

OKANAGAN FALLS



August, 2020

2020 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & RECOVERY PLAN

A 3-year work plan for the vision, economic development and COVID-19 recovery of the community of Okanagan Falls. To be used by not-for-profit associations, RDOS staff and Board of Directors, and the community-at-large.

This report was prepared by Kettle Valley Consulting



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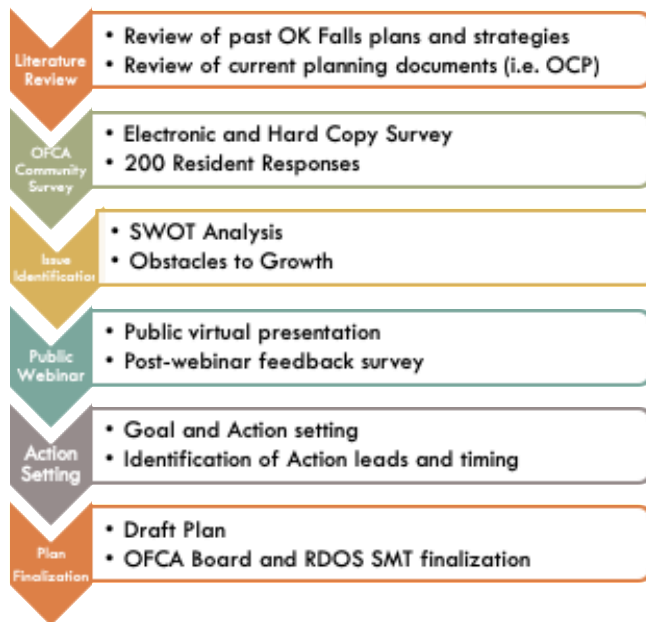
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This plan charts the **strategic direction** of Okanagan Falls, and is designed as a key engagement document for local residents, business owners, investors, local community organizations, and RDOS staff and elected officials.

This plan is also a **call to action** for all stakeholders in Okanagan Falls to contribute to the economic fortunes of the community. Okanagan Falls has suffered from a gradual economic decline and **COVID-19** has exacerbated this trend. There is a need for a new strategy to reverse this trend and build momentum in the community.

The RDOS partnered with the Okanagan Falls Community Association (OFCA) on the completion of this plan, and the OFCA Board was utilized as a project steering committee for the plan development process (provided below). This process was completed from January to July 2020.



Strategic planning techniques (SWOT, & Obstacle identification) were utilized in consultation with OFCA members to identify issues and determine the **limiting factors** impacting economic investment and recovery in Okanagan Falls.

Seven over-arching goals for the community were developed through discussion with the OFCA and feedback from the public webinar:

Goal No. 1: An Attractive Community for young Families

Goal No. 2: Continued Business Support through Recovery

Goal No. 3: Understand Infrastructure Challenges, and Plan for the Future

Goal No. 4: An Informed Discussion on the prospect of Incorporation in Okanagan Falls

Goal No. 5: Develop a Community Brand, and build Okanagan Falls as a Tourism Destination

Goal No. 6: Downtown Improvement and Beautification

Goal No. 7: Build on Community Amenities that are already a Strength

For each of these goals, a number of key action items were developed to provide a work focus for the community and RDOS staff for the next three years. Many of these action items will require **collaboration** with different organizations for them to be successful, so a **strong working relationship** with the RDOS, Okanagan Falls organizations, and residents will be required moving forward.

Table 1.0 provides the action item leads, target start date and estimated timeframe for completion for each item. Also identified are the organizations and key stakeholders that will be needed to participate. All actions, except for ongoing items, are proposed to be completed by the **fall of 2022**.

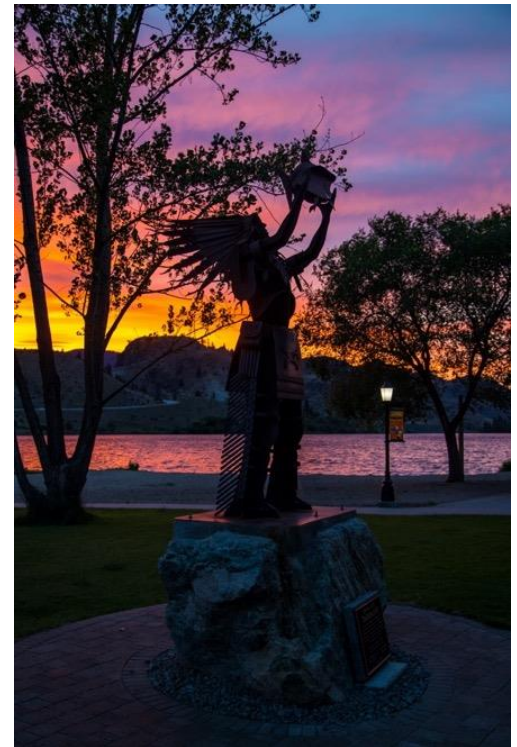


INTRODUCTION

Okanagan Falls is the largest unincorporated community (estimated at ~2,500 people) in the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen. It is found on the main traffic corridor (Highway 97) for the South Okanagan, and is approximately located 15 km south of the City of Penticton, and 21 km north of the Town of Oliver. Okanagan Falls is the main economic center for Electoral Area “D” in the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, and as such, this plan focuses on the community of Okanagan Falls specifically to drive further growth in Electoral Area “D”. The idea behind this is that the surrounding neighborhoods of Electoral Area “D” (i.e. Heritage Hills, Upper Carmi, Skaha Estates, Sun Valley Estates, etc.) will benefit if the local economy of Okanagan Falls prospers.

Okanagan Falls already has a number of substantial economic drivers, such as Structurlam, which specializes in innovative wood products for the building industry and employs 200 people at their Okanagan Falls location. Unit Electric Engineering Ltd.’s head office is also located in Okanagan Falls, and they employ 100 people. In addition, Okanagan Falls is home to a number of world-class Okanagan wineries, many of which boast fantastic views of Vaseux Valley from their location on Oliver Ranch Road (as shown in our cover photo).

In addition to economic drivers, Okanagan Falls also boasts a number of recreational and social amenities that help to attract new investment and residents. Okanagan Falls is located on the south end of Skaha Lake, and the Regional District maintains a number of fantastic beachfront parks, such as Christie Memorial and Kenyon Park, that are a summer attraction for tourists and residents alike. Okanagan Falls provides a great home base for a number of surrounding recreational trails for hiking and cycling, with the flagship being the Kettle Valley Rail (KVR) Trail, which wraps around the Skaha Lake shoreline into Penticton. As well, the community of Okanagan Falls affords an Elementary School (K to Grade 6), a medical clinic, an active Legion, and a vibrant volunteer base. Needless to say, there already exists a number of economic and amenity assets found in Okanagan Falls of which this plan hopes to build on and support.



Despite some growing sectors (i.e. wine and wood products), Okanagan Falls is in a state of economic paralysis. A once blossoming small community, its economic fortunes have suffered from a gradual decline. No greater symptom of this was apparent than the sudden closure of the only local grocery store in the community (the “IGA”) in September, 2019. As a result, a new community organization was formed with a focus on the need to do something different: the Okanagan Falls Community Association (OFCA). Dedicated residents and business people are now volunteering their time to improve the economic state of the community and they have already contributed to a renewed optimism on the economic development fortunes of the community.

Shortly thereafter, and in the middle of this plan development process, the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the globe. The pandemic has exacerbated the issues that were already facing businesses in Okanagan Falls. As a result, approximately 90% of service-based businesses in Okanagan Falls saw a 100% revenue loss impact from the middle of March to the middle of May, 2020.

Purpose of the Plan

This plan charts a renewed strategic direction for Okanagan Falls, and is designed as a key engagement document for local residents, business owners, investors, local community organizations, and RDOS staff and elected officials. It is proposed to be a living document, to guide the course of direction on the economic recovery of the community from COVID-19, and to set the groundwork for widespread community collaboration. Actions identified will need support from local residents, strong volunteerism, partnerships with local organizations, and facilitation by paid RDOS staff to be truly successful. Project champions will need to be identified early. The plan does not try to reinvent past economic development initiatives, but build on the current assets and momentum of community groups already underway.

Time Frame

The timeframe of 3 years (technically 2.5 years: August, 2020 – December, 2022) is used purposely, to ensure that the goals of the plan are achievable and time-relevant to the needs of the Okanagan Falls community. This plan is less a long-term visioning exercise of the next 20 years, such as an Official Community Plan, but more so an operational plan for the work efforts of the community over the next three years. Actions have been selected based on realistic targets for completion within a 3 year time-span. In addition, this operational plan will guide the work focus of the RDOS staff that are located at the Okanagan Falls Economic Development Office.

Mission Statement

We will collaborate to improve the economic and social sustainability of the community of Okanagan Falls and the surrounding area.

Okanagan Falls, with partners the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, community organizations, and residents, will work together to attract new businesses and development, foster tourism growth, and support the existing business community.



