

City of White Rock

Economic Development Strategic Plan: Final Report

May 2009



In association with:

Eric Vance & Associates

Planning & Management Consultants

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of White Rock's recently adopted Official Community Plan (OCP) and Council Goals both emphasize the importance of a strong and diversified local economy, including employment opportunities for residents and support for White Rock businesses. Council approved a recommendation of the City's Economic Committee that an Economic Development Strategic Plan be prepared that sets out specific strategies and actions for strengthening the White Rock economy.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION

This Economic Development Strategic Plan will help achieve the OCP vision and Council Goals by nurturing a strong local economy that contributes to the quality of life for the city's residents, labour force and visitors. This includes supporting the conditions for business success and employment growth, attracting new businesses and investment, achieving a larger and more balanced tax base, and generating more tourism activity. The particular needs of each commercial area of White Rock will be considered, including the Waterfront and Town Centre, and action taken to ensure their vitality. Home-based enterprises will also be supported.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

White Rock's Economic Development Vision will be achieved through private and public investment in economic development initiatives that:

- Support sustainable development that integrates economic, social and environmental interests.
- Provide opportunities for all segments of the community to achieve economic success.
- Encourage strong resident and business participation in the economic development process.
- Ensure cooperation and mutual support with other stakeholders where needed.
- Foster a climate supportive of businesses, including fair government regulations and taxation.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Three strategic objectives have been established in support of the Vision:

1. Establish a structure that will allow the City to effectively and efficiently undertake economic development initiatives.
2. Create a positive business climate in White Rock.
3. Aggressively pursue opportunities to attract new businesses and investment to the city.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

This Economic Development Strategic Plan contains 22 strategies in support of the three strategic objectives. For each strategy, a number of actions are presented, along with the suggested lead responsibility, which is in many, but not all cases, the City itself. Partnerships will be important in implementing some of the strategies and the Strategic Plan provides examples of who some of the partners might be. An implementation plan and performance measuring methods are also included.

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

All the strategies are important, but given the City's many competing demands for financial and other resources, there should be a focus on the strategies and actions that are likely to yield the greatest economic benefits. The four most important strategic priorities for City action are:

STRATEGY 1. ESTABLISH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POSITION AND BUDGET

The first step in creating an economic development structure is for the City of White Rock to re-establish a clearly defined economic development position.

There are many possible ways to do this, ranging from a part-time to a full-time position, from a contracted role to a permanent staff position, and from a position located in City Hall to a position located externally, such as within the offices of one of the local business organizations. Each of these models is in place in communities in British Columbia and there is no single best model, but the most important principle is to establish a clearly designated individual who is responsible for economic development, with a clearly defined mandate (focusing on the implementation of this Strategic Plan), and a dedicated budget.

STRATEGY 9. UNDERTAKE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AND VISIONING PROCESS FOR THE WATERFRONT

The Waterfront is White Rock's best-known feature, yet there is a strong sentiment among local businesses that their operating environment is gradually deteriorating.

A thorough examination of the Waterfront is needed, including a clear and realistic vision for its future from a planning perspective and how it can be achieved. This exercise should address the full range of waterfront issues, including:

- Land uses.
- Densities.
- Consideration of a potentially greater residential component through densification.
- Physical appearance of both public and private areas.
- Types of activities permitted on the boardwalk and pier.
- Parking.
- Linkages between East Beach and West Beach.
- Public transit.
- Expanding the type and number of uses of the water (while recognizing environmental issues).

The residential capacity of the Waterfront area needs particular attention. Most vibrant commercial areas have a significant population base living within walking distance. This issue will become even more important for the Waterfront as White Rock's Town Centre and Semiahmoo Town Centre in Surrey continue to develop as commercial centres, making it harder to draw residents down to the Waterfront on a regular basis for shopping and dining.

STRATEGY 10. PURSUE THE DENSIFICATION OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE TOWN CENTRE

White Rock's Town Centre is intended to serve as the higher density core of the community. Increasing densities is important to economic development for several reasons:

- White Rock has virtually no land available for greenfield development, so significant new job creation requires more intense use of currently developed land.
- Many of the types of "high-value" jobs that may be attracted to White Rock are limited to office-based companies, including professionals, business services, and health services. New office space is therefore required, but will be created in White Rock only through higher-density mixed-use developments.
- Expanding White Rock's population will lead to greater economic development opportunities by expanding the local consumer market and the local labour market, and increased residential densities in Town Centre are an important part of that process.

The City can encourage the densification of the Town Centre by a variety of means, such as:

- Density bonusing in exchange for community amenities, which could include more commercial floorspace.
- Higher densities outright.
- Reduced on-site residential parking requirements given that the Town Centre is a walkable neighbourhood

While a significant amount of work, the recommended Waterfront and Town Centre planning processes should be undertaken concurrently to ensure that the outcomes are fully coordinated.

STRATEGY 18. CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE GROWTH OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY THROUGH THE TOURISM IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The White Rock Tourism Implementation Plan was completed in October 2007 with the assistance of Tourism BC and its Community Tourism Foundations program. The Plan has led to the creation of Tourism White Rock through a funding partnership of the City, White Rock BIA, and White Rock and South Surrey Chamber of Commerce.

The Tourism Implementation Plan addresses marketing initiatives and target markets, visitor servicing, the development of new tourism products, community engagement, and tracking of tourism measures. This Economic Development Strategic Plan does not reproduce strategies in those areas, but there are some important synergies between the two documents. Some of the identified target opportunities under Strategy 14 relate to tourism, including a hotel and conference space, while issues like transportation improvements, growth of arts and culture, and enhancing the year-round viability of Waterfront businesses are closely tied to tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

The City of White Rock's Community Vision, which is set out in its recently updated Official Community Plan (OCP), recognizes that a strong local economy is an important part of the city's livability:

By enhancing its exceptional setting with careful planning, White Rock is a unique and livable beachfront community that has become a leader in balancing its environmental, economic, social and cultural values for a healthy, livable future. Residents have been very involved in ensuring that the city retains its heritage and character as it becomes a more complex community of complementary areas.

While the vibrant waterfront with its mixed uses remains White Rock's soul, the thriving town centre that borders Surrey is its heart, appreciated by residents and visitors for its range of shops, services and great public spaces. Residential neighbourhoods, some of which continue to redevelop, are safe and walkable. They contain a diversity of housing suitable for people of all ages, lifestyles and incomes; quiet, local roads; accessible parks and green spaces as well as a well-connected bike and pedestrian network.

White Rock proves that exceptional natural and cultural resources can be successfully combined to provide the kind of recreational and tourism opportunities that contribute to a high quality of life anyone may enjoy.

The Economic Development Strategic Plan has been created in support of this Community Vision by focusing on how to build a strong local economy

PURPOSE OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

In addition to being part of White Rock's OCP vision, economic development has been identified by City Council as one of its key goals. This includes sustaining and supporting economic diversity, maintaining and attracting a dynamic mix of businesses, establishing baseline data to monitor trends over time, and finalizing both an Economic Development Strategic Plan and Tourism Plan (now completed).

As one of the three core principles of sustainability, having a strong economy is essential to supporting the other principles of environmental and social wellbeing. White Rock has recently enjoyed some success in this regard, as the number of jobs in White Rock grew slightly faster (average of 1.4% per year) from 2001 to 2006 than the number of working residents living in White Rock (1.2% per year). This has improved the number of local job opportunities for White Rock residents, thereby reducing the necessity of commuting and helping to create a more vibrant, complete community.

But much remains to be done as the majority of employed White Rock residents still travel to other municipalities to work (only 21% of employed residents worked in White Rock in 2006). This is partly due to the lack of diversity in the local economy that has been caused by the community's unique location and history of development (e.g., no industrial land).

Some White Rock businesses are also facing challenges, either because they primarily rely on seasonal tourism (especially along Marine Drive) or as a result of competition from the growing amount of commercial development taking place in the Semiahmoo Town Centre area of South Surrey.

Despite these challenges, there remain a variety of possible ways to diversify White Rock's economy within its land and location constraints and in accordance with existing community character and vision.

CONTEXT PROVIDED BY EXISTING CITY POLICIES

An Economic Development Strategic Plan cannot exist in isolation from other City initiatives and policies and it is important to acknowledge and link with other policies and documents whenever possible. This is particularly the case for the OCP, which has been recently updated and includes a variety of economic goals and policies.

CONSULTING TEAM AND CONSULTATION PROCESS

This Economic Development Strategic Plan was developed over a seven-month period from June 2008 to January 2009 by the consulting team of Vann Struth Consulting Group Inc. and Eric Vance & Associates.

The community provided input to the Plan in several ways, including:

- The City's Economic Committee, which oversaw the preparation of the Plan and provided guidance throughout the process.
- Four Focus Group sessions involving local business people and members of the community. These Focus Groups were divided into four subject areas: the Waterfront, Uptown, arts and culture, and office and professional.

Input to the Plan was also provided in a workshop with the City's Senior Management Team, representing all City departments.

A list of participants in the consultation process is contained in Appendix A.

The thoughtful advice and assistance offered by the Economic Committee and others who participated in the process is gratefully acknowledged by the consulting team.

STRUCTURE OF REPORT

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 presents the Economic Development Vision that has been established for the Plan, along with the Principles and Strategic Objectives. It also acknowledges other City goals and policies that have helped shape the Plan.

Chapter 3 presents an overview of the White Rock economy within the context of the Metro Vancouver region..

Chapter 4 contains a competitive assessment of the White Rock economy using a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) approach.

Chapter 5 presents a comprehensive set of strategies and actions to enhance White Rock's competitive position.

Chapter 6 contains the implementation plan and methods for monitoring performance.

2. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION, PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

This Economic Development Strategic Plan has been guided by a number of existing City principles, goals and policies with a relationship to economic development. This chapter presents the Economic Development Vision, Principles and Strategic Objectives for the Plan and summarizes the direction already set by the City through its Council Goals and OCP.

2.1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION AND PRINCIPLES

VISION

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PRINCIPLES

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2. Create a positive business climate in White Rock.
3. Aggressively pursue opportunities to attract new businesses and investment to the city.

These objectives are the framework under which the specific Economic Development Strategies and Actions are organized (see Chapter 5).

2.3. COUNCIL GOALS

Council has established nine goals for 2008 that guide all initiatives of the City, one of which is to “sustain and support economic diversity”, including:

- Finalize the Economic Development Strategic Plan.
- Work in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and BIA to begin implementation of the Tourism Strategy.
- Identify short and long term parking options for the city in consultation with the BIA.

Some other Council goals also have an economic development component, such as “supporting local preparations for the 2010 Winter Olympics” and “creating a community of excellence for health and wellness”.

2.4. OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

COMMUNITY VISION

The Community Vision set out in White Rock’s new OCP was presented in the Introduction to this Plan. This Vision is supported in the OCP by community principles along with an overall goal for economic development from a land use planning perspective, nine specific goals and 19 policies.

COMMUNITY PRINCIPLES

The OCP is founded upon four community principles that provide overall direction for policies within the Plan. Excerpts that are particularly relevant to economic development include:

A COMPLETE COMMUNITY

- Provide for diverse local employment opportunities for its residents.
- Nurture a supportive environment for culture, heritage and the arts.

A COMMUNITY OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

- Work with the business community to support a healthy business climate.
- Adapt to changing circumstances to improve viability of existing businesses and opportunities for new businesses

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Section 6 of White Rock's OCP is devoted to economic development, with an overall goal, nine specific goals and 19 policies.

OVERALL GOAL

To maximize White Rock's economic development potential with a view to strengthening the local economy, creating more local jobs, achieving a more balanced tax base and generating more tourism activity.

SPECIFIC GOALS

Goal 1: To ensure that economic development policy continues to be relevant to the current and short-term reality and vision of White Rock, and is implemented over the short- to medium-term.

Goal 2: To promote the city as a place to move to and reside in over the long-term.

Goal 3: To protect employment lands and promote commercial (office and retail) sector growth as a means of providing local jobs, growing the non-residential tax base and supporting local business.

Goal 4: To achieve a coordinated effort in support of tourism development in White Rock.

Goal 5: To leverage partnerships that will assist business development.

Goal 6: To improve the commercial viability of Marine Drive.

Goal 7: To achieve a greater balance between well established summertime activities and events and off-season/shoulder-season activities to help support local businesses year-round.

Goal 8: To achieve greater land use efficiency, and in turn, maximize economic development opportunities, in the Town Centre.

Goal 9: To capitalize on Metro Vancouver's identity as 'North Hollywood'.

Appendix B contains the 19 policies in support of these nine goals.

3. ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of some of the key statistical trends and issues affecting economic development in White Rock. The data used to generate the graphs can be found in Appendix C.

Prior to the discussion of trends is commentary on how recent events in the global economy affect the context for economic development in White Rock and the content of this Strategic Plan.

IMPACT OF GLOBAL ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

This project was undertaken through the summer and fall of 2008, a time period that included a series of significant events in the global economy. Stock markets experienced some of their largest single-day declines in history, multiple US financial institutions either went bankrupt or were saved by government bailouts, and evidence mounted that the global economy, led by the United States, was entering into a deep recession.

The ultimate impact of these events for the global economy remains unknown. It is possible these issues will manifest in a severe and extended global recession, but it is also possible that a global recession will be relatively short and not so severe, and the world economy will quickly regain its growth trajectory. By any historical standard a recession (defined as consecutive quarters of declining Gross Domestic Product) is overdue, but it's also possible that Canada and/or British Columbia will not go into recession at all.

How do these events affect the White Rock economy and the context for this Strategic Plan? White Rock will not be immune from a downturn in economic conditions and there may be delays in growth and development that would otherwise occur. Some companies regionally, and quite likely locally, will not survive the depressed economic conditions. The number of business failures will likely increase, but business turnover is a regular occurrence even in healthy economic conditions. Eventually there will be a return to growth and new development and the competitive strengths and weaknesses of White Rock relative to other locations in Metro Vancouver are unlikely to have changed.

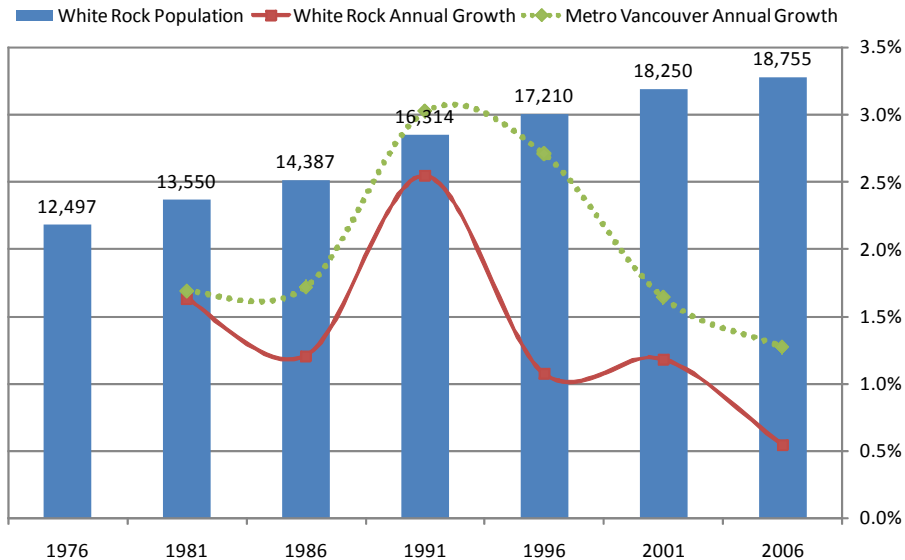
There are also few, if any, local government policy tools that affect macroeconomic conditions. The focus of this Strategic Plan is on creating a favourable local environment for economic development, which will become even more important if the broader economy is troubled and White Rock is competing for a smaller number of growth and development opportunities. The analysis that underlies this Plan encompasses a long-run view and the recommended strategies are anticipated to be valid for multiple years to come.

POPULATION

White Rock has had continuous population growth for decades, albeit at a slower pace than Metro Vancouver. White Rock's population grew by about 0.5% per year from 2001 to 2006, compared to region-wide growth averaging 1.3% per year.

Census Population and Annual Growth Rates, 1976 to 2006

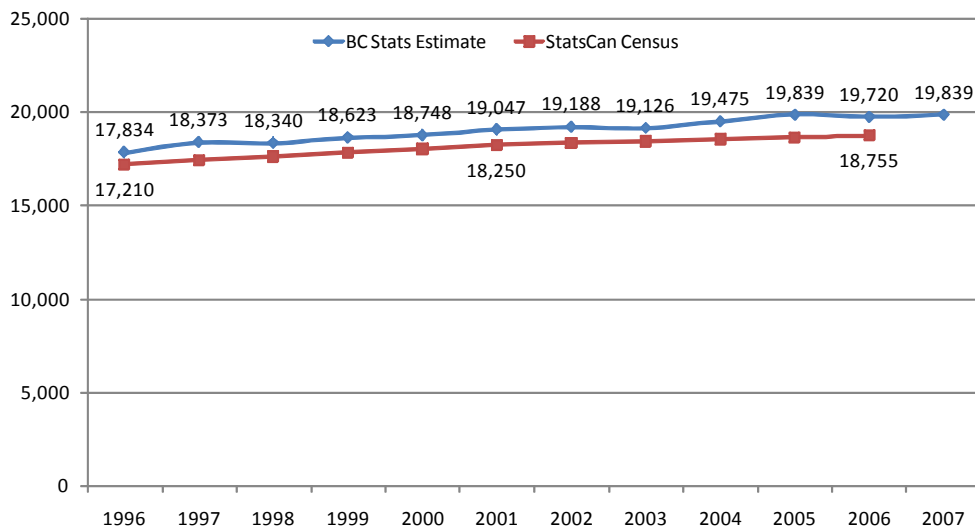
(Source: Statistics Canada)



The slower rate of growth is largely due to White Rock’s limited land base, which requires most population growth to be achieved through redevelopment and densification, whereas some of the fastest-growing parts of the region (e.g., Surrey, Maple Ridge, Langley Township) have room for new residential neighbourhoods and greatly expanded town centre developments.

