

# SETTING THE STAGE

## DESCRIPTION

Early, informal conversations about the community's economic context are essential. This list of reasons to undertake economic development planning will help you gather important feedback from multiple perspectives and to begin generating support for a strategic planning process.

## RATIONALE

- Support and buy-in from key players and decision makers is essential to the process
- Opportunity to understand the general opinions and perceptions around LED and planning
- Opportunity to recruit for project team

## LOGISTICS

**Duration:** as needed; brief conversations with key players

**Format:** informal conversations

**Key Players:** project lead

**Resources:** existing documentation (OCP, community profile, statistics, webpage); other relevant community data that will help make a case for undertaking a strategic planning process

## OUTPUT

Consistent understanding of what process could or should entail; buy-in from key players; understanding of perspectives of multiple stakeholder types.

## PROCESS

1. Review the “Why undertake strategic planning” principles on the following page.
2. Develop a few-sentence overview that captures why you feel embarking on a strategic planning exercise for your community is important and timely. Try to link back to tangibles such as funding applications, or direct results such efforts may have on the community.
3. Have brief, informal meetings with the key players whose support would be integral to the success of the process. This could include: council members, local government staff, local business representatives, prominent local organizations – many of whom may make up the project team.
4. Discuss:
  - What this planning process could look like – how long, how much, to what end?
  - What challenges and opportunities does the person anticipate throughout the process?
  - Initial thoughts on the direction it could go, who would need to be involved, and how to get everyone on the same page.
  - Be sure to discuss their perspective on the local economy: what's going well, what could use improvement, and where they feel efforts should be focused.





## WHY UNDERTAKE LED STRATEGIC PLANNING?

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### Why is this important?

- Highlight the impetus for planning in your local area. Be sure to review any plans that exist already, and have some research including local stats, trends and issues ready to share
- A plan makes a difference: 75% of communities who have a plan agree it is effective<sup>1</sup>
- A plan allows communities to be responsive to funding opportunities (which often have very tight timelines to apply) – it is like writing a proposal for your community
- A plan helps make things happen: it coordinates efforts and creates connections and partnerships (gives you a roadmap)
- A plan gets past the talking (everyone is rowing in the same direction, deadlines, commitment)
- It helps keep track of what you are doing and if it is making a difference
- It is essential for marketing your community and attracting investment – investors are looking for a clear, targeted plan
- Many funding applications require that requests link back to a strategic plan

### What needs to happen?

- You need to get essential support, get a fresh plan in place, identify what can be done now (e.g., what are three quick starts) and what needs to be done over the longer term (e.g., upgrade the harbour)

<sup>1</sup> According to the findings of the [2016 Local Economic Development in B.C. survey](#).

- The project team will customize a consultation and planning process that makes sense for the community's context and capacity

## TIPS

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- Follow your local processes for initiation – the first step is often getting internal stakeholders on board, particularly council
- The first step is to gain buy-in from board members, if applicable, and develop a good understanding of the board's desired outcomes from the process
- Discuss with the council and/or board members if it's appropriate to establish a committee, and if so, who should be involved