PLAN PROCESS

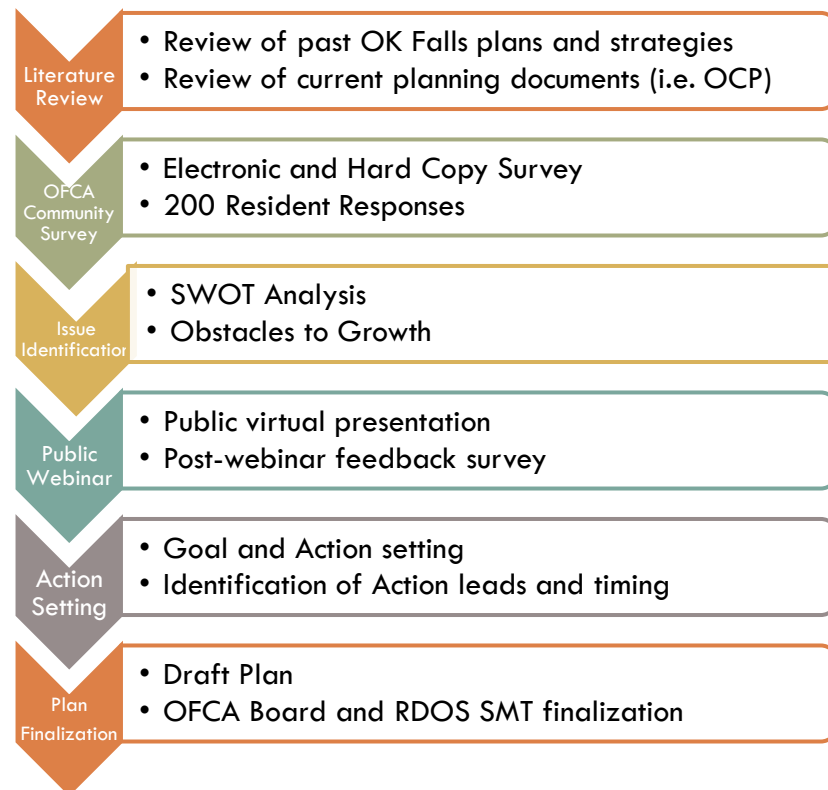
In January 2020, RDOS staff and the project consultant started engaging with the Okanagan Falls Community Association (OFCA) on the development of this economic plan. The intent of this engagement was to utilize the OFCA as the key stakeholder committee for the plan's development. The organization's mandate is similar to that of this plan: **To help Okanagan Falls achieve its economic and community development goals.**

Members of the OFCA are residents and business owners that live in Okanagan Falls. As such, the OFCA can be considered a public representative organization of the community of Okanagan Falls. In addition, for this plan to be effective, it's important that the RDOS staff, the Regional board, the Community Association, and general public in Okanagan Falls are all on the same page for the next steps and actions to move forward with. As such, it was recognized early that the OFCA and RDOS should partner on the completion of this Plan.

With the use of the OFCA Board as a project steering committee, the consultant completed an iterative plan development process with knowledge gained at each stage of the process. Figure 1 below provides the plan development process utilized to complete this plan. Included was a literature review (Appendix 'A'), a community survey (managed by the OFCA), the use of strategic planning tools such as a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats), and a virtual public webinar held on May 13, 2020. This meeting had a total of 43 participants and included RDOS Electoral Area "D" Director Ron Obirek and MLA Linda Larson.

In late April, with the advent of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the OFCA Board reviewed their SWOT feedback and information gathered to date to determine what changes may need to be made to the plan to support the economic recovery of the community in the short term.

Figure 1: Plan Development Process



BACKGROUND REVIEW

LITERATURE REVIEW

Before determining goals and actions, it is important to review the history of past plans and studies for the Okanagan Falls community. **Appendix ‘A’** provides a short summary analysis of seven studies/plans completed for the community in the past 11 years. The intent of this literature review was to ensure that this plan does not repeat past actions and to learn lessons from studies of the past. What has worked and what hasn’t? Which actions were identified, but never pursued and may have some value? Also, what guiding policy is currently in place that needs to be reviewed to ensure that actions developed are consistent? Appendix ‘A’ includes a background review of past studies, documents, and action plans that may be relevant to the forming of new actions in this plan. Below is a list of the documents that were reviewed in the preparation of this plan:

1. 2008 Okanagan Valley Industrial Land Study
2. 2012 Economic Development Action Plan (EDCD Consulting)
3. 2013 Electoral Area “D-2” Official Community Plan
4. Electoral Area “D” Governance Study - Final Report August 2016
5. 2016 “How’s Business?” Business Survey (RDOS)
6. 2017 Okanagan Falls Town Centre Plan (RDOS)
7. 2020 OFCA Community Survey



SWOT ANALYSIS

To aid the strategic planning process, the project consultant led the OFCA Board of Directors and the RDOS Economic Development Coordinator in a SWOT exercise prior to the determination of goals and actions. ‘SWOT’ is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats, and this type of strategic planning exercise is of value to recognize the community’s internal attributes (i.e. strengths and weaknesses) and how these attributes may relate to the external environment (i.e. opportunities and threats).

To summarize the SWOT feedback from the OFCA Board, Figure 2 below provides a number of SWOT ‘themes’ of the items discussed. **Appendix ‘B’** provides a short description and the detailed OFCA Board feedback of each SWOT theme and how it related to action planning.

Figure 2: SWOT Themes



OBSTACLES TO GROWTH

Following the SWOT analysis, a clearer picture arose of some limiting barriers that may be restricting growth and economic development within Okanagan Falls. These barriers may be larger items that cannot be easily changed. **Appendix ‘C’** identifies these barriers (or obstacles) specifically, defines what influence these obstacles have on goal-setting, and determines if they can be overcome or not. The advantage of doing this at the onset is to ground-truth the goals and actions of this strategic plan and to ensure that the actions are realistic given the jurisdictional, governance, physical and/or environmental limits that are apparent. The barriers identified include:

- Community Apathy
- Infrastructure Upgrades
- Regional District Governance System

- Access to Funding
- MoTI Road Right-of-Way Jurisdiction



BACKGROUND CONCLUSIONS

All of the gathered background information - the review of past studies and plans, the community feedback provided in the 2020 OFCA Community Survey, and the SWOT feedback provided by the OFCA Board – was considered to draw out some concluding statements to inform the goals and actions of this new plan. Provided below is some general conclusions stemming from the background review:

- **Community perceptions of Quality of Life have declined.**

The 2020 OFCA Community Survey results provides a stark contrast to the perceptions of quality of life found from the RDOS 2017 Citizen Satisfaction Survey. The 20% reduction from 2017 to 2020 in the community’s perception of Okanagan Falls as a place to retire, to raise a family and overall speaks to the need to take significant action to improve community attitudes. The actions within this plan should try to improve the self-perception of community members.

- **Downtown vibrancy has been an ongoing concern.**

In the literature review, a number of past plans had goals and actions that focused on downtown revitalization and yet the 2020 OFCA survey results still indicated that the “Downtown” was the fourth biggest issue facing Okanagan Falls. In addition, the OFCA Board recognized that the appearance of downtown as a major weakness for the community. Given this feedback, and the history of little results/success on Downtown initiatives, it’s important that actions on the Downtown are tackled directly and not just passed over as a symptom of other community or economic issues.

- **More action & implementation, less studies and plans.**

Members of the OFCA Board have remarked that the community is suffering from ‘plan fatigue’. In just 8 years the community has undergone five major plan or study processes (including this one), and eight such processes in the past 12 years. Each has had numerous positive recommendations to move the community forward on its economic development goals. Yet many similarities are apparent in a comparison of the SWOT review from the 2012 process and that completed by the OFCA Board in 2020. Implementation has been a challenge and the community has stagnated as a result.

GOALS & ACTIONS

This section provides the overall economic development goals of the community of Okanagan Falls for the next three years and onwards. Also, this section identifies specific project deliverables and/or community actions to help facilitate the successful realization of these goals. Achievement of the actions listed here will be the measuring stick to evaluate the success of this plan, the performance of the economic development staff in Okanagan Falls, and the perseverance of the community to overcome its obstacles. Following the identification of actions in this section, the 'Results & Measurement' section identifies the leads for each action, timing, and key stakeholders required to participate in each action to ensure success.

Goal No. 1: An Attractive Community for young Families

Okanagan Falls already has all the amenities and key services that young families are looking for in a small community: high quality recreational opportunities, a great school, affordable housing costs, and easy access to a larger service center (Penticton). The community can build on these assets, and market the community specifically targeting younger families that want to move to the Okanagan Valley, but cannot afford housing in the larger urban communities.

As well, with the recent social acceptance to remote working due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more people may be seeking opportunities to move to locations that can offer more space, a larger home with a yard at a comparable lower price, but can still offer a high quality of life. Okanagan Falls can position itself as a desirable community in this area, and should be looking to expand community amenities and improve services that will help increase the attraction of families to move to the community.

Action 1.1: Create a Marketing Campaign focused on attracting new families to reside in Okanagan Falls.

Action 1.2: Create marketing packages for the real estate industry on the advantages of living in Okanagan Falls.

Action 1.3: Complete a review of zoning regulations in Okanagan Falls to ensure that single family residential lots have the flexibility to construct a carriage home or a secondary suite suitable for young families (i.e. review of maximum floor area and number of bedrooms).

