

# Town of Ponoka

## Economic Development Strategy



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## Purpose of this Report

Ponoka is located in the heartland of Central Alberta. Its Western Canadian character and culture are celebrated by residents and visitors each year at the Ponoka Stampede, and each weekend at the Calnash Ag Event Centre, where the community hosts thousands of agricultural event-goers annually. It is also the home of a world-class research facility, the Centennial Centre for Mental Health and Brain Injury. Centennial Centre employs hundreds and makes Ponoka a destination for patients and some of the province's top health care professionals.

It is a tight knit community of approximately 7,200 that enjoyed a population growth rate of 6.7% over the last two census periods, though its growth rate is below the provincial growth rate of 11.6%. Its median age of 40.1 as of the 2016 census, and proportion of those aged 65+ compared with provincial norms suggest that it is a community that is getting older, faster than its neighbouring communities while lagging behind some of the economic growth that occurred in the rest of the province.

The Town of Ponoka has been without an economic development strategy or a single-purpose dedicated economic development staff presence since 2015. Economic development efforts were undertaken by various staff, committees, and council initiatives. During that time, the Town worked toward streamlining its internal processes for development, and it developed a series of progressive plans and policies that would guide the responsible future growth of Ponoka. Some of these included an Urban Framework Master Plan, Recreation and Culture Master Plan, Downtown Action Plan, and Corporate Strategic Plan. These planning efforts lay the groundwork for a strong sense of place, and, once implemented, will competitively position Ponoka to take full advantage of development opportunities.

This Economic Development Strategy is, in many respects, a continuation of those efforts. It is geared toward responsible economic growth that approaches economic development efforts in a thoughtful and holistic manner, beginning by tapping into Ponoka's existing business base and stemming economic leakage. The purpose of this strategy is to guide the Town of Ponoka's economic development efforts from now into the coming years. It lays the groundwork for focused and customer service oriented economic development efforts.

This report includes the following:

- **SOARR Assessment and Strategic Directions:** An overview of the Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Risks, and Results, coming from the background report review and stakeholder engagement, culminating in the presentation of themes, target markets and sectors to inform the subsequent Action Plan.
- **Supporting Background Components:** All supporting materials that informed the SOARR and preliminary directions, including the economic base analysis, economic forecast and local impacts of market trends discussion, Triage BR+E follow-up interview findings, and stakeholder engagement key findings and summaries. The Retail Gap Analysis and Triage BR+E findings are included as appendix material.









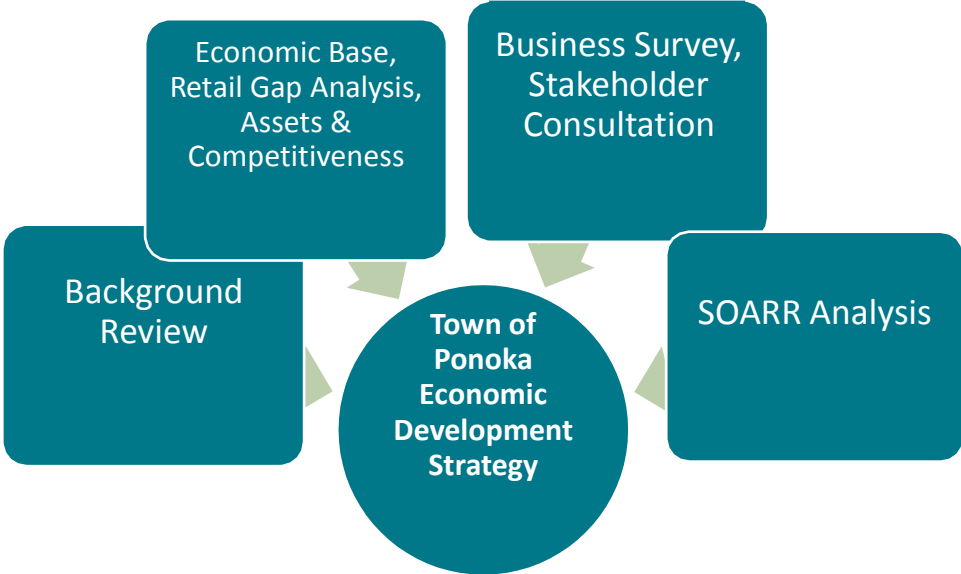
# Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Risks & Results for Ponoka

## Developing the Strategy

The Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Risks, and Result (SOARR) analysis for Ponoka was the culmination of a series of background and statistical research, coupled with various methods of stakeholder consultation. This process began with a review of background material provided by the Town. Statistical analyses included an economic base analysis and a retail gap analysis. This project was also complimented by a Triage BR+E survey, which surveyed 60 businesses on their satisfaction with various factors of doing business in Ponoka. These were followed by in-person follow up meetings with the highest priority businesses identified in the survey and a representative from the Town.

Stakeholder consultation covered significant ground. Three community workshops were conducted that gathered perspectives of the business community, external perspective interviews that captured the perspectives of outside investors to Ponoka, and interviews with neighbouring communities (Ermeniskin First Nation, Samson Cree First Nation, Louis Bull First Nation, Montana First Nation, and Ponoka County) that revealed the potential for partnerships and collaboration. Consultations such as the neighbouring community interviews and the BR+E follow-up interviews served the dual purpose of building relationships between the Town and those stakeholders, as they provided an opportunity for the representatives from the Town to meet face-to-face with them, and a forum for valuable discussion.

The image below offers a visual to the process that led to the completion of this strategy. Each input's findings contributed to the SOARR analysis, which led to the formulation of priorities and the resulting action plan.





## SOARR Assessment

A SOARR Assessment is a model for reflecting on strategic planning by studying identified Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Risks and Results (SOARR). It is a forward-looking model, taking elements of what would traditionally be affiliated with a Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis and using insights gained through stakeholder consultations to inform what is desired for the future and how to know when our aspirations have been met. The key concepts underpinning the SOARR model are outlined in the figure below. The SOARR Assessment is used in conjunction with the rest of the content of this Background Report. In essence, it represents a summary of all the key learnings uncovered to date so that some preliminary directions can be explored for the Economic Development Strategy.

Figure 1: Key Considerations for a SOARR Analysis



Source: MDB Insight, 2019.



## Strengths



### STRENGTHS

What can we build on?

- What are we doing well?
- What key achievements are we most proud of?
- What positive aspects have individuals and enterprises commented on?

- **Location:** Ponoka is located in the middle of the Highway 2 corridor near Red Deer and close to both Edmonton and Calgary. The town is only a 45-minute drive from Edmonton International Airport and close enough to Calgary International Airport to make it a reasonable option.
- **Surrounding agricultural base:** The surrounding region's longstanding economic mainstay, agriculture, which includes grain, livestock, chickens, and dairy, is thriving and shows no signs of slowing down.
- **Ponoka Stampede:** The Ponoka Stampede rivals the biggest rodeos in the province and draws thousands of spectators from the U.S. and Canada each year. It is the largest 7-day pro rodeo in Canada and the 4<sup>th</sup> highest paying rodeo in North America.
- **Calnash Ag Event Centre:** The Ag Event Centre brings in new people for events nearly every weekend of the year and has proven an extremely good investment for the Town, County, the Ponoka Stampede and Exhibition Association, and the Ponoka Agricultural Society.
- **Rural Western Canada culture:** Building off the strength of the Ag Event Centre and the Stampede, Ponoka's rural Western Canadian character is notable and charming, and is a key element of Ponoka's sense of place.
- **Town Council and administrators who are attentive to the needs of businesses:** There were numerous comments throughout consultation that the Town's responsiveness to development applications has greatly improved over the last 10 years.
- **Centennial Centre:** A world-class brain injury and mental health facility, that employs the best of the best in the field and treats patients from all over the province.
- **Health services and access to physicians:** The general hospital is excellent and has been successful in recruiting physicians in recent years.
- **Fibre internet services:** Ponoka's broadband access is exceptional with fibre internet.
- **River valley:** A differentiator among similar Albertan towns, Ponoka's river valley is a unique natural asset.
- **Water access:** Water in Ponoka is piped from the Red Deer River, with 'unlimited' water supply. This may present opportunities for agri-food processing or other water intensive industries.
- **Picturesque downtown:** Ponoka's downtown bears many unique underleveraged architectural assets, including the Cardinal-designed Alberta Government building, and elm trees that line the streets.
- **Citizen engagement:** Ponoka's community is active, engaged, and invested in its future.





- **Tolerance, acceptance, and diversity:** Culturally, Ponoka shows marked acceptance of people with mental health issues and the neurodiverse because of the Centennial Centre. An example of this is Ponoka’s Rising Sun Clubhouse, which is active in the community and provides work opportunities and allows persons with mental health needs to live independent, self-sufficient lives. Also, the second most commonly spoken language in Ponoka is Tagalog, which signals cultural diversity.
- **First Nations culture:** Ponoka has a large First Nations community living there and is surrounded by several First Nations communities that are open to partnerships with the Town. The new library’s bilingual signage in English and Cree are evidence of Ponoka’s commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- **Community investment:** Plans are in place that show Ponoka is serious about investing in itself: the Transportation Master Plan, Downtown Action Plan, and Urban Framework Master Plan, among others, are all either recently completed or in process, which shows the Town is taking an active role in its future.
- **Oil and gas:** Ponoka benefits from the surrounding oil and gas industry.

## Opportunities



### OPPORTUNITIES

What are our best possible future opportunities?

- What changes in demand do we expect to see in the future?
- What external forces or trends may positively affect development?
- What are the key areas of untapped potential?
- What weaknesses or threats can be converted into SMART improvements?

- **Regional relationships:** The Four First Nations, Ermeniskin First Nation, Montana First Nation, Louis Bull First Nation, and Samson Cree First Nation have expressed interest in working with Ponoka. Some are doing well economically (e.g. Ermenskin have their own businesses and are doing solar, hydroponics); all of them are looking to use their lands in a strategic way. First Nations can also apply to grants that municipalities cannot apply to (e.g. CANDO’s CEDI).
- **Intermunicipal Development Plan & Collaboration Framework with the County:** The Town and County are currently engaged developing an intermunicipal collaboration framework. This signals that the Town and County will be able to partner on any future economic opportunities.
- **Convenience retail:** The Retail Gap Analysis shows that attracting convenience box store retail would capture some of the economic leakage from shoppers who leave town to buy convenience items.
- **Centennial Centre employees as residents:** Many Centennial Centre employees commute to Ponoka and do not reside in the town. There is an opportunity to attract these workers as residents.
- **E-Commerce and tech-based businesses:** Ponoka’s excellent fibre internet access gives it an edge in attracting e-commerce and tech-based businesses. Low cost real estate and proximity to airports and big cities are also value propositions for tech-based businesses and solopreneurs to locate in Ponoka. Developing a more attractive sense of place to attract these types of entrepreneurs is also an opportunity.



- **Agri-food processing:** Leverage Ponoka's water availability and strong surrounding farming community to attract agri-food processing businesses.
- **Health/Wellness hub:** Building off the excellence of the Centennial Centre, there is an opportunity to attract other medical and healthcare-focused businesses, or additional centres of healthcare excellence, to complement that activity.
- **Capturing retail dollars from Stampede and Calnash Ag Event Centre tourism:** Both the stampede and the ag event centre draw hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. Consultations revealed that many retailers, especially downtown, do not benefit from those visitation numbers. There is an opportunity to capture those benefits more widely throughout the town. Finding creative ways to entice those visitors downtown is an opportunity.
- **Destination for seniors:** Ponoka's size, readily available health care services and community amenities make it a top destination for retirees to settle.
- **Downtown investment:** Implementing the recommendations within the Downtown Development Plan will not only improve the business environment and encourage façade improvements, stronger business organization, a beautification (e.g. streetscape improvements, patios, closing off Chipman Ave in the summer) but will buoy the community's spirits and pride in itself.
- **Community Futures presence and local small business support:** Engagement with local businesses showed that small businesses in Ponoka are unaware of what local resources are available to them including grant or loan opportunities or resources for succession planning. Facilitating a stronger Community Futures presence in Ponoka would be a step towards filling those gaps and contribute to the health of the business community.
- **Economic development services:** Engagement with local businesses showed that businesses are unsure who to speak to at the Town for any municipal needs. An economic development service, such as a dedicated single-purpose staff person and/or continued BR+E efforts with a dedicated volunteer task force, would maintain the Town's connection with the business community and take a leadership role on economic development projects. This position would help to push the community's aspiration to have a reputation for service excellence for businesses.
- **Retail, service, and entertainment development:** With a picturesque downtown that is home to some unique small businesses, Ponoka can attract shoppers from the trading area and Edmonton to enjoy boutique and niche businesses.
- **Customer service improvements to development request processes:** There is recognition that the Town has done an excellent job at improving the development permit process over the last several years. Ponoka has updated its Zoning Bylaw and there will be opportunities to build off those efforts and ensure that approval processes continue to improve and become consistently excellent. There are also opportunities to communicate that messaging to build a regional reputation for service excellence.
- **Farming immigration investment in the region:** Newcomer farmers suggest there may be new supply chain opportunities to break into in agri-food. Exploring those could be an opportunity.
- **Municipal campground:** Capturing revenue from tourist visitation to the Stampede and Ag Event Centre. There could be an opportunity for the Town to operate a camp ground, and collect revenue from visitors.





## Aspirations



### ASPIRATIONS

What do we care deeply about achieving?

- What are we deeply passionate about?
- As a region, what difference do we hope to make (e.g. to residents, for institutions, to businesses)?
- What does our preferred future look like?

- Being known as a seniors-friendly community
- To be the Western entertainment destination of Canada
- To be known as the health care and wellness hub of Alberta
- Recreation assets and offerings in Ponoka are competitive with neighbouring communities and well utilized.
- A stronger relationship between the Town and the business community.
- To have a thriving and vibrant downtown with successful businesses that is a destination for tourists and residents. Architectural and natural elements such as the Douglas Cardinal-designed Provincial Government building and the town's mature elm trees are a source of civic pride that contribute to Ponoka's sense of place.
- To be a place where young professionals and solopreneurs choose to live and raise their families because of its recreation amenities and livability
- Ponoka has a regional reputation for service excellence across the board, especially with regard to business and development inquiries
- To have positive and mutually beneficial working relationships with regional partners including Montana First Nation, Ermeniskin First Nation, Louis Bull First Nation, Samson Cree First Nation, and Ponoka County.