Comparison of White Rock Census to BC Stats Estimated Population, 1996 to 2007

(Sources: Statistics Canada Census, BC Stats)

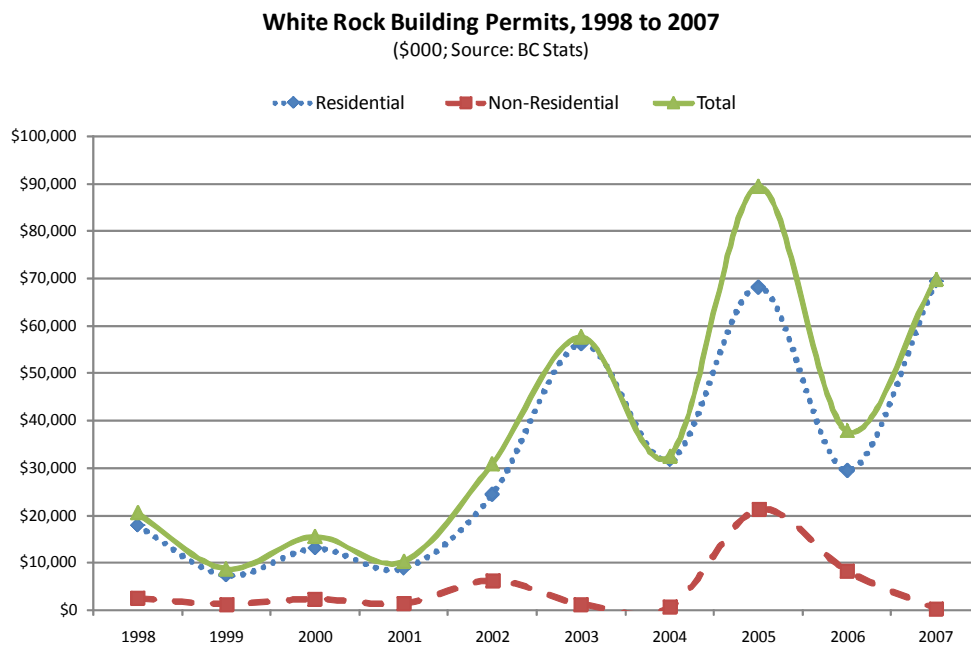


It should be recognized that the Census misses some people. BC Stats prepares annual population estimates for municipalities that attempt to account for this “net Census undercount”, which is typically in the range of 3-5%.

White Rock's true population is therefore likely closer to 20,000 (and may have reached this threshold in 2008) rather than the 18,755 shown in the 2006 Census.

DEVELOPMENT

Like many communities throughout British Columbia, White Rock has had accelerated levels of development activity in recent years. Total building permits were nearly \$70 million in 2007 after peaking at almost \$90 million in 2005.



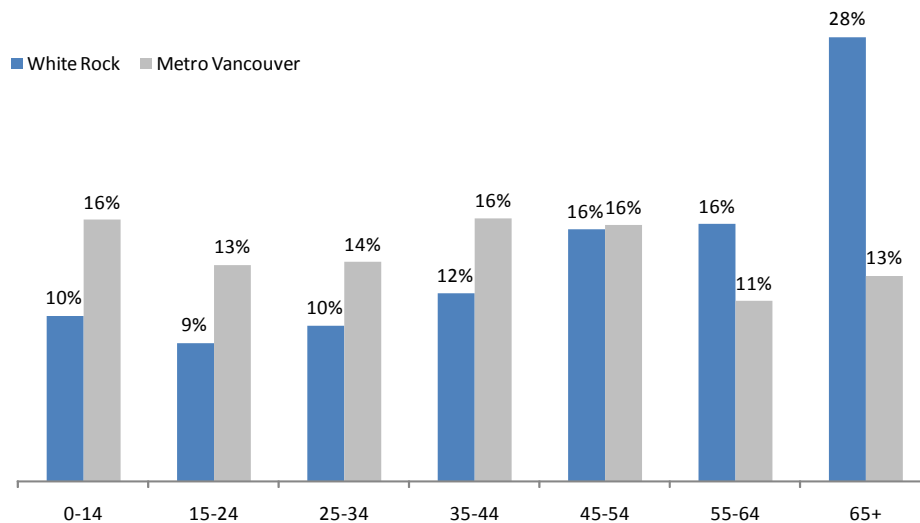
The majority of development in White Rock is residential. Over the 10-year period from 1998 to 2007, residential permits accounted for 88% of total building permit values.

DEMOGRAPHICS

One of White Rock's most distinctive characteristics is the age profile of its residents. The city has more than double the percentage of senior citizens as Metro Vancouver overall and a lower population share in each age category up to age 55.

Population by Age Categories, 2006

(Source: Statistics Canada Census)

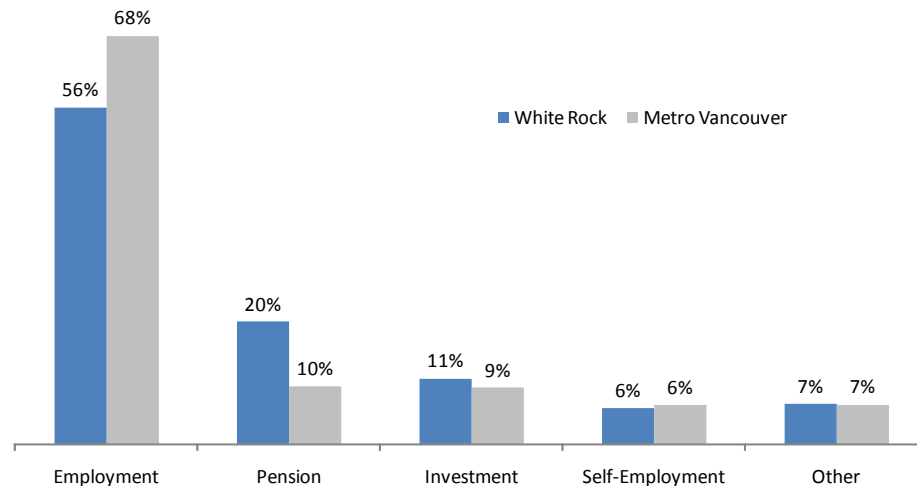


Achieving a more balanced demographic profile by attracting more young families to live in White Rock is one of Council's goals. The current age profile affects the local market for goods and services, but overall does not have significant repercussions for economic development because White Rock is part of an integrated metropolitan region and the majority of local jobs can be (and are) filled by residents of surrounding communities. Neighbouring Surrey has a much younger age profile than White Rock, even though the South Surrey area shares many of White Rock's attributes and has the oldest population profile of the neighbourhoods within Surrey.

INCOME

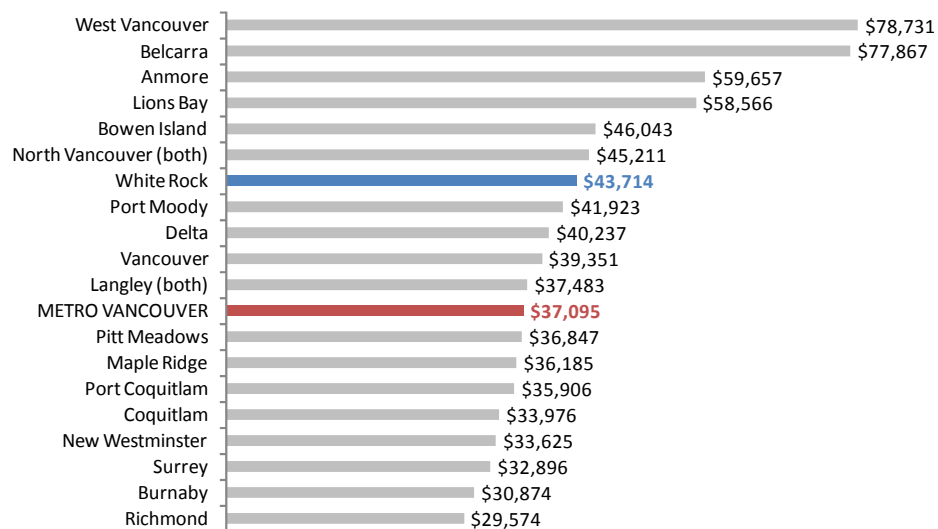
White Rock's demographics influence the sources of income of White Rock residents. Based on income tax returns from 2005 (the most recent year available), White Rock residents receive 20% of their total income from pensions, which is double the region-wide rate, while receiving substantially less income from employment (56% compared to 68% region-wide). The shares of income from other sources are nearly the same as the regional averages.

Taxfiler Income by Source, 2005
(Source: Canada Revenue Agency, compiled by BC Stats)



Average incomes are 18% higher in White Rock than the regional average, but nowhere near the highest-income municipalities of West Vancouver and Belcarra. White Rock does have the distinction of being the highest-income municipality located south of Burrard Inlet.

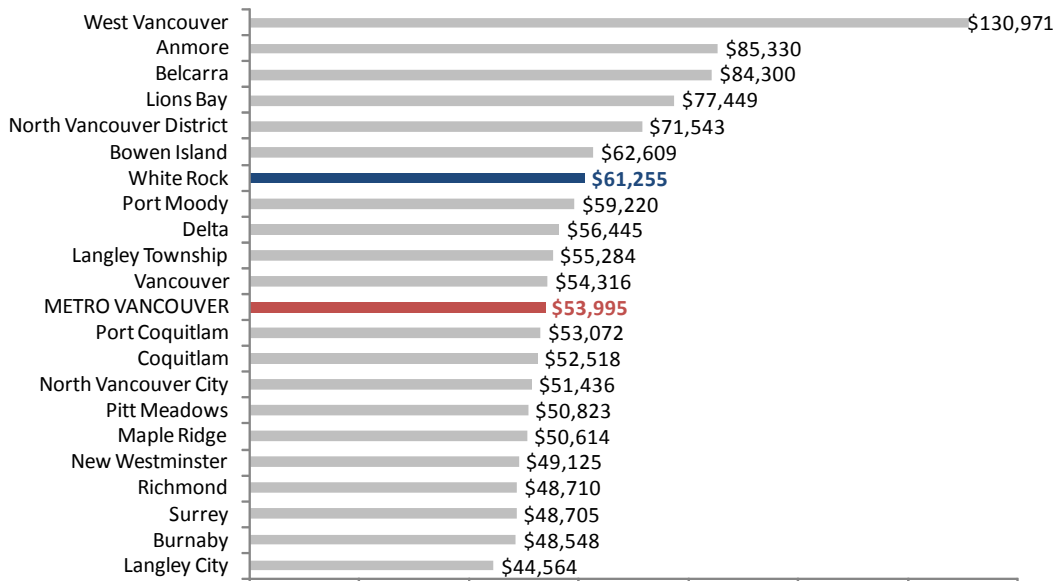
Average Taxfiler Income, 2005
(Source: Canada Revenue Agency, compiled by BC Stats)



Retirees typically have lower annual incomes than the working population, so a separate comparison of average employment income for those working full-time is also shown below.

Average Full-time Employment Income (Place of Residence), 2005

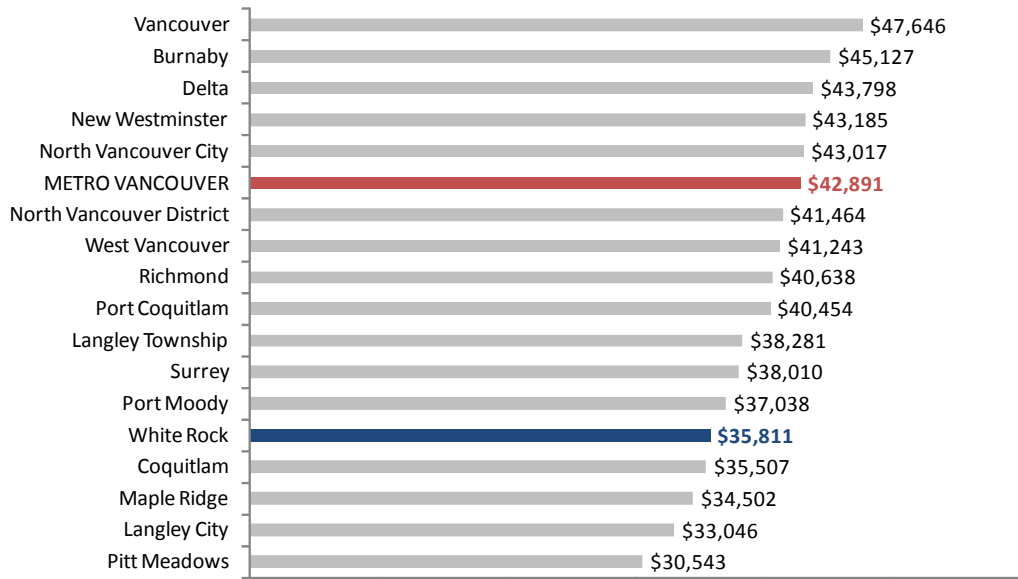
(Source: Statistics Canada Census)



White Rock's relative ranking in employment income is similar to the overall income ranking shown in the previous graph. It has the highest income of all municipalities not located on the North Shore (13% higher than the regional average). Note, however, that these are incomes for White Rock residents, many of whom work elsewhere. The average income of jobs located in White Rock is substantially lower.

Average Employment Income (Place of Work), 2005

(Source: Statistics Canada Census)



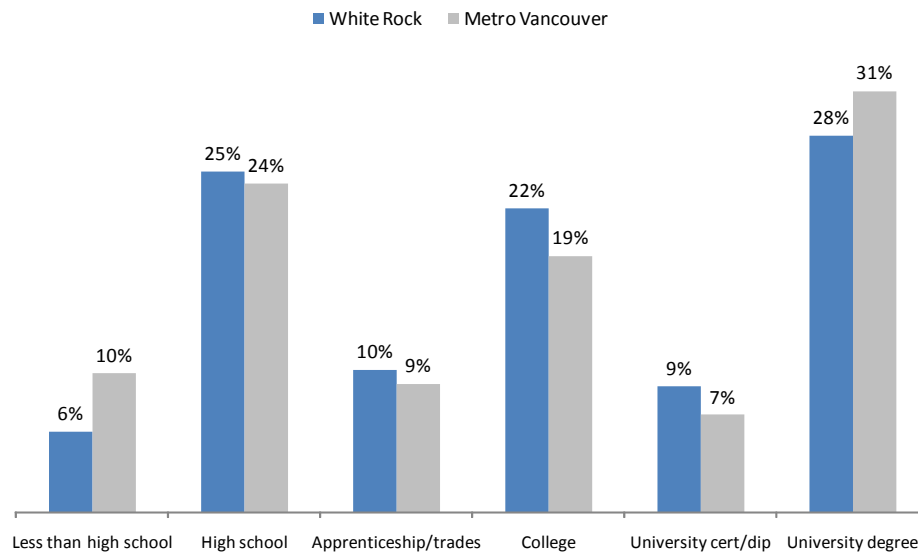
The average income for jobs located in White Rock (including part-time jobs) was about \$35,800 in 2008 - 17% lower than the regional average. Whereas White Rock residents are among the highest earners in the region, and the highest of all municipalities south of Burrard Inlet, the actual jobs located in White Rock are among the lowest-paying in the region, similar to other outer suburban municipalities. The highest-paying jobs, on average, are located in Vancouver and Burnaby.

EDUCATION LEVEL

The educational profile of White Rock residents in the working age years of 25 to 64 is very similar to the regional average. There are somewhat fewer residents with less than a high school educational and slightly fewer with a university degree. There are slightly more residents who have finished college and who achieved a university certificate or diploma.

Educational Attainment for Age 25-64, 2006

(Source: Statistics Canada Census)

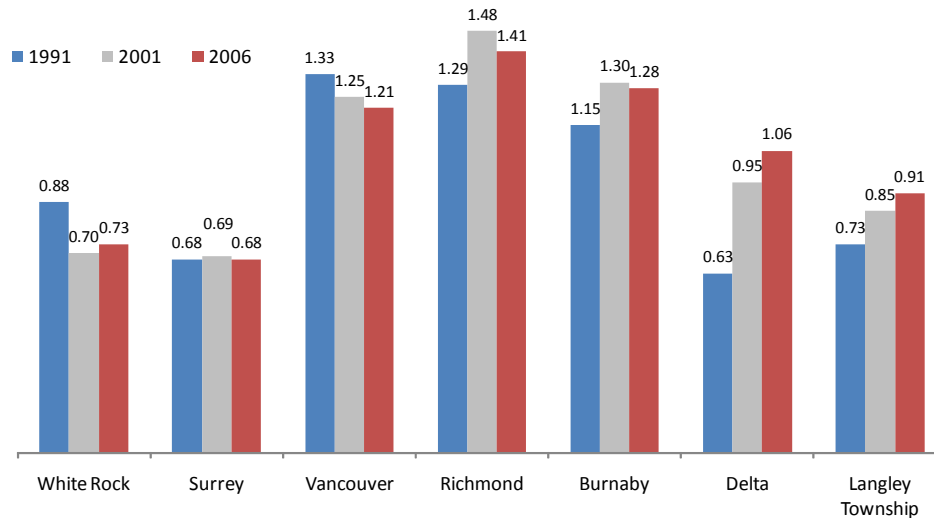


JOBS AND LABOUR FORCE BALANCE

White Rock is similar to most municipalities in Metro Vancouver by having an imbalance between the number of jobs located in White Rock and the number of White Rock residents who work. The urban core municipalities of Vancouver, Burnaby and Richmond are net importers of workers from other parts of the region, whereas nearly all of the outer suburban municipalities are net exporters of workers.