Action 1.4: Advocate for improved access to social services in the community for young families (i.e. after-school programs, daycares, hospital and clinic access, arts & culture).

Action 1.5: Advocate for a higher level of standard for the services provided in the community (i.e. RCMP, bylaw enforcement, park maintenance, road maintenance).



Goal No. 2: Continued Business Support through Recovery

With the advent of COVID-19, businesses in rural communities need support now more than ever. This is no exception in Okanagan Falls. Even prior to the pandemic, the business community in Okanagan Falls was dealing with challenges, such as crime on adjacent properties, and a population base that preferred to do their shopping in Penticton or Oliver. The establishment of the Economic Development office in November of 2019 was a great start to provide a local resource to the small business community, and more business support will be required moving forward.

It is imperative that the community and Economic Development staff continue to make their best efforts to support the business community through the recovery phase of the pandemic. The loss of the grocery store was a symptom of a problem, and other local businesses will follow the same course if drastic changes to support the business community are not implemented. As well, this action includes the attraction of new businesses to the community, and the fostering of entrepreneurship through training and access to business support resources.

Action 2.1: Develop a demographic and statistical marketing package (and GIS platform) for potential commercial and industrial businesses.

Action 2.2: Identify potential spaces that could be used by an Art Studio/Gallery shared space to be located in Okanagan Falls in support of local Artists.

Action 2.3: Complete a market assessment of the potential for a seniors supportive living facility being located in Okanagan Falls, providing jobs and demand for local services.

Action 2.4: Complete a feasibility analysis and public survey for the attraction of a new grocery store or grocery co-operative in OK Falls.



Goal No. 3: Understand Infrastructure Challenges, and Plan for the Future

Prior to seeking to attract new development, Okanagan Falls would be wise to learn more about the infrastructure challenges inherent to the community and find creative solutions to either cost-share improvements with developers, or seek partnerships with other key stakeholder organizations (i.e. Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation, Okanagan Falls Irrigation District).

Developers are attracted to communities where there is a clear, and consistent framework for development: that expected costs can be determined upfront, that municipal infrastructure upgrades required are easily identified, and land is pre-zoned and ready for development. RDOS has completed a lot of work to support further development on the planning side (i.e. OCP, Town Centre plan, and associated implementation projects), but what has not been developed is further understanding on infrastructure planning to support further development.

Action 3.1: Liaise with and assist (if requested) the Okanagan Falls Irrigation District in the completion of a detailed engineering study and master capital plan on the potential costs to upgrade the water system to increase fire flow capacity in Okanagan Falls, and to the Town Centre area as a priority.

Action 3.2: Create an engagement committee with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to discuss key local street corridor issues and the plan for future upgrades.

Action 3.3: Advocate for the installation of internet fibre and 5G cellphone coverage throughout the community.

Action 3.4: Support the RDOS in completing a sanitary sewer master plan for upgrades and capital replacement planning.

Goal No. 4: An Informed Discussion on the prospect of Incorporation in Okanagan Falls

Discussion of incorporation within the community of Okanagan Falls has ebbed and flowed for years. A number of studies and reports have been developed, with the most recent being the 2016 Electoral Area “D” Governance Study that resulted in the split of Electoral Area “D” and the creation of Electoral Area “P”. The thought process behind this action was that it would allow for greater representation of Electoral Area “D” residents, including Okanagan Falls. However, the community still feels that a lot of their economic development woes may be fixed through having greater local community control that would occur through incorporation, and that there is a need to gain further understanding of the prospect of incorporation.

There are differences of opinion on the benefits and costs of incorporation, the need for enhanced local services, and for more accountability from government leaders. As such, this plan includes actions for consideration of both the RDOS and the community to gain understanding on the prospect of incorporation so that a more informed choice can take place in the future.

Action 4.1: Prepare a report outlining “Best Practices” for incorporation based upon a review of recent incorporations by other communities.

Action 4.2: Procure a consultant to complete a cost-benefit analysis of incorporating the community of Okanagan Falls (and possible other areas in Electoral Area “D”), including detailed financial considerations and a thorough public engagement and education component.

Goal No. 5: Develop a Community Brand, and build Okanagan Falls as a Tourism Destination.

Okanagan Falls has many local assets and a unique local history to build on and succeed in the competitive tourism industry. It is believed that up to 9000 vehicles pass through Okanagan Falls on Highway 97 each day, and each vehicle represents an opportunity for the community to market and encourage that visitor(s) to stay awhile and enjoy the fantastic recreational amenities, wineries, and beaches that tourists are looking for in the South Okanagan. In addition, Okanagan Falls can boast of local stories that have captured the community, such as Kenny McLean, considered the greatest Canadian rodeo cowboy of all time, or the Salmon Chief statue signifying the area of importance for local First Nations for traditional salmon fishing.



What Okanagan Falls lacks is a thought-out tourism development plan on how the community will be able to build on their assets, market the community, and strengthen the tourism amenity profile that the community can provide to visitors. Especially lacking is a focus on a distinct community brand that is bought into by the business community and residents alike, but is also unique to make it attractive to potential visitors. The Okanagan Falls Winery Association has done tremendous work to market collectively their wineries and create a local industry that tourists are attracted to. Now, with the new Economic Development office and the focus on tourism by the Okanagan Falls Community Association, the puzzle pieces are back in place to target the tourism industry with a renewed focus for community growth.

Action 5.1: Pursue designation of the Okanagan Falls Visitor Information Centre as a formal Destination BC “Visitor Information Centre”

Action 5.2: Develop a Community Brand process that builds on existing local tourism assets, such as the wineries, beaches, and recreational amenities.

Action 5.3: Refresh the community websites for Okanagan Falls to reflect the new community Brand and enhance the digital marketing mediums utilized.

Action 5.4: Prepare a guide for use by local stakeholders on the requirements for establishing a Destination Marketing Organization.

Action 5.5: Liaise with the Okanagan Falls Winery Association on the development of a tourism marketing campaign.

Action 5.6: Developing and enhancing events to attract tourists to the community.

Action 5.7: Partner with the Visit South Okanagan Cooperative marketing organization in order to ensure the promotion of Okanagan Falls and Kaleden in regional initiatives.

Goal No. 6: Downtown Improvement and Beautification

Identified as a weakness, the visual state of downtown Okanagan Falls is in a poor state. This is inclusive of the Town Centre area, but also other commercial properties along highway 97 going south on Main Street. There is a lack of urban landscaping being maintained, and the infrastructure in place, such as sidewalks, signage, and even line painting, has been ignored. This lack of upkeep is also noticeable on private buildings in commercial areas. The community has a few derelict and unsightly properties in high profile locations that are allowed to exist in its untidy state for years. Other landlords have followed suit, and there is lack of re-investment on refreshing existing commercial buildings on a continual basis.

They say ‘you only get one chance to make a good first impression’, and that is very much true for visitors that pass-through Okanagan Falls. Unfortunately, the impression visitors receive is of a community that takes little pride in its physical appearance, which does not cater to the >9000 vehicle visitors per day wanting to stop and enjoy the great businesses and amenities that the community has to offer.

In addition, there is much that the community can do in this area without the need for large resources from the RDOS or other government jurisdictions. A little effort can go a long way to improving things. Recent actions by a few individual property owners to clean-up or paint their buildings (e.g. OK Falls Hotel, Centex Gas Station) have been well received in the community and have made a difference to the visual appearance of downtown. The actions provided here are intended to establish the footings for a longer-term initiative to continue to improve and invest in the Downtown moving forward.

Action 6.1: Establish a Downtown Improvement Business Association focused on revitalization initiatives in downtown Okanagan Falls.

Action 6.2: Prepare a RDOS Board report for consideration of a new ‘OK Falls Downtown Improvement’ service area to provide seed funding to the new Downtown Business Association and Ec. Dev. Staff for downtown projects.

Action 6.3: Develop a downtown storefront incentive program to improve facades, signage, and paint (i.e. murals) in the Downtown area in partnership with willing commercial landlords.

Action 6.4: Focus Regional District bylaw enforcement activities in Okanagan Falls on the clean-up of derelict and unsightly properties.

Action 6.5: Seek potential grant opportunities focused on downtown revitalization projects.



Goal No. 7: Build on Community amenities that are already a Strength

As already mentioned, Okanagan Falls has a tremendous park system, phenomenal beaches, and plenty of recreational assets with easy access to community residents. RDOS has taken care to continually improved these assets, and the efforts of RDOS parks staff and the volunteers on the Parks & Recreation Commission should be commended. However, related to the goal of trying to attract younger families to the community, there may be the need to think bigger about the amenities in Okanagan Falls. What recreational assets is the community missing that incoming residents are looking for? How can the community better utilize the large park spaces in close proximity to the beach? What is the plan to link all the park spaces with a community trail system connected into the KVR Trail? Okanagan Falls would be well served to setting a community-wide recreation and park amenity plan to vision and conceptualize what may be missing for new community assets moving forward.

At the same time, the COVID-19 has placed some key community and regional amenities under threat. Plans will need to developed to provide focused support on maintaining these key assets sustainable as they transition to the new COVID world.



Action 7.1: Undertake a Waterfront Parks Master Plan, focused on consideration of additional amenities to pursue.