## Risks

	<b>RISKS</b> How will we recognize and mitigate or eliminate potential risks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What challenges do we need to be aware of?</li><li>• What policy shifts could impact our aspirations?</li><li>• What contingencies should we have in place to address threats or unexpected consequences?</li></ul>
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- If quality-of-place improvements are not made, there is a risk of not being able to attract residents and tech/remote workers.
- Failure to invest in infrastructure improvements – the recreation centre, for example - will ultimately come with higher costs later and put the community behind its neighbouring communities.
- Continued lack of market choice of industrial land stifles development opportunities.
- Lack of investment in relationships with the business community could lead to apathy and businesses leaving Ponoka for other communities.
- The continued growth of retail in nearby competing communities narrows the field in Ponoka.
- Not investing in a dedicated economic development presence in town, through a dedicated staff person or otherwise, may make Ponoka miss opportunities and put it behind its competitors.
- Aging population may signal a depleting labour force.

## Results

	<b>RESULTS</b> How will we know we are succeeding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are the key goals we would like to accomplish in order to achieve these results?</li><li>• What meaningful measures will indicate that we are on track toward achieving our goals?</li><li>• What resources are needed to implement our most vital projects and initiatives?</li></ul>
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- Ponoka’s population has grown.
- More available residential and industrial development land.
- Downtown businesses are seeing the benefits of tourism visitation from regional visitors on weekends, and the Calnash Ag Event Centre and the Ponoka Stampede.
- Increased awareness of Ponoka throughout the region and province.
- Continually improving satisfaction ratings by owners of existing businesses.





Photo Divider





# Prioritizing Economic Development Activities

## Definition of Economic Development:

Economic development is rooted in the premise that initiatives must ultimately increase the total wealth within a community. There are two main ways to do this:

1. **Export Development** – any initiative that brings new money into the community:
  - starting/attracting a business that sells products/services outside the community
  - attracting visitors who then buy local products/services
  - encouraging existing business to sell their product/service outside the community
2. **Import Substitution** – any initiative that keeps money in the community:
  - encourage people and businesses to buy their goods/services locally rather than importing them from another community
  - starting or attracting new businesses that recognize the leakage and provide a product/service to stop it

In strong local economies, locally generated wealth changes hands many times before it is spent outside. The impact of these drivers and subsequent circulation is job creation, property investment and local taxation.

Taken together, these two philosophies form the fundamental direction for economic development programs. If economic development programs are meant to increase wealth in the community (and for the community) then initiatives should be directed to improving export development (primarily) and improving import substitution (secondarily).

By its very nature, economic development is a broad discipline. It means different things to different people and within that the most important priorities can also vary. As a result, there are different ways for an economic development office to prioritize its time and financial resources. The Town of Ponoka has an Economic Development Board, though it does not have a directed Economic Development Office nor a paid staff person to undertake Economic Development activities solely. Engagement also revealed that there is no apparent Community Futures presence in town that engages and supports local business.

For Ponoka, as the following sections will emphasize, this strategy proposes that economic development be prioritized to sectors and markets that are most easily attainable and with a service excellence approach. Focusing efforts on external communication with the business community and creating and maintaining relationships will be at the heart of Ponoka's economic development efforts.





## The Importance of Economic Impact and Influence

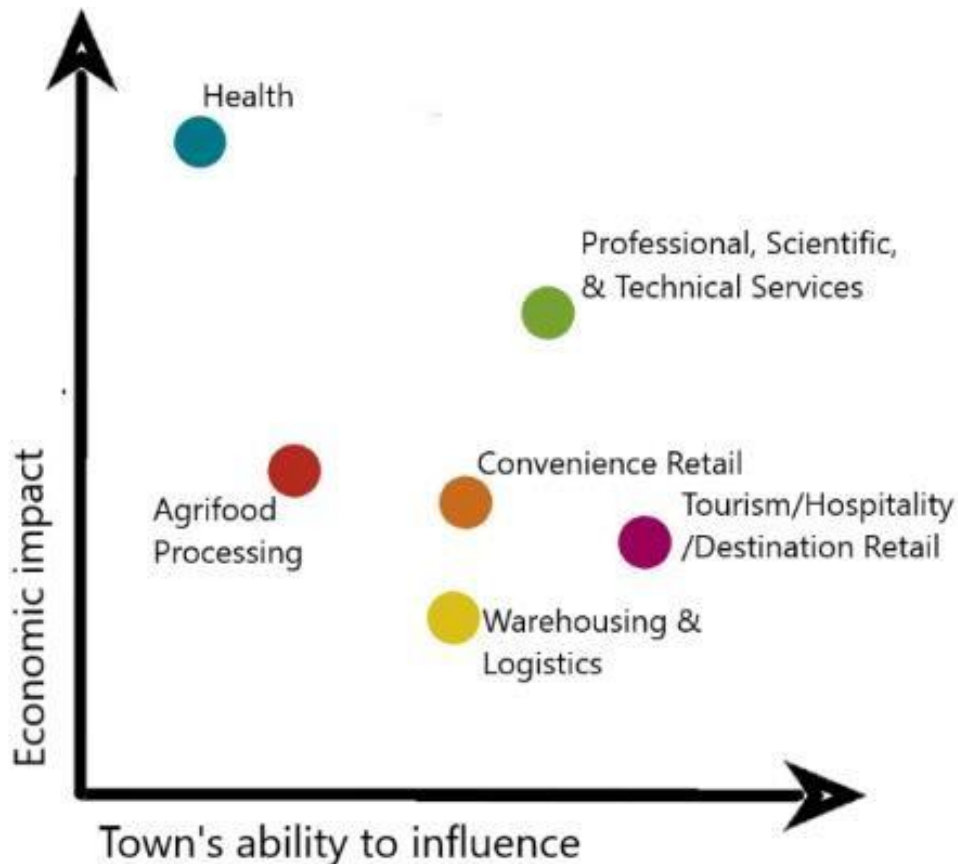
The following economic drivers – or sectors - can be prioritized by examining two important criteria:

- The economic impact on Ponoka
- The ability for the Town of Ponoka to influence economic change in a given sector

The image below shows some of the identified sectors of strength for Ponoka: Health, Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (PSTS), Convenience Retail, Tourism/Hospitality/Destination Retail, Agrifood Processing, and Warehousing and Logistics. These sectors were placed on a matrix that shows where each sector falls within the Town’s ability to influence the sector, and its potential economic impact. It’s notable that the health care sector, the blue dot, has very high economic impact, but it falls on the left in the matrix as the Town’s ability to directly influence the attraction of health care sector activity is relatively low since it is largely a publicly funded industry. That said, it is undeniable that a state- of-the-art medical facility such as Centennial Centre has major economic impact and can be leveraged to attract more high paying health care jobs to the community.

Ideally, it is best to prioritize economic development efforts to the sectors that fall closest to the upper right of the matrix.

Figure 2: Long term 'Economic Impact of' and 'Town Influence on' investment and job creation opportunities





# Economic Forecast and Local Impacts of Market Trends

Based on the Strengths and Opportunities identified in the SOARR analysis, five target sectors were reviewed to inform big-picture thinking around how Ponoka can best leverage those sectors. It is important as an economic developer to understand the international, national and local policies and market trends that impact any given sector, as attraction and retention activities must be tailored to these realities. This section will review the major trends, opportunities, and potential impacts in Alberta and Canada of the following industry sectors:

- Agriculture and agri-food (including Cannabis)
- Tourism
- Warehousing and logistics
- Professional, scientific and technical services
- Health care

## Agriculture and Agri-food

Ponoka identifies as more than just farming and ranching. Today, the agriculture sector has diversified to include the production of bison, elk, and other exotic stock. Ponoka also has a reliable agriculture service and value-added agricultural industry, including for trucks and equipment dealerships, fertiliser companies, Agri-supply businesses, and veterinarian clinics.

The agriculture and agri-food sectors play an essential role in Alberta's economy. According to the province, there are approximately 40,638 farms, and over 50 million acres of total farmland dedicated to crop and livestock production; these farms reached a total of \$11.6 billion in exports in 2018.

Alberta is a leader in the production of wheat, canola seeds, and dry peas; contributing to Canada's grain exports notably. In terms of livestock; beef (including dairy products) and pork accounted for half of Alberta's food manufacturing sales, approximately \$7.5 billion in 2018<sup>1</sup>.

According to the Canadian Ministry of Agriculture and Agri-food, the sector has been experiencing continued growth since 2016 and has the target of growing the sector exports to \$75 billion by 2025 (compared to \$64.6 billion in 2017). The Federal Government is also promoting the use of agricultural by-products such as paper made from wheat bagasse, and straws made from flax stems.

### Cannabis a Growing Opportunity

According to Statistics Canada data, Alberta was the province with the most significant sales of legal cannabis in Canada, with approximately \$123.6 million in sales from October 2018 to June 2019<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Alberta. Introducing Alberta's Agriculture and Agri-food Sector. 2019

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 20-10-0008-01 Retail trade sales by province and territory (x 1,000)





Furthermore, Alberta's cannabis consumers are expected to spend about \$940 million on legal weed by 2024, second in Canada just behind Ontario<sup>3</sup>.

Since Cannabis became legal in October of 2018, Canada has received more than \$186 million in taxes from cannabis sales, of which 71% corresponded to provincial revenue.

Some examples of businesses operating within the cannabis industry include:

- **Agriculture technology:** Businesses that support the innovation and development of equipment required to cultivate cannabis, such as automated fertiliser systems, greenhouse technologies and improved lighting systems.
- **Ancillary products and services:** Businesses that offer products that complement the cannabis industry as a whole, which can include products like cannabis breathalyser to laboratories that test cannabis products. This also includes companies that provide insurance to cultivators as well as those that create consumer packaging for products.
- **Biotechnology:** Businesses that focus on the pharmaceutical applications of cannabis by developing treatments to target illnesses and diseases.
- **Consulting services:** Businesses that respond to the complexity of rules and regulations around cannabis between different jurisdictions. They may provide services to assist with licensing, zoning or advising on operational processes.
- **Consumption devices:** Businesses that create products that people use to consume cannabis.
- **Cultivation and retail:** Businesses that grow and sell cannabis, and are often the types of businesses that most people think of when discussing the cannabis industry.
- **Cannabis products and extracts:** Businesses that sell cannabidiol products, edibles, topicals, drinks and other products.
- **Holding companies:** Businesses that typically own a considerable number of voting shares in a variety of cannabis companies, allowing them to influence the management and affairs of the companies held.
- **Industrial hemp:** Businesses that provide products using industrial hemp, which is different than cannabis and may have numerous applications and uses, including creating consumer products like paper and clothing, as well as building materials, fuel and foods.
- **Organic farms:** Businesses that provide organically-grown cannabis to other companies or sell to consumers directly, relying on the increasing demand for organic products and services to drive the business's growth.<sup>4</sup>

### Industrial Hemp

Cannabis' sister crop, hemp, is also a very promising crop for Alberta.<sup>5</sup> Hemp is a protein and fibre-rich food, but its fibre is incredibly versatile for manufacturing. Products made from hemp include textiles, paper products, building materials or biofuels. Alberta has been recognized as the hub of the hemp

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<sup>3</sup> CBC Canada. Retrieved from <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/alberta-cannabis-market-1.5089769>>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.getsmarteraboutmoney.ca/invest/investment-products/investing-cannabis-industry/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.techlifetoday.ca/articles/2019/alberta-poised-to-become-a-hemp-hub>



industry, and the communities of Airdrie, Drayton Valley, Vegreville, and Bruderheim are all home to hemp processing facilities and value-added manufacturers. The Town of Ponoka is currently home to a marijuana processing facility, Battle River Pharmaceuticals. This was approved in 2018 and the facility is under construction 2019-2020. This suggests there are possibilities to attract more of this type of industry.

## Tourism

Canada is increasingly becoming a tourism destination for international travellers who come seeking out genuine, outdoor, and natural experiences. Tourists to Canada are predominantly motivated by experiences that enhance local scenery<sup>6</sup>. Alberta's opportunity market is focused on cross-border US tourists, and due to Ponoka's location along the Calgary-Edmonton Corridor, the town benefits from the constant movement of people and goods between Alberta's largest cities; having average daily traffic of 27,392<sup>7</sup>.

As home to the Ponoka Stampede, an event best known for being one of western Canada's largest professional rodeos, Ponoka's tourism brand is uniquely Western Canadian. The Calnash Ag Event centre is also a major attraction for tourists, with thousands of visitors each weekend, who come for agricultural events and experiences.

Throughout consultations, it was revealed that economic benefits from Ponoka's regular tourism activity is segmented to the south end of town. There is an opportunity in Ponoka to attract visitors of those agriculturally based events to the downtown retail businesses and restaurants.

Furthermore, Ponoka's charming downtown and its unique niche retail businesses show potential to make it a destination for visitors from surrounding urban centres.

## Warehousing and Logistics

Although Ponoka's labour force employed in warehousing and transportation, and the number of businesses is relatively low compared to other industry sectors, Ponoka has potential to become a logistics centre for Alberta. Its location along highway 2, between Edmonton and Red Deer make it an ideal location for warehousing goods being distributed within and outside of Alberta.

Demand for transportation, warehousing and logistics services originates from all sectors of the economy, and its directly affected by fluctuations in economic activity in trade patterns.

Canada's transportation networks are well-developed and nationally, it's trade corridors are considered a competitive advantage for international businesses looking to move goods throughout the country and the rest of the continent. Alberta's highway 2 is among those well-developed trade corridors.

The development and adoption of technology is resulting in significant upgrades to logistic and warehousing activities. This leads to better efficiency, reliability, sustainability, safety and security for

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<sup>6</sup> Roberto, Rocha. "Why Canada's tourism industry is finally heating up again." June 18, 2018. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/travel-canada-numbers-1.4682484>

<sup>7</sup> Government of Alberta. Highway Traffic Counts.





goods being warehoused and moved. Transportation and logistic providers are increasingly adopting advanced technologies and innovative processes to retain their competitive advantage. They are aiming at reducing costs, improving services and decreasing their carbon footprint. Ponoka's fibre internet services and land availability are competitive advantages in this area.

Adequate capacity in the country's infrastructure is key to support current and future trade needs. Investments required to upgrade existing infrastructure and to adapt to the ever-growing traffic volume represent a significant challenge for all levels of government.<sup>8</sup>

Since 2011, the warehousing and transportation industry has added more than 10,525 jobs and 926 new businesses have been recorded in Alberta.

## Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services

Understanding how to grow professional, scientific and technical services in any community is best started through the lens of talent attraction best practices. Professional, scientific and technical services entrepreneurs and workers are those who are engaged in activities in which human capital, or knowledge, is the major input: lawyers, architects, engineers, accountants, computer systems design or related services, for example. These entrepreneurs are highly skilled and can typically take their trade with them to a community of their choice. The research shows that among the myriad of reasons this talent might locate somewhere, what these professionals seek places that offer quality of life and quality of place.