Jobs to Working Residents Ratio, 1991 - 2006

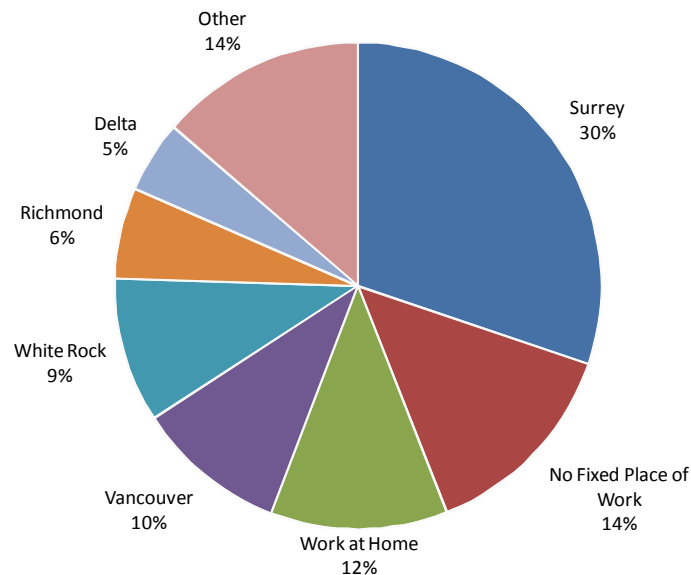
(Source: Statistics Canada Census, GVRD;
Note: Includes allocation of jobs with no fixed place of work)



The ratio of jobs to resident workers in White Rock was relatively consistent from 2001 to 2006. Most municipalities strive to achieve a balance between jobs and working residents, helping to create a “complete community”.

Place of Work of White Rock Residents, 2006

(Source: Statistics Canada; based on 9,245 employed residents)

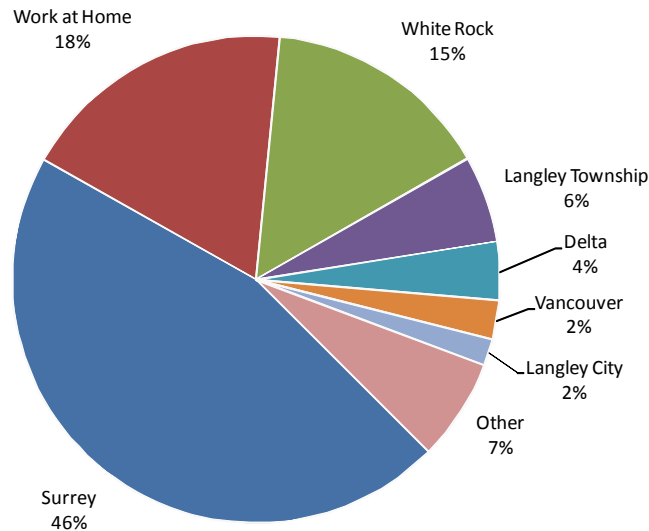


Even though there are enough jobs in White Rock for more than 70% of the community’s resident workers, the actual patterns of commuting far exceed those levels. Only 21% of White Rock’s working residents were employed in White Rock in 2006, with a higher number commuting to jobs in Surrey (30%) and others going to Vancouver

(10%) and Richmond (6%). A further 14% of employed residents have no fixed place of work, which is typical for jobs in industries like construction.

Place of Residence of White Rock Workers, 2006

(Source: Statistics Canada; based on 5,900 jobs in White Rock)



The opposite side of this equation is commuting to jobs located in White Rock. Of the 5,900 jobs physically located in White Rock in 2006, one-third are held by White Rock residents, including 18% based at home. Nearly half of White Rock-based jobs are held by residents of Surrey.

EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR

The 5,900 jobs in White Rock as of the 2006 Census are shown in Table 1. The health care and social assistance sector is easily the largest employer in the city due to the presence of Peace Arch Hospital. It is also White Rock's most prominent sector on a relative basis, as shown by its "job concentration" being 223% higher than Metro Vancouver's. This means that health care and social assistance jobs are more than three times as plentiful in White Rock as they are in Metro Vancouver overall.

Other sectors that are relatively more prominent in White Rock (shown in bold) include accommodation and food services, construction, and real estate and rental and leasing. Sectors that are relatively less prevalent in White Rock are shown in italics and include retail and wholesale trade, education, manufacturing, information and cultural industries (which includes industries like newspapers, movie and sound studios, broadcasters, and telecommunications), arts/entertainment/recreation, transportation and warehousing, and the primary industries of agriculture, forestry, fishing and mining. These relative strengths and weaknesses are not all that surprising given White Rock's size, geography, and development history. It is also notable that many of the typical "office-based" sectors like professional services and finance and insurance are close to the regional average in their relative concentration in White Rock. And despite the prominence of retail trade and the arts in White Rock's identity, these sectors are still smaller employers relative to the regional average.

One of Council's goals is to "sustain and support economic diversity", which is an important goal given the relative lack of diversification of the White Rock economy compared to Metro Vancouver. White Rock jobs are clustered in a relatively small number of sectors, which is again due at least in part to geography and lack of industrial land.

The other notable feature of this table is the 2nd column, which shows the relative pay level of each sector (based on average incomes across Metro Vancouver). The sectors were divided into three tiers (high, mid, and low pay), and total employment by each category is summarized in the final three rows. Overall, White Rock jobs have a relatively similar earnings profile to the regional average, with relatively fewer jobs in the high-paying and low-paying sectors, but relatively more jobs in the mid-paying sectors (again driven largely by the mid-level pay of the health care and social assistance sector). Contrast this finding with the earlier observation that White Rock residents earn incomes significantly above the regional average, suggesting that working residents do not have comparable quality job opportunities in their home community.

Table 1. White Rock Employment by Sector, 2006

Sector	Pay Level	Jobs	Job Concentration (relative to Metro Vancouver)
Health care and social assistance	Mid	1,920	223% higher
Accommodation and food services	Low	705	43% higher
<i>Retail trade</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>530</i>	<i>23% lower</i>
Professional, scientific and technical services	High	490	15% lower
Finance and insurance	High	345	8% higher
Other services (except public administration)	Low	270	13% lower
Construction	Mid	250	32% higher
Real estate and rental and leasing	Mid	220	39% higher
Public administration	Mid	220	12% lower
<i>Educational services</i>	<i>Mid</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>56% lower</i>
<i>Wholesale trade</i>	<i>Mid</i>	<i>190</i>	<i>44% lower</i>
<i>Manufacturing</i>	<i>Mid</i>	<i>160</i>	<i>71% lower</i>
<i>Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>150</i>	<i>30% lower</i>
<i>Arts, entertainment and recreation</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>22% lower</i>
<i>Information and cultural industries</i>	<i>Mid</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>66% lower</i>
<i>Transportation and warehousing</i>	<i>Mid</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>92% lower</i>
Management of companies and enterprises	High	20	69% higher
<i>Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>84% lower</i>
<i>Mining and oil and gas extraction</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>53% lower</i>
<i>Utilities</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>68% lower</i>
Total		5,900	
Tourism ¹ (estimate)	Low	325	9% lower
<i>High Technology</i> ² (estimate)	<i>High</i>	<i>156</i>	<i>62% lower</i>
Low-paying Sectors		1,770	7% lower
Mid-paying Sectors		3,255	7% higher
High-paying Sectors		875	9% lower

Note: Sectors shown in bold are at least 25% more concentrated in White Rock relative to Metro Vancouver; sectors shown in italics are at least 20% less concentrated.

Sources: Statistics Canada Census, Vann Struth Consulting Group calculations

¹ Tourism employment estimates are based on a BC Stats formula for estimating tourism employment and gross domestic product (GDP) at the provincial level. The formula estimates the amount of employment in each industry that is reliant on tourist spending (e.g., 95.0% of employment in the Traveller Accommodation industry is attributed to tourists, 22.5% of employment in Full-service Restaurants, etc.).

² High technology employment estimates are based on a BC Stats formula for estimating various high technology statistics. It includes industries that produce goods or services with significant technology content or that make extensive use of technology in producing other goods and services.

Table 2 shows employment growth in White Rock from 2001 to 2006. The number of jobs in White Rock grew by 7%, slightly less than the regional growth rate of 8%. The fastest-growing sectors (with more than 100 jobs) were real estate and rental and leasing, public administration, construction, and professional services. Some of the growth rates for these sectors are extremely high due to the low starting point, but regardless each grew much faster in White Rock than in Metro Vancouver overall.

Some of the prominent sectors that grew more slowly than the regional average were accommodation and food services, retail trade, and arts/entertainment/recreation.

Table 2. White Rock Employment Growth by Sector, 2001 to 2006

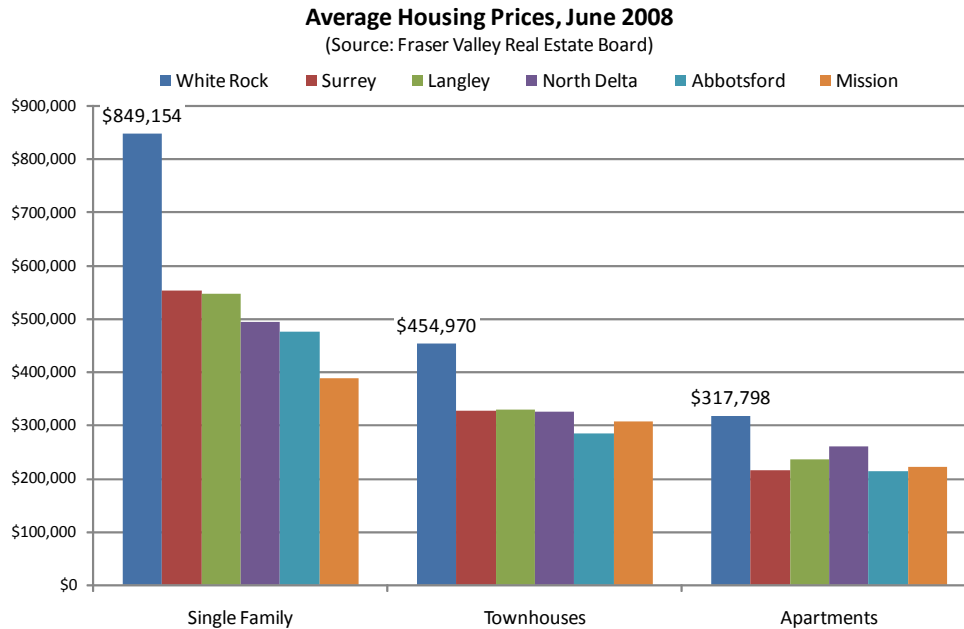
Sector	2001 Jobs	2006 Jobs	01-06 Job Growth		Metro Vancouver Job Growth
			#	%	
Management of companies and enterprises	10	20	10	100%	138%
Real estate and rental and leasing	115	220	105	91%	18%
Public administration	125	220	95	76%	1%
Construction	165	250	85	52%	32%
Professional, scientific and technical services	345	490	145	42%	18%
Wholesale trade	150	190	40	27%	11%
Educational services	165	200	35	21%	12%
Health care and social assistance	1,740	1,920	180	10%	7%
Manufacturing	150	160	10	7%	0%
Accommodation and food services	690	705	15	2%	12%
Mining and oil and gas extraction	10	10	0	0%	97%
Finance and insurance	355	345	-10	-3%	3%
Retail trade	590	530	-60	-10%	6%
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	170	150	-20	-12%	17%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	140	105	-35	-25%	18%
Other services (except public administration)	380	270	-110	-29%	13%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	15	10	-5	-33%	0%
Utilities	15	10	-5	-33%	-12%
Information and cultural industries	110	70	-40	-36%	-7%
Transportation and warehousing	65	25	-40	-62%	-4%
Total	5,495	5,900	405	7%	8%
Tourism (estimate)	341	325	-16	-5%	0%
High Technology (estimate)	161	156	-5	-3%	6%

Note: Sectors shown in bold are at least 25% more concentrated in White Rock relative to Metro Vancouver; sectors shown in italics are at least 20% less concentrated.

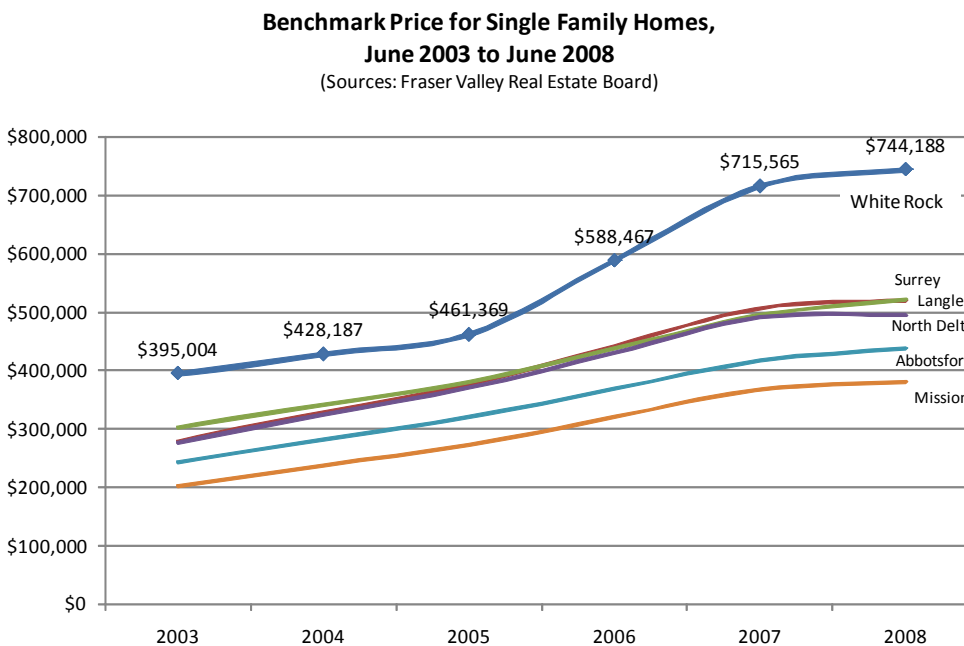
Sources: Statistics Canada Census, Vann Struth Consulting Group calculations

HOUSING PRICES

White Rock has the highest housing prices among the communities covered by the Fraser Valley Real Estate Board.



The average price in White Rock for single family homes, townhouses and apartments all stand well above the cluster of more similar prices in the other Fraser Valley communities.



White Rock housing prices have consistently been the highest in the Fraser Valley, and the gap between White Rock and the other communities has increased over the last five years.

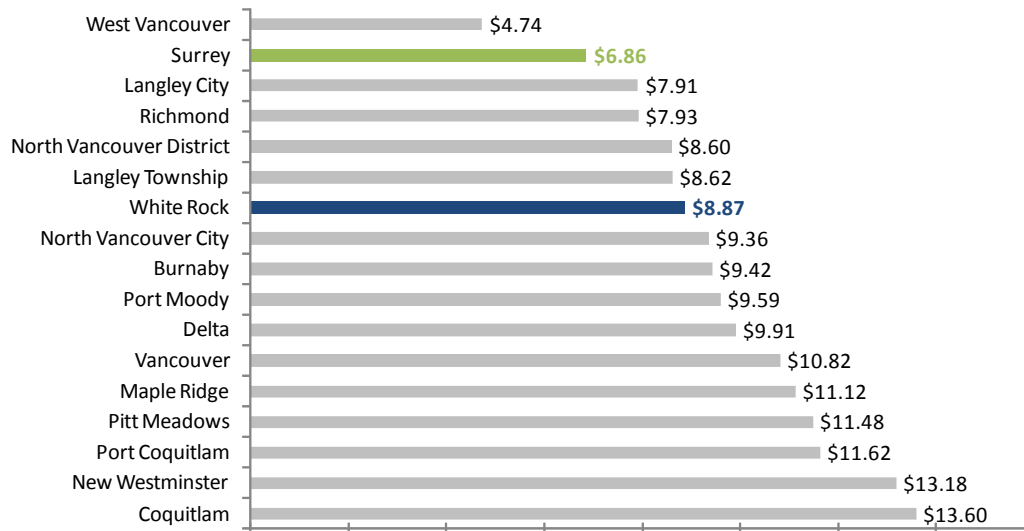
PROPERTY TAXES

Part of maintaining a welcoming and attractive business climate is ensuring that business costs, including municipal taxes, fees and charges, are competitive with other locations within Metro Vancouver. It is difficult to make “apples-to-apples” comparisons of business property taxes and fees because each municipality provides a different range and quality of public services and pays for these services through a unique combination of taxes and fees. Whereas one municipality might provide a service on a user-fee basis, another will fund it from general property tax revenues.

The assessment-based system of property taxation also makes comparisons difficult because assessed property values can vary significantly from place to place within the region (and within municipalities) so a comparison of property tax rates is often not a true comparison of actual property taxes paid for a given type of property. Municipalities with very high property assessments can charge much lower property tax rates and still raise the same amount of revenue as municipalities with lower property assessments that charge higher property tax rates.

Business Property Tax Rates per \$1000 assessed value (municipal portion only), 2008

(Source: Ministry of Community Services)



It is important, however, for the City of White Rock to ensure that its property tax rates are similar to those in the City of Surrey. The reason is that the White Rock/South Surrey area functions as a single market, meaning that assessed values should be similar and therefore differences in property tax rates are likely to reflect real differences in property taxes paid. The comparison is still not perfect as there remain differences in the level of services provided by each municipality and the combination of taxes and fees used to fund services, but tax rates

in White Rock cannot be too much higher without indicating a genuine cost disadvantage relative to Surrey. This issue is addressed in Strategy 7.