Action 7.2: Undertake an assessment of recreational and community amenity needs in Okanagan Falls (i.e. ice arena, pickleball courts, skateboard or BMX pump track, community centre).

Action 7.3: Encourage community building events such as “clean-up in the park”, or the installation of new playground/equipment through volunteers.

Action 7.4 (a): Replace Okanagan Falls entrance signs on Highway 97 at the north and south ends of the townsite.

Action 7.4 (b): Develop a directional signage program for community recreational assets and tourist amenities (i.e. wineries).

Action 7.4 (c): Implementation of the directional signage program developed by OFCA.

Action 7.5: Support all regional efforts to reinforce and sustain the Penticton Regional Airport in the recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic.

RESULTS & MEASUREMENT

As already mentioned in the Introduction, this plan is more so an operational plan for the community, rather than a visionary document. As such, now that we have identified the goals and actions for the community for the next 3 years, it's important to take these goals to the next step and consider: who will be leading and implementing each action item? When is it important for the community to start the project? What is the logical sequence of projects so that efforts are not wasted (i.e. tourism brand identification prior to website development)?

The conclusions from the background review has shown that Okanagan Falls has had an unfortunate history of many plans being developed for the community, but a lack of tangible action and delivery on the implementation items in these plans. This section is intended to reverse this trend. By providing specific target timelines and the identification of key organizational responsibilities, the plan can be evaluated periodically over the next 3 years to determine if target timelines are being met and goals have been achieved, and ensure that accountability to the plan is being maintained. As well, the plan provides for actions to assist RDOS and the community to evaluate whether the current system of governance may be a barrier for action implementation.

Table 1.0 below lists all the goals & actions of this plan, identifies the appropriate organization lead to implement each action, a target start date and expected timeline to complete each action item, and key organizational stakeholders that will be required to participate for implementation to be successful. The target start date and timeline columns are colour-coded based on their expected timeframe: **grey** items are expected to be completed in 2020, **orange** in 2021, and **blue** in 2022. **Green** items are ongoing items and are expected to be worked on following the adoption of the plan and continually moving forward.

It is important to note that almost every action requires the need to collaborate with multiple organizations and community groups to achieve success. This is a product of doing these type of economic development projects in an unincorporated community: various organizations have different types of jurisdiction within the Okanagan Falls community. Of course, many actions will require the management of the RDOS, but also the OFCA, the Okanagan Falls Irrigation District, and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. It's important that the separate business plans of each organization incorporate the actions in this larger community plan to ensure accountability.

Table 1.0: Action Leads, Timeline, and Stakeholders

Goals and Actions	Action Lead	Target Start	Timeline	Key Stakeholders
Goal No. 1: An Attractive Community for young Families				
Action 1.1: Create a Marketing Campaign focused on attracting new families to reside in Okanagan Falls	RDOS	Spring, 2021 (subject to inclusion in 2021 Budget)	6 months	OFCA Board

Action 1.2: Create marketing packages for the real estate industry on the advantages of living in Okanagan Falls.	RDOS	Summer, 2021	6 months	Realtor associations, developers, OFCA Board
Action 1.3: Undertake a review of zoning regulations in Okanagan Falls in relation to the maximum floor area allowances for carriage homes and secondary suites so that they are more suitable for young families.	RDOS	Fall, 2021	4 months	OK Falls residents, Electoral Area 'D' Advisory Planning Commission
Action 1.4: Advocate for improved access to social services in the community for young families (i.e. after-school programs, daycares, hospital and clinic access, arts & culture).	RDOS	August, 2020	Ongoing	OFCA membership – volunteers, SD 67, Elementary School PAC
Action 1.5: Advocate for a higher level of standard for the services provided in the community (i.e. RCMP, bylaw enforcement, park maintenance, road maintenance)	OFCA Board, Electoral Area "D" Director	August, 2020	Ongoing	Regional Board, Interior Health, RCMP, OFCA membership - volunteers
Goal No. 2: Continued Business Support through Recovery				
Action 2.1: Develop a demographic and statistical marketing package (and GIS platform) for potential commercial and industrial businesses.	RDOS	February, 2020	6 months	Engagement with commercial landlords
Action 2.2: Identify potential spaces that could be used by an Art Studio/Gallery shared space to be located in Okanagan Falls in support of local Artists.	RDOS	January, 2021	3 months	OFCA Board, Downtown landlords to partner with.
Action 2.3: Procure a consultant to complete a market assessment of the potential for a seniors supportive living facility being located in OK Falls, providing jobs and demand for local services.	RDOS	Fall, 2021 (subject to inclusion in 2021 Budget)	4 months	SeniorsBC, BC Housing, Interior Health, OFCA Board, South Skaha Housing Society
Action 2.4: Complete a feasibility analysis and public survey for the attraction of a new grocery store or grocery co-operative in OK Falls.	RDOS	July, 2020	4 months	IGA landlord, Community Futures, Valley First, Co-op.
Goal No. 3: Understand Infrastructure Challenges, and Plan for the Future				
Action 3.1: Liaise with and assist (if requested) the Okanagan Falls Irrigation District in the completion of a detailed engineering study and master capital plan on the potential costs to upgrade the water system to increase fire flow capacity in Okanagan Falls, and to the Town Centre area as a priority.	RDOS	August, 2020	5 months	OFID, OFCA Board
Action 3.2: Recognizing the road concerns in Okanagan Falls, create an engagement committee with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure	RDOS Area 'D' Electoral Area Director	Fall, 2020	Ongoing	OFCA Board, MoTI Operations

to discuss key local street corridor issues and the plan for future upgrades.				
Action 3.3: Advocate for the installation of internet fibre and 5G cellphone coverage throughout the community.	RDOS	Fall, 2020	Ongoing	RDOS Area 'D' Electoral Area Director, OFCA membership
Action 3.4: Support the RDOS in completing a sanitary sewer master plan for upgrades and capital replacement planning.	RDOS	June, 2020	12 months	OFCA, Okanagan Falls Irrigation District.
Goal No. 4: An Informed Discussion on the prospect of Incorporation in Okanagan Falls				
Action 4.1: Prepare a report outlining “Best Practices” for incorporation based upon a review of recent incorporations by other communities.	OFCA Board/Electoral Area “D” Director Sub-Committee	August, 2020	3 months	RDOS Legislative Services Manager, RDOS Board of Directors
Action 4.2: Procure a consultant to complete a cost-benefit analysis of incorporating the community of Okanagan Falls (and possible other areas in Electoral Area “D”), including detailed financial considerations and a thorough public engagement and education component.	RDOS	March, 2021	12 months	RDOS Electoral Area 'D' Director, OFCA membership, OK Falls residents, external consultant
Goal No. 5: Develop a Community Brand, and build Okanagan Falls as a Tourism Destination				
Action 5.1: Pursue designation of the Okanagan Falls Visitor Information Centre as a formal Destination BC “Visitor Information Centre”	RDOS	Fall, 2020	Ongoing	Destination BC, Thompson-Okanagan Tourism Association, Visitors Centre Society, OFCA Board, Ok Falls Winery Association
Action 5.2: Develop a Community Brand process that builds on the existing tourism assets, such as wineries, beaches, and recreational amenities.	OFCA Board	June, 2020	4 months	RDOS Ec. Dev. Coordinator, OK Falls residents, OK Falls Winery Association, Electoral Area "D" Director
Action 5.3: Update the visit.Okfalls.ca and Okfalls.ca websites to reflect the new community brand and enhance the digital marketing of the community.	RDOS	Fall, 2021	6 months	OFCA Board
Action 5.4: Prepare a guide for use by local stakeholders on the requirements for establishing a Destination Marketing Organization.	RDOS	Spring, 2022	Ongoing	OK Falls Winery Association, local tourism operators, DestinationBC

Action 5.5: Liaise with the Okanagan Falls Winery Association on the development of a tourism marketing campaign.	RDOS	Fall, 2020	3 months	OK Falls Winery Association
Action 5.6: Developing and enhancing events to attract tourists to the community.	RDOS	August, 2020	Ongoing	South Okanagan Chamber of Commerce, OFCA membership - volunteers, Electoral Area 'D' Director.
Goal No. 6: Downtown Improvement and Beautification				
Action 6.1: Establish a Downtown Improvement Business Association focused on revitalization initiatives in downtown Okanagan Falls.	OFCA Board	August, 2020	Ongoing	RDOS Economic Development Coordinator, Downtown business community
Action 6.2: Prepare a RDOS Board report for consideration of a new 'OK Falls Downtown Improvement' service area to provide seed funding to the new Downtown Business Association and Ec. Dev. Staff for downtown projects.	RDOS	Fall, 2021	6 months	RDOS Board of Directors, RDOS Electoral Area 'D' Director
Action 6.3: Develop a downtown storefront incentive program to improve facades, signage, and paint (i.e. murals) in the Downtown area in partnership with willing commercial landlords.	RDOS	January, 2022	12 months	OFCA Board, Downtown business community
Action 6.4: Focus Regional District bylaw enforcement activities in Okanagan Falls on the clean-up of derelict and unsightly properties.	RDOS	May, 2021	Ongoing	OFCA Board, RDOS Electoral Area 'D' Director, Regional Board
Action 6.5: Seek potential grant opportunities focused on downtown revitalization projects.	RDOS	August, 2020	Ongoing	OFCA Board members
Goal No. 7: Build on Community amenities that are already a Strength				
Action 7.1: Undertake a Waterfront Parks Master Plan	RDOS	April, 2021 (subject to inclusion in 2021 Budget)	TBD based on project scope	OFCA, Area "D" Parks and Recreation Commission
Action 7.2: Undertake an assessment of recreational and community amenity needs in Okanagan Falls (i.e. ice arena, pickleball courts, skateboard park or bmx pump track, community centre)	RDOS	April, 2021 (subject to inclusion in 2021 Budget)	6 months	OFCA Board, OK Falls residents, Electoral Area "D" Parks and Recreation Commission.
Action 7.3: Encourage community building events such as "clean-up in the park", public art, or the installation of new playground/equipment through volunteers.	RDOS	3 or 4 each year, as opportunity arises	Ongoing	OFCA Membership, Area 'D' Parks and Recreation Commission