“Among 25 to 34-year-olds with college degrees, two thirds look for a job after they choose the community where they want to live”<sup>9</sup>. Talented workers expect to live in communities that have recreation and cultural amenities, are safe, accessible, attractive, and vibrant.

Many knowledge workers have the flexibility to telecommute. A popular term for those that work from home from a location of their choice is Lone Eagles. ‘A Lone Eagle is a knowledge worker who can live and work anywhere, primarily because of advances in telecomputing technologies.’<sup>10</sup>

Ponoka's fibre optic internet access, and its ideal location on highway 2 with easy access to Edmonton and Red Deer, are two strengths that could be leveraged to attract these types of knowledge professionals. A professional could comfortably live and work in Ponoka and take advantage of its rural lifestyle. Efforts to increase Ponoka's liveability assets – such as the new recreation centre, and investment in revitalization of the downtown - are examples of efforts that, once completed, will be assets that can be leveraged in talent attraction efforts.

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<sup>8</sup> Government of Canada Industry Profile: Transportation and Warehousing. [https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/dsib-logi.nsf/eng/h\\_pj00541.html](https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/dsib-logi.nsf/eng/h_pj00541.html)

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.iedconline.org/clientuploads/directory/docs/EDRP\\_Placemaking.pdf](https://www.iedconline.org/clientuploads/directory/docs/EDRP_Placemaking.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <https://fcpp.org/pdf/PolicySeries19%20Lone%20Eagles.pdf>



## Health Care

The Health Care and Social Assistance sector comprises establishments providing health care and social assistance for individuals. The sector includes both health care and social assistance because it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the boundaries of these two activities. The industries in this sector are arranged on a continuum starting with those establishments providing medical care exclusively, continuing with those providing health care and social assistance, and finally finishing with those providing only social assistance. The services provided by establishments in this sector are delivered by trained professionals. All industries in the sector share this commonality of process, namely, labour inputs of health practitioners or social workers with the requisite expertise. Typically, wages in health care and social assistance in Alberta are higher than those of the average hourly wages in all industries. In 2016, the average hourly wage of \$30.99 for the health care and social assistance industry was above the provincial average of \$29.61.<sup>11</sup>

Many of the industries in the sector are defined based on the educational degree held by the practitioners included in the industry. Under Statistics Canada and the North American Industry Coding System (NAICS) this consists of 4 different sub-sectors: ambulatory health care services, hospitals, nursing and residential care facilities, and social assistance.<sup>12</sup>

Between 2017 and 2018, the Alberta government's priorities included better access to primary and community-based health care, spending \$249 million for the year. It also budgeted \$81 million for addiction and mental health services. The provincial government also set aside \$2 billion for home care and community care for seniors and Albertans with disabilities, creating prospects for rural service providers.<sup>13</sup>

For Ponoka, having Centennial Centre as a long-established centre of excellence in brain injury and mental health treatment and research in the community is evidence that Ponoka already has a health care cluster. Working with the provincial government and Centennial Centre's leadership to better understand the industry would likely lead to new opportunities to attract health care businesses and institutions to town. This would create more of those well-paying health care jobs, and could have the added effect of attracting senior residents to the community who may be attracted to Ponoka's superior health care services.

<sup>11</sup> <https://alis.alberta.ca/occinfo/industry-profiles/health-care-and-social-assistance/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVD&TVD=1181553&CVD=1181554&CPV=62&CST=01012017&CLV=1&MLV=5>

<sup>13</sup> <https://alis.alberta.ca/occinfo/industry-profiles/health-care-and-social-assistance/>



## Sector Value Proposition Matrix

Figure 3: Value Proposition Matrix for the Town of Ponoka

Indicators	Healthcare & Health Services	Agri-food Processing	Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	Tourism	Warehousing & Logistics	Convenience Retail
Estimated Long-term Growth of Sector	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	Moderate	Strong
Complement to existing local economic base	Strong	Strong	Moderate-Strong	Strong	Moderate	Strong
Potential to have a significant impact on the local economy	Strong	Moderate-Strong	Strong	Moderate-Strong	Moderate	Strong
Alignment with Town priorities and previous plans	Moderate-Strong – Further health care sector attraction and development was not noted strongly throughout the literature, but making Ponoka a health care hub would further the Town’s priority of promoting health and wellness in the community.	Strong – Agrifood processing cluster development was noted in the Municipal Development Plan as a priority.	Strong – plans such as the Recreation Master Plan and the Community Wellness Centre contain key community assets that would assist in attracting these professionals.	Strong – Tourism is noted as an economic development priority in the Town’s corporate strategic plan 2018-2023. The Downtown Action Plan and others that promote creating a destination in the downtown.	Moderate – Industrial development and the provision of industrial lands for activity is noted throughout the literature.	Strong – the Town of Ponoka Growth Study (2009) and the Municipal Development Plan (2013) include commercial land needs to accommodate for future population growth.
Current state of the local sector	Moderate-Strong	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	Weak





Indicators	Healthcare & Health Services	Agri-food Processing	Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	Tourism	Warehousing & Logistics	Convenience Retail
Current ability to capitalize on the sector	Centennial Centre's excellent reputation combined with the destigmatization of mental health signals a current moment of opportunity.	Moderate – strong network of surrounding agricultural businesses and “unlimited” water access in Ponoka are strengths for the sector that can be leveraged.	Moderate-Strong. Ponoka's fibre internet connection is a major asset in attracting this sector, as is its location between Edmonton and Red Deer.	Strong – the Calnash Ag Event Centre and the Stampede are well established and bring thousands of visitors each year. This is an excellent launching point.	Moderate-strong – Ponoka has an ideal location on highway 2, and some land that could accommodate industrial warehousing facilities	Strong – the Retail Gap Analysis found that there is an opportunity to retain retail spending that would otherwise go to neighbouring communities.
Capitalize on these competitive advantages	Centennial Centre  Health care professionals are typically paid high wages that can be redistributed to the local economy	Ponoka is situated in the middle of a vibrant farming region  The Province has invested in farming immigration – potential to leverage new small-scale family farm businesses  Relatively low housing costs  Strength in healthcare	Fibre internet  Location between Edmonton and Calgary, including their international airports  Relatively low housing costs  Strength in healthcare  Downtown Development Plan	Western Canadian culture/identity  Charming downtown  Niche retailers such as antique shops and artisan businesses downtown  Interesting architecture  Scenic river valley  Relatively low housing costs  Downtown Development Plan	Ideal location on Highway 2  Relatively low housing costs	Land assets along Hwy53 and Hwy2A  No other box store/convenience retail competition in town



Indicators	Healthcare & Health Services	Agri-food Processing	Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	Tourism	Warehousing & Logistics	Convenience Retail
Beware of these competitive disadvantages	Attracting health care institutions can be a bureaucratic process requiring lobbying upper levels of government. Health care employees at Centennial Centre have historically not chosen to live in Ponoka to separate from work.	Leveraging surrounding agricultural producer businesses can be difficult, as supply chains are often well established and difficult to penetrate. Major newcomer processing businesses would likely require serviced development land.	Planned liveability projects that would assist with attracting these professionals, such as the new recreation centre, are not yet established.	Few unique dining experiences downtown despite a handful of niche retailers	Land on highway 2 is not yet serviced	Ponoka does not exhibit significant demand forecasts, and its smaller population will make it less attractive to some larger retailers.
Desired future situation by 2024 notes from Board meeting	Sector is really changing so people are flexible	Must become investment ready if want to be serious about the sector	We have places that people want to meet; Changed perception of not being current; Have downtown accommodations	Investment attraction ready	Investment ready to be able to react to incoming inquiries	Ponoka's retail base meets the needs of the population. Retail spending is retained within Ponoka and not lose to neighbouring communities.

Source: MDB Insight, 2019

Photo Divider







## Prioritizing Economic Development Efforts by Markets & Resources

Setting economic development priorities is often based on budget and resource constraints. As such, it can be useful to set priorities based on market segments.

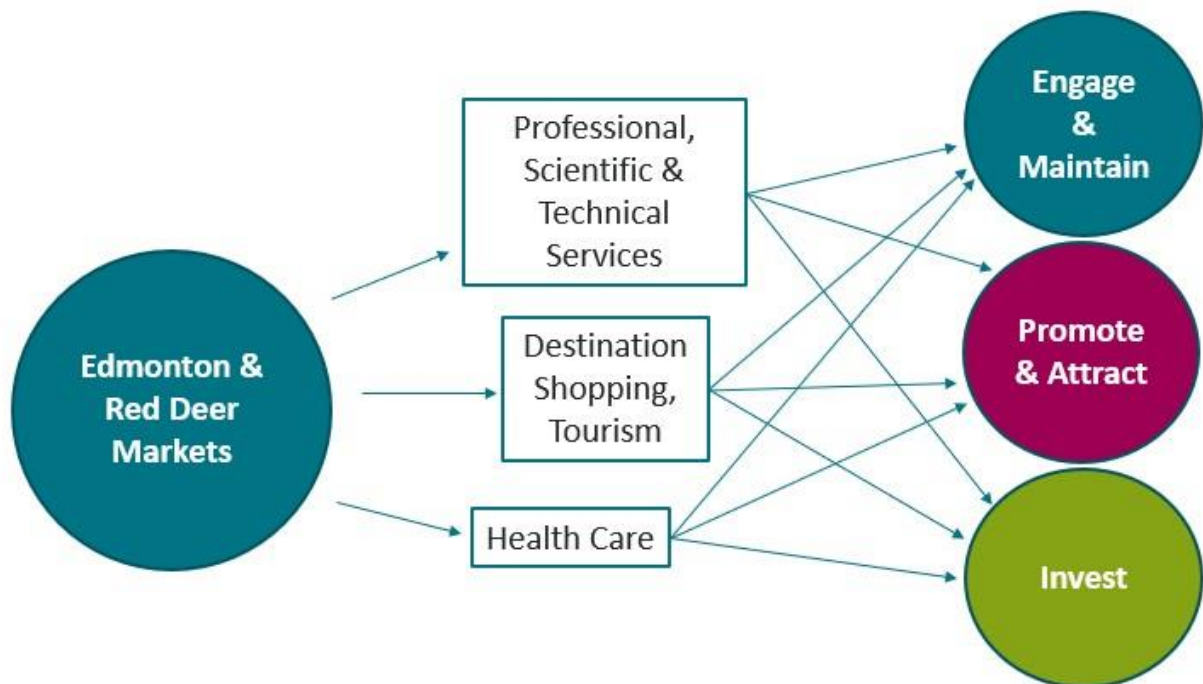
### Local and Regional Market Focus: Edmonton & Red Deer

Ponoka's location on highway 2 was its most commonly cited strength throughout consultations. Its connectedness to the urban centres of Edmonton and Red Deer provides it markets for targeted population and business attraction. Ponoka's identified major sectors of opportunity were assessed from this perspective. Those sectors were professional, scientific and technical services, destination shopping and tourism, convenience retail, and health care.

Economic development activities to develop those sectors in regional markets are then broken into action areas: Engage & Maintain, Promote & Attract, and Invest.

The following image shows that each action area encompasses economic development activities that would focus on those sectors.

**Figure 4: Local and Regional Markets: Sector Focus and Action Areas**



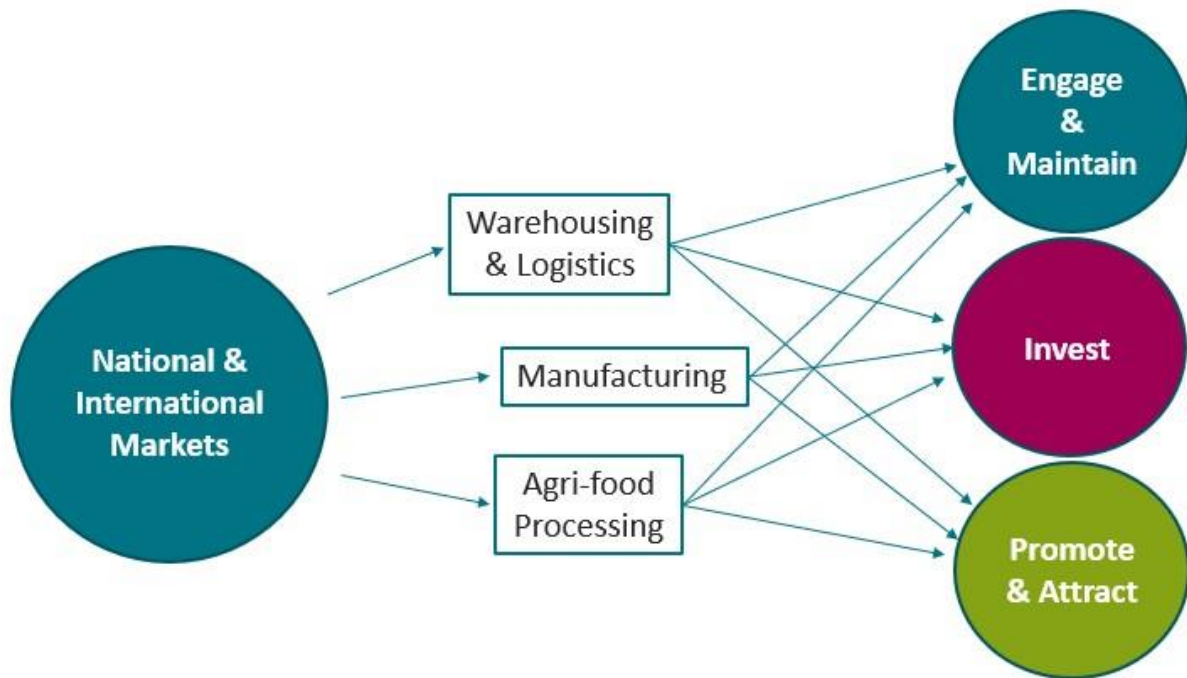
### National & International Market Focus

With a larger budget and increased resources, we can think about attracting those sectors that typically operate at national and international scales. We can think bigger. The priority sectors that typically operate at a national and international scale were warehousing and logistics, manufacturing, and agri- food processing. Attracting businesses of that scale requires increased resources and investment.

For this broader focus, the priority order of activity themes shifted. Engage and Maintain still represents the first set of activities but the action area Invest comes second. This is to represent the necessary investment the Town must make to be investment ready to external interests. Activities under this theme may include larger undertakings like servicing of green fields.

Promote and Attract is the last action area in this market segment, as promotion and attraction of industry at these scales cannot happen until investments are made and ready for presentation.