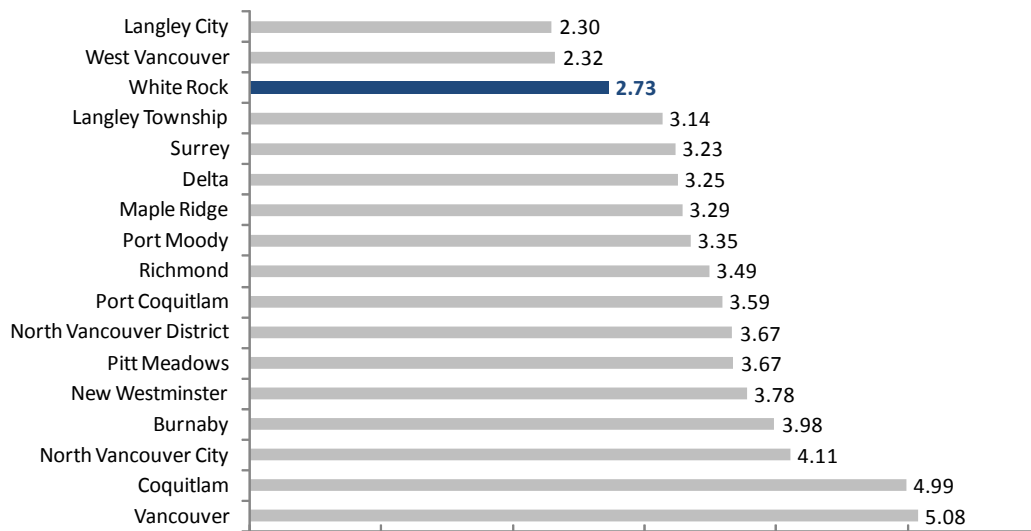
Another way to evaluate business property taxes is to show them relative to residential rates. All municipalities in Metro Vancouver charge higher property tax rates to businesses, but the ratio of business to residential rates varies significantly across municipalities.

This issue has been prominent both regionally (especially in the City of Vancouver) and provincially in the last several years as the business community has objected to what it views as its unequal share of the property tax burden, especially since residences usually cost more to service than businesses.

White Rock compares quite favourably to other Metro Vancouver municipalities on this measure, as its ratio of business to residential property taxes is among the lowest in the region.

Ratio of Business to Residential Property Tax Rates (municipal portion), 2008

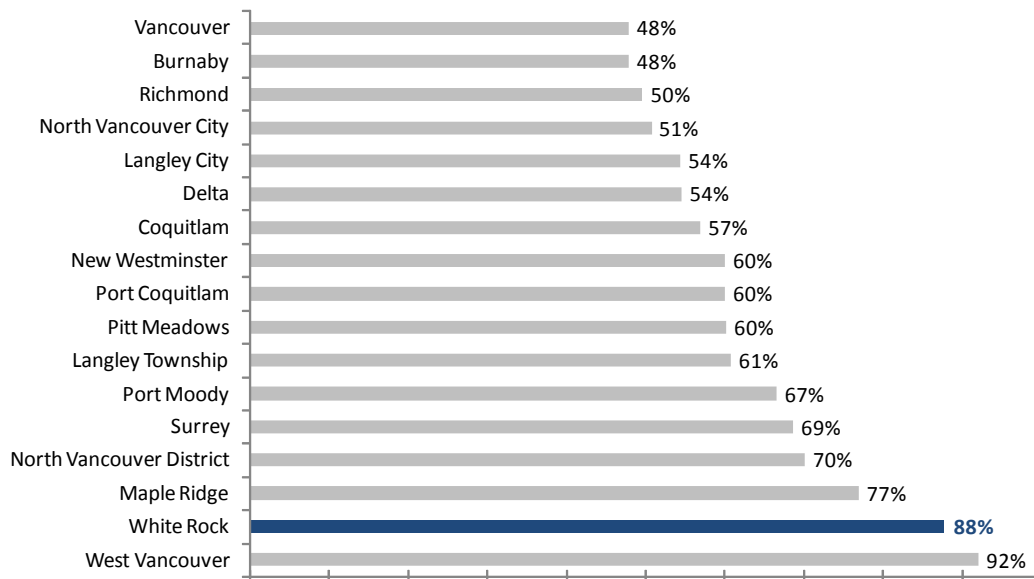
(Source: Ministry of Community Services)



The final graph below shows the extent to which the City of White Rock relies on the residential class as a source of property tax revenue, with 88% of revenue drawn from residential taxpayers. This is one of the highest rates in the region. One of the implicit goals of this Economic Development Strategic Plan is to support the conditions for growth in the non-residential portion of the property tax base.

Residential Share of Municipal Property Taxes, 2008

(Source: Ministry of Community Services)



4. COMPETITIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE WHITE ROCK ECONOMY

This analysis of White Rock's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) has been compiled from a variety of sources, including:

- Consultation with the City's Economic Committee.
- Consultation with the business community through the four Focus Groups.
- Previous studies completed for the City.
- Results of the consultants' analysis of the White Rock economy and its relative position within Metro Vancouver.

The order in which specific points are made below does not imply importance or priority in the Plan. These are established as part of the Strategies and Actions (Chapter 5) and Implementation (Chapter 6).

STRENGTHS

- Close proximity to the U.S. border.
- Close proximity to large neighbouring residential markets in South Surrey and the broader South Fraser region.
- Well-known waterfront area, including the beach, pier, and restaurants.
- Eclectic mix of small businesses.
- Excellent quality of life (mild climate, good air quality, proximity to ocean/mountains, community parks, sports fields, waterfront, etc.).
- Well-established "working-at-home" sector.
- Higher-income population.
- Recent creation of Tourism Board and implementation of Tourism Strategy.
- Active and supportive business organizations, including White Rock Business Improvement Association and White Rock and South Surrey Chamber of Commerce.
- Multiple major tourism and community events.
- Diverse skills in the resident labour force with education levels similar to the regional average.
- Diverse housing choices.
- Strong health care sector (predominantly Peace Arch Hospital).
- City implementation of BizPal.
- Up-to-date OCP.
- Competitive municipal property taxes and fees.

WEAKNESSES

- Virtually no undeveloped land.
- No industrial land.
- Deteriorating reputation of waterfront area due to parking challenges (including cost and perceived high probability of being ticketed) and lower level of maintenance of waterfront areas relative to the past (especially East Beach).
- Pay parking on Waterfront relative to free parking in South Surrey commercial areas.
- Opposition to growth and change from some members of the community.
- Relatively small resident population to support local businesses.

- Lack of diversity in local employment and business opportunities (employment heavily concentrated in health care and food services).
- Imbalance between the number and quality of jobs in White Rock with the number and skill level of working White Rock residents, forcing many to commute to other municipalities for work.
- Limited public transit options.
- Highest housing prices in South Fraser region, contributing to a lack of affordable housing.
- Unbalanced property tax base, with 88% of taxes derived from residential sources.
- Business property tax rates higher than competing locations in Surrey.
- Significantly lower labour force participation, caused in large part by older population profile.
- No public post-secondary education institution in the community, or in nearby South Surrey.
- Cyclical nature of business activity due to high reliance on summer tourists and weather.
- No City staff member devoted full-time to economic development.
- Lack of connectivity between waterfront commercial areas and Uptown.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Retail, commercial services, and business/professional services, driven by growing population and economic development in South Fraser region.
- Continued growth in home-based businesses.
- Health sector expansion (e.g., Centre for Wellness, growth at Peace Arch Hospital and for related services and suppliers).
- Development of complementary shops and services to redevelopment at Semiahmoo Mall in South Surrey (which will attract more shoppers to the area and includes substantial residential development that will increase the population on White Rock's border).
- Development of new tourism attractions and initiatives.
- Expanded arts and culture sector, both as an economic activity and to enhance quality of life for residents, tourists, and businesses.
- Post-secondary education facilities, both public and private.
- Services and shopping catering to White Rock's large retiree population.
- Expansion of existing small knowledge-based companies.
- Development of moorage space to attract water-based traffic.
- Accommodation properties.
- Railway service for tourists connecting White Rock to downtown Vancouver.

THREATS

- Competition from growing commercial centre in South Surrey, including possible redevelopment of Semiahmoo Mall.
- Loss of unique identity as development in South Surrey continues to increase.
- Economic uncertainty, increased difficulty crossing the border, and other factors that are reducing visitation by American tourists.
- Economic downturn in the Metro Vancouver region (initially anticipated post-2010, but already occurring).
- Slow down in real estate development and business investment.

SUMMARY

The rapid growth occurring in the South Fraser region is creating both opportunities and challenges for White Rock from an economic development perspective. The increasing population base is providing opportunities for existing White Rock businesses, but is also attracting highly competitive new businesses, including well branded chain stores. Many of these new businesses are locating in South Surrey rather than White Rock, where there is a larger and more central supply of readily developable land. There are some spill-over economic benefits to White Rock, but there could be more.

Both of the City's major commercial districts – Waterfront and Town Centre – require attention to enhance their overall competitiveness.

The Waterfront in particular has challenges, as is evident from the number of vacant and under-utilized commercial spaces, especially at East Beach. Some businesses are thriving, but others are not, especially those that rely mainly on the tourism market, which is both seasonal and currently in a slump due to the general state of the economy and fewer US visitors. Year-round pay parking is perceived by some Waterfront business to be a significant barrier to attracting more customers (an issue that the City is now addressing, an example being a recent Council decision to allow free parking Monday to Thursday from November 1 to February 28, 2009 to measure the direct effect on businesses). Some Waterfront buildings and businesses have a run-down appearance and there is a general sense that the Waterfront is in gradual decline or at best in a holding pattern as a vibrant commercial area.

The Town Centre benefits from closer proximity to South Surrey and is the focus of most new commercial and mixed-use development in White Rock. But, even here, there are areas that need attention, with many smaller independent businesses facing more competition from just a few blocks to the north in Semiahmoo Town Centre. Some existing Town Centre businesses will continue to do well by serving niche markets seeking unique products and superior service, but others will gradually disappear due to heavier competition and will be replaced by different types of businesses that can better compete with the larger players. Redevelopment pressure will mount in the Town Centre as this business evolution takes place. Further examination is needed of how and where redevelopment should occur in Town Centre and its most appropriate form since this will affect economic development.

Comprehensive plans are needed for both the Waterfront and Town Centre commercial areas that go beyond what is presently in the OCP, dealing with not only the fundamentals of land use and density but all aspects of urban design - both building and streetscape. These plans should include careful consideration of the amount of new residential development that White Rock should encourage in and around Town Centre and on the Waterfront. With a currently projected average annual population growth rate of just 1% (190 new residents) over the next 25 years, those White Rock businesses that are primarily population-serving have to rely mainly on the South Surrey market for growth, which is much the same market that the Semiahmoo Town Centre and other South Surrey commercial developments are targeting. As the new OCP acknowledges, "As development occurs over time, the capacity of White Rock to absorb the potential population will have to be reviewed."

There also needs to be greater focus on better connecting the Waterfront and Town Centre districts through improved public transit service.

The economic development opportunities for White Rock can be categorized as falling into three broad categories:

- Lifestyle, capitalizing on the moderate climate, waterfront, health and wellness, recreation, arts and culture, and housing choice. Lifestyle not only attracts more residents but the types of businesses that support it.
- Tourism, with a strong focus on the local Metro Vancouver market. While White Rock's waterfront is a major attraction, there are a growing number of other attractions in the region that compete. Simply being there is no longer enough and aggressive tourism marketing is needed.
- Smaller niche businesses that can serve local markets in a different way, including offering a high level of personal service and specialized products, than the larger format, national brand retailers, food and beverage establishments and service providers can do.

The following chapter sets out the strategies and actions needed to pursue the opportunities and put White Rock in a stronger competitive position to secure them.

5. STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

This chapter presents the specific strategies and actions that comprise the White Rock Economic Development Strategic Plan.

The strategies are organized under the three economic development strategic objectives outlined in Section 2.2. There is a discussion of the rationale and purpose of each strategy, along with the identification of specific actions, the City department with lead responsibility for implementation, suggested partner organizations, and recommended priority and timing. Where possible, the discussion of each strategy also makes reference to one or more of the Council goals (see Section 2.3).

The list of suggested partners for each strategy are examples and may ultimately include other partners not listed or may not include some of the listed organizations. Similarly the recommended priority and timing are not ironclad – it is recognized that the economy is continually evolving and new priorities may emerge while current high priorities become less important over time. It is anticipated that the recommended City economic development officer (see Strategy 1) will prepare annual work plans that reflect available resources and the highest priorities for each year.

The priorities are currently identified as High Priority, Medium Priority or Lower Priority. It must be emphasized that all strategies are important – otherwise, they would not appear in this Strategic Plan. Yet the City has limited resources and should place greatest focus on the strategies that are expected to yield the greatest benefit.

Suggested timing is also included as Short-term, Longer-term, or Ongoing. In general the higher-priority strategies are recommended for action in the short-term, but in some cases there are external factors affecting timing, such as the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. Some initiatives are one-off projects, while those that should be maintained indefinitely are identified as “Ongoing” strategies.

The priority and timing of each strategy is summarized in Chapter 6 on Implementation and Performance Monitoring.

5.1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURE

The first strategic objective in this Plan is:

1. Establish a structure that will allow the City to effectively and efficiently undertake economic development initiatives.

This objective is listed first not because it is most important, but because an effective structure must be in place to implement the remainder of the Strategic Plan. The five strategies under this objective therefore recommend ways for the City of White Rock to put a structure in place, both through internal staffing and City-led initiatives, as well as through partnerships with other organizations, to effectively pursue economic development success.

Strategy 1. Establish economic development position and budget.

The first step in creating an economic development structure is for the City of White Rock to re-establish a clearly defined economic development position.

There are many possible ways to do this, ranging from a part-time to a full-time position, from a contracted role to a permanent staff position, and from a position located in City Hall to a position located externally, such as within the offices of one of the local business organizations. Each of these models is in place in communities in British Columbia and there is no single best model, but the most important principle is to establish a clearly designated individual who is responsible for economic development, with a clearly defined mandate (focusing on the implementation of this Strategic Plan), and a dedicated budget.

The duties and responsibilities of this position will include:

- Liaison with the Economic Committee.
- Implementation of this Plan through the development of annual work plans and annual performance monitoring reports (see Chapter 6).
- Fostering economic development partnerships with local organizations, other Metro Vancouver municipalities, and senior levels of government.
- Bringing an economic development perspective to City policies and decisions.

The exact characteristics of the economic development position will be determined by senior City staff and Council taking into consideration the many competing demands for the City's limited financial and human resources. Some background material on economic development budgets and factors to consider in defining the economic development function can be found in Appendix D, starting on page 62.

Actions

- Re-establish a clearly defined economic development position and budget, based on the resources required to implement this Plan and taking into consideration the City's available resources and partnership opportunities.

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ City Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local business organizations (Chamber and/or BIA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High Priority, Short-term

Strategy 2. Establish and operate a business retention and expansion program.

The majority of job growth, particularly in communities like White Rock with limited room for new development, is generated by the growth and expansion of established companies. It is therefore important to ensure that issues affecting White Rock's competitiveness as a business location are identified and addressed on an ongoing basis.

A business retention and expansion (BRE) program is designed to fit this purpose. The typical BRE program is based on a regular schedule of in-depth interviews with business owners and operators, with the purpose of continually monitoring business conditions, identifying problem areas, providing advance notice of companies in distress or companies looking to expand, and allowing for meaningful reporting of local economic conditions on an annual (or as-required) basis. Aggregating company responses across a variety of industries and company sizes provides insight into common competitive issues and important trends in the local economy, and generally allows local economic development officials to better assist the retention and growth of their established companies. It also raises the profile of the economic development function within the business community and significantly enhances the real and perceived responsiveness of local government to economic development issues.

For example, companies in different industries may be having difficulty attracting and retaining a certain type of skilled worker, so the economic development office can work with post-secondary educational institutions in the area to develop a new training program. Or companies that are consistently lacking some type of support service may highlight the presence of a business opportunity in the local area that could be promoted by the economic development office to attempt to attract such a service provider to the community.

Many BC communities have adopted BRE programs in recent years. The most challenging aspect of the program is the time commitment, which is considerable. Typically interviews are quite in-depth and last for at least one hour, with additional time required for organizing the program, arranging interviews, conducting “pre-research” on the target companies, recording the results, acting upon the results, and reporting. Some of the larger municipalities in the province have sufficient internal resources to manage the program independently (e.g., the City of Surrey recently hired a staff person in the Economic Development Office to focus almost exclusively on its BRE program) while others engage community organizations in a partnership to operate the program. The latter approach is recommended for White Rock given the relatively limited City resources that are expected to be available for economic development and the presence of strong business organizations in the city to act as possible partners.

Most BC municipalities with BRE programs also use a BRE software program called *Synchronist*. It includes pre-designed BRE interview questions and various diagnostic tools for analyzing and reporting the results. It is not the only BRE software program available, but is recommended based on the experience of other BC communities and the fact that the Province of BC has purchased a master license that would allow White Rock to access the program for an up-front cost of about \$2,800 plus a \$600 annual fee for upgrades, maintenance, and technical support.

The City of Nanaimo has taken its BRE program a step further by creating a “response team” of City staff and business leaders who are responsible for acting upon issues raised through the BRE interview process. The team members have expertise in specific business topics such as finance, real estate, human resources and technology and are asked to volunteer their time to help address issues as they are raised. The City of Nanaimo calls its program “BusinessBEST” and the Response Team terms of reference are provided for information as Appendix E (starting on page 69).