Action 7.4 (a): Replace Okanagan Falls entrance signs on Highway 97 at the north and south ends of the townsite.	RDOS	April, 2021 (subject to inclusion in 2021 Budget)	6 months	OFCA Board, MoTI Operations, Economic Development Coordinator, Electoral Area “D” Director
Action 7.4 (b): Develop a directional signage program for community recreational assets and tourist amenities (i.e. wineries)	OFCA Board	July 2020	6 months	RDOS Planning Manager, MoTI Operations, Economic Development Coordinator, Electoral Area “D” Director
Action 7.4 (c): Implementation of the directional signage program developed by OFCA	RDOS	January, 2021	12 months	OFCA Board, MoTI Operations, Economic Development Coordinator, Electoral Area “D” Director
Action 7.5: Support all regional efforts to reinforce and sustain the Penticton Regional Airport in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.	RDOS	August 2020	Ongoing	RDOS Board, Regional Tourism Associations, Transport Canada, City of Penticton.



APPENDIX A: LITERATURE REVIEW

1. 2008 Okanagan Valley Industrial Land Study

The overall intent of this Industrial Land Strategy was to provide local economic development officials with the information and tools to **understand and address mid-to-long-term industrial land use needs and to be more fully aware of future risks and opportunities associated with industrial land development in the Okanagan Valley.**

The inventory of vacant industrial land in the Okanagan-Similkameen was approximately 102.18 acres at the time of this study. Comparably, Central Okanagan was 36.7 acres, while North Okanagan was 32.5 acres. In addition, based on the information provided by BC Assessment, the average assessed value for an acre of industrial land in the Okanagan-Similkameen in 2007 was the lowest value in the Valley, at \$345,513, while Penticton recorded the highest value at \$904,714. The Okanagan-Similkameen represented 60% of the total amount of vacant, industrial zoned land throughout the Okanagan Valley, while also being some of the cheapest appraised value. This information indicates that in comparison to the two other Regional Districts, the Okanagan-Similkameen has the highest potential investment climate for new industrial businesses to locate too.

This study also provided a number of policy recommendations, including that the Province, Regional Districts, and local municipalities collaborate to ensure that the infrastructure is provided to support the future development of industrial land. However, since 2008, there has been a lack of coordination with these jurisdictions to provide this support.

2. 2012 Economic Development Action Plan (EDCD Consulting)

In August 2011, the Okanagan Falls Economic Development Department (OFEDD) retained EDCD Consulting to prepare an economic development strategy. The consultant team worked in cooperation with the economic development office and stakeholders in Okanagan Falls to assess the economic development needs of the community.

This strategy was intended to guide economic development in Okanagan Falls to develop long term policies, provide the framework for the initiative undertaken by the economic development department, and inform the broader community of local advantages and opportunities.

The following is a list of some of the suggestions to promote economic development in Okanagan Falls from the plan:

- Improve the image of the community
- Develop strategies to promote that Okanagan Falls is open for business
- Clean up main street - beautification
- Attract new residents (families)
- Look after existing businesses
- Take advantage of the geographic location
- Make Okanagan Falls a destination

- Clearly identify what economic development can do
- Cooperate and participate in regional economic development efforts

Sub Titled “An action plan for prosperity”, this document included many initiatives that are tourism related including a downtown revitalization program, a commercial marina development, marketing and recommendations to move the tourism function under the economic development umbrella.

This action plan was a result of substantial input and feedback provided by the entire Okanagan Falls and Electoral Area “D” community. The plan also includes a strong and mostly still relevant SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis.

All economic development actions in the strategy addressed the following fundamental questions:

- How can we best support our community and affect change?
- What can we realistically accomplish with the resources we have?
- Who are our partners and for what priorities/goals?

The goals identified in this plan included a commitment to economic development by the RDOS, nurturing a strong existing business base, developing an environment to encourage investment, the creation of a waterfront and downtown revitalization program, increasing awareness of marketing initiatives, and expanding and enhancing existing partnerships.

What’s interesting about this plan is that if it was developed today (summer, 2020), a lot of the goals & actions identified would still resonate and be of value to the community moving forward. This indicates that there has not been a significant amount of change in the community despite the actions set in the 2012 plan.

3. 2013 Electoral Area “D-2” Official Community Plan

The East Skaha, Vaseux Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2603, 2013 was adopted in 2013. In this Plan, Okanagan Falls is recognized as a community where growth is encouraged. Okanagan Falls is well suited to accommodate future growth, having community water and sewer systems, and an established urban area with a mix of residential, industry and commercial uses, as well as a school and parks. There is also considerable capacity for new development on vacant sites and redevelopment opportunities.

The Official Community Plan (OCP) recognizes Okanagan Falls as the center for commercial development and supports economic development activities, revitalization efforts, and design guidelines that promote a lively and harmonious built environment. Residents supported an increase in the amount and diversity of shopping, dining, entertainment and employment opportunities as well as an attractive and walkable community. A strong focus on mixed-use commercial, institutional and medium density residential development in the Town Centre area as well as a continuous waterfront walkway from Main Street to Lions Park is also identified as an important goal in the Community Plan.

A number of characteristics of Okanagan Falls indicate that the community is ripe for additional land development. There exist large parcels of vacant or underutilized land, and future development capacity is being enabled by the expansion of the Wastewater Treatment plant. As well, Okanagan Falls is designated as a ‘Primary Growth Area’ in the South Okanagan Regional Growth Strategy, and is the only primary growth area outside of the incorporated communities in the South Okanagan.

The plan calls for a strong focus of mixed-use commercial, institutional and medium density residential development in the Okanagan Falls Town Centre area. A continuous waterfront walkway from Main Street to Lions Park is also identified as an important goal in the Community Plan.

Also identified is a desire of all residents of Electoral Area “D” to see the downtown of Okanagan Falls become a vibrant hub of mixed commercial and residential development. The community also envisions a diverse industrial land base to create economic development opportunities and employment for Okanagan Falls and the surrounding areas.

With the expansion of the Okanagan Falls sewage treatment plant and the future potential extension of sewer services to the Eastside Road area or Kaleden community, growth is encouraged where existing community infrastructure is in place. Minimizing potential pollution impacts from septic fields to the natural environment, including Skaha and Vaseux Lakes is also a priority of the Regional District.

4. Electoral Area “D” Governance Study - Final Report August 2016

The purpose of this study was to help identify options for moving forward that could help address governance and service issues, including those identified by residents and the public engagement process. An initial survey with 184 responses revealed a variety of service and governance concerns.

Options referenced in the report are highlighted below based on the consultant’s assessment of priority, ability of the options to address community concerns or issues identified during the study process, and the feasibility of implementation:

1. Consider a boundary change involving Electoral Area “D” that creates at least one additional electoral area, and addresses the imbalance of representation, and the diversity of communities encompassed within one electoral area.
2. Create a committee to facilitate collaboration on water, with representation from the RDOS, Interior Health Authority, improvement districts and private water purveyors. Sharing knowledge, information, best practices, and supporting long term asset management together will benefit every system, and may enable the water authorities to discover opportunities for sharing resources, joint initiatives or achieving economies of scale. Water quality is widely recognized as an issue of importance in Electoral Area “D”.
3. Review some of the service level issues identified. Further analysis or investigation may be required to confirm broader concerns, or support for any given approach.
4. Focus the Region’s communication efforts to clarify roles, educate residents on what services they receive (and from whom), and how they can influence that process.
5. Consult with the communities of Okanagan Falls and Apex regarding the feasibility of creating a committee or commission for each of the communities as a tool for community input, identify local concerns, enhance local control and seek resolution to multi-jurisdictional issues.
 - A Local Community Commission is one option for the community of Okanagan Falls. A multi-jurisdictional committee or commission (improvement districts, provincial ministries, RCMP), potentially with delegated authority to address specific issues may be a more functional option to resolve complex issues.

Following this study, the RDOS pursued the first option, which involved splitting the previous Electoral Area “D” east/west of Skaha Lake to form a new Electoral Area “I” representative of the communities of Kaleden, Twin Lakes, Marron Valley, and Apex.