Figure 5: National & International Markets: Sector Focus & Action Areas









## The Critical Path to Success and Risk of Inaction

A number of items emerge from the action plan as being essential to a long-term foundation for success. While this action plan has been structured taking into account that there is presently no dedicated full-time Economic Development Officer or Coordinator role in place at the Town of Ponoka, creating a position to lead and carry out these high priority actions is recommended.

### **Dedicated Economic Development Staff Person**

A visit to the Town of Ponoka website's 'Business' section is evidence that the Town acknowledges the supports that businesses need to get started in a community. A checklist for starting a business, and links to resources are all important elements to have in encouraging business investment. That said, best practices in this area go the extra mile and include a single point of contact for business inquiries who will walk investors through the process. Having a dedicated staff member in that role is a key component of service excellence. As Triage BR+E Survey results found, not all businesses in Ponoka are aware of who to speak to at the Town for support or with concerns, and many are unaware of any funding programs or resources that may be available to them. It is clear that to increase business satisfaction in Ponoka, further outreach, communication, and relationship building will be essential to success.

### **Attracting Convenience Retail**

The Retail Gap Analysis found that retaining more retail spending that otherwise goes to Wetaskiwin, Lacombe, and Red Deer should be a priority. Attracting convenience retailers such as strategic franchise brands would stem some of those losses.

### **Implementation of the Town's Recent Plans**

The Town's recent plans all highlight the importance of sense of place and liveability. These investments are promising for Ponoka's ability to attract PSTS professionals, who value work life balance and recreation amenities. Investments the Battle River green space, trails, the downtown, and recreation amenities are also key elements to quality of life for seniors, who may be attracted to Ponoka as a retirement destination.

### **Lifestyle/Lone Eagles Marketing Approach**

Ponoka's affordability, natural assets, charming downtown and fibre internet are all strengths that can be leveraged to attract lone eagles (mobile professionals in professional, scientific, and technical services). This marketing approach would elevate Ponoka's reputation regionally and prompt those seeking to leave their urban lifestyle to consider Ponoka as a place to build their lives.



**Figure 6: Economic Development Priorities, Investments and Risks of Inaction**

Priority	Investment Considerations	Risks of Inaction
<p><b>Dedicated Economic Development Staff Person</b></p>	<p>Long-term dedicated staff time is the most important factor in developing relationships and maintaining communications with local businesses. This person will be the key to connecting existing businesses together or existing businesses with external opportunities to form new relationships that lead to new business.</p>	<p>Businesses may become disengaged or there is the risk of flight from the community; businesses may remain unaware of supports that could assist them to expand.</p>
<p><b>Attracting Convenience Retail</b></p>	<p>Attendance of ICSC conference in Whistler. Investigation of and outreach to appropriate franchisees to locate in Ponoka.</p>	<p>Ponoka will continue to lose local retail spending dollars to outside communities.</p>
<p><b>Implement the recommendations of the Town’s recent plans. (E.g. the Urban Framework Master Plan and Implementation Plan, the Downtown Action Plan, and Recreation Master Plan)</b></p>	<p>The implementation of these plans are a significant investment for the Town of Ponoka, though the improvements outlined within them are essential to increasing liveability, sense of place, pride, and identity. These outcomes will serve to attract the types of residents and businesses identified in this strategy – mobile young professionals (lone eagles), seniors, and entrepreneurs.</p>	<p>Ponoka lags behind its neighbouring communities in its quality of life amenity offerings and is uncompetitive in attracting businesses and residents.</p>
<p><b>Lifestyle marketing approach</b></p>	<p>External marketing expertise investment may be required to the creation of a compelling resident and business attraction campaign. Investing in marketing that celebrates Ponoka’s lifestyle and amenities will elevate Ponoka’s reputation regionally and generate interest in Ponoka as a place to live, work, and do business.</p>	<p>Ponoka’s regional recognition remains the same. Interest in relocating to Ponoka remains where it currently stands, which lags behind neighbouring communities that have experienced residential growth in recent years.</p>



# Action Plan

## Actions to Grow Local & Regional Markets

### Engage & Maintain

**Why? Building relationships with the existing business community is the first step to success. Without a dedicated Economic Development presence or Community Futures presence in recent years, businesses in all sectors would have had limited points of contact with the Town or access to funding programs and resources. Triage BR+E Survey findings revealed that 27% of businesses do not know who to contact at the Town with a problem with their business. This suggests that there is a gap to be filled to increase local business satisfaction and maintain the local economic base.**

Engage & Maintain is an action area that takes a customer service first approach to economic development. Ensuring that businesses have the best experience possible with the Town and feel supported by its representatives will strengthen business community morale and encourage expansions.

Action, Timing, Target Sectors	Outcomes
<b>Objective 1: Maintain the current business base and engage with business owners.</b>	
<p><b>1.1 Continue BR+E efforts with the business community.</b> Create sector-specific BRE visitation programs: downtown retail, tourism, health care, professional, scientific and technical services. Rotate sectors every three years.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Immediate and ongoing</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> PSTS, destination retail, tourism, health care</p>	<p>Relationships with the business community are built. Businesses know who to contact at the Town with needs. The Town has a better understanding of business' needs &amp; can address accordingly.</p>
<p><b>1.2 Work with businesses in Ponoka to ensure all businesses have a Google listing.</b></p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> All sectors</p>	<p>Business visibility is increased. This would take the place of a business directory, as the majority of customers find businesses online now rather than using a business directory.</p>
<p><b>1.3. Identify existing Lone Eagles in Ponoka</b> through targeted semi-casual business mixers, networking events, and information sessions. Track and classify areas of business expertise and facilitate information sharing methods between.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> PSTS</p>	<p>The Town has a better understanding of who remote worker professionals are and their areas of expertise, so it can better grow the sector. Businesses have a closer attachment to the community. Contacts established for future planned marketing and promotional activities.</p>





Action, Timing, Target Sectors	Outcomes
<p><b>1.4 Explore the creation of a coworking space.</b> Give consideration to space at Town Hall or determine a central downtown space for PSTS professionals.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> PSTS</p>	<p>The Town has a better understanding of who remote worker professionals are and their areas of expertise, so it can better grow the sector.</p>
<p><b>1.5 Explore what opportunities exist to increase Community Futures presence in Ponoka.</b><sup>14</sup></p> <p>Explore potential to partner with Community Futures to host business workshops (themes may include: marketing, social media, ecommerce, succession planning) and other outreach activities to assist small businesses.<sup>15</sup></p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Short-Medium</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> All sectors</p>	<p>Businesses are made aware of funding opportunities and resources through a Community Futures outreach point of contact. Local business capacity is increased.</p>
<p><b>Objective 2: Engage with the local health care sector &amp; explore opportunities for continued growth.</b></p>	
<p><b>2.1 Create a Health Care Sector Growth Working Group</b> committed to growing Ponoka as a health care hub. Invite local health care professionals and leaders to participate to understand the health care system.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Short</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> Health care</p>	<p>The Town will develop a better understanding of how to grow the health care sector locally, and closer relationships with leadership in the health care sector.</p>

<sup>14</sup> For contact information, see <http://eastparkland.albertacf.com/our-staff>

<sup>15</sup> Theme-based workshops is a successful model which has been implemented in Edson in partnership with organizations like Community Futures and Alberta Labour.



<b>Objective 3: Engage with existing tourism market.</b>	
<p><b>3.1 Take a leadership role on encouraging tourism visitation downtown from the Calnash Ag Event Centre and the Stampede.</b><sup>16</sup> Work with downtown businesses and Agricultural Society leadership to develop common goals. Activities may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hosting complementary events downtown during Stampede or Ag Event Centre events to entice people downtown</li> <li>▪ Working with downtown businesses to develop tourism specific discounts or shopping incentives for tourists</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> Short</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> Tourism, Destination Retail</p>	<p>Increased visitation downtown by ag event centre and Stampede tourists.</p>
<p><b>3.2 Establish a community events calendar</b> to be hosted on the Town webpage and posted at the Calnash Ag Event Centre.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Short-medium</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> Tourism, Destination Retail</p>	<p>The community and visitors know about all there is to do in Ponoka.</p>
<b>Objective 4: Engage with surrounding communities and explore partnerships.</b>	
<p><b>4.1. Continue to build relationships with leadership of the Four First Nations</b> and explore opportunities for partnerships.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Short-medium</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> All sectors</p>	<p>Ponoka and its regional partners will be prepared to address any future joint economic opportunities that arise.</p>

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<sup>16</sup> Consultations revealed that the high tourism visitation numbers to the Ag Event Centre and the Stampede did not necessarily benefit traffic to downtown businesses. While there have been some efforts to bridge that gap, a leadership role by the Town is necessary to bridge that gap.



## Promote & Attract

**Why? Attracting residents, businesses, and tourists to Ponoka from regional markets in Edmonton, Red Deer and Leduc will bring new money to the local economy. Ponoka is easily accessible to these markets, is affordable, and has excellent health care amenities as well as fibre internet connections.**

This action area focuses on promoting Ponoka’s quality of life assets, its culture, and its vibrant downtown. It is also focused on communicating to the region that Ponoka is a Town that will take a customer-service approach to ensuring prospective businesses know that Ponoka will help them get started and do what it takes to get them up and running.

Action, Timing, Target Sectors	Outcomes
<b>Objective 5: Promote downtown as a tourism destination.</b>	
<p><b>5.1 Use the new EDO to provide leadership on the Downtown Ponoka Marketing Strategy</b> outlined in the Downtown Action Plan, 2017 (Appendix C) and execute on actions. Cross-brand Downtown Ponoka with the rest of the town.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> Destination Retail</p>	Downtown is celebrated as an integral and central part of Ponoka.
<p><b>5.2 Develop a Ponoka tourism brand</b> that celebrates Ponoka’s Western Canadian culture as well as its small-town charm offerings. Leverage the brand to target weekend tourists from Edmonton and Red Deer.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> Destination Retail, Tourism</p>	Increased awareness of Ponoka as a niche retailer destination regionally.
<b>Objective 6: Promote Ponoka’s service excellence and be investment ready.</b>	
<p><b>6.1 Develop a central inventory of funding opportunities and resources for businesses in Ponoka.</b><sup>17</sup> Have a handout or webpage ready for business inquiries.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Short</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> All sectors</p>	The Town can respond accordingly to business inquiries and provide support or direction to businesses requiring assistance with business planning, succession planning, etc.

<sup>17</sup> During BR+E follow up interviews, it was found that a few businesses are seeking to close due to retirement with no succession plan. Services like Succession Matching or resources through Community Futures can assist those businesses with creating a succession plan and selling their business so Ponoka does not lose some of its established business base. See <https://successionmatching.com/>





Action, Timing, Target Sectors	Outcomes
<p><b>6.2 Develop a business guide</b> and ensure it outlines all the services and processes of the municipality that assist business investment opportunities.<sup>18</sup></p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Short</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> All sectors</p>	<p>The Town of Ponoka’s development processes are well communicated and understood by investors.</p>
<p><b>6.3 Create an online campaign that promotes Ponoka’s streamlined business process and customer-first Town culture.</b><sup>19</sup></p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> All sectors</p>	<p>The Town is known as a business-friendly organization that will do what it takes to get businesses up and running.</p>
<p><b>Objective 7: Attract new residents.</b></p>	
<p><b>7.1 Targeted resident attraction campaigns.</b> Resident targets include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lone Eagle PSTS professionals from Edmonton and/or Red Deer, selling quality of life assets and broadband connectivity.<sup>20</sup></li> <li>▪ Health care professionals able to work remotely as a result of new Connect Care online patient management systems. Determine how best to benefit from these upgrades.<sup>21</sup> See ‘Engage &amp; Maintain’ Action 02 – make this a focus of the committee</li> <li>▪ Seniors, positioning Ponoka as an ideal destination to retire with ample health care amenities and recreation options.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> Short-Medium</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> PSTS, Health Care</p>	<p>Ponoka builds a reputation as a town with quality of life offerings that are attractive to mobile professionals and businesses.</p>

<sup>18</sup> A popular external business guide for general start-up advice is BusinessLink. It is funded by the Government of Alberta: <https://airdrie.ecdev.org/ca-csd-airdrie>. This is great for general business planning, but does not have insight in specific local resources or assistance. For example, the City of Grande Prairie has a simple online seven step guide to starting a business with links to specific resources embedded at each stage: <http://www.cityofgp.com/index.aspx?page=2064>. A list of business financing from different levels of government is available in Appendix C of this Strategy.

<sup>19</sup> In Mount Pearl, Newfoundland, the City had a reputation for red tape and difficult to obtain development permits. The City did an overhaul of its internal processes and communicated its business-friendly culture with a campaign in 2019, Consider It Done. See <https://consideritdone.mountpearl.ca/>

<sup>20</sup>See Hastings County, Ontario <https://ileftthecity.ca/> or <http://buildanewlife.ca/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/cis.aspx>



Action, Timing, Target Sectors	Outcomes
<p><b>7.2 Undertake a marketing strategy in partnership with local housing developers to attract residents to build in Ponoka.</b><sup>22</sup></p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> All sectors</p>	<p>Ponoka is seen as an affordable and liveable option for people to build their homes and lives.</p>
<p><b>Objective 8: Promote local businesses.</b></p>	
<p><b>8.1 Develop online business profiles for local businesses that celebrate and showcase what’s happening in Ponoka.</b></p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Short/Ongoing</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> All sectors</p>	<p>Business visibility is increased, business morale is heightened.</p>
<p><b>Objective 9: Attract new retail, hospitality businesses.</b></p>	
<p><b>9.1 Identify restaurant and hospitality businesses that would open a second location in Ponoka</b> (e.g. Cilantro and Chive or a favourite restaurant that residents would otherwise drive to Leduc, Red Deer, or Edmonton to visit).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Explore franchise businesses that have locations in Edmonton, Leduc or Red Deer that may be interested in opening a franchise location in Ponoka.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> Tourism, Destination Retail, Convenience Retail</p>	<p>By attracting a satellite location of popular restaurant to Ponoka, residents would likely choose to remain in Ponoka for entertainment.</p>

<sup>22</sup> See City of Leduc, “Build with us” campaign <https://g-squared.ca/projects/city-of-leduc/>



## Invest

**Why? Investing in economic development with a dedicated staff member will be key to the Town taking being able to harness opportunities and move forward.**

**The Town of Ponoka has also been making considerable investments in recent years, with a series of forward thinking new municipal plans and strategies in place that will upgrade infrastructure, beautify downtown, and add value to Ponoka’s recreational assets. To attract mobile young professionals in tech and health care, and seniors, it is important that these liveability assets are put in place.**

Action, Timing, Target Sectors	Outcomes
<b>Objective 10: Invest in Economic Development</b>	
<p><b>10.1 Hire an economic development dedicated staff person to lead and coordinate economic development projects.</b></p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Short</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> All sectors</p>	<p>Long-term dedicated staff time is the most important factor in developing relationships and maintaining communications with local businesses. This person will be the key to connecting existing businesses together or existing businesses with external opportunities to form new relationships that lead to new business.</p>
<b>Objective 11: Continue to invest in Downtown</b>	
<p><b>11.1 Continue to implement downtown façade improvement grants and make infrastructure/streetscape improvements to downtown as per the Downtown Action Plan, 2017.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If there is an EDO, that individual should take the lead on promoting façade improvement program to downtown business owners and ensure they are aware of all programs available to them.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> Destination Retail</p>	<p>Downtown improvements are made. Businesses and residents take pride in downtown, and tourists are drawn to its amenities.</p>
<p><b>11.2 Follow public realm improvements downtown by activating the downtown with festivals, events and sidewalk sales.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Explore tactical urbanism options to animate downtown, like a temporary low-cost landmark or interactive sign.<sup>23</sup></li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> Short-Medium</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> Tourism/Destination Retail</p>	<p>Hosting festivals and events downtown will drive foot traffic and will showcase the Town’s investment in the downtown core.</p>

<sup>23</sup> See ‘Ok!’ sign in downtown Lethbridge. <https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/lethbridge-says-oki-to-everyone-who-visits/>





Action, Timing, Target Sectors	Outcomes
<b>Objective 12: Continue to invest in placemaking.</b>	
<b>12.1 Continue to implement recreation and sense of place improvements</b> (see Recreation Master Plan, 2016). <b>Timing:</b> Medium <b>Target Sectors:</b> PSTS	Ponoka will have competitive recreation offerings that can be leveraged in attracting residents, mobile professionals and businesses.