Actions

- Initiate discussions with local business organizations to assess willingness to develop a business retention and expansion program on a joint basis.
- Consult with other communities (e.g., Surrey, Nanaimo, Chilliwack, Mission, Central Okanagan Regional

District) to benefit from their experience in developing and operating a BRE program.

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local business organizations (Chamber and/or BIA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium Priority, Ongoing

Strategy 3. Participate in regional economic development initiatives where appropriate.

Metro Vancouver Commerce (MVC) is a partnership of municipalities in Metro Vancouver that have agreed through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to collaborate on economic development activities. As of November 2008, the partnership includes Surrey, Richmond, New Westminster, Burnaby, Vancouver and both the City and District of North Vancouver.

Some of MVC’s activities revolve around common-sense information-sharing, while others are focused on specific international marketing opportunities, many of which are currently oriented toward the Olympic Games. There is no up-front cost to participate in MVC – rather, each municipality has the discretion to choose in which projects and initiatives it will participate. Some are more local in scope, such as a proposed Mobile Business License pilot project, and others are broader, such as pursuing international opportunities.

The MVC partners recognize that successful marketing and investment attraction at the international level is best undertaken under a common “Metro Vancouver” brand. It is likely, however, that at least some types of investment pursued by MVC will not be appropriate for White Rock (given its unique characteristics, including small geographic area, location and lack of industrial land). Other opportunities, such as leveraging the Olympic Games for tourism promotion, could have significant potential benefits for White Rock.

Actions

- Initiate discussions with the member municipalities in Metro Vancouver Commerce to identify possible initiatives that are consistent with White Rock’s economic development opportunities and objectives.
- Participate in other regional economic development activities, such as Metro Vancouver’s Regional Economic Development Subcommittee (REDS).

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metro Vancouver municipalities Relevant Provincial and Federal government agencies and departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower Priority, Ongoing

Strategy 4. Pursue economic development opportunities in partnership with neighbouring local governments.

There may be economic development opportunities for White Rock that are not focused strictly within the city boundaries. Many visitors to the Semiahmoo Peninsula are unaware of where Surrey ends and White Rock begins,

while the Semiahmoo First Nation is a close neighbour along the waterfront to the east. Blaine, Washington is also nearby, abutting the Canadian border at the Peace Arch border crossing.

The City of White Rock and its local government neighbours have collaborated on many projects in the past and will continue to do so. From an economic development perspective it is important to maintain regular channels of communication so that issues of mutual interest are identified and partnership opportunities explored. For example:

- White Rock and Blaine have previously held discussions regarding the establishment of an Amtrak stop in White Rock (for the Vancouver-Seattle train).
- White Rock and Surrey have much in common and may benefit from a collaborative effort on a range of issues, such as improved public transit service to the Peninsula.
- Development on Semiahmoo land on the waterfront, such as a resort or tourist attraction, could also benefit White Rock by drawing additional traffic to the area in close proximity to East Beach.

Note also that only White Rock’s closest neighbours are identified in this strategy, even though some issues may be most appropriately addressed through larger partnerships, such as the “south of Fraser” municipalities in Metro Vancouver, including Delta and the Township and City of Langley.

Actions

- Continue to maintain regular channels of communication between the City of White Rock and local government neighbours.
- Include other local organizations in regional partnership activities where appropriate, such as business organizations, arts and culture groups, etc.

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local government neighbours ▪ Local business and community organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lower Priority, Ongoing

Strategy 5. Provide referral service for entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Entrepreneurship is a key part of economic growth and the success of local entrepreneurs should be encouraged and supported. Most local economic development offices lack the resources to provide intensive business counseling to entrepreneurs and small businesses, but can still provide valuable information and referral services.

Other organizations, such as the Canada/BC Business Service Centre and Business Development Bank of Canada, as well as the Surrey-based Self-Employment and Entrepreneur Development Society (for Employment Insurance recipients), are mandated to provide these services. The White Rock & South Surrey Chamber of Commerce can also provide information and assistance from the perspective of the existing business community. The City’s role is primarily to provide information and referrals to these other organizations.

The City has already taken a significant, positive step in this direction through its adoption of BizPaL, which is an online guide to all relevant permits and licenses for all levels of government for a given type of business.

Actions

- Identify organizations and programs that provide support to entrepreneurs and small businesses.
- Provide referrals to these organizations through website links, distribution of brochures and reference materials, etc. (building on what is currently provided through the Business Licensing page on the City website).

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local business organizations (Chamber and/or BIA) ▪ Organizations providing support services to entrepreneurs (e.g., Canada/BC Business Service Centre) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lower Priority, Ongoing

5.2. BUSINESS CLIMATE

The Plan's second strategic objective is:

2. Create a positive business climate in White Rock.

The strategies in support of this objective address a range of factors under the control of local government that help to determine the attractiveness of White Rock as a business location.

Strategy 6. Review City regulations and bylaws to ensure continued effectiveness and efficiency.

While much of the overall regulatory environment for economic development is determined by the federal, provincial and regional governments, municipal government also has discretion in several areas that influence the local business climate. Examples include zoning and other land use controls, development permits, business licensing, and property taxes.

All City regulations and bylaws and associated fees and charges should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they continue to meet their intended purpose and do not impose unnecessary costs, delays, or market distortions. The frequency of reviews depends on the type of regulation and could be triggered by a variety of factors, including feedback from the community, regulatory or fee changes in other municipalities, or changes in Council goals.

Regulatory reviews are most effective when they incorporate the input of affected organizations and individuals. The City of Winnipeg undertook a comprehensive "Red Tape Commission" in 2004-2005 using this model. The process was a highly public exercise that was chaired by a member of City Council and invited submissions from the public, the business community, and all other community stakeholders to identify inefficient, unnecessary,

wasteful, excessively costly, or needlessly time-consuming regulations and City processes. A 30-point plan was then created to guide improvements in City processes, with firm deadlines for completion.

The point of such an exercise is not to compromise necessary regulation, but to ensure that regulation is efficient and that City Hall provides a high quality of service to the public. An important ancillary benefit of such a process is the clear message it sends to the community that White Rock is committed to being an outstanding location for business development. The adoption of BizPal is a positive move as it significantly enhances the transparency and ease of access to all City regulations.

The consultation process for this study identified several areas of City regulation in need of review, such as patio regulations, the sign bylaw, the perceived lack of enforcement of design controls, and pay parking.

Actions

- Establish a Council-led initiative, using the Winnipeg Red Tape Commission as a model, to comprehensively review City regulations and bylaws, and invite participation from the business community, residents, and other community stakeholders.
- Continue to review regulations, bylaws, and associated fees and charges on a regular basis to ensure efficiency, effectiveness, and competitiveness with other municipalities.
- Continue to investigate the establishment of a “one-stop shopping” model of City services, where applicants have a single point of contact in the City who internally manages all relevant applications, rather than requiring applicants to visit multiple City departments to make multiple applications.
- Monitor the mobile business license pilot project being planned by Metro Vancouver Commerce municipalities to determine the costs and benefits of White Rock joining a possible future mobile business license in Metro Vancouver.

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local business organizations (Chamber and/or BIA) ▪ All other community organizations affected by City regulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Medium Priority, Short-term

Strategy 7. Ensure municipal taxes and charges for business are competitive with the City of Surrey.

The importance of maintaining White Rock as a competitive location for business was emphasized in the previous strategy, but particular emphasis is required with respect to the City of Surrey³. Given that White Rock and South Surrey are essentially a single market, it is important to ensure that businesses do not face significantly different property tax rates or municipal fees and charges by locating in White Rock.

Property taxes for the Business class (Class 6) were \$2.01 higher in White Rock per \$1,000 of assessed value in 2008. This is not an exceptionally large difference (11% of the total property tax bill), but the City of White Rock needs to ensure taxes and other business costs remain competitive with Surrey into the future.

³ Further analysis of property tax data is provided in the Economic Overview, page 20.

Of course, property taxes are only part of the overall taxation burden faced by White Rock businesses. Provincial and federal taxes, as well as property assessments determined by the BC Assessment Authority, are all beyond the control of local government.

Actions

- Continue to monitor the relative level of business property taxes and other fees and charges compared to the City of Surrey.
- Ensure that business costs in White Rock are competitive with similar costs in Surrey.

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Financial Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No external partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Medium Priority, Ongoing

Strategy 8. Improve White Rock's aesthetics.

One of Council's goals is to develop and promote unique community character. This is a critical part of enhancing White Rock's appeal to tourists, local shoppers (including White Rock and South Surrey residents), business owners and developers. It also makes White Rock an attractive place to live.

The City has undertaken a number of beautification initiatives over the years, including streetscape improvements and major Waterfront upgrades. White Rock's draft Parks Master Plan (November 2007) also places considerable emphasis on enhancing parks and open spaces. This effort has been recognized. For example, White Rock recently won first place nationally for communities with a population of 13,001 to 20,000 in the 14th annual in the Communities in Bloom competition.

Among the items that need to be given particular attention from an economic development perspective are:

- Updating the City's Town Centre Design Guidelines and creating Waterfront Design Guidelines to provide more details (including through illustration) of the appropriate design standards as part of the recommended comprehensive planning processes for the Waterfront (see Strategy 9) and Johnston Road area (already identified as a policy in the OCP).
- Updating the City's Sign Bylaw, which was adopted in 1986.
- Exploring incentives for businesses to upgrade their physical appearance (e.g., permissive tax exemptions through the Community Charter, grants).
- Encouraging additional public art throughout the community, especially art produced locally.

As Council's goal of developing and promoting unique community character recognizes, enhancing White Rock's aesthetics requires partnerships to fully succeed. Not only the City but other groups, including the business community, must be prepared to participate.

Actions

- Update Town Centre Design Guidelines.

- Create Waterfront Design Guidelines.
- Update Sign Bylaw.
- Explore incentives to encourage commercial building improvements.
- Encourage more public art.
- Explore project funding opportunities for beautification, heritage and revitalization initiatives from the federal and provincial governments.
- Explore the viability of providing time-limited (e.g., five-year) tax breaks to businesses undertaking building improvements.

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local business organizations (Chamber and/or BIA) ▪ Community Arts Council of White Rock & District ▪ Tourism White Rock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Medium Priority, Ongoing

Strategy 9. Undertake comprehensive planning and visioning process for the Waterfront.

The Waterfront is White Rock’s best-known feature, yet there is a strong sentiment among local businesses that their operating environment is gradually deteriorating. A variety of factors are cited, including:

- Increased competition from commercial developments in nearby South Surrey.
- A stagnant and highly seasonal tourism market.
- Parking issues (addressed in Strategy 11).
- Lack of continuity between East Beach and West Beach.
- Poor public transit service.
- Loss of street vibrancy through conversion of street-level commercial space to offices and other non-pedestrian oriented uses (e.g., East Beach).
- Lack of strong design controls and/or lack of enforcement, including building facades and business signage.

A thorough examination of the Waterfront is needed, including a clear and realistic vision for its future from a planning perspective and how it can be achieved. This exercise should address the full range of waterfront issues, including:

- Land uses.
- Densities.
- Consideration of a potentially greater residential component through densification.
- Physical appearance of both public and private areas.
- Types of activities permitted on the boardwalk and pier.
- Parking.
- Linkages between East Beach and West Beach.
- Public transit.
- Expanding the type and number of uses of the water (while recognizing environmental issues).

The residential capacity of the Waterfront area needs particular attention. Most vibrant commercial areas have a significant population base living within walking distance. This issue will become even more important for the Waterfront as White Rock’s Town Centre and Semiahmoo Town Centre in Surrey continue to develop as

commercial centres, making it harder to draw residents down to the Waterfront on a regular basis for shopping and dining.

Action

- Prepare comprehensive Waterfront Plan.
- Explore funding opportunities for the Waterfront Plan through the BC Real Estate Foundation and other sources.

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local business organizations (Chamber and/or BIA) ▪ Tourism White Rock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High Priority, Short-term

Strategy 10. Pursue the densification of development in the Town Centre.

White Rock’s Town Centre is intended to serve as the higher density core of the community. Increasing densities is important to economic development for several reasons:

- White Rock has virtually no land available for greenfield development, so significant new job creation requires more intense use of currently developed land.
- Many of the types of “high-value” jobs that may be attracted to White Rock are limited to office-based companies, including professionals, business services, and health services. New office space is therefore required, but will be created in White Rock only through higher-density mixed-use developments.
- Expanding White Rock’s population will lead to greater economic development opportunities by expanding the local consumer market and the local labour market, and increased residential densities in Town Centre are an important part of that process.

The City can encourage the densification of the Town Centre by a variety of means, such as:

- Density bonusing in exchange for community amenities, which could include more commercial floorspace.
- Higher densities outright.
- Reduced on-site residential parking requirements given that the Town Centre is a walkable neighbourhood

While a significant amount of work, the recommended Waterfront and Town Centre planning processes should be undertaken concurrently to ensure that the outcomes are fully coordinated.

Action

- Review Density Bonus Policy.
- Review residential parking requirements in Town Centre.
- Update Town Centre Design Guidelines and consider adopting an official Town Centre Plan.

- Explore funding opportunities for the Town Centre Plan through the BC Real Estate Foundation and other sources.

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local business organizations (Chamber and/or BIA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High Priority, Short-term

Strategy 11. Address parking and transportation issues.

One of Council's goals is improving and increasing transportation and mobility options. Parking is a key issue for many Waterfront businesses. As a result of recommendations earlier this year by the Mayor's Task Force on Waterfront Parking, there have been some changes in current parking policies. This includes a recent Council decision to allow free parking Monday to Thursday from November 1 to February 28, 2009 to measure the direct effect on businesses.

However, free parking during off-peak times of the week and year will not fully resolve the Waterfront parking issue. During peak times, parking on the Waterfront is hard to find and some businesses believe that visitors are turned away. Given space constraints, creating large amounts of new parking is not an option, nor does it make economic sense simply to meet high demand for relatively short periods of time during the year. Improved Waterfront public transit service is needed, although it is acknowledged that this is not an easy sell with TransLink given its limited resources.

As well as a need for improved public transit service overall, improved service between the Waterfront and Town Centre is needed so that there is more synergy between the City's two commercial centres. This is one of Council's current goals.

One of the suggestions put forward by some members of the business community is a free or low fare shuttle bus service between the two centres during peak times, although the viability of such a service would require much closer examination.

Improved public transit is also important, especially during the busy summer months, so that young staff can travel to and from work, especially on the Waterfront.

Given the rapid development and population growth taking place in South Surrey, there may be a better chance of success in gaining improved transit service if White Rock coordinates with the City of Surrey on the initiative.

Improved wayfinding signage on along both Highway 99 and within White Rock itself has also been identified by the business community as important for helping draw visitors.

Actions

- Continue to work with Waterfront businesses to implement the recommendations of the Mayor's Task Force on Waterfront Parking and monitor the results.
- Work with the City of Surrey to lobby TransLink for improved public transit service to the White Rock/South

Surrey area.

- Continue to explore the viability of a summer shuttle service between the Waterfront and Town Centre to help alleviate parking constraints on the Waterfront.

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local business organizations (Chamber and/or BIA) ▪ TransLink ▪ City of Surrey ▪ Tourism White Rock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Medium Priority /Ongoing

Strategy 12. Continue to ensure a range of housing choice in the market.

Increasing diverse housing opportunities is one of Council’s goals. A range of housing choice is important for a socio-economically diverse population, including attracting more families and young adults who are in the labour force. Choice means providing a mix of housing forms (i.e., single family, townhouse, apartment) at a variety of sizes and densities to appeal to different price points in the market. Even then, it is recognized that White Rock will likely continue to have higher housing costs relative to neighbouring communities because it is such a desirable community in which to live, coupled with its limited land base for residential development.

Expanding the supply of housing is also required to expand White Rock’s population, thereby increasing the local consumer market for goods and services and increasing the local supply of labour.

A range of housing issues in White Rock were addressed through the Housing Diversity Task Force, which recently delivered its final report and recommendations to Council.

Action

- Implement the recommendations of the Housing Diversity Task Force as deemed appropriate by Council.

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Affordable housing agencies ▪ Development industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Medium Priority, Ongoing

5.3. EXTERNAL MARKETING AND INVESTMENT ATTRACTION

The final strategic objective in this Plan is:

3. Aggressively pursue opportunities to attract new businesses and investment to the city.

The first objective is intended to provide White Rock with the structure and programs to effectively pursue economic development initiatives and the second objective is intended to make White Rock a more desirable location for a wide range of economic activity. This final objective is intended to identify a series of specific

economic development opportunities and provide the tools for these opportunities to be actively pursued by the City and its partners.

Strategy 13. Prepare community profile and enhance economic development information on the City's website.

In order to effectively promote its economic development opportunities, the City requires information and promotional tools.

A standard package of community information should be available, and regularly updated, on the City's website. This can include basic demographic and other statistical profile information, but given the availability of this type of data from numerous other sources (to which links may be provided), the emphasis should be on information that is specific to White Rock and not widely available elsewhere, including:

- Commercial development opportunities.
- Leading employers (public and private sectors).
- Transportation infrastructure.
- Travel times to border crossings, airports, downtown Vancouver, universities, port facilities, etc.
- Local utilities and infrastructure, including water, sewer, and telecommunications.
- Quality of life information such as housing costs, parks, health services, schools, churches, etc.

The information package can be distributed online as a downloadable PDF file that can be printed for hard-copy distribution when necessary.

The emphasis is not on a high-cost, "glossy" publication, but rather an inexpensive, data-intensive package that is easily updated and customized for specific purposes.

The data package can be supplemented with marketing messages that highlight the available opportunities. These may be incorporated into the same document, or developed as a series of stand-alone pieces that focus on specific opportunities and provide supporting information.