In addition, it's interesting to note the last recommendation from the consultant was to develop a "Local Community Commission" for Okanagan Falls. This may be considered to be achieved with the new Okanagan Falls Community Association (OFCA), although this association is strictly a non-profit organization and is not a formal commission of the RDOS as what was proposed in 2016.

5. 2016 "How's Business?" Business Survey (RDOS)

This survey was completed by RDOS staff and included a total of 23 businesses located in Okanagan Falls and Kaleden. Of the 23 businesses responses, the top 4 industries that they identified with included: 1) Tourism, 2) Agriculture, 3) Retail/Service/office, & 4) Artistic/Creative.

Highlights of the survey are listed below:

What do you like about doing business here?

A beautiful area, with beaches, hiking trails, and relaxed environment for tourists make it effortless for quality accommodations to fill every day on the calendar with guests. Businesses appreciate the opportunity to get to know their customers personally and that businesses try to support one another. Highway access, easy parking and close proximity to a larger center are positive aspects of doing business here.

Challenges and suggestions to support business success:

- A need for high quality accommodations was highlighted a number of times by those surveyed, with a focus on tourism advertising and promotion
- Promotion of buy local and a showcase of all the businesses in the area
- Promotion of the wine industry (helping people find them), and of the area as a tourism destination
- Expansion of the industrial base will lead to hotels, restaurants
- Policing/bylaw and cleaning up the appearance of Okanagan Falls along Hwy 97 and Main street
- Increase the population with housing development
- Workforce consistency
- Creative wellness solutions and continued education opportunities for adults 50+

6. 2017 Okanagan Falls Town Centre Plan (RDOS)

The purpose of this plan was to provide direction and guidance for the future development of the Okanagan Falls Town Centre area with a specific vision and policy goals, and with an accompanying Development Permit Area to address the form and character of future development within the Town Centre.

The Okanagan Falls Town Centre refers to the area between Skaha Lake and Highway 97 and between the Okanagan River bridge to the west and Main Street to the east. Figure 3: Town Centre Plan Study Area identifies this general area with a dashed red line.

Figure 3: Town Centre Plan Study Area



The plan recognizes that, the current urban form/street corridor does not support a pedestrian-friendly downtown. Many buildings are set back from the streets, with poor street-wall definition, and are often separated from the street by surface parking. The public road right-of-way is underdeveloped, with substandard or missing sidewalks, over-scaled roadways, few street trees, and no street furniture, pedestrian lighting, or other amenities.

The plan outlines several factors that demonstrate that there are significant growth opportunities in the Okanagan Falls Town Centre. These include: several key undeveloped sites; a relatively compact urban area; beautiful natural setting at the south end of Skaha Lake; Hwy 97, which brings 9000 vehicles per day to the town centre; a new provincial prison with increased local demand for housing; regular scheduled air service in Penticton; and an expanding wine industry.

A key new direction for the Town Centre is the re-designation of most of the existing Commercial zoning to a new flexible zoning that encourages Medium Density Residential or Mixed-Use developments. The plan indicates that this intended to, over time, create additional population to support local shops and services. The first new development that followed this new policy direction was the BC Housing Corporation-funded seniors housing project located on the east lot of the former 'flea market' property at 5080 Highway 97, which included twenty-eight affordable apartment units.

Ultimately, the plan envisions that when all the downtown residential sites have been developed, an additional 300+ dwelling units are forecast in the Town Centre, along with approximately 60 new Tourist Commercial (i.e. hotel) rooms and approximately 700 m² of additional commercial space.

The Town Centre plan recommended that a new Development Permit Area be implemented, in order to ensure that the design of new developments in the Town Centre be consistent with the goals, objectives and policies for the area. The design guidelines for this Development Permit Area were intended to ensure the desired form and character of new development in the Town Centre is consistent, of high-quality design, and respects the local context.

The following are follow-up studies and initiatives that have been identified in the Okanagan Falls Town Centre Plan as required actions by the RDOS to implement portions of the Plan:

1. Official Community Plan Bylaw - The proposed introduction of a new Town Centre (TC) designation to the Electoral Area "D-2" OCP Bylaw will require a review of the existing objectives and policies contained within the Commercial (C) designation that currently applies to the study area.

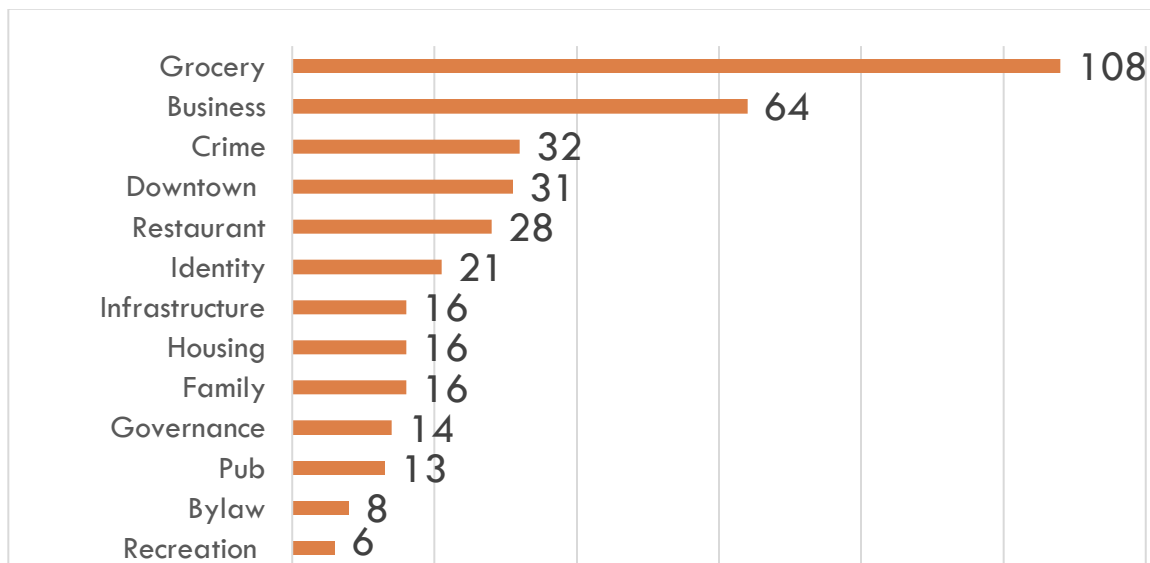
2. Zoning Bylaw - A review of the Okanagan Falls Town Centre (C4) Zone should be undertaken in order to ensure consistency with the objectives and policies of the Town Centre (TC) designation under the OCP Bylaw (i.e. allow medium density residential development in those areas identified on Figure 2: Future Land Use).
3. Public Access Design Guidelines - Preparation of public access design guidelines for foreshore areas along the length of Skaha Lake waterfront in the Town Centre.
4. Transportation Plan - Finalize the Okanagan Falls Town Centre Plan Transportation Impact Analysis and work with the MoTI to secure its support for the Town Centre Plan.
5. Commercial Moorage Facility - Undertake a technical study to determine the feasibility and optimum location of a commercial water vessel moorage facility in Skaha Lake within the Town Centre area.
6. Place Magnet Project - Work with the proposed property landowner and potential investors/development partners to implement and facilitate the 'Place Magnet' project as proposed in the Okanagan Falls Town Centre Plan.

Since the plan's adoption by the Regional Board in 2017, RDOS has completed the OCP Bylaw amendments which included a new Town Centre Development Permit Area, and created a new Okanagan Falls Town Centre (OFTC) Zone to reflect the built form encouraged in the plan.

7. 2020 OFCA Community Survey

At the same time that this economic development plan process was being initiated, the Okanagan Falls Community Association embarked on their own survey of Okanagan Falls residents in February of 2020. With the permission of the OFCA Board, **the results of the survey are shared here to demonstrate current issues and why there is a pressing need to have a focused plan for economic development in Okanagan Falls.** The OFCA survey received 200 resident responses, which represents approximately 10% of the population of Okanagan Falls, which is a healthy response rate for a small rural community. Figures 4 and 5 below provide some summary results of the survey.

Figure 4: Question – What are the Main Issues facing Okanagan Falls?



Given the recent closure of the IGA grocery store, it's no surprise that the lack of a community grocery store was a significant issue in the community. However, it's also important to note that business and the downtown environment was the number 2 and 4 most frequent response, demonstrating that economic development is a key priority for Okanagan Falls residents.

Figure 5: Question – How would you rate community life in Okanagan Falls?



The OFCA survey also asked how residents rate community life in Okanagan Falls, as a place to retire and as a place to raise a family with a score of 1 to 10. The RDOS completed a citizen satisfaction survey for Electoral Area “D” residents in 2017 that asked similar questions. Both of these results are provided in Figure 5. It's interesting to note that there has been a reduction in the perception of community life in Okanagan Falls in only a short 3-year time period (almost 20% reduction). As well, even though it wasn't asked in 2017, the rating of 4.2 out of 10 for Okanagan Falls as a place to start a business indicates that the community feels that there is a strong need for additional small business and entrepreneurship support services.