## Actions to Break into National & International Markets

### Engage & Maintain

**Why?** Engaging with existing businesses that are owned nationally or internationally is a key place to start when thinking about growing businesses of that scale locally. Being aware of and ready to assist with any future expansion plans will ensure those businesses stay in Ponoka. Understanding why they chose Ponoka can help the Town with future investment attraction.

Action, Timing, Target Sectors	Outcomes
<b>Objective 13: Engage with externally-owned businesses.</b>	
<p><b>13.1 Make a special effort to connect with businesses that are externally owned</b> through BR+E outreach.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> Agrifood processing, manufacturing, warehousing &amp; logistics.</p>	<p>Relationships are formed with larger, externally owned businesses.</p>
<p><b>13.2 Create online business profiles of major manufacturing and agrifood processing businesses located in Ponoka</b>, focusing on why they chose Ponoka and the benefits of doing business in Ponoka.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Target Sectors:</b> Agrifood processing, manufacturing, warehousing &amp; logistics.</p>	<p>Relationships are formed with larger, externally owned businesses.</p>



## Invest

**Why?** Investment readiness is the most important component of national and international investment attraction. The process by which firms select sites on which to operate is complex, and the most competitive communities will have a high degree of investment readiness. The actions herein are some of the investments communities need to make to ensure they are fully investment-ready.

Action, Timing, Target Sectors	Outcomes
<b>Objective 14: Invest in industrial lands</b>	
<p><b>14.1 Undertake industrial land inventory</b> exercise and determine what is available and current level of investment readiness.  <b>Timing:</b> Short  <b>Target Sectors:</b> All sectors</p>	<p>Ponoka has an in-depth understanding of its publicly and privately-owned land availability &amp; what is needed to make them investment ready.</p>
<p><b>14.2: Upgrade or service any available lands and buildings</b> to get them to investment-ready standard.  <b>Timing:</b> Medium-long  <b>Target Sectors:</b> All sectors</p>	<p>Ponoka has investment-ready lands</p>



## Promote & Attract

**Why?** Once investments are made in available lands, the promotion and attraction of Ponoka on the national and international marketplace requires significant research to determine which industries are a best fit, and beyond that, which firms would be a best-fit for Ponoka. Actions here include online marketing, attending trade shows, and building relationships with key individuals in the site selection process.

Action, Timing, Target Sectors	Outcomes
<b>Objective 15: Promote Ponoka nationally and internationally</b>	
<b>15.1: Create an Invest in Ponoka webpage</b> , with ongoing sector profiles and content that highlight investment opportunities in Ponoka. <sup>24</sup> <b>Timing:</b> Medium <b>Target Sectors:</b> All sectors	Potential investors see that Ponoka understands its competitive strengths.
<b>15.2 Create central website with inventory of available lands</b> targeted to site selectors. <b>Timing:</b> Medium-long <b>Target Sectors:</b> All sectors	Land inventory is readily available to site selectors, increasing Ponoka's competitiveness.
<b>15.3 Identify targeted firms in identified sectors</b> <b>Timing:</b> Timing: Medium-long <b>Target Sectors:</b> All sectors	Ponoka understands which firms to target that are most appropriate for Ponoka's identified sectors.
<b>15.4 Develop a relationship with the Site Selectors Guild</b> <b>Timing:</b> Medium <b>Target Sectors:</b> All sectors	Ponoka is on site selectors' radar for any future investment opportunities.
<b>15.5 Develop relationships with Trade Commissioner Service</b> <sup>25</sup> <b>Timing:</b> Medium <b>Target Sectors:</b> All sectors	Ponoka is on the Trade Commissioners' radar for any future investment opportunities.
<b>15.6 Hire external consultants to attend trade shows and conferences for targeted sectors</b> on behalf of Ponoka that are experts in target sectors. <b>Timing:</b> Medium-long <b>Target Sectors:</b> All sectors	Awareness of Ponoka is generated among industries of choice.

<sup>24</sup> See [www.investmedicinehat.com](http://www.investmedicinehat.com) as an example.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.tradecommissioner.gc.ca/index.aspx?lang=eng>



Divider photo





## Appendix A: Background Documents Common Themes Matrix



The following table is a matrix of common themes across the background plans and documents that were provided for this study. These documents provided context to current projects and initiatives being undertaken in Ponoka and offered a sense of municipal priorities. The purpose of the matrix below is to showcase big-picture commonalities across the literature to illustrate their importance. These prevailing themes will be loosely used to guide the resulting action plan to ensure that proposed activities fit with corporate priorities.

The documents that were reviewed for these purposes were:

- Town of Ponoka Municipal Development Plan, 2013
- Downtown Action Plan, 2017
- Draft Transportation Master Plan, 2019
- Draft Urban Framework Master Plan, 2019
- Town of Ponoka Wellness Centre- Business Plan, 2017
- Town of Ponoka Economic Development Strategy 2015-2017
- Town of Ponoka Final Budget, 2019
- Airport Business Plan
- Off Site Levy Bylaw
- Tax Bylaw
- Town of Ponoka Growth Study, 2009-2059
- Airport Development Plan
- Recreation Master Plan, 2016-2036
- Town of Ponoka Strategic Plan, 2018-2023
- West Ponoka Area Structure Plan

A prevalent theme throughout all recent literature was the importance of building and/or maintaining sense of place. It was clear that creating a sense of community pride is an underlying intent to the majority of municipal initiatives. Sense of place is a holistic, often intangible concept that is difficult to quantify, and to create it, it must be a guiding principle across all town initiatives. It is interdisciplinary in nature, as expressed in the Draft Urban Framework Master Plan which reads: “each task should be regarded as strategic community investments that will yield a unified, diverse, and strong sense of place for the Town of Ponoka that reflects and promotes the communities people, landscape, climate, culture, history and sustainable and ecologically based characteristics and principles.”

The second most prevalent theme was health and wellness. The Recreation Master Plan emphasized the concept of liveability and justifies investment in good recreational infrastructure and facilities as having economic benefits: “liveable communities are places that are prime for investment. Good facilities and recreation/cultural opportunities make communities attractive places to live, helping towns grow their populations and economic bases.” Health and wellness guided many Town initiatives from trail development along the Battle River, and the planned Community Wellness Centre.

Downtown revitalization was noted throughout a number of key documents. The improvement and



development of the downtown is understood to be a key component of tourism development. Tourism also came up reliably throughout the literature.

Regional partnerships – with organizations, businesses, or neighbouring regional government such as the County were also noted. The Town of Ponoka Municipal Development Plan specifically identifies the commitment to a co-ordinated economic development strategy on a regional basis. In the current economic climate, the Town of Ponoka needs to strategically identify and capitalize on its competitive advantages while promoting and marketing lands that will attract future developments and ensure the growth of its industry clusters. This strategic long-term approach requires that a substantial land base be within the municipal corporate limits to provide for long term growth.





Theme	Total # of Occurrences	Transportation Master Plan, 2019	Recreation & Culture Master Plan, 2016	Town of Ponoka Strategic Plan, 2018	Urban Framework Master Plan, 2019	Downtown Action Plan, 2017	Town of Ponoka Wellness Centre Business Plan, 2017	Town of Ponoka Municipal Development Plan, 2013	Final Budget, 2019	Economic Development Strategy, 2015	West Ponoka Area Structure Plan	Airport Development Plan	Growth Study, 2009-2059
<b>Health &amp; Recreation</b>		X	X	X			X		X				
<b>Sense of Place</b>		X	X			X	X				X		
<b>Downtown Revitalization</b>		X	X	X		X		X					
<b>Marketing</b>								X	X	X			
<b>Tourism</b>			X	X		X		X		X			
<b>Partnerships</b>				X	X			X	X	X			X
<b>Airport Development</b>				X						X		X	
<b>Industrial Development</b>		X			X			X			X	X	X
<b>Commercial Development</b>								X					X
<b>Agri-food &amp; Processing</b>								X					
<b>Business Retention &amp; Attraction</b>						X				X	X		



## Appendix B: Economic Base Analysis



## Economic Base Analysis Key Findings

- From 2006 to 2016, the Ponoka's population grew by 10%; this represents a total of 653 new residents to the area. More recent numbers show an increase of 6.7% between 2011 and 2016. This contrast with the growth of 11.6% experienced by the province in the same period. Ponoka also has a larger share of people 55 year of age and older. However, unlike the province and the census division, Ponoka's median age has decreased since 2011.
- 67.4% of residences in Ponoka are single-detached houses, and 14.6% are apartments in a building that have fewer than five storeys; this translates into a low urban density area. The percentage of owners and renters is similar in Ponoka compared to the province, with little variations (between 1% to 2%). Ponoka stands out for being more affordable in terms of housing value (including rented dwellings) than the province and surrounding cities like Red Deer. In additions, the growth in median value of dwellings have been only a third among all broader geographies.
- The median income levels for individuals and households in Ponoka are lower than the Census Division and the province at \$39,120 and \$74,313 respectively. Notable differences are found specially in the proportion of people and households with incomes over \$100,000 where Ponoka stands lower than the broader geographies. This might be the result of it lower share of skilled labour force (people with post-secondary or apprenticeship education) in comparison to the rest of comparators. In terms or post-secondary education, most of Ponoka's skilled labour force (23.7%) have a college, CEGEP or other non-university degree or diploma, being the health care and related the main field of study.
- Between 2011 and 2016, the labour force in the Town of Ponoka grew by 180 people; this represents a growth of 5%. In contrast the Census Division No. 8 and the province saw a growth of 9% during the same period. In terms of participation rates, these have fallen in the areas analyzed, following the national trend. Note that the participation rate is a combination of the unemployment rate (which represents people able to work but who for one reason or other are not working though actively looking) and employment rate (people employed in full-time or part-time work). Other contributors to low participation could include health disability allowance recipients or social service recipients, but not people receiving employment insurance benefits. Other contributors to low participation could include health disability allowance recipients or social service recipients, but not people receiving employment insurance benefits. In 2016, Ponoka's unemployment grew at the same rate than Alberta, around 3.2% since 2011.
- Approximately 21% of Ponoka's labour force is employed in occupations related to sale and services; and trades, transport and equipment operators. Commuting patterns also reveal that Ponoka is a net importer of workers, the town attracts more than 1,500 workers. Meanwhile, only 745 residents leave Ponoka to work.
- The most competitive industries for employment in Ponoka are health care and social assistance, and other services (except public administration). Health care and social assistance is also the largest industry by employment in Ponoka, providing jobs for 620 residents of Ponoka, and 720 commuters from other census subdivisions. Nevertheless, this sector has seen decline in competitiveness, due to local-related trends as opposed to industry shifts or broader economic trends.



## Introduction

This economic base analysis presents an overview of the socio-economic, labour force and industry composition in the Town of Ponoka. The results are derived from the following sources:

- Statistics Canada, Census Profile, 2016
- Statistics Canada, Census Profile, 2011
- Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, December 2018

The Town of Ponoka is presented in comparison to other broader areas such as the City of Red Deer, the Census Division No. 8, and the Province of Alberta. These comparisons were done to understand Ponoka's socio-economic trends in comparison with nearby urban areas, its general region, and the rest of the province.

### Demographic portrait

Since 2006, Ponoka's population has increased from 6,576 to 7,229 in 2016. The most recent numbers show a population growth of 6.7% compared to 2011. This population growth is about 4% lower than the increase observed in the City of Red Deer and the Census Division N. 8, and 5% lower than the growth experienced at the provincial level.

According to Ponoka's 2013 Municipal Development Plan projections, the population of Ponoka is expected to be between 11,143 to 14,541 by 2059<sup>26</sup>.

**Figure 7: Total population change in the Town of Ponoka 2006-2016.**

Year	Ponoka	Red Deer	Division No. 8	Alberta
2006 Census	6,576	83,154	175,337	3,290,350
2011 NHS	6,778	90,564	189,243	3,645,257
2016 Census	7,229	100,418	209,395	4,067,175
Most Recent Pop Growth rate	6.7%	10.9%	10.6%	11.6%

Source: Statistics Canada; 2011 National Household Survey, 2016 Census Profile

Figure 8 shows that Ponoka's median age (40.1) is older than median age of the Census Division No. 8 and the Province. However, median age in Ponoka has decreased from 41.1 in 2011 to 40.1, following an opposite trend compared to the other geographies.

On the other hand, as shown in Figure 9, Ponoka has a larger share of people over 65 years of age, and a smaller share of people aged 25 to 44.