All economic development materials should be consistent with City branding and emphasize the City's competitive advantages (as articulated in the Strengths section of Chapter 4, and customized for particular purposes and target markets as required). The development of a new City of White Rock brand and visual identity should therefore incorporate economic development input.

Actions

- Undertake a research program to develop community profile information (funding may be available through the federal Community Investment Support Program (CISP), administered by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade).
- Expand the Economic Development component of the City's website to include greater community profile information, links to other information sources, downloadable versions of any promotional documents that are created, maps, and key contacts.
- Regularly maintain and update the profile information as new data becomes available.
- Ensure that input is provided from an economic development perspective in the creation of a new White Rock

brand and visual identity.

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local business organizations (Chamber and/or BIA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lower Priority, Longer-term

Strategy 14. Attract investment by developing relationships and sharing information with companies in strategic sectors.

Investment attraction is perhaps the highest-profile part of the economic development toolkit, yet it is also the most difficult type of initiative to successfully undertake. Investment by external companies or individuals will occur only if the community presents not just a favourable market opportunity, but the *best* opportunity relative to all other locations and all other types of investment that might be considered.

Economic development offices cannot create market opportunities where none exist, but they can ensure that information on market opportunities is made available to the right companies and individuals with the resources to act on it. Potential investors may not be aware of the market opportunities in White Rock, particularly if the local business environment has become more favourable over time. The consulting team has conducted economic development projects in many municipalities in Metro Vancouver and consistently found that residents and businesses in one part of Metro Vancouver are often surprisingly uninformed about other parts of the region. The investment attraction program can therefore accelerate growth that might otherwise have taken much longer to occur.

The recommended approach for White Rock is not to undertake a mass-market promotional initiative, but to treat investment attraction as an ongoing sales initiative. Economic development staff should develop relationships with companies in promising sectors and ensure that these companies are kept informed of the situation in White Rock, particularly as some of the other recommended strategies are implemented and the investment environment improves over time.

The following businesses appear to have viable growth potential in White Rock, now or in the future, and should be the initial focus of investment attraction efforts. Companies in other sectors may also reveal themselves as targets over time and can also be maintained as part of the “sales portfolio.” Current targets include:

- Hotels and other accommodation properties, including those with meeting space.
- Post-secondary educational institutions, including both public institutions (e.g., Emily Carr) and private colleges.
- Developers of retail and mixed-use retail/small office/residential properties.
- Health and wellness related businesses (see Strategy 17).
- Office-based companies and professionals, particularly those based in or providing services to the White Rock/South Surrey market. This includes targeting residents of the area who may currently work or operate a business elsewhere in the region but would welcome the opportunity to work closer to home. Note that this target first requires the development of suitable office locations, likely as part of mixed-use redevelopments in the Town Centre.

- Specific retail and services business targets that are identified through research conducted by the White Rock BIA, which has plans to conduct separate Retail Needs Assessment studies for the Waterfront and Uptown/Five Corners areas.
- Other “anchor” companies or attractions that would draw significant new visitors or jobs to the city. This may include a significant hotel with meeting space (as identified above).

It is anticipated that most of the targeted companies will be located in Metro Vancouver. Investment attraction beyond the region is extremely costly and challenging for small communities like White Rock to undertake on their own. Even the largest municipalities in Metro Vancouver have recognized the need to jointly promote the region under the Metro Vancouver Commerce banner.

One final point of emphasis is that to be successful in investment attraction, the community must have something tangible to sell. There is little use in undertaking an extensive marketing and investment campaign but not having a physical location for a business to make its investments. White Rock’s lack of developable land therefore constrains the types of opportunities that can be pursued, meaning the City primarily relies on redevelopment and densification of existing commercial areas. For this reason, there is a natural synergy between White Rock’s economic development office and property developers and/or realtors, both of whom are interested in attracting new businesses to the community.

Actions

- Establish and maintain portfolio of target companies with whom the City will maintain a relationship over time and provide ongoing information updates about evolving business opportunities in White Rock.
- Identify target companies through a variety of means, including:
 - Research on growing companies in opportunity industries.
 - Participation in industry events.
 - Through inquiries received for more information on White Rock.
 - Through referrals from local business organizations and other sources.
- Encourage the White Rock BIA to complete the planned Retail Needs Assessment studies for the Waterfront and Uptown/Five Corners areas in 2009.
- Include focus on residents of the White Rock/South Surrey area as investment decisions are influenced in part by proximity to key decision-makers.

Lead Responsibility

- Economic Development

Partnerships

- Local business organizations (Chamber and/or BIA)
- Tourism White Rock

Priority & Timing

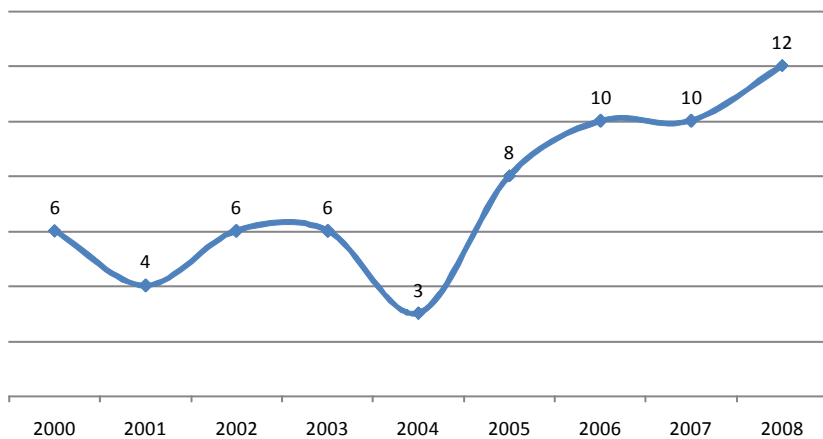
- Lower Priority, Ongoing

Strategy 15. Promote expansion of filming activity.

The film industry is a growing part of the White Rock economy, with the total number of permitted shoots (including television series, movies, commercials, music videos, etc.) ranging from 3 to 6 in the years 2000 to 2004, increasing to 8 to 10 shoots in the years 2005 to 2007, and achieving a new high of 12 permitted shoots in 2008.

White Rock Film Permits, 2000 to 2008

(Source: City of White Rock)



Metro Vancouver overall is established as one of the leading film centres in North America. Most of the permanent studio space is located in Vancouver, Burnaby and North Vancouver, while location shoots occur throughout the region. White Rock is a common stand-in for California and has become a regular home to the television show “Psych”, which is currently filming in White Rock between 5 and 10 times per year.

The City of White Rock regulates the industry by issues film permits and charging fees for the rental of public areas (e.g., sidewalks, parks), for parking, and for providing services such as traffic control. The City has participated in informal comparisons of filming fees and procedures among Metro Vancouver municipalities and concluded that White Rock fees are very competitive with other municipalities and much lower than some.

Looking to the future, the City should continue to support the film industry by continuing to ensure that fees and administrative procedures are regionally competitive and by cooperating with other municipalities in efforts to make the entire region more film-friendly. According to a report prepared by the BC Film Commission⁴, one of the disadvantages of Metro Vancouver relative to other film centres like Los Angeles and Toronto is the separate permitting process required for each of the region’s 21 municipalities. Efforts to standardize procedures and fees would make the region more film-friendly, particularly given the increasingly competitive nature of the film industry worldwide.

Actions

- Continue to ensure that film permit regulations, procedures and fees are competitive with other municipalities in Metro Vancouver (they should be included in the regulatory reviews recommended under Strategy 6).
- Support region-wide initiatives to standardize and streamline film permitting to enhance the region’s appeal as a filming location.
- Ensure that White Rock remains well-represented in industry databases of film locations, such as the one maintained by the BC Film Commission.
- Work with the business community to emphasize the benefits of the film industry.
- Work with Tourism White Rock to promote filming locations as tourist attractions, particularly for “Psych” (due to its popularity and strong connection to White Rock), similarly to the way that Cloverdale attracts tourists visiting film locations for the series “Smallville”.

⁴ BC Film Commission (February 2007), *Overview of Municipal Film Permitting Practices in the GVRD*.

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operations Department (responsible for film permitting) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism White Rock BC Film Commission and other Metro Vancouver film offices Local business organizations (Chamber and/or BIA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower Priority, Ongoing

Strategy 16. Continue to support expansion of the arts and culture sector.

Arts and culture is one of the fastest growing sectors of the Metro Vancouver economy. In addition to creating jobs, it is also an important contributor to the region’s quality of life. Developing a cultural strategy that enhances the arts, cultural and heritage attributes of the community is one of Council’s goals.

There appears to be strong local interest in pursuing the development of a destination-quality Arts Centre through partnerships with local arts organizations and private developers. At the same time, the role of such an Arts Centre needs to be set in the broader context, with recognition that the Surrey Arts Centre acts as the dominant regional facility.

The presence of arts and culture in the everyday life of White Rock residents should be enhanced by encouraging more performing arts, including buskers and other entertainers on the Waterfront and in Town Centre.

There are clear synergies between an expanded arts and culture sector and tourism, as recognized in the Tourism Plan, which targets expanded festivals and events. The Waterfront Concert Series is a prime example of the kind of local tourism benefits that can be generated.

Agreement is needed with the School District to provide greater community access to facilities, like White Rock Elementary that has a pottery studio, theatre and other amenities.

Arts and culture is one of White Rock’s strengths and the breadth of organizations and facilities should be prominently incorporated into profile and marketing material on the community.

Actions

- Secure agreement with the Surrey School District to provide greater community access to arts facilities at White Rock Elementary School.
- Encourage more outdoor performing arts in the commercial areas, especially the Waterfront.
- Examine the feasibility of a White Rock Arts Centre.
- Emphasize the diversity and quality of White Rock’s arts and culture facilities and programs as a key selling feature in economic development promotional material, including on the City’s website.

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism White Rock Community Arts Council of White Rock & District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium Priority, Ongoing

Strategy 17. Promote White Rock as a centre of health and wellness.

White Rock has the potential to be increasingly known as a centre for health and wellness within Metro Vancouver and is one of Council’s goals. This image is based on the prominence of the health care sector in White Rock with Peace Arch Hospital, including specialized facilities like the Cardiac Rehab program and ElderHealth, as well as the Centre for Health Improvement adjacent to the expanded Peace Arch Curling Club. This reputation is enhanced by the spectacular seaside setting and extra hours of sunshine relative to Vancouver, factors that have contributed to White Rock’s long-standing popularity among retirees.

With an older-than-average age profile and a moderately wealthy population in White Rock and South Surrey, there is already a strong built-in market for various health and wellness goods and services. The combination of public facilities and complementary service providers has the potential to create a strong “cluster” of health and wellness operations in White Rock.

Examples of business opportunities may include testing laboratories, diagnostic services, and a wide range of therapeutic and wellness services such as spas, massage therapists, nutritionists and alternative medicine practitioners.

The City can further enhance the public sector component of the health and wellness cluster through the Community Health Plan, which is currently being developed.

Actions

- Maintain regular contact with Peace Arch Hospital to ensure that potential health-related business development opportunities related to the hospital and its expansion are understood and acted upon by the City.
- Continue to support a high standard of public health and wellness facilities and programs through the development of the Community Health Plan.
- Use White Rock’s health and wellness attributes as a key selling feature in economic development promotional material, including on the City’s website.

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Peace Arch Hospital ▪ Centre for Health Improvement ▪ Local business organizations (Chamber and/or BIA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lower Priority, Ongoing

Strategy 18. Continue to support the growth of the tourism industry through the Tourism Implementation Plan.

The White Rock Tourism Implementation Plan was completed in October 2007 with the assistance of Tourism BC and its Community Tourism Foundations program. The Plan has led to the creation of Tourism White Rock through a funding partnership of the City, White Rock BIA, and White Rock and South Surrey Chamber of Commerce. Each organization provides \$15,000 per year to fund a part-time Executive Director position (16 hours per week) and a modest marketing budget that is leveraged through Tourism BC initiatives.

The Tourism Implementation Plan addresses marketing initiatives and target markets, visitor servicing, the development of new tourism products, community engagement, and tracking of tourism measures. This Economic Development Strategic Plan does not reproduce strategies in those areas, but there are some important synergies between the two documents. Some of the identified target opportunities under Strategy 14 relate to tourism, including a hotel and conference space, while issues like transportation improvements, growth of arts and culture, and enhancing the year-round viability of Waterfront businesses are closely tied to tourism.

Actions

- Continue to support Tourism White Rock and the Tourism Implementation Plan.
- Ensure funding for Tourism White Rock is commensurate with the mandate of the organization and its project and staffing requirements.
- Explore long-run funding arrangements for Tourism White Rock beyond the current three-year funding agreement.

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tourism White Rock ▪ Local business organizations (Chamber and/or BIA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High Priority, Ongoing

Strategy 19. Pursue greater marine-based activity on the White Rock waterfront.

The White Rock waterfront, with its famous pier and promenade, is the city’s best-known feature. Yet the vast majority of activity in the area is based on land, whether strolling the pier and promenade or visiting the restaurants and shops along Marine Drive, and nearly all visitors also arrive by land, typically in a private automobile.

Potential therefore exists to expand the range of activities on the waterfront by making more use of the water, and potentially by expanding moorage opportunities to allow more visitors to arrive in White Rock by water. The latter opportunity has implications for Customs clearance due to White Rock’s close proximity to the Canada/US border and the likelihood of attracting many US-based boats with increased moorage space. Customs officers can currently be contacted by telephone and arrangements could be made to enhance service if warranted by increased international traffic.

But a larger challenge for expanding waterfront activity is the environmental sensitivity of the area and the possible negative impacts of increased human activity on the foreshore. The Fraser River Estuary Management Program (FREMP) has designated White Rock’s western foreshore area as a “Conservation” area and the eastern foreshore area as a “Recreation/Park” area with a sub-designation as “Conservation”.

The City’s Environment Committee is currently developing a Pier and Foreshore Protection Plan that will help to clarify the range of acceptable activities. One possibility is that recreational activities are restricted to “human-powered” vehicles, such as kayaks.

Actions

- Conduct joint meetings of the Environment Committee and Economic Committee to discuss and clarify the range of human activities that will be permitted on the waterfront through the Pier and Foreshore Protection Plan.
- Pursue the expansion of such activities, either through the establishment of new City parks services or by allowing commercial operators to provide services like boat rentals.
- Explore the potential to provide expanded daytime moorage for visiting recreational vessels, which would expand visitation to the waterfront area without affecting automobile traffic and parking.
- Consider the expansion of waterfront activities as a tool for the revitalization of East Beach.

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local business organizations (Chamber and/or BIA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lower Priority, Longer-term

Strategy 20. Explore the reinstatement of passenger train service in White Rock.

White Rock has a long history with rail travel, dating back to the opening of the train station in 1913. Over the ensuing decades, many visitors traveled to the community from all over the Lower Mainland until the growth of the automobile led to a decline in rail travel starting in the 1950s.

There are several possible ways for train service to reconnect with White Rock:

- Amtrak service between Seattle and Vancouver passes through White Rock. Past efforts to include a stop in White Rock have been complicated by Customs issues.
- Establishment of a commuter rail service between White Rock and downtown Vancouver, with other possible stops along the way.
- Establishment of a tourism-oriented train service, likely to operate only in the summer months between downtown Vancouver and White Rock.

The commercial viability of any of these options is currently questionable. As referenced in the City's 2006 Transportation Plan, previous studies of the commuter rail option (which was envisioned as being similar to the West Coast Express service from Mission to downtown Vancouver) concluded that ridership would be far short of an economically viable level, due in large part to the indirect rail line that would actually have a longer travel time than bus.

Actions

- Continue to explore the feasibility of re-establishing passenger train service in White Rock.

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local business organizations (Chamber and/or BIA) ▪ Rail operators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lower Priority, Long-term

Strategy 21. Support expansion of home-based business.

The majority of employed White Rock residents are currently commuting to jobs located outside the community. Many of these workers are well-educated and highly-skilled and may be candidates for home-based employment, either through self-employment or through tele-commuting to their existing job.

The telecommunications technology that enables effective home-based employment for many occupations has been in place for some time now, but other more recent trends may also encourage home-based employment growth. High gas prices that have increased commuting costs, ever-increasing traffic congestion in the growing Metro Vancouver region, and a greater societal interest in living sustainably and in complete communities all may encourage more workers who are currently leaving White Rock for work to consider moving their job into their home.

White Rock currently has an imbalance between the number of working residents and the number of jobs located in White Rock, so growth in home-based employment is one way to provide more local job opportunities for residents. It also contributes to the “complete community” and expands the local daytime market for many White Rock businesses, including restaurants, retailers, and business support services.

Actions

- Continue to support home-based business through various regulations, including business licensing.

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local business organizations (Chamber and/or BIA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lower Priority, Ongoing

Strategy 22. Explore promotional and business development opportunities associated with the 2010 Winter Olympic Games.

The 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games will provide unprecedented levels of worldwide media exposure for Metro Vancouver and British Columbia. The provincial government has also been working, through the 2010 Commerce Centre and other initiatives, to ensure that BC communities also capitalize on the business development potential of the Games.

There are several main areas of opportunity:

- Capitalizing on procurement opportunities for hundreds of millions of dollars of goods and services required to stage the Games. These opportunities are coordinated through the 2010 Commerce Centre, which allows companies to register and indicate the types of goods and services they are interested in providing. Staff from the Commerce Centre have previously conducted workshops through the White Rock & South Surrey Chamber of Commerce explaining the procurement process and a total of 46 White Rock companies are currently registered with the Commerce Centre.