APPENDIX B: SWOT ANALYSIS – THEMES

Strengths

Theme: Recreation and Natural Amenities

Okanagan Falls is located in a beautiful natural setting, which affords it many opportunities for recreation and outdoor pursuits that rivals even other communities in the Okanagan. With its accessibility to Skaha Lake, world-class hiking and biking trails, large community parks in the Town Centre, and access to other larger recreational opportunities, such as ski hills and climbing, Okanagan Falls is positioned well to take advantage of its desirable location.

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- Beautiful Natural Environment
 - Rec, KVR, beach park – quiet
- KVR railway offers great recreation opportunities
 - Access to the 201 logging areas (recreational mountain biking, hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, ATVing etc.)
- Athletic/World Class Cycling
- Skaha Bluffs
- Two Ski hills within 2 hours – Apex/Big White
- Calm waters –Skaha – great for paddle boarding.
- Great Fishing



Theme: Affordable Living

In comparison to the other communities in the South Okanagan, Okanagan Falls has less expensive real estate. Even though there is some new single-family dwelling product in the community, often these homes are priced less than a comparable property in Penticton. Yet, the community is only a 20 minute drive from Penticton, and can offer a semi-rural, laid back lifestyle for young families that may not be achieved in Penticton.

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- Semi-rural – Laid back – affordability
 - Less expensive real-estate – proximity to Penticton
- Affordability of housing

- Young families
- Workforce – Structurlam/UEE

Theme: Access to Services

Despite the affordability of the community, Okanagan Falls can still boast tremendous access to community services. The elementary school is a key community asset, the community can take advantage of a recently installed, state-of-the-art, sewage treatment plant, and has access to a community water system managed by the Okanagan Falls Irrigation District. As well, the community's location lends convenient access to key regional assets, such as the Penticton Regional Hospital or the Penticton Airport, with access to daily flights to Calgary or Vancouver.



Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- Brand new wastewater treatment plant. Community water and sewer system also available
- Hospital close/quality health care services – Teaching hospital
- Airport Penticton 20mn/ Int'l Airport Kelowna 1.5 hours
- BC Transit gives some accessibility
- Okanagan College

Theme: Tourism Potential

Okanagan Falls affords a number of world-renown wineries that are already achieving economic development success. The community can take advantage of these business assets in the community by building marketing campaigns that attract visitors to the community for wine, but stay for the recreational amenities. The community also boasts some other unique tourism assets, such as the Dominion Radio Astrophysical Observatory and Tickleberry's Ice Cream.

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- Wineries – Sub GL. Region. Uniqueness, Kettle holes – specific geography – soils etc.
- Tourism Destination
- DRAO – White lake observatory – World Renowned
- Arts and Culture

Theme: Industrial Employment Lands

Already mentioned in the introduction of this plan was two key industrial businesses headquartered in Okanagan Falls: Structurlam and UEE. These businesses provide stable, high paying jobs within the community which is a currently a key driver of the community's growth. As well, Okanagan Falls has additional vacant industrial land to attract more comparable operations to the community, with easy access to community water and sewer services required for these operations.

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- Changing Demographic - Aging Population means more need for support services
- Real Estate moves quickly
- Structurlam/UEE – world class companies
- Commercial and Industrial land AVAILABLE
- Really only need a few more developments kicked off in the main strip to kick off some momentum
- Underutilized Industrial land

Weaknesses

Theme: Community Image

The community struggles with an image problem in two ways: the physical, built environment image; and the reputational image of the community. Driving through the community, it's hard not to notice the lack of upkeep of the buildings that line Highway 97, and also the lack of infrastructure investment in the public realm, such as sidewalks, intersection treatment, and public landscaping. As well, the community suffers an image problem from external sources, which is exacerbated by a lack of a cohesive public brand to market.

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- Streetscape/Public Realm
- Public/Community Image to external people
- Misconception of region by outsiders
- No promotion

Theme: Leadership & Oversight

There is much discussion in the community to incorporation and the lack of control over the community's own destiny. Despite the recent governance review in 2016, and the subsequent splitting of Area 'D', Okanagan Falls still only has one elected representative on now a larger, 19-member Board of Directors. In addition, there is a lack of local community champions to put new initiatives into action. The new OFCA is a great start, but it will need to be sustained for the long term, and demonstrate a number of wins for the community to have continued support.

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- Lack of control over direction
- Lack of jurisdiction under RDOS model
- Lack of local leadership
- Unincorporated Community, no resources to initiate / coordinate/ implement actions
- Inability to implement or champion
- No real voice or Citizens with a common goal



Theme: Infrastructure & Built Environment

Related to the physical appearance of the community, there is a need of significant infrastructure investment. Water suppression within the Okanagan Falls Irrigation District system is a major barrier to new multi-family and commercial development. The water and the sanitary sewer mains in the community are in need of replacing, and upgrades can be a burden for service users. As well, the intersection at Highway 97 and Main is in need of an upgrade. Finally, although the parks are a terrific community asset, they suffer from not having a clear plan for improvement and a lack of ongoing investment.

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- Short comings in infrastructure
 - Water/Fire Suppression
 - Road right of way – sidewalks
 - Sewer collection mains aging
- Most Confusing intersection Hwy 97/main
- Highway and directional signage MOTI
- Infrastructure poses some challenges to getting developments kicked off
- Underdeveloped beaches and Parks
 - Picnic shelters
 - Maintenance Issues (grass) (Parks)
 - Lacking a master plan
- Aster/Beach Maintenance



Theme: Lack of, or insufficient, Services

Although access to services is identified as a key community strength, there are some service areas that require additional resources and support. Discussed was the lack of an RCMP presence in the community, as well as the active enforcement of RDOS bylaws (such as Untidy & Unsightly). Okanagan Falls does have access to these services, but the OFCA members felt that the community's ability to direct these services to improve service delivery was limited.

As well, there has been the loss of previous services, such as the recent loss of the grocery store. The community also lacks key services to support further growth in the tourism industry, such as quality hotel accommodations, hospitality businesses (i.e. bars, restaurants, shopping), and night entertainment options.

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- Security/Policing of RCMP presence
- Lack of Resources dedicated to the community
- Grocery Store – lack of
- Hospitality (pub and shopping)
- After-school programs – FEW
 - Lack of youth programs and a place for teens
- Day Care – Few local options
 - Waiting lists
- Hotels - Lack of temporary quality accommodations
- Rental Accommodation
- Too many liquor stores that also serve as a Quasi grocery store

Theme: Loss of Stable Employment

The OFCA Board lamented the loss of some big resource-based industries in the community, such as Weyerhaeuser, and the associated loss of stable employment from these industries leaving. As a result, demographics have changed in the community in that more low-income families and seniors reside in the community and have less ability to support local business growth.

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- No Employment Opportunities
- Loss of resource based industries approx. 10 years ago
- Low income is increasing more than inflation

Opportunities

Theme: Build a Tourism Destination & Brand

To take advantage of its tourism potential, Okanagan Falls requires a clear community brand to market itself as a destination, such as Osoyoos, Whistler, or Revelstoke. There's also a need to foster awareness externally of all the recreational amenities available in Okanagan Falls, as its often not thought of compared to other areas. Finally, this brand should tie into community signage, an online and social media presence, and be represented by all community members in public settings.

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- Sailing, Kayak, Paddleboard
- SUP – Paddleboard movement – trend/popular/young people
- Support Tourism
- Branding – signage/marketing
- Foster awareness of biking suitability
- Foster aware of hiking/walking suitability
- Start a promotional campaign leveraging all our short comings



Theme: Focus on Quality of Life

Building on its inherent strengths, Okanagan Falls can continue to strengthen the quality of life aspects of the community. Residents in Okanagan Falls take pride in the dog-friendliness of the community and the community was recently designated as an Age-Friendly community. Okanagan Falls can market potential residents in being a more relaxed, safer community with still easy access to the urban amenities in Penticton. There is also an opportunity to build up the arts & culture sector in the community to attract residents.

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- Arts & Culture Sector
- Reposition as bedroom community
- Dog Friendly Community
- Rental market opening up to lower income – vacancies support housing accessibility
- Age in place community (Assisted Living)
 - Age Friendly Community

Theme: Enhance Community Assets

The OFCA Board discussed that further investment in community assets can encourage additional growth. Examples provided included the much-discussed idea from past plans: a commercial marina, an indoor ice arena, expanded use of Keogan Park field, and a Sailing/Yacht club for kids. The waterfront park system is a tremendous asset, that may be better served with long term plan for amenity development. Also discussed was the idea of using a co-op model to develop a new community grocery store.

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- Commercial Marina
- Sailing Club/Yacht Club for kids
- Development of an indoor Arena
- Expanded use of Keogan Park field Tennis/pickle ball
- OK Falls elementary school into Penticton School District
- New Hotel
- Co-op a grocery store or Find a manager who would take on operation of existing store



Theme: Service Development

Given the concern with some key services, there is an opportunity to do better. Identified was the need to develop a strong working relationship with the RCMP. Also, the idea of providing additional support services to the senior's demographic (i.e. seniors community 'hub') was discussed.

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- Building relationship with RCMP (new Officer in charge) Rural Policing
- Put in a seniors care hub in a central spot where people can "AGE" at home.
 - Do all the things a seniors home would do but instead of building a huge resort, you just have a smaller HUB and take the service to them.