**Figure 8: Median Age of Population, Town of Ponoka, AB 2016**

Year	Ponoka	Red Deer	Division No. 8	Alberta
Median age population 2011	41.1	34.7	36.1	36.5
Median age population 2016	40.1	36.1	36.8	36.7

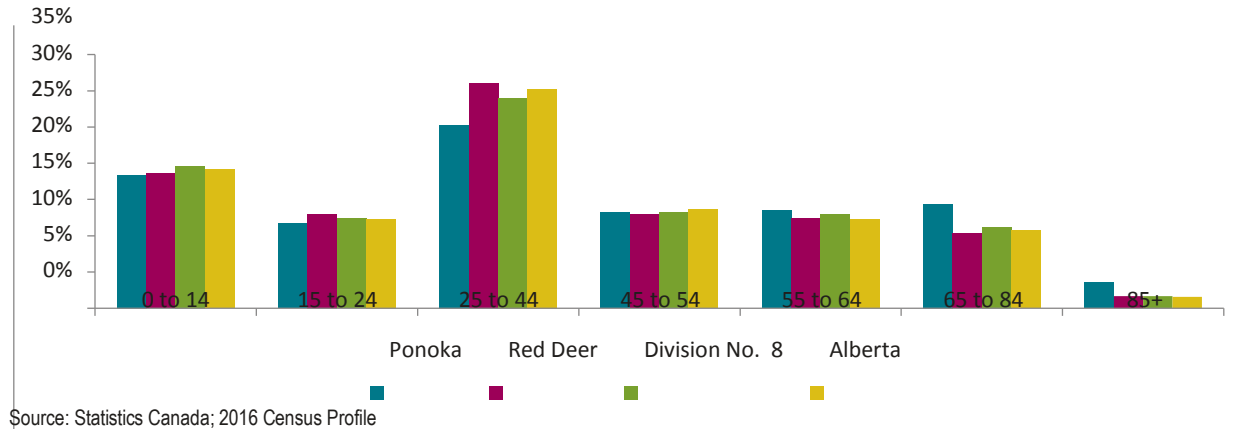
<sup>26</sup> Town of Ponoka. 2013 Municipal Development Plan. Background Information and Analysis Report. P. 20





Source: Statistics Canada; 2011 National Household Survey, 2016 Census Profile

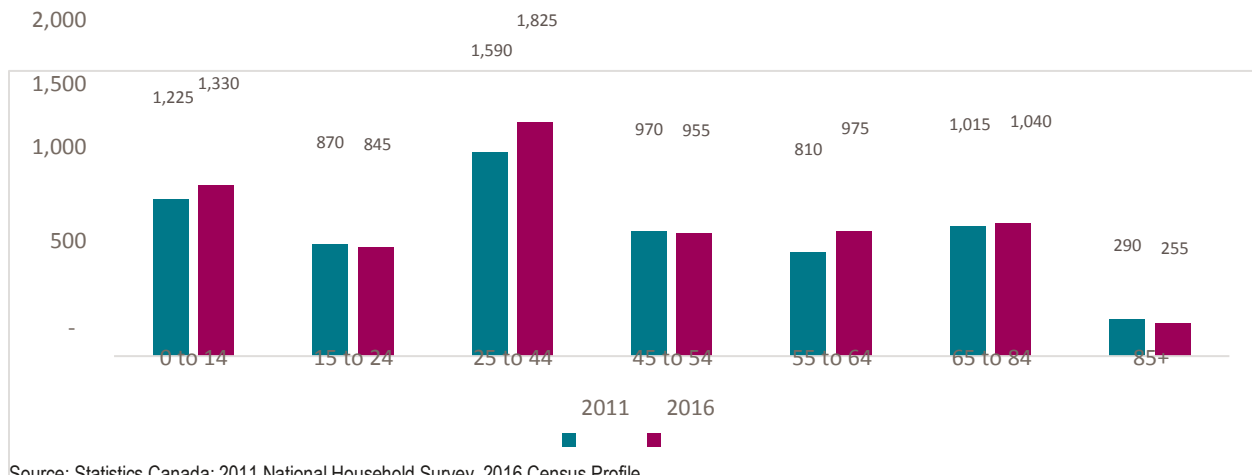
**Figure 9: Age characteristics, percentage of overall population – detailed categories – 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada; 2016 Census Profile

Figure show the evolution of different age groups in Ponoka between 2011 and 2016. People between 25 to 44 years of age experienced the largest growth; the growth of this group does indicate opportunities for increased labour force participation. However, by 2016, people 55+ years of age represented 31% of Ponoka’s population, posing the challenge of ensuring that an adequate pool of skilled workers is available to replace the retiring workforce in the next 5-15 years.

**Figure 10: Age characteristics, overall population – Town of Ponoka – 2011 - 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada; 2011 National Household Survey, 2016 Census Profile



## Dwelling Characteristics

Most of the housing in the Town of Ponoka are single detached dwellings, followed by apartments in a building that has fewer than five storeys. The share of people living in single-detached houses higher in Ponoka compared to the City of Red Deer, the Census Division No. 8 and the Province.

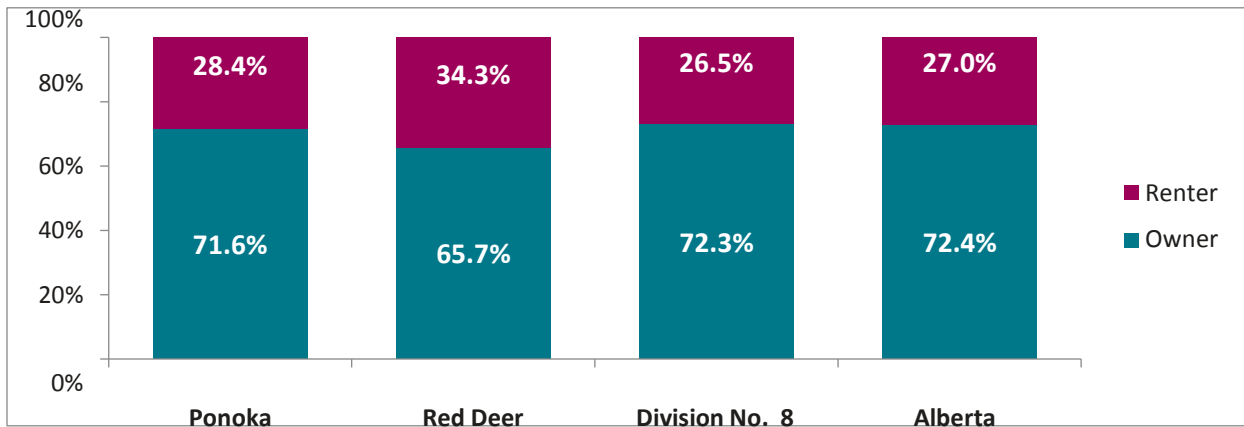
**Figure 11: Occupied dwellings by type, percentage of overall population, Town of Ponoka 2016**

Type of dwellings	Ponoka	Red Deer	Division No. 8	Alberta
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Single-detached house	67.4%	52.7%	63.9%	61.9%
Apartment in a building that has five or more storeys	0.0%	1.5%	0.8%	4.1%
Semi-detached house	5.1%	8.1%	6.0%	5.7%
Row house	2.7%	10.1%	7.5%	7.6%
Apartment or flat in a duplex	3.8%	3.8%	2.6%	2.8%
Apartment in a building that has fewer than five storeys	14.6%	21.0%	13.0%	14.6%
Other single-attached house	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Movable dwelling	6.1%	2.7%	6.0%	3.1%

Source: Statistics Canada; 2016 Census Profile

In Ponoka, most of dwellings are occupied by owners, the share of people renting dwellings represented 28.4% of the town's residents. The share of owners is similar than both the Census Division No. 8 and Alberta, with less than 1% of difference.

**Figure 12: Occupied dwellings by type, percentage of overall population, 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada; 2016 Census Profile

Median value of dwellings in Ponoka has grown approximately 4.6% between 2011 and 2016; this is lower than the value increases experienced by Red Deer (15.9%), the Census Division No. 8 (15.9%), and Alberta (14.4%). In addition, median values suggest that Ponoka has the lowest housing cost among comparators, including rented dwellings.



**Figure 13: Average dwelling and shelter costs for rented dwellings**

Characteristics	Ponoka	Red Deer	Division No. 8	Alberta
<b>Median value of dwellings (\$) - 2011</b>	239,784	300,745	300,321	349,684
<b>Median value of dwellings (\$) - 2016</b>	250,727	348,457	348,201	400,104
<b>Median monthly shelter costs for rented dwellings (\$) -2011</b>	770	949	943	1,017
<b>Median monthly shelter costs for rented dwellings (\$) -2016</b>	914	1,144	1,152	1,243

Source: Statistics Canada; 2011 National Household Survey Profile, 2016 Census Profile.

## Income

By 2016, the median income of Ponoka’s residents has remained lower than the provincial median amount. However, median individual income has grown at a higher rate in Ponoka (25%), compared to all the comparators.

**Figure 14: Median total individual income in the Town of Ponoka 2010-2015**

Characteristics	Ponoka	Red Deer	Division No. 8	Alberta
<b>Median total income in 2010 among recipients (\$)</b>	31,237	35,258	34,036	36,306
<b>Median total income in 2015 among recipients (\$)</b>	39,120	41,109	40,754	42,717
<b>% change</b>	25%	17%	20%	18%

Source: Statistics Canada; 2011 National Household Survey Profile, 2016 Census Profile.

Shifting to the subject of median household income, Ponoka’s median income has grown 19% since 2010. Ponoka experienced the lowest increased compared to the Red Deer, Census Division No. 8 and Alberta. Ponoka’s median household income is \$12,947 lower than the median house income in the Census Division No. 8, and \$19,522 lower than the provincial median household income.

**Figure 15: Median total household income in the Town of Ponoka 2010-2015**

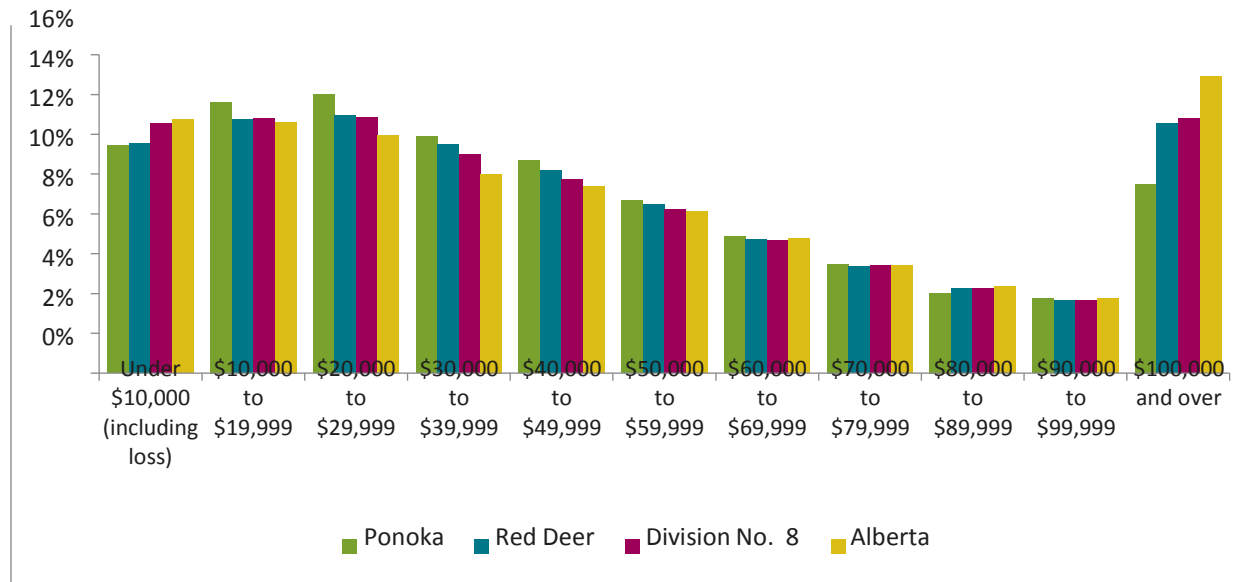
Characteristics	Ponoka	Red Deer	Division No. 8	Alberta
<b>Median total income of households in 2010 (\$)</b>	63,338	72,385	72,697	78,632
<b>Median total income of households in 2015 (\$)</b>	74,313	85,794	87,260	93,835
<b>% change</b>	17%	19%	20%	19%

Source: Statistics Canada; 2011 National Household Survey Profile, 2016 Census Profile



In terms of individual income distribution, Figure 16 shows that the Town of Ponoka has slightly higher share of people with incomes between \$20,000 to \$59,999 in comparison to the other areas, and a smaller proportion of people with income over \$60,000. Major difference is observed specially in people with income over \$100,000.

**Figure 16: Individual income distribution, percentage of overall population, 2015**



Source: Statistics Canada; 2016 Census Profile

## Education

Education attainment can be looked at as an important descriptor of labour force capacity. The figure below summarizes skilled labour proportions for comparator areas, which is composed of those people that have completed an apprenticeship, trade certificate, or college or university degree, diploma or certificate. By 2016, the proportion of skilled labour aged 25 to 64 years was lower in Ponoka in comparison to the City of Red Deer, Census Division No. 8, and Alberta. Skilled labour force in Ponoka have also shrunk by 11% since 2011; this might challenge the town’s ability to meet demand for skill workers.

**Figure 17: Proportion of population (ages 25 to 64) with post-secondary or apprenticeship education (skilled labour)**

Year	Ponoka	Red Deer	Division No. 8	Alberta
Skilled Labour 2011	64%	60%	58%	64%
Skilled Labour 2016	52%	59%	58%	64%

Source: Statistics Canada; 2016 Census Profile

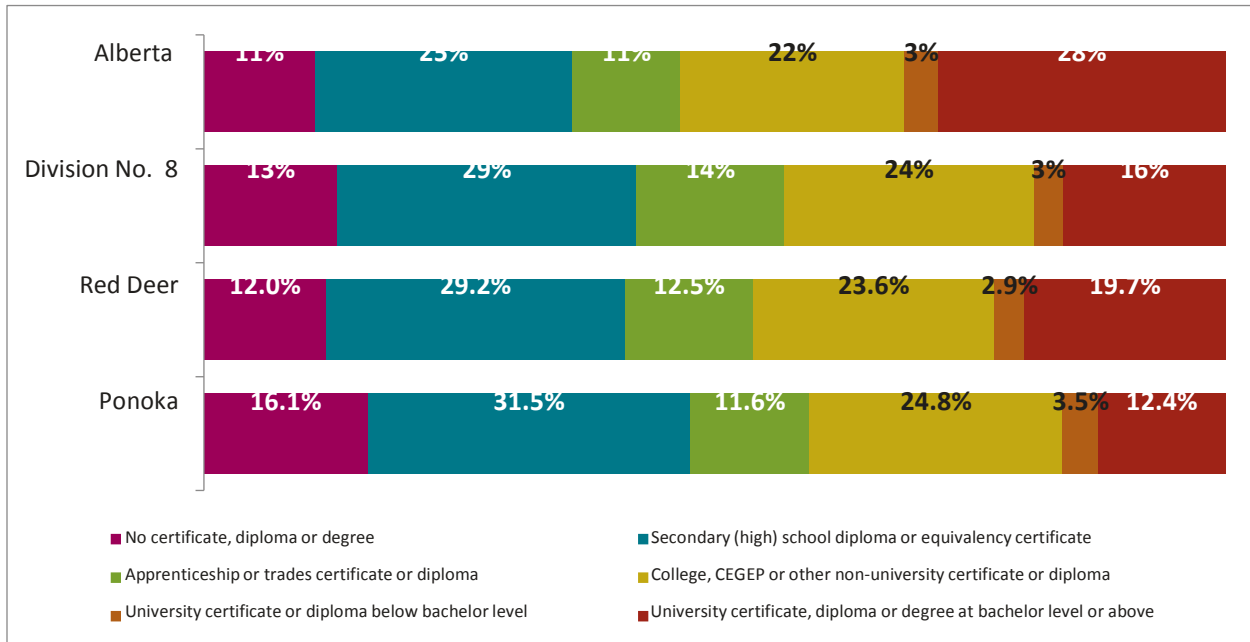
Figure 18 shows that the Town of Ponoka has the largest share of people with non post-secondary education among comparators. At the same time, Ponoka also registered the highest share of people with college, CEGEP or other non-university degree. On the contrary, the share of people with a





university degree (below or above bachelor level) is the lowest in Ponoka compared to Red Deer, Census Division No. 8 and Alberta.