- Promoting White Rock to an international audience through the BC Explorer program and by targeting the international media, who regularly report interesting local stories. The BC Explorer program is operated by the 2010 Winter Games Secretariat and includes short video clips promoting BC communities.
- Tourism promotion through programs operated by Tourism BC, such as the “Share the Excitement” marketing campaign that encourages all communities to use similar marketing messages and provides opportunities to link community marketing videos into Tourism BC’s Olympic marketing website.
- Using White Rock facilities to host Olympic teams and visitors, such as current efforts to use the Peace Arch Curling Club in White Rock as a practice facility for visiting teams before and during the Games.

These are just some of the opportunities being created for White Rock businesses to benefit from the Games either directly or indirectly, and for the community as a whole to promote itself as a tourist destination.

Actions

- Encourage White Rock businesses to pursue procurement opportunities through the 2010 Commerce Centre.
- Ensure that promotional videos on White Rock are incorporated into the BC Explorer program.
- Encourage Tourism White Rock to capitalize on Tourism BC programs for promoting White Rock as a tourism destination.

Lead Responsibility	Partnerships	Priority & Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ White Rock Spirit Committee ▪ White Rock & South Surrey Chamber of Commerce ▪ Tourism White Rock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Medium Priority, Short-term

6. IMPLEMENTATION AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING

6.1. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The previous chapter outlined a total of 22 strategies that make up the White Rock Economic Development Strategic Plan. Each strategy was assigned a priority level (High, Medium, Lower) and suggested timing (Short-term, Ongoing, Longer-term) based on the consulting team's assessment of the relative importance of each strategy and when it is best pursued.

Implementation of the Plan is ultimately the responsibility of the City. Most economic development offices create annual work plans that use the strategic priorities as a starting point while also considering resource constraints, available partners, and possible changing priorities over time.

To assist the City with implementation, the entire Plan is presented visually on the following page. Priority is shown on the vertical axis and Timing on the horizontal axis.

The strategies that should receive the most initial attention from the City are those in the upper-left section, which shows High Priority, Short-term items. The strategies that are most easily set aside in the initial implementation are those in the lower-right section, which shows Lower Priority, Longer-term strategies.

Presenting the Strategic Plan visually in this way provides guidance on implementation, but leaves ultimate discretion in the hands of the City.

Table 3. White Rock Economic Development Strategic Plan in Summary

	Short-term	Ongoing	Longer-term
High Priority	<p>Strategy 1. Establish economic development position and budget.</p> <p>Strategy 9. Undertake comprehensive planning and visioning process for the Waterfront.</p> <p>Strategy 10. Pursue the densification of development in the Town Centre.</p>	<p>Strategy 18. Continue to support the growth of the tourism industry through the Tourism Implementation Plan.</p>	
	<p>Strategy 6. Review City regulations and bylaws to ensure continued effectiveness and efficiency.</p> <p>Strategy 22. Explore promotional and business development opportunities associated with the 2010 Winter Olympic Games.</p>	<p>Strategy 2. Establish and operate a business retention and expansion program.</p> <p>Strategy 7. Ensure municipal taxes and charges for business are competitive with the City of Surrey.</p> <p>Strategy 8. Improve White Rock’s aesthetics.</p> <p>Strategy 11. Address parking and transportation issues.</p> <p>Strategy 12. Continue to ensure a range of housing choice in the market.</p> <p>Strategy 16. Continue to support expansion of the arts and culture sector.</p>	
Medium Priority		<p>Strategy 3. Participate in regional economic development initiatives where appropriate.</p> <p>Strategy 4. Pursue economic development opportunities in partnership with neighbouring local governments.</p> <p>Strategy 5. Provide referral service for entrepreneurs and small businesses.</p> <p>Strategy 14. Attract investment by developing relationships and sharing information with companies in strategic sectors.</p> <p>Strategy 15. Promote expansion of filming activity.</p> <p>Strategy 17. Promote White Rock as a centre of health and wellness.</p> <p>Strategy 21. Support expansion of home-based business.</p>	
Lower Priority			<p>Strategy 13. Prepare community profile and enhance economic development information on the City’s website.</p> <p>Strategy 19. Pursue greater marine-based activity on the White Rock waterfront.</p> <p>Strategy 20. Explore the reinstatement of passenger train service in White Rock.</p>

6.2. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Performance monitoring is always one of the great challenges in economic development. The modern market economy is immensely complex and the reasons for economic successes, and failures, are not easily attributable to any single factor.

The recommended approach for the City of White Rock is to monitor a variety of economic indicators over time, supplemented by project-specific data and qualitative observations where appropriate. There are three main components to such a program:

1. **External data** generated by reputable sources such as Statistics Canada, BC Stats, Metro Vancouver, and various senior government departments. The advantage of external data is the regularity and consistency of the data over time that supports trend analysis and allows for direct comparisons between White Rock and other communities.
2. **Internal data** such as business licenses, building permit values, and possibly results generated through a business retention and expansion program (if adopted).
3. **Project-specific qualitative and quantitative data.** This can be as simple as a qualitative reporting on project outcomes, or can incorporate a quantitative dimension through customized surveys, counts of visitors/clients, and any other measurement that might be possible for a given project.

One of the keys to effective performance monitoring is ensuring that measurement and evaluation becomes part of the everyday mindset, provided the measurements that are adopted are meaningful indicators of progress or success.

Some potential external and internal data sources that should form part of the City's economic development performance monitoring are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Elements of an economic development performance monitoring system

Topic	Data Set	Source	Frequency
Employment Growth and Diversification	Number of jobs located in White Rock, over time	Statistics Canada Census	Every five years
	Average income in White Rock-based jobs	Statistics Canada Census	Every five years
	Employment in high-paying sectors in White Rock	Statistics Canada Census	Every five years
Home-based employment	Home-based jobs in White Rock	Statistics Canada Census	Every five years
	Business license counts for home-based companies.	City of White Rock	Monthly or Annual

Topic	Data Set	Source	Frequency
Population and Business Growth	Population estimates	BC Stats, Statistics Canada Census	Annual (BC Stats), Every five years (Census)
	Building permits of each type (residential, commercial, industrial, institutional)	City of White Rock, Metro Vancouver	Monthly (City), Annual (Metro Vancouver)
	Business license counts, including home-based	City of White Rock	Monthly or Annual
Balance of Jobs and Working Residents	White Rock-based jobs relative to working White Rock residents	Statistics Canada Census	Every five years
	Percentage of working White Rock residents working in White Rock	Statistics Canada Census	Every five years
Tax Base Balance	Share of residential assessment and property tax revenue	City of White Rock, Ministry of Community Services (for comparable data)	Annual
Development in specific areas (e.g., Waterfront, Town Centre)	Building permits in defined areas	City of White Rock	Annual or as required
	Business licenses in defined areas	City of White Rock	Annual or as required
Workforce education	Workforce educational attainment	Statistics Canada Census	Every five years
Business retention and expansion (BRE) measurements	Number of companies planning expansions (and contractions), anticipated job openings for the next year, and other ad hoc information collected through the BRE program	City of White Rock	Annual or as required
	(If purchased), Synchronist BRE software produces indices for Growth, Value, Risk, and Satisfaction (they are calculated by the software based on the interview results and can be compared over time or to other communities)	City of White Rock, possibly other BC municipalities (who could share data for comparative purposes)	Annual or as required
Tourism visitation	Visitor Information Centre visits	Tourism White Rock	Monthly
	Event-specific attendance data	Festival/event organizers, Tourism White Rock, BIA	As they occur
	Customs entries at Peace Arch	Canada Border Services Agency (reported by Tourism BC)	Monthly, annually

APPENDIX A: CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS

The following individuals gave generously of their time to provide input into the creation of the Economic Development Strategic Plan.

INDUSTRY FOCUS GROUPS

- Elaine Antifaev, E.T. Resources
- Larry Bergquist, LB Petroleum & Environmental Consulting
- Pamela Bessette, RBC
- Hunter Brumell, South Surrey and White Rock Art Society
- George Demmer, Jenkins Showler Gallery
- Hugh Ellenwood, White Rock Museum & Archives
- Sharon Greyson, formerly Rad Brad's Surf & Turf Wear
- Marilyn Knoch, M.J. Knoch and Associates
- Bill Lawrence, Sandpiper Pub
- Bob Long, Chicken Bob's Cantina
- Steve McVittie, Celtic Treasure Chest (and President, White Rock BIA)
- Fred Partridge, White Rock Players Club
- Nicholas Popoff, Pearl on the Rock
- Robin Rankine, Community Arts Council of White Rock & District
- Cherie Sutherland, White Rock Museum & Archives
- David Young, Peace Arch Community Services

ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

The consulting team met with the City's Economic Committee on four occasions in the course of developing the Strategic Plan. The Committee members:

- Councillor Catherine Ferguson, Chair
- Councillor Doug Mclean, Vice Chair
- Russ Davies, White Rock Business Improvement Association
- Doug Hart, White Rock & South Surrey Chamber of Commerce
- Anneke Henny
- Angela Huck
- Zarina Lalji
- Phil LeGood
- Dean Wautier

CITY OF WHITE ROCK SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

The City's Senior Management Team provided input to the Strategic Plan at a workshop in September 2008. The individuals participating in the workshop were:

- Peggy Clark

- Tracey Arthur
- Rob Atkinson
- Rita Clarkson
- Todd Fookes
- Chloe Fox
- Sandra Kurylo
- Donna Obermeyer
- David Pollock
- Rob Thompson
- Rae Williamson
- Richard Wilson

OTHER CONTACTS

The following individuals were consulted for their expertise in particular topics relevant to the development of the Strategic Plan:

- Donna Bernard, Tourism White Rock
- Eric Canada, Blane, Canada Ltd.
- Savannah Carate, City of White Rock Film Liaison
- Geoff Crawford, Comox Valley Economic Development Society
- Amrit Manhas, City of Nanaimo
- Ken Veldman, 2010 Commerce Centre

APPENDIX B: OCP GOALS AND POLICIES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

OVERALL GOAL FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

To maximize White Rock's economic development potential with a view to strengthening the local economy, creating more local jobs, achieving a more balanced tax base and generating more tourism activity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal 1: To ensure that economic development policy continues to be relevant to the current and short-term reality and vision of White Rock, and is implemented over the short- to medium-term.

1. The City will review the *Five Year Economic Development Plan* every five years to ensure that it remains current in providing strategic direction to help realize the general economic goals and policies of the OCP.
2. The City will initiate and participate in an economic development plan workshop to monitor progress in implementing the *Five Year Economic Development Plan* and to establish implementation priorities, responsibilities and timelines.

Goal 2: To promote the city as a place to move to and reside in over the long-term.

3. The City will promote White Rock as a community providing:
 - a mix of high quality residential options, including high and low density development to accommodate workers of differing incomes, abilities and stages of life
 - precinct areas and boutique shopping opportunities
 - leisure-supportive spaces (e.g., rest and play areas) and tourism areas (e.g., the waterfront and Town Centre)
 - arts, heritage and cultural events and activities
 - a wide range of community services

Goal 3: To protect employment lands and promote commercial (office and retail) sector growth as a means of providing local jobs, growing the non-residential tax base and supporting local business.

4. The City will foster a mix of employment opportunities by protecting its commercial land base from conversion to non-employment uses and allow home occupations.
5. The City will explore ways to encourage an expanded business sector, including both retail and office uses, through initiatives such as branding, partnerships, and incentives.
6. The City will encourage a "shop-at-home" campaign by local businesses.
7. The City will continue to maintain Johnston Road as the main shopping and service street within the community by encouraging pedestrian friendly development that supports commercial and service

activity. The Johnston Road Study will support this policy through its objective of revitalizing Johnston Road.

Goal 4: To achieve a coordinated effort in support of tourism development in White Rock.

8. The City, in collaboration with the White Rock Tourism Advisory Board and other stakeholders, will implement its *Tourism Implementation Plan* to enhance the value of its tourism economy.
9. Foster the involvement of the business community, including the Business Improvement Association (BIA), in the improvement and promotion of White Rock as a place to visit.
10. The City will work with the White Rock Tourism Advisory Board and other stakeholders to promote tourist accommodations such as bed & breakfasts.

Goal 5: To leverage partnerships that will assist business development.

11. The City will foster the involvement of the business community, including the White Rock BIA, in the improvement and promotion of White Rock as a place to do business.
12. The City will work with the City of Blaine to promote economic development opportunities of benefit to both communities.
13. The City is receptive to public-private partnerships (P3) opportunities.

Goal 6: To improve the commercial viability of Marine Drive.

14. The City will develop and support tourism initiatives on Marine Drive that are consistent with the community vision to attract and keep visitors on the waterfront and in consideration of the environmental value of Semiahmoo Bay.
15. The City will encourage retail services and other commercial uses as the predominant use along Marine Drive at the street level in concert with the *Five Year Economic Development Plan*.

Goal 7: To achieve a greater balance between well established summertime activities and events and off-season/shoulder-season activities to help support local businesses year-round.

16. The City will work with local partners to encourage year-round tourist-oriented and community activities, such as outdoor markets and street festivals.

Goal 8: To achieve greater land use efficiency, and in turn, maximize economic development opportunities, in the Town Centre.

17. The City will encourage the redevelopment of existing vacant lands and underutilized sites (e.g., parking lots) in the Town Centre.

18. The City will pursue higher densities in the Town Centre to provide more housing choice, improve the ratio of residential to commercial development and use land efficiently.

Goal 9: To capitalize on Metro Vancouver's identity as 'North Hollywood'.

19. The City will market White Rock as a prime destination for the film industry.

APPENDIX C: ECONOMIC DATA

The data tables in this Appendix provide additional detail for some of the data topics in Chapter 3 (Economic Overview).

Table 5. Census Population, White Rock and Metro Vancouver, 1976-2006

Year	White Rock		Metro Vancouver	
	Population	Average Annual Growth	Population	Average Annual Growth
1976	12,497		1,166,348	
1981	13,550	1.6%	1,268,183	1.7%
1986	14,387	1.2%	1,380,729	1.7%
1991	16,314	2.5%	1,602,502	3.0%
1996	17,210	1.1%	1,831,665	2.7%
2001	18,250	1.2%	1,986,965	1.6%
2006	18,755	0.5%	2,116,581	1.3%

Source: Statistics Canada Census

Table 6. Comparison of Census Population and BC Stats Population Estimates, White Rock, 1996-2007

Year	Census Population	BC Stats Population Estimate
1996	17,210	17,834
1997		18,373
1998		18,340
1999		18,623
2000		18,748
2001	18,250	19,047
2002		19,188
2003		19,126
2004		19,475
2005		19,839
2006	18,755	19,720
2007		19,839

Sources: Statistics Canada Census, BC Stats

Table 7. Building Permit Values, White Rock, 1998-2007 (\$000)

Year	Residential	Non-Residential	Total
1998	\$17,843	\$2,545	\$20,388
1999	\$7,308	\$1,323	\$8,631
2000	\$13,023	\$2,401	\$15,424
2001	\$8,814	\$1,380	\$10,194
2002	\$24,435	\$6,280	\$30,715
2003	\$56,281	\$1,313	\$57,594
2004	\$31,672	\$682	\$32,354
2005	\$68,233	\$21,224	\$89,457
2006	\$29,471	\$8,287	\$37,758
2007	\$69,411	\$324	\$69,735
Total 1998-2007	\$326,491	\$45,759	\$372,250

Source: Metro Vancouver, based on Statistics Canada data

Table 8. Population by Age, White Rock, 2006

Age Group	White Rock		Metro Vancouver	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
0-14	1,940	10%	345,745	16%
15-24	1,620	9%	285,700	13%
25-34	1,825	10%	289,705	14%
35-44	2,200	12%	347,790	16%
45-54	2,950	16%	338,385	16%
55-64	3,010	16%	237,795	11%
65+	5,205	28%	271,465	13%
Total	18,750	100%	2,116,585	100%

Source: Statistics Canada Census

Table 9. Educational Attainment for Age 25-64, White Rock, 2006

Age Group	White Rock		Metro Vancouver	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Less than high school	585	6%	122,365	10%
High school	2,475	25%	290,040	24%
Apprenticeship/trades	1,035	10%	113,225	9%
College certificate/diploma	2,205	22%	225,865	19%
University certificate/diploma	910	9%	86,065	7%
University degree	2,735	28%	371,215	31%
Total	9,945	100%	1,208,770	100%

Source: Statistics Canada Census

Table 10. Place of Work of White Rock Residents, 2006

Place of Work	Number of White Rock Residents	Percentage
Surrey	2,795	30.2%
No Fixed Place of Work	1,280	13.8%
Work at Home	1,085	11.7%
Vancouver	925	10.0%
White Rock (outside the home)	895	9.7%
Richmond	555	6.0%
Delta	445	4.8%
Burnaby	330	3.6%
Langley Township	295	3.2%
Other	145	1.6%
Work outside Canada	100	1.1%
Langley City	90	1.0%
New Westminster	90	1.0%
Abbotsford	70	0.8%
Coquitlam	45	0.5%
Port Coquitlam	20	0.2%
Metro Vancouver Area A	20	0.2%
North Vancouver District	20	0.2%
North Vancouver City	20	0.2%
Semiahmoo Reserve	20	0.2%
Total	9,245	100.0%

Sources: Statistics Canada Census

Table 11. Place of Residence of White Rock Workers, 2006

Place of Residence	Number of White Rock Workers	Percentage
Surrey	2,695	45.7%
White Rock (including Work at Home)	1,980	33.6%
Langley Township	340	5.8%
Delta	230	3.9%
Vancouver	150	2.5%
Langley City	105	1.8%
Other	115	1.9%
Abbotsford	85	1.4%
Richmond	75	1.3%
Burnaby	45	0.8%
Chilliwack	30	0.5%
Coquitlam	30	0.5%
Port Coquitlam	20	0.3%
Total	5,900	100.0%

Sources: Statistics Canada Census

Table 12. Average Housing Prices, Fraser Valley Municipalities, June 2008

Municipality	Single-Family	Townhouses	Apartments
White Rock	\$849,154	\$454,970	\$317,798
Surrey	\$553,378	\$328,293	\$216,616
Langley	\$548,122	\$330,122	\$236,690
North Delta	\$495,514	\$325,000	\$260,000
Abbotsford	\$476,335	\$286,067	\$214,491
Mission	\$389,856	\$308,050	\$222,666

Source: Fraser Valley Real Estate Board

Table 13. Benchmark Price for Single Family Homes, Fraser Valley Municipalities, June 2003 – June 2008

Municipality	June 2003	June 2004	June 2005	June 2006	June 2007	June 2008	Increase, 2003-2008
White Rock	\$395,004	\$428,187	\$461,369	\$588,467	\$715,565	\$744,188	\$349,184
Surrey	\$279,010	\$327,903	\$376,795	\$441,981	\$507,168	\$520,354	\$241,344
Langley	\$303,227	\$341,572	\$379,918	\$436,995	\$494,073	\$521,247	\$218,020
North Delta	\$277,884	\$324,406	\$370,928	\$431,094	\$491,259	\$495,189	\$217,305
Abbotsford	\$244,368	\$282,355	\$320,342	\$368,302	\$416,261	\$437,907	\$193,539
Mission	\$202,607	\$237,629	\$272,651	\$320,550	\$368,448	\$381,712	\$179,105

Source: Fraser Valley Real Estate Board

APPENDIX D: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BUDGETS, SALARIES AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

BUDGETS AND SALARIES

Some guidance on economic development budgets and salaries is provided by special analysis of the results of the 2007 Economic Development Association of British Columbia (EDABC) membership survey.⁵ A total of nine completed surveys were received from communities with the following characteristics:

- Population from 5,000 to 35,000;
- Single economic development staff person (with up to one-half time support staff).

