GOAL

Residents of all ages are informed and involved in the civic institutions, organizations, and events that contribute to the sustainability, quality of life, and well-being of Tumbler Ridge

STRATEGY

Work together to foster an inclusive community that accepts and welcomes people of all cultures and ethnicities.

In the process of diversifying the economy, filling gaps in critical services, and building stability in the community, Tumbler Ridge will need to engage all members. This will involve strengthening relationships with local First Nations. It will also entail attracting new residents – and visitors to town.

One of Tumbler Ridge's greatest assets is our people and it is important that this friendliness is extended to newcomers, including people of different cultures and ways of life. It is also crucial that these newcomers feel welcome in Tumbler Ridge. One way to facilitate this openness is by fostering a greater awareness, understanding, and appreciation of different cultures and customs.



TACTICS

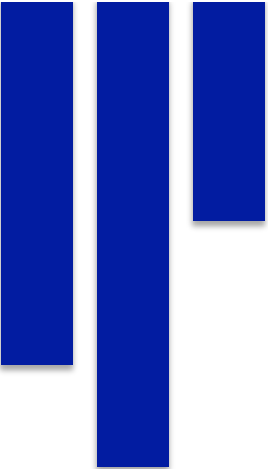
- Develop cultural awareness education, for example through high school/evening classes at the college and events in the community.
- Celebrate the cultural traditions and recognize the contributions made by cultural groups in the community.
- Engage First Nations elders in classes at Tumbler Ridge Secondary School and at the Northern Lights College campus and at events in the community.
- Engage cultural groups in District initiatives, such as advisory committees.

STRATEGY

Build capacity and numbers in the volunteer sector

Tumbler Ridge is supported and sustained by a core group of dedicated volunteers. These individuals run the museum, they organize highly successful annual events, such as Grizfest and the Emperor's Challenge, and they provide vital social services to some of the community residents most in need of assistance. Many community events and assets in Tumbler Ridge are a product of volunteer 'sweat equity' – and in times of downturn, these volunteers, and volunteer organizations are a vital source of support.

Volunteering in the community is immensely rewarding, but it is also hard work that requires an investment of time. As a result, the majority of volunteer organizations are forever looking for ways to recruit new members, as well as retain the ones they already have. There is also an imperative to collaborate and build synergies across the sector in order to maximize resources.



These same challenges are faced by non-profit organizations in large and small communities everywhere. However, in Tumbler Ridge, the need to build support for volunteer organizations and grow the base of volunteers is particularly imminent. In the wake of recent layoffs, many organizations have had a large proportion of their volunteers leave town. There is also a high rate of burnout among those who remain. At the same time, demand for the services provided by these organizations is higher than ever.

T A C T I C S

- Reconstitute the Tumbler Ridge Umbrella Committee as a forum for volunteer organizations to come together, exchange knowledge, and share lessons learned and to mobilize as necessary around community issues.
- Conduct a survey to determine what types of volunteers are needed and to identify volunteer interests in the community.
- Consider hiring a Volunteer Coordinator who would serve all of the organizations in the community.
- Offer volunteer training to organizations on how to recruit and retain volunteers.
- Consider negotiating corporate sponsorship of volunteerism.

STRATEGY

Work with youth in the community to build awareness and appreciation of and involvement in the volunteer sector.

Key to building numbers and capacity in the volunteer sector is involving youth in this work. Volunteering benefits youth by providing a venue for developing life skills and relationships, encouraging a sense of service and responsibility toward others, and facilitating the development of social skills such as empathy. Developing youth volunteers also builds sustainability and support for older volunteers.

People of all ages become involved in volunteering positions that align with their interests and ways of life – and recruiting volunteers often involves shaping the opportunities to appeal to people’s passions and schedules. There have been a number of highly successful volunteer initiatives involving youth in Tumbler Ridge in the past, and there is an opportunity to build on these successes. It would also be worthwhile to reach out to youth to ask what types of volunteer opportunities are of interest.

TACTICS

- Conduct a dialogue with youth in the high school to identify volunteering opportunities that would interest them.
- Maintain and build on successful youth volunteer initiatives, i.e. Grade 5/6 iPad instruction to seniors.
- Re-establish the position of youth council member on District Council.
- Look at allowing volunteering as a means of satisfying work credit requirements in the high school curriculum.



MOVING FORWARD...

Demonstrating leadership and a proactive commitment to action/change, the District of Tumbler Ridge undertook the development of a sustainability plan to chart a course for the future of the community. This future imagines Tumbler Ridge as a community that draws its strength and stability from a diverse economic base, and in which people of all ages and cultures are able to live, thrive, and enjoy the stunning environment that surrounds them.

The process to develop the sustainability plan brought together people and organizations from all sectors within the community. Together they identified, and in many cases set in motion, strategies that will make Tumbler Ridge the community they want it to be.

The full implementation of the plan will take time. The key, therefore, will be to:

- Remain focused and committed to the implementation of the plan;
- Continually monitor progress and adjust the plan as necessary to take advantage of new opportunities or address new challenges;
- Celebrate success and recognize those who contribute to making things happen;
- Regularly bring people and organizations together to share information and develop collaborative strategies for moving forward; and,
- Communicate progress and successes within and beyond the community, and share the community's story with other areas that could benefit from Tumbler Ridge's experience.

Tumbler Ridge has already made strong progress toward economic diversification and community resiliency. As the community discovered through this process, it has a wealth of assets upon which to build its future: the people, amenities, and surroundings of Tumbler Ridge. Building on these will enable Tumbler Ridge to achieve a vibrant and sustainable community.

COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE



The Community Development Institute at The University of Northern British Columbia

The Community Development Institute (CDI) at UNBC was established in 2004 with a broad mandate in the areas of community, regional, and economic development. Since its inception, the CDI has worked with communities across the northern and central regions of British Columbia to develop and implement strategies for economic diversification and community resilience.

Dedicated to understanding and realizing the potential of BC's non-metropolitan communities in a changing global economy, the CDI works to prepare students and practitioners for leadership roles in community and economic development, and create a body of knowledge, information, and research that will enhance our understanding and our ability to anticipate, and develop strategies for, ongoing transformation. The CDI is committed to working with all communities – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – to help them further their community and regional development aspirations.

*Research having an impact,
People making a difference*

www.unbc.ca/community-development-institute