**Figure 18: Highest level of education attainment (ages 25 to 64), % of the population, 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada; 2016 Census Profile

People’s major fields of study in the Town of Ponoka are health and related fields, followed by architecture, engineering, and related technologies, and business, management and public administration. These are also the main three fields of study in all broader geographies.

**Figure 19: Major field of study (ages 25 to 64 years), percentage of the population, 2016**

Major field of study	Ponoka	Red Deer	Division No. 8	Alberta
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>No postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree</b>	53.1%	49.1%	50%	45%
<b>Education</b>	4.2%	4.2%	4%	4%
<b>Visual and performing arts, and communications technologies</b>	0.7%	1.3%	1%	2%
<b>Humanities</b>	1.1%	1.5%	1%	2%
<b>Social and behavioural sciences and law</b>	2.3%	4.1%	3%	5%
<b>Business, management and public administration</b>	7.7%	9.6%	9%	11%
<b>Physical and life sciences and technologies</b>	1.1%	1.1%	1%	2%
<b>Mathematics, computer and information sciences</b>	0.5%	1.2%	1%	2%
<b>Architecture, engineering, and related technologies</b>	11.6%	13.2%	14%	14%
<b>Agriculture, natural resources and conservation</b>	1.7%	1.1%	2%	1%
<b>Health and related fields</b>	13.7%	10.0%	9%	8%
<b>Personal, protective and transportation services</b>	2.4%	3.5%	4%	3%
<b>Other</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%

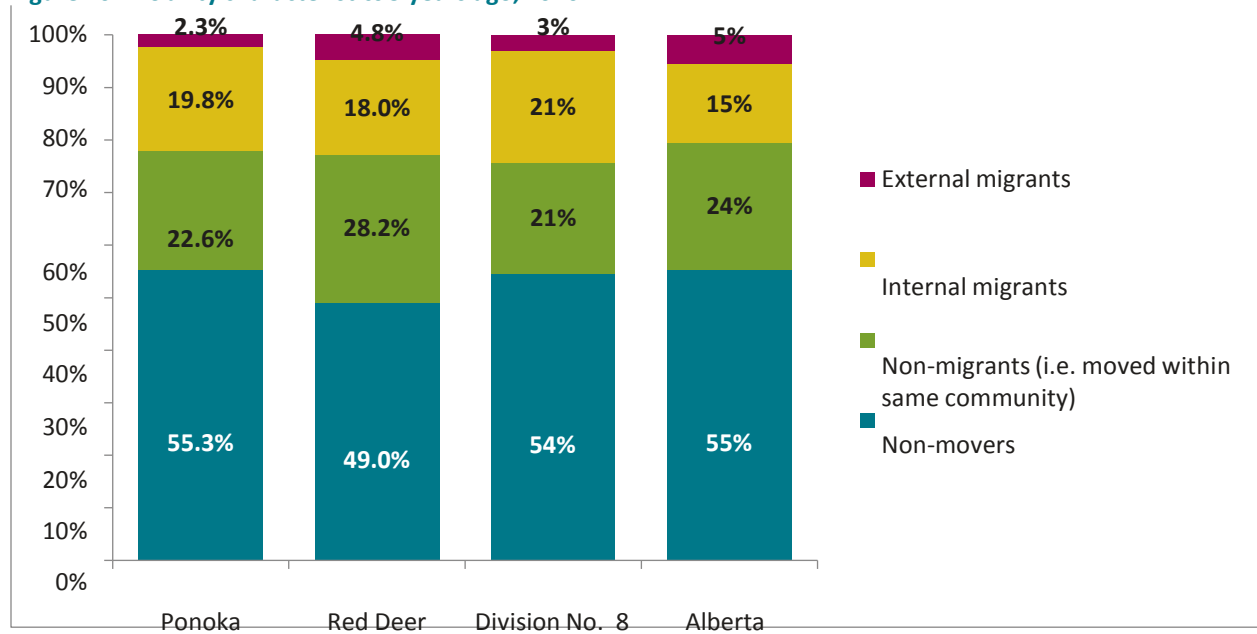
Source: Statistics Canada; 2016 Census Profile



## Mobility

The movement of people within a community or to the community from somewhere else constitutes mobility. Statistics Canada tracks this in two ways, by asking if a household has moved within the past year and asking if a household has moved within the past five years. As of 2016, most people in Ponoka had either stayed where they were five years earlier or moved somewhere in the same geography. By 2016, Ponoka had a similar share of migrants (internal and external) that Red Deer, and the province.

**Figure 20: Mobility characteristics 5 years ago, 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada; 2016 Census Profile



## Labour Force

According to the standard definition employed by Statistics Canada, the employed are persons having a job or business, whereas the unemployed are without work, are available for work, and are actively seeking work. Together the unemployed and the employed constitute the labour force<sup>27</sup>.

Between 2011 and 2016, Ponoka's labour force grew by 180 people, from 3,605 to 3,785; which represent an increase of 5%. This growth ranks below the 9% growth experienced by all other comparators.

**Figure 21: Labour force size, 2011-2016**

Labour Force Size	Ponoka	Red Deer	Division No. 8	Alberta
In the labour force 2011	3,605	53,095	106,890	2,115,640
In the labour force 2016	3,785	57,920	116,740	2,302,945
Net (+/-)	180	4,825	9,850	187,305
Net %	5%	9%	9%	9%

Source: Statistics Canada; 2011 National Household Survey; Census Profile, 2016

Unemployment rates have increased in all areas between 2011 and 2016. Notably, the Town of Ponoka saw the lowest unemployment growth compared to Red Deer and the Census Division No. 8. Participation rate is pivotal because out of the total people qualified to enter the labour market (aged 15 and over) it says what proportion is either employed or actively looking for employment. Participation rates have fall in all the areas analyzed. The Town of Ponoka had the largest participation rate fall among these geographies (-2.3%). Note that people looking for work can also include those receiving employment insurance.

**Figure 22: Labour force status, percentage of population, 2011-2016**



Source: Statistics Canada; 2011 National Household Survey; Census Profile, 2016

<sup>27</sup> Statistics Canada. Retrieved on January 7, 2019 from < <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/81-004-x/def/4153361-eng.htm> >



Turning to the class of worker, over 86% of the labour force in Ponoka works as employees. The town also registered a highest share of self-employed people compared to a bigger urban center such as Red Deer.

**Figure 23: Class of worker ratio, 2016**

Labour force status	Ponoka	Red Deer	Division No. 8	Alberta
Employee	86.9%	88.5%	84%	86%
Self-employed	11.2%	9.8%	14%	12%

Source: Statistics Canada; 2016 Census Profile

### Employment by Industry

Of the figure below, Ponoka has larger proportions of its labour force concentrated in health care and social assistance. The Town of Ponoka has also an important percentage of its labour force working in retail trade. Notably, the share of people working in health care and social assistance is twice as much than the provincial share.

Management of companies and enterprises; utilities; and information and cultural industries were the sectors that employed fewer people in the Town of Ponoka, and other comparators.

**Figure 24: Employed labour force by industry, percentage of labour force, 2016**

Industry (NAICS)	Ponoka	Red Deer	Division No. 8	Alberta
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Industry - NAICS2012 - not applicable	1.8%	1.7%	2%	2%
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	2.6%	0.9%	5%	3%
21 Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	5.8%	7.0%	8%	6%
22 Utilities	0.3%	0.4%	0.5%	1%
23 Construction	8.9%	9.9%	11%	10%
31-33 Manufacturing	5.0%	7.5%	6%	6%
41 Wholesale trade	3.0%	3.1%	3%	4%
44-45 Retail trade	10.7%	13.2%	11.6%	11%
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	3.6%	3.1%	4%	5%
51 Information and cultural industries	0.7%	1.0%	1%	1%
52 Finance and insurance	2.2%	2.6%	2%	3%
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	1.2%	1.8%	2%	2%
54 Professional, scientific and technical services	3.2%	5.1%	5%	7%
55 Management of companies and enterprises	0.26%	0.1%	0%	0%
56 Admin. and support, waste mgmt., and remediation services	2.2%	3.3%	3%	4%
61 Educational services	5.5%	5.8%	6%	6%
62 Health care and social assistance	23.1%	12.9%	11.7%	11%
71 Arts, entertainment and recreation	1.6%	1.8%	2%	2%
72 Accommodation and food services	7.7%	8.5%	7%	7%
81 Other services (except public administration)	6.5%	5.1%	5%	5%
91 Public administration	4.2%	5.0%	5%	5%

Source: Statistics Canada; 2011 National Household Survey; Census Profile, 2016





The figure below shows the number of people working in each North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) sector for 2011 and 2016. Most notably, declines are evident in retail trade (-70); followed by health care and social assistance (-55); and educational services (-55).

Sectors that saw notable growth over this period include manufacturing (+75), administrative and support, waste management and remediation services (+65), and agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (+55).

**Figure 25: Employed Labour Force by Industry (Number of People), 2016**

Industry (NAICS)	Ponoka 2016	Ponoka 2011	Net (+/-)
<b>Total</b>	3,785	3,610	175
<b>Industry not applicable</b>	70	40	30
<b>11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting</b>	100	45	55
<b>21 Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction</b>	220	185	35
<b>22 Utilities</b>	10	0	10
<b>23 Construction</b>	335	345	-10
<b>31-33 Manufacturing</b>	190	115	75
<b>41 Wholesale trade</b>	115	65	50
<b>44-45 Retail trade</b>	405	475	-70
<b>48-49 Transportation and warehousing</b>	135	145	-10
<b>51 Information and cultural industries</b>	25	45	-20
<b>52 Finance and insurance</b>	85	55	30
<b>53 Real estate and rental and leasing</b>	45	60	-15
<b>54 Professional, scientific and technical services</b>	120	90	30
<b>55 Management of companies and enterprises</b>	10	0	10
<b>56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services</b>	85	20	65
<b>61 Educational services</b>	210	265	-55
<b>62 Health care and social assistance</b>	875	930	-55
<b>71 Arts, entertainment and recreation</b>	60	50	10
<b>72 Accommodation and food services</b>	290	235	55
<b>81 Other services (except public administration)</b>	245	230	15
<b>91 Public administration</b>	160	195	-35

Source: Statistics Canada; 2011 National Household Survey; Census Profile, 2016

Despite the insight gleaned from the above, further analytical tools allow for an assessment of industry competitiveness relative to the overall province, and these can prove insightful for understanding what industries make sense to promote for further growth or monitoring for potential declines.

A location quotient analysis explains which industries employ a competitively higher proportion of people than the province. A score of 1.25 or greater represents a sector of relative strength, a score between 0.75 and 1.25 represents a sector that is on par with the province (1.0 represents perfect parity), and a score below 0.75 represents a sector of comparative weakness. Also pertinent are the trends over time and their direction, which indicate that potential opportunities or threats need to be addressed. Based on the above considerations, the following observations emerge from the data in the figure below:

- Competitive sectors in 2016 include: health care and social assistance, and other services (except public administration).



- Moderate or high competing sectors experiencing growth include mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction; accommodation and food services; and other services (except public administration).
- Notable declines are evident in health care and social assistance; information and cultural industries; and educational services.

**Figure 26: Employment location quotient (LQ) analysis – concentration of employed labour force by industry**

Industry (NAICS)	LQ 2011	Strength	LQ 2016	Strength	Change	Trend
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	0.43	Low	0.95	Moderate	0.52	Growing
21 Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	0.79	Moderate	0.94	Moderate	0.15	Growing
22 Utilities	0.00	Low	0.28	Low	0.28	Growing
23 Construction	1.03	Moderate	0.86	Moderate	-0.17	Declining
31-33 Manufacturing	0.55	Low	0.91	Moderate	0.36	Growing
41 Wholesale trade	0.43	Low	0.87	Moderate	0.44	Growing
44-45 Retail trade	1.21	Moderate	0.99	Moderate	-0.23	Declining
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	0.81	Moderate	0.71	Low	-0.10	Declining
51 Information and cultural industries	0.74	Moderate	0.46	Low	-0.28	Declining
52 Finance and insurance	0.47	Low	0.75	Moderate	0.28	Growing
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	0.88	Moderate	0.66	Low	-0.22	Declining
54 Professional, scientific and technical services	0.32	Low	0.44	Low	0.11	Growing
55 Management of companies and enterprises	0.00	Low	1.09	Moderate	1.09	Growing
56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	0.16	Low	0.59	Low	0.43	Growing
61 Educational services	1.10	Moderate	0.87	Moderate	-0.23	Declining
62 Health care and social assistance	2.64	High	2.17	High	-0.47	Declining
71 Arts, entertainment and recreation	0.74	Low	0.81	Moderate	0.08	Growing
72 Accommodation and food services	1.09	Moderate	1.15	Moderate	0.05	Growing
81 Other services (except public administration)	1.33	High	1.41	High	0.08	Growing
91 Public administration	0.89	Moderate	0.79	Moderate	-0.09	Declining

Source: Statistics Canada; 2016 Census Profile. Adapted by MDB Insight

\*Although some companies have a high concentration, the total number of people employed in the sector might be small (see Figure 25)

Figure 27 presents the results of another analytical tool called a **shift-share analysis**. The shift-share articulates the factors which drive changes in employment through three primary considerations:

- Reference Area Growth Effect: The impact that changes in the overall broader economy at the provincial level have had on local employment in a given sector, leading to an increase or decrease in local employment.
- Industrial Mix Effect: The impact that changes among different industries of the economy have had on local employment in a given sector, leading to an increase or decrease in local employment).
- Differential Shift: The impact that local factors have had on increases or decreases in local employment (i.e. changes that cannot be explained by those in the reference area growth effect or industrial mix effect).