Theme: Provide Economic Development Support

The OFCA Board reviewed the history of the community Economic Development Office, and its lack of stability being an issue. There is the need to provide expanded economic development support on a continual basis, especially in today's current economic climate with COVID-19. Also discussed was the idea of a community business association, short term workforce programs, and support for the agricultural business community through repurposing housing for temporary farm workers.

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- Expansion of Economic Development support
- Creation of Business Association - Collaborate with SOCC
- Make work projects – short term workforce programs
- Local accommodations re-purpose for temporary workers - COVID
- Local unemployed workforce expand into agricultural work
- Expansion of the fiber optic network – promote the “I want fiber” page on telus.com – lobby telus to expand in our area

Theme: Attract New Development

In many ways the community is ripe for new development. There is a lot of underutilized land in the Town Centre area that has tremendous access to the beaches and the parks in the community. Further, the Town Centre plan and Official Community Plan provides the planning framework and zoning flexibility to allow for future growth. Housing development is one sector that has not seen a significant slow-down with the COVID-19 pandemic, and as such, can be targeted for recovery. Also, the recently vacated IGA retail space provides the opportunity for another large-scale retailer to move into the community.

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- Still can be shaped in many ways due to amount of land for sale...kind of get to start from scratch
- Higher end
- For Profit
- More developments in the main strip to kick off some momentum
- Conduct a review of current limitations and opportunities on current infrastructure
- Grocery stores are in high demand, large space available



Threats

Theme: Economic Threats

A recognized economic threat would be if one of the larger employers of the community closed or relocated its facility. As an example, Structurlam recently announced an expansion into Arkansas. The cannabis industry speculative bubble bursting following legalization impacted the community with the loss of a major production facility that would have offered over 200 full-time positions. The COVID-19 pandemic, in general, represents a substantial economic threat throughout the world, and Okanagan Falls should position itself best to weather the economic storm moving forward.

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- Plant closure: major wood-based manufacturing plants announces it is closing its OKF facility and building a new / larger plant in Penticton
- Real estate market decline: a 25% 'correction' as has just occurred in Calgary and much of AB, and as might occur if China were removed from the Vancouver market
- COVID-19 Pandemic
- Permanent loss of businesses due to covid
- Air B&B industry built on travel

Theme: Threat of Inaction

The OFCA Board considered that the lack of action on “doing something” in the community has been a major barrier. Members discussed that the community used to be much more vibrant, and that they have noticed a slow, gradual decline over time. The threat here is that this just continues: that there is no future tangible development, that there is no marketing or promotion of the community, and absentee landlords continue to not look after their properties.

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- Inaction leading to continued decline in community
- Absentee commercial Landlords
- Community Competition (lack of marketing)
- Lack of some tangible development.... Someone does NOT invest in their property and we continue our gentle slide in to oblivion
 - Hotel
 - The additional lot owned by Housing Ass'n,
 - Flea Market land beside it,
 - 10 ac housing lot at south end of town*, 3 ac motel / RV park by lake*
 - Closed restaurant (Kaitlin's) and
 - Burned Out Gas Station

Theme: Loss of Community Assets

If the community continues to decline, it can be expected that this trend will be worsened with the loss of community assets. Given the demographic change in the community, and the lack of young families with children, there is the threat that the elementary school is closed or consolidated with another school. Other key community assets that could be threatened include the Credit Union, local pharmacy, or the permanent sporting events that come through the community. In 2020, these events were cancelled, and it will be imperative that the community advocate for them to return (if possible) in 2021. Finally, with the challenges faced by airline industry in a COVID world, the loss of daily air service has already had a significant impact on the community and the Region as a whole, and the risk of continued service reduction at Penticton airport is a substantial threat.

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- SD 53 announces closure of OKF Elementary School
- Valley First announces closure of local branch
- Local pharmacy closes
- Closure of the KVR (i.e. Trestle bridge)
- Loss of sporting events. (i.e. change of route for Ironman)
- Loss of Penticton Regional Airport

Theme: Mis-information and Poor Communication

The OFCA Board recognized that communication flow in the community has not been positive, and often rumours start by misinformation being spread on social media. The threat of this continuing is that it leads to lack of community support on projects and initiatives moving forward, and to further negative media attention

that detracts from the community image. There is also a need to ensure strong communication flow between the various community stakeholder groups (i.e. the community partners meeting a great example in this effort).

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- Lack of communication of community groups (I.E. community partners)
- Misinformation on social media
- Negative media
- Collaboration on distribution of information utilizing social media

Theme: Environmental Threats

The last theme identified was a grouping of environmental threats, such as floods, fires and diseases to agriculture. In 2018, Okanagan Falls suffered a flood event that impacted a residential subdivision and there is always ongoing threat of fire in the community. Also discussed was if something should happen to the environmental health of Skaha Lake. The lake is of paramount importance to the community.

Detailed OFCA Board feedback:

- Flooding, Fires and Disease to Agriculture
- Land slides effecting road closures
- Health of the Lake

APPENDIX C: OBSTACLES TO GROWTH

Community Apathy

The OFCA Board recognized that the community itself has been its own barrier in the past. Residents have taken on community development initiatives before, but these have fizzled out due to volunteer burden and a lack of a coordinated effort. The absence of local leadership and championing has allowed community apathy to set in. As a result, new initiatives and a call for change is sometimes responded to by residents with negativity and a sense of “why bother?”. This plan would be wise to seek actions that accentuate the positive aspects of the community, that build community goodwill and momentum, and that remove opportunities for naysayers to stymie or reject a new initiative.

Infrastructure Upgrades

Identified as a weakness, the water suppression that exists within the Okanagan Falls Irrigation District system will not be an easy fix. The majority of the infrastructure was built to serve a single-family residential suburb, with a maximum of 60 litres per second (l/s) fire flow. An upgrade to allow for multi-family residential and industrial uses will require almost a complete reconstruction of the system. Actions should focus on what can realistically be accomplished by the community and developers to upgrade the water system, which specific areas of the community should be targeted first, and what potential grants may be available to cost-share project costs.

The sewer collection system, like the water infrastructure, was built to a certain capacity. Although the capacity of a large portion of the system was designed to accommodate more than just single family dwellings, there are several key pieces, such as the Main street liftstation, that does not have capacity to add much more sewage generated. This sewer infrastructure along with the collection pipes will need to be replaced in the coming decade as the system ages and capacity needs increase. Similar to the water system, actions should focus on what can be accomplished by the community and by developers for upgrading. Master planning for both the water and sewer systems are a critical step to be taken for future infrastructure replacement.

Regional District Governance System

Regional Districts are great government bodies for working on truly regional issues (such as environmental action, transit, emergency management, and solid waste), and for providing basic rural services to highly independent, agricultural communities. However, for unincorporated sub-urban communities with specific issues (such as local economic concerns), it is difficult for the local concern to be represented strongly at the 19-member Regional Board, and then subsequently transferred into direct action by Regional District staff. As one OFCA Board member put it “It’s not RDOS’s job to champion for OK Falls”.

The process of incorporation, if it is desired by the community, could take years of process, provincial and RDOS review, and will be ultimately be subject to a community petition. For the purpose of this plan, actions in this area should be on engaging with the community upfront, and providing education on potential costs and benefits of incorporation, so that if incorporation is pursued in the future there is clear evidence of community support and the community is more informed prior to making a decision. In the meantime, budget increases to existing RDOS local service areas that tie into the economic development goals of this plan may be easier to pursue, such as park amenity development, infrastructure, downtown revitalization, and enforcement services.

Access to Funding

Currently, federal Gas Tax funding for capital projects is proportioned out to each Electoral Area within the Regional District based on population. Further, within Electoral Area “D”, the Electoral Area Director must

decide how to split that capital amount amongst all the various infrastructure deficiencies throughout the entire Electoral Area, which include a number of unincorporated communities and rural subdivisions. In addition, the Regional District may value regional projects that are of paramount importance for the majority of Electoral Areas and Municipalities for grant funding application and attention (i.e. solid waste). As a result, the amount of grant funding assigned specifically to Okanagan Falls may be reduced. Given this, it is important that actions are developed that recognize the limitations of grant resources for infrastructure projects specific to the community, and that economic development staff target additional grant funding streams that can be specifically applied to Okanagan Falls.

MoTI Road Right-of-Way Jurisdiction

The RDOS, and therefore the community of Okanagan Falls, has limited control on the operation, maintenance and infrastructure replacement of the road network in Okanagan Falls. The provincial Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) has jurisdiction to maintain the local road network throughout all Regional Districts in BC. MoTI is also responsible for the safe operation of all primary highways in the Province, and given its vast geographic area and challenging mountain landscape, these primary highways are in a perpetual state of requiring additional resources. As a result, the lack of attention on local road networks is an issue common for all electoral areas in all regional districts across BC.

Rather than routinely sending complaints to the Ministry directly and indirectly through political channels to no avail, Okanagan Falls may have interest in exploring another avenue to road right-of-way infrastructure improvements, such as seeking maintenance agreements between the RDOS and the Ministry, and paying a local service area charge to upgrade the infrastructure.