The nine communities are located throughout British Columbia (only one is from the Lower Mainland) with a mixture of models (6 employed an economic developer as a municipal employee, while 3 contracted with an external organization to provide economic development services). Several of the municipal employees worked in a hybrid arrangement where they were employed by the local government but were physically located outside municipal offices, usually in the office of another organization like a Chamber of Commerce or Community Futures Development Corporation.

The average economic development core funding from local government for these nine communities was \$214,000, although this figure is inflated by several large budgets. The budgets ranged from \$82,000 to \$600,000, with a median of \$152,000.

These types of comparisons give a ballpark indication of typical economic development budgets, but the large range indicates the extent to which each community must develop the economic development solution that works best for its situation. Given White Rock's limited available land, it has a different set of development opportunities than other communities that may be pursuing massive resort or industrial or waterfront developments, and budgets vary accordingly.

Incidentally, the average salary for the economic developers in these nine communities was \$64,000, with a range from \$46,000 to \$83,000. The report showed, however, based on statistical analysis of the factors that appear to influence salary that there is a clear salary premium for those working in the Lower Mainland (Metro Vancouver plus Fraser Valley Regional District). This premium is an estimated average of \$18,000 per year for Lower Mainland-based economic developers.

The other factors that showed a statistically significant relationship with salary are number of supervised staff, number of years working in economic development, and whether the individual was the community's top economic development official. Other factors like community size, level of education, and hours worked were not statistically significant predictors of salary.

⁵ Vann Struth Consulting Group Inc. (March 2008), *2007 EDABC Membership Survey Report*, prepared for Economic Development Association of British Columbia. This survey has been conducted annually by Vann Struth Consulting Group since 2003. Custom tabulations of survey results are periodically provided to Association members who require salary or budget information for communities matching a custom set of characteristics. The full report is only available to members of EDABC (www.edabc.com).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURE OPTIONS

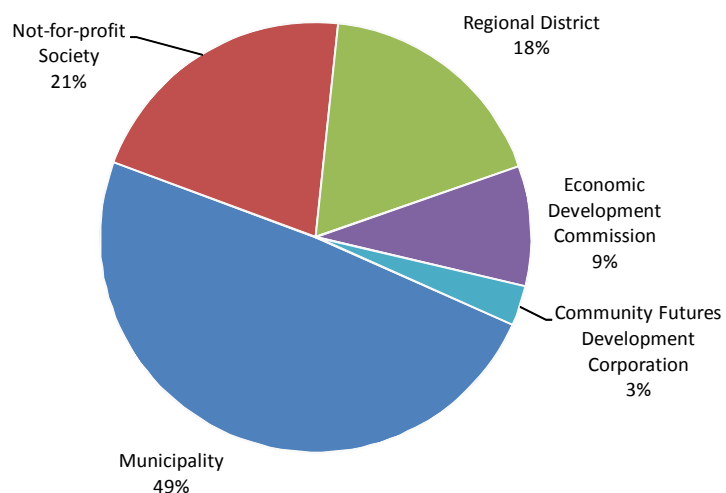
There is no one “right” model for economic development. Local governments considering which organizational structure is best suited to their needs have two main options.

1. The **“in-house model”**, where an economic development function is established within the local government. This may be a single individual with sole responsibility for economic development, a multiperson department, or an individual or department that handles economic development in addition to other responsibilities.
2. The **“arms-length model”**, where the local government provides funding through a fee-for-service arrangement with an arms-length organization. This can be a dedicated economic development organization (such as a non-profit society or development corporation), or an existing organization like a Chamber of Commerce or Community Futures Development Corporation.

The 2007 Economic Development Association of British Columbia Membership Report showed the breakdown of organizational models shown in the graph. The majority is based in local government (municipalities or regional districts) but one-third are contracted to an external organization. This graph does not show the number of local government employees who physically work at external locations, but a large number do so.

Local Economic Development Structures in BC, 2007

(Source: EDABC Annual Membership Survey)



Vann Struth Consulting Group has researched economic development structures in British Columbia and identified the advantages and disadvantages of various organizational structures on a variety of dimensions. The key factors to consider in establishing an economic development organization include, in no particular order:

1. Operational costs and access to external funding
2. Relationship with business community
3. Relationship with local government
4. Administration and regulation
5. Co-location with other agencies (e.g., tourism, film)
6. “Deal-making” and provision of incentives
7. Structure of economic development boards and advisory committees
8. Local vs. regional operations

Each local government would place these issues in a different priority order, so there is not necessarily a right way and a wrong way to approach each issue. The discussion that follows looks at each issue and provides feedback

from economic development practitioners in the province and information from other respected information sources, including professional associations and economic development publications.

ISSUE 1. OPERATIONAL COSTS AND ACCESS TO EXTERNAL FUNDING

In-House Model

- Overhead costs are absorbed within local government budgets.
- Access to most government funding programs is the same regardless of the organization's structure. The only exceptions are for projects that exceed the typical mandate of a local government (e.g., constructing commercial buildings).

Arms-Length Model

- Overhead costs can be shared with other jurisdictions or with other organizations. Some economic development offices own buildings and charge rent to other organizations, while others are tenants in facilities owned by other organizations.
- May have greater access to non-traditional sources of funding through partnerships, sponsorships, for-profit ventures, etc.

ISSUE 2. RELATIONSHIP WITH BUSINESS COMMUNITY

A positive relationship with the business community, including both local businesses and external investors, is essential for a successful economic development program.

In-House Model

- Enables coordinated service across all departments.
- Provides business community with direct access to decision-makers.
- Subject to Freedom of Information requests so great care required to maintain confidential business information.

Arms-Length Model

- Economic developer viewed more as an advocate for business, and less as part of the regulatory body.
- Maintaining an office outside of local government (even if economic developer is still directly employed by local government) enhances relationship with business community.
- Greater assurances of privacy and confidentiality.

ISSUE 3. RELATIONSHIP WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Many economic development projects and issues require cooperation and coordination of other local government departments, such as planning. There is also a need for overall direction and support from Council (or Regional District Board).

In-House Model

- Proximity to other local government departments enhances information sharing and coordination of activities.
- Allows greater opportunity for political influence and control over economic development activities.
- Enables economic developers to exert greater influence on the direction of local government policy.
- Economic developers can serve as champions of large projects within the

Arms-Length Model

- More difficult to have effective communication with local government and input into policies relevant to economic development.
- Physical separation of economic development office exacerbates communication problems.
- Less direct oversight by local government can lead to a sense of disconnect and consequent loss of political support for the economic development organization.
- Greater independence from local government control reduces influence of politics on decision-making.

local government.

ISSUE 4. ADMINISTRATION AND REGULATION

While hardly unique to economic development, the administrative burden and regulatory obstacles faced by economic developers were raised as important barriers to an effective economic development program.

In-House Model

- Economic developers are often senior managers, but are often a department of one or two people. Involving the economic developer in excessive meetings and issues with little relevance to the position detracts from the economic development function.
- Requirement for senior staff and Council approvals increase time and effort required to respond quickly to business demands (e.g., making an unscheduled out-of-town trip to meet a client).

Arms-Length Model

- Independence from local government bureaucracy lessens administrative burden and allows more rapid response to opportunities.
- Flexibility is enhanced by having non-union staff. Contract labour can be moved in and out as project demands change.
- Example: In Parksville and Mission the economic developer is a municipal employee, but works at an external office (in both cases, the local Chamber of Commerce). This separation means that they are still included in the senior administrative team, and therefore have regular and high-level access to information, but have lesser administrative responsibilities.

ISSUE 5. CO-LOCATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES (E.G., TOURISM, FILM)

Some BC communities are now combining economic development with other organizations like tourism or film promotion agencies into a single office.

In-House Model

- Little potential for co-location with other agencies with the in-house model. It may be possible for some agencies to be brought into the local government but tourism promotion in particular requires a highly accessible location outside of government offices.

Arms-Length Model

- Co-location with related agencies allows greater co-ordination of activities and saving of overhead costs.
- Organizations like tourism and film promotion agencies are essentially doing economic development focused on a particular sector. There may be significant synergies between, for example, tourism promotion, investment attraction promotion, and new resident promotion that are less likely to be realized with separate organizations.
- Particularly in smaller communities where financial resources are limited, it is sensible to limit overhead costs to the greatest degree possible. It may also be helpful in limiting the demands placed on community volunteers who would otherwise become involved with multiple organizations.
- A number of communities have incorporated the Chamber of Commerce and other similar groups into a single location. Other organizations like Community Futures Development Corporations, Business Improvement Areas, and other business-related groups are other possible partners.

ISSUE 6. “DEAL-MAKING” AND PROVISION OF INCENTIVES

In-House Model

- Local governments are constrained by legislation and their own regulations that prohibit offering anything to a company that might confer an advantage relative to other companies.
- Lack of incentives (e.g., property tax reduction, free infrastructure upgrades, support for training) relative to American locations may be a disadvantage in the eyes of American companies that are accustomed to being offered inducements to locate in a particular area.
- General consensus among BC economic developers is that the lack of most American-style incentives is not really a negative.
- It avoids the “race to the bottom” that happens when municipalities compete to offer the best incentives and thereby eliminate much of the benefit they would otherwise receive from the investment, such as an enhanced local tax base.

Arms-Length Model

- Have more freedom to be creative in dealing with potential investors. May be able to own land and may sell it not necessarily to the highest bidder, but to the bidder that will create the greatest economic value from the land.
- There is greater latitude to negotiate a comprehensive deal that may include other inducements to the company, such as assistance with financing or a lower land sale price.
- Increased freedom of arms-length organizations to structure deals is still not comparable to the incentives offered by American jurisdictions.

The final two issues shown below are also important to consider in the establishment of an economic development organization but are not significantly different for the in-house local government model versus the arms-length model.

ISSUE 7. STRUCTURE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARDS AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES

- Nearly all economic development boards and committees have a mixture of public and private sector representatives. Some have a fixed roster of appointments that must come from designated organizations (e.g., local government, Chamber of Commerce) or important sectors (e.g., forest industry, tourism, agriculture).
- Some organizations require potential board/committee members to apply, at which time their applications are reviewed (often by a membership committee of the board) and a recommendation is made for the next round of appointments. In other cases, the board uses their own knowledge of community leaders to identify and approach individuals. Board elections may or may not be held to verify appointments.
- There is no clear consensus on the best approach to appointing board/committee members – what is important is the support of the local government, the business community, and the public at large. It is likely, however, that the more transparent and rigorous is the selection process, the fewer problems will ensue.
- For in-house economic development offices, ultimate control over activities and the strategic direction is provided by Council, so an economic development committee is strictly advisory. There is strong consensus, however, that the active participation of local business leaders is essential for identifying and focusing on the most important economic development issues for the community. Business community participation is less easily achieved in the local government model where business leaders must accept working within a bureaucratic framework. One BC municipality has struggled to maintain an advisory

committee over the years as there is a feeling that Council has not been interested in allowing others to provide direction to the economic development program.

- Regarding the issue of having fixed board positions from specific sectors, there is some feeling that this leads to a situation where the board members feel responsible for “representing” their sector, rather than acting in the best interest of the economic development organization as a whole. While it is desirable for all key sectors in a community to be represented, this may be better accomplished in an informal way without fixed positions. Several private economic development corporations reported that they operate their boards like any other private company, thereby avoiding the politicization of the board as much as possible.
- The issue of term limits on boards and committees has been troublesome for some organizations. Term limits have been introduced to ensure that “fresh blood” is kept on the board, but term limits can also be changed by those wishing to extend their involvement.

ISSUE 8. LOCAL VS. REGIONAL OPERATIONS

- Regional economic development organizations face unique challenges, regardless of how they are structured. There are often political difficulties in ensuring that each contributing entity (either a municipality or a regional district electoral area) is satisfied that they are receiving value for their contribution. It is often the case that smaller entities feel, either fairly or unfairly, that the central or largest community receives most of the attention and benefit of the economic development program.
- Sharing of costs and leveraging of additional resources is one of the primary arguments in favour of a regional approach. The resources of a combined regional entity in terms of both staff and budget are often considerably more than any of the individual entities could fund on their own, particularly in the case of small communities that can obtain a far more substantial economic development program by combining with other small communities or with larger communities in their region.
- Most of British Columbia’s economy is highly regional in nature. Industries often have a primary component in unincorporated areas or small communities (e.g., forestry, mining, fishing, tourism) supported by services, transportation facilities, and natural resource processing in larger centres. There are about 550,000 people living in unincorporated areas in the province, most of whom live near incorporated municipalities that act as retail and service centres and places of employment. In more urbanized areas, adjacent municipalities often function as part of a single regional economy. Businesses looking to invest in an area are interested in the size of the market, regardless of political boundaries, so it often makes better sense for multiple jurisdictions to have a unified economic development organization.
- The physical size of a region is important in considering a regional function. The point was made by several economic development professionals that regions that are so large that it takes many hours by car to travel between outlying communities may not be suited to a regional partnership. These vast distances diminish the argument that the entire region functions as a single economy, and also make it more difficult for outlying areas to feel connected to activities happening at the centre.

CONCLUSIONS

1. There is no single best model of local economic development.

2. Each local government must take into consideration their objectives for economic development, the range of services that are already being provided by other agencies, the amount of available funding, and potential partners.
3. The “in-house” model of economic development remains the most common organizational structure for BC local governments, but there is a trend toward more arms-length organizations.
4. An increasing number of communities are leveraging local government investment in economic development by sharing overhead costs with other organizations, or by pooling funding with adjacent jurisdictions.
5. The regional nature of the BC economy suggests that economic development is often better suited to a regional approach than a single-community approach. Past experience suggests, however, that the geographic size of the region cannot be too large.
6. Co-location with other organizations enhances collaborative economic development planning and reduces unnecessary overlap of services.
7. A positive relationship with the local business community is essential to the success of any economic development program. This relationship often works better when the economic development office is located outside of local government (even if it remains a department of the local government).
8. Communication with local government is essential for arms-length organizations to ensure continued support and coordination of activities.

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR BUSINESS “RESPONSE TEAM”

The City of Nanaimo has generously shared the Terms of Reference for their BusinessBEST Response Team. This is a committee of community leaders in various strategic industries, as well as City of Nanaimo representatives, who are jointly tasked with addressing business issues raised through the City’s BusinessBEST program.

BusinessBEST Program

Response Team Terms of Reference & Confidentiality Agreement

The Response Team is the key to success for the BusinessBEST program. The team must be customer focused, proactive and responsive. The team members must follow through on all actions, or delegate the actions and ensure they are acted upon. Team members must be problem solvers who are committed to making resolution of business issues a priority.

Members of the Response Team have the following responsibilities:

1. Act as a BusinessBEST champion.

Response Team members will build recognition and support for the principles of the program within their organizations and beyond.

2. Maintain a broad perspective

Response Team members will maintain a broad perspective on issues.

3. Maintain Confidentiality

Response Team members will hold all information obtained through the BusinessBEST program confidential. Businesses will not share concerns with us unless we can offer 100% confidentiality.

4. Represent their sector

Response Team members will act as representatives of their sector (Finance, Real Estate, Human Resources, Technology, Market Access, Local Government) not just their own organization or their personal area of responsibility and expertise.

5. Make it happen

Response Team members are responsible for taking action or delegating responsibility within the organizations they represent and encouraging members of their network to take action. Action will be required in two main areas:

- Priority response to the “Red Flag” or “opportunity” issues which are immediate in nature and can be solved/addressed in the short term.
- More measured response to policy or strategic issues.

6. Report back

Business issues are emailed to Response Team members with a timeline. Members are responsible for reporting back to the interviewer with solutions which will be communicated to the respective businesses.

Time Commitment: It is expected that being an effective member of the BusinessBEST Response Team will represent a time commitment of one hour per week. This includes problem solving and follow-up on business issues and two luncheon meetings held each year to report on BusinessBEST findings & progress.