The data below indicate the following:



- Overall, changes in the labour force were driven by growth in the reference area growth effect (i.e. growth of Alberta’s economy), and by changes in the industries under the industrial factor. Declines were driven mostly by local factors. In total, the gains and declines resulted in a net gain of 170 new jobs for the Town of Ponoka.
- Increases were most evident in manufacturing (due to due to local and provincial factors), and construction (mainly due to local factors), and administrative and support, waste management and remediation services (due to a mix of all provincial, industry and local factors).
- Declines are most evident in retail trade, and health care and social assistance (due to local factors).

**Figure 27: Alberta/Town of Ponoka – Shift Share Analysis**

North American Industry Classification System	Area Growth Effect	Industrial Mix Effect	Differential Shift	Total
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	4	-2	53	55
Mining and oil and gas extraction	15	-7	27	35
Utilities	0	0	10	10
Construction	29	42	-81	-10
Manufacturing	10	-6	71	75
Wholesale trade	5	-12	56	50
Retail trade	40	3	-113	-70
Transportation and warehousing	12	2	-25	-10
Information and cultural industries	4	-7	-17	-20
Finance and insurance	5	-4	30	30
Real estate and rental and leasing	5	-3	-17	-15
Professional, scientific and technical services	8	-5	27	30
Management of companies and enterprises	0	0	10	10
Admin. and support, waste mgmt. and remediation services	2	2	61	65
Educational services	22	-11	-66	-55
Health care and social assistance	78	98	-231	-55
Arts, entertainment and recreation	4	2	4	10
Accommodation and food services	20	33	3	55
Other services (except public administration)	19	-9	5	15
Public administration	16	-26	-26	-35
<b>Total</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>-220</b>	<b>170</b>

Source: Statistics Canada; 2016 Census Profile. Adapted by MDB Insight

Calculation does not include “not applicable industries”



A more detailed analysis of the employed labour force shows the industries at the 4-digit level in the Town of Ponoka shows that hospitals, full-service restaurants, support activities for mining and oil and gas extraction are the industries with the largest number of local labor force employed.

**Figure 28: Top 20 Industries (4 Digit NAICS) by Employed Labour Force in Ponoka, AB 2016**

Industry	Labour force employed
<b>6220 Hospitals (6221 to 6223)</b>	400
<b>7225 Full-service restaurants and limited service eating places</b>	235
<b>2131 Support activities for mining and oil and gas extraction</b>	165
<b>6111 Elementary and secondary schools</b>	155
<b>4451 Grocery stores</b>	125
<b>6230 Nursing and residential care facilities (6231 to 6239)</b>	100
<b>6211 Offices of physicians</b>	95
<b>1110 Farms (except Greenhouses and Aquaculture) (1111 to 1113, 1119 to 1124 and 1129)</b>	90
<b>9130 Local, municipal and regional public administration (9131 and 9139)</b>	90
<b>8111 Automotive repair and maintenance</b>	80
<b>6241 Individual and family services</b>	75
<b>2371 Utility system construction</b>	65
<b>4411 Automobile dealers</b>	60
<b>8113 Commercial and industrial machinery and equipment (except automotive and electronic) repair and maintenance</b>	60
<b>2111 Oil and gas extraction</b>	55
<b>4461 Health and personal care stores</b>	55
<b>6213 Offices of other health practitioners</b>	55
<b>2361 Residential building construction</b>	50
<b>2382 Building equipment contractors</b>	50
<b>6214 Out-patient care centres</b>	50

Source: Statistics Canada; Census Profile, 2016





## Employment by Occupation

Figure 29 shows the percentage of the labour force employed by occupational category in 2016. Occupations in sales and service have the highest percentage of labour force employed in Ponoka, followed by trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations, and health occupations.

**Figure 29: Employed labour force by occupational category, percentage of labour force, 2016**

Occupations (NOC)	Ponoka	Red Deer	Division No. 8	Alberta
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Occupation - not applicable	2%	2%	2%	2%
<b>0 Management occupations</b>	9%	9%	11%	11%
<b>1 Business, finance and administration occupations</b>	12%	13%	13%	15%
<b>2 Natural and applied sciences and related occupations</b>	3%	5%	5%	8%
<b>3 Health occupations</b>	14%	8%	7%	7%
<b>4 Occupations in education, law and social, community and government services</b>	9%	10%	9%	10%
<b>5 Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport</b>	3%	2%	2%	2%
<b>6 Sales and service occupations</b>	21%	24%	21%	21%
<b>7 Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations</b>	21%	18%	20%	18%
<b>8 Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations</b>	4%	4%	6%	3%
<b>9 Occupations in manufacturing and utilities</b>	3%	5%	4%	3%

Source: Statistics Canada; 2011 National Household Survey; Census Profile, 2016

The figure below shows the number of people working in each occupation as defined by the National Occupational Classification (NOC) for 2011 and 2016.

Occupations that experienced major growth in Ponoka include occupations in education, law and social, community and government services (+100), business, finance and administration occupations (+95), and occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport (+60). On the other hand, occupations that experienced decline include health occupations (-110), and sales and service occupations (-65).

**Figure 30: Employed labour force by occupational category (number of people), 2011-2016**

Occupations (NOC)	Ponoka 2016	Ponoka 2011	Net (+/-)
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,780</b>	<b>3,605</b>	<b>175</b>
Occupation - not applicable	65	45	20
<b>0 Management occupations</b>	345	300	45
<b>1 Business, finance and administration occupations</b>	440	345	95
<b>2 Natural and applied sciences and related occupations</b>	95	75	20
<b>3 Health occupations</b>	545	655	-110
<b>4 Occupations in education, law and social, community and government services</b>	345	245	100
<b>5 Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport</b>	105	45	60
<b>6 Sales and service occupations</b>	795	860	-65
<b>7 Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations</b>	800	765	35
<b>8 Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations</b>	135	140	-5
<b>9 Occupations in manufacturing and utilities</b>	115	120	-5

Source: Statistics Canada; 2016 Census Profile



## Commuting Patterns

The Study on commuting patterns measures the import and export characteristics of a region’s workforce. A high percentage of outside labour force working in the community depicts the attraction of the region for nearby communities. In contrast, if majority of the workers in the community leave for their work (export of labour force) than it may hint towards lack of proportional opportunities in the community. In the Town of Ponoka, 27.7% of its residents’ commute to a different geography to work; this percentage is the higher among comparators.

**Figure 31: Commuting destination for employed labour force**

Commuting destination	Ponoka	Red Deer	Division No. 8	Alberta
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Commute within census subdivision (CSD) of residence	72.1%	76.1%	56%	73%
Commute to a different census subdivision (CSD) within census division (CD) of residence	17.4%	19.8%	37%	22%
Commute to a different census subdivision (CSD) and census division (CD) within province or territory of residence	9.8%	3.7%	6%	4%
Commute to a different province or territory	0.5%	0.4%	0.5%	1%

Source: Statistics Canada; 2016 Census Profile

The analysis from the 2016 Census suggests that about 2,275 people commute to Ponoka from other geographies to work, mostly from Ponoka County, the City of Lacombe and Red Deer.

**Figure 32: Place of residence of the people commuting to Ponoka, AB 2016**

Geography	Total
Ponoka County MD	985
Lacombe CY	265
Red Deer CY	230
Lacombe County MD	185
Blackfalds T	70
Edmonton CY	70
Wetaskiwin CY	65
Camrose County MD	40
Beaumont T	40
Red Deer County MD	35
Others* (includes 33 Census Subdivisions)	290

Source: Statistics Canada; 2016 Census Profile



When it comes to labour force living in Ponoka, around 745 people leave the town to work. Most of the people commute to the cities of Red Deer, Lacombe and Wetaskiwin.

**Figure 33: Commuting destination of people commuting from Ponoka, AB 2016**

Geography	Total
Red Deer CY	195
Lacombe CY	130
Wetaskiwin CY	100
Ponoka County	45
Ermineskin 138 IRI	35
Lacombe County MD	30
Edmonton CY	30
Red Deer County MD	20
Clive VL	15
Rimbey T 00000	15
Others* (includes 35 Census Subdivisions)	130

Source: Statistics Canada; 2016 Census Profile

In addition to the above commuter pattern data, net import/export of labour was studied by industry to better understand what sectors people are coming or leaving to work in. The results show the following:

- The Town of Ponoka is a net importer of workers (1,530). Most of commuters to Ponoka work in health care and social assistance (520), retail trade (165), and educational services (155).
- Utilities was the only sector that registered an outflux of workers from Ponoka to other communities.

**Figure 34: Net import/export of workers Ponoka, AB 2016**

Industry (NAICS)	Net import/export
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,530</b>
11 Agriculture	115
21 Mining	50
22 Utilities	-10
23 Construction	110
31-33 Manufacturing	70
41 Wholesale trade	45
44-45 Retail trade	165
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	55
51 Information and cultural industries	0
52 Finance and insurance	25
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	15
54 Professional, scientific and technical services	105
55 Management of companies and enterprises	0
56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	30
61 Educational services	155
62 Health care and social assistance	520
71 Arts, entertainment and recreation	20
72 Accommodation and food services	65
81 Other services (except public administration)	45
91 Public administration	55

Source: Statistics Canada; 2016 Census Profile



## Business Counts

Statistics Canada's Canadian Business Counts provides a record of business establishments by industry sector and size. This data is collected from the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA). The Canadian Business Counts data records business counts as either "Without Employees" or "With Employees." The establishments in the "Without Employees" category include the self-employed (i.e. those who do not maintain an employee payroll, but may have a workforce consisting of contracted workers, family members or business owners). It should be noted that the Canadian Business Counts data use the Canada Revenue Agency as a primary resource in establishment counts; therefore, businesses without a business number or indicating annual sales less than \$30,000 are not included.

Focussing primarily at the "Sub-Total, classified" numbers and industry breakdowns, the analysis has found that:

- 69% of all businesses have no employees, with less than 1% of business employing more than 100 employees.
- 56.9% of all businesses with employees employ 1 to 4 people; this represents 18% of total businesses.
- Construction; other services; and retail trade are the industries with the largest number of businesses with employees.
- Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting; real estate, rental and leasing; and construction; are the industries with the largest number of businesses without employees.
- 2 businesses employ more than 500 people; these businesses are in sector like health care and social assistance, and educational services.

**Note:** This section includes all registered companies that have a Goods and Services Tax number, as registered through the Canada Revenue Agency. Results should not be compared directly to existing business directories in the Town Ponoka as the criteria for registering are different for both. The Canadian Business Counts data are used primarily so that comparisons can be made to the Provincial Distribution of businesses across the same categories.





**Figure 35: Business counts in the Town of Ponoka by industry and business size (number of employees)**

Industry (NAICS)	Total	Ind.	Subtotal	1-4	5-9	10-19	20-49	50-99	100-199	200-499	500 +
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,470</b>	<b>1,011</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
Unclassified	109	91	18	14	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Sub-total, classified</b>	<b>1,361</b>	<b>920</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>11 - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>21 - Mining and oil and gas extraction</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>22 - Utilities</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>23 - Construction</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>31-33 - Manufacturing</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>41 - Wholesale trade</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>44-45 - Retail trade</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>48-49 - Transportation and warehousing</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>51 - Information and cultural industries</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>52 - Finance and insurance</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>53 - Real estate and rental and leasing</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>54 - Professional, scientific and technical services</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>55 - Management of companies and enterprises</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>56 – Admin. and support, waste mgmt. and remediation services</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>61 - Educational services</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>62 - Health care and social assistance</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>71 - Arts, entertainment and recreation</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>72 - Accommodation and food services</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>81 - Other services (except public administration)</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>91 - Public administration</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, December 2018



The table below presents the distribution of businesses with employees in the Ponoka. Besides construction; other services; and retail trade, industries such as professional, scientific and technical services; health care and social assistance; and accommodation and food services also have a significant proportion of businesses with employees operating in Ponoka.

**Figure 36: Businesses by industry in Ponoka, percentage of total businesses with employees, 2018**

Industry (NAICS)	Business with employees	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>100%</b>
Unclassified	18	3.9%
11 - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	21	4.6%
21 - Mining and oil and gas extraction	16	3.5%
22 - Utilities	0	0.0%
23 - Construction	74	16.1%
31-33 - Manufacturing	19	4.1%
41 - Wholesale trade	21	4.6%
44-45 - Retail trade	53	11.5%
48-49 - Transportation and warehousing	13	2.8%
51 - Information and cultural industries	1	0.2%
52 - Finance and insurance	16	3.5%
53 - Real estate and rental and leasing	10	2.2%
54 - Professional, scientific and technical services	43	9.4%
55 - Management of companies and enterprises	1	0.2%
56 - Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	17	3.7%
61 - Educational services	4	0.9%
62 - Health care and social assistance	34	7.4%
71 - Arts, entertainment and recreation	7	1.5%
72 - Accommodation and food services	29	6.3%
81 - Other services (except public administration)	61	13.3%
91 - Public administration	1	0.2%

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, December 2018



Again, using the location quotient analysis, where 1.25 or greater represents strength, 0.75 to 1.25 represents proximity to the Provincial distribution, and below 0.75 represents low competitiveness, the sectors with the higher concentration of businesses than the province include other services; manufacturing; arts, entertainment and recreation; agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting; and construction.

**Figure 37: Business count location quotients (LQ) businesses with employees by industry, 2018**

Industry (NAICS)	LQ 2018	Strength
11 - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	1.34	High
21 - Mining and oil and gas extraction	1.20	Moderate
22 - Utilities	0.00	Low
23 - Construction	1.26	High
31-33 - Manufacturing	1.46	High
41 - Wholesale trade	1.12	Moderate
44-45 - Retail trade	1.15	Moderate
48-49 - Transportation and warehousing	0.53	Low
51 - Information and cultural industries	0.22	Low
52 - Finance and insurance	1.10	Moderate
53 - Real estate and rental and leasing	0.54	Low
54 - Professional, scientific and technical services	0.67	Low
55 - Management of companies and enterprises	0.36	Low
56 - Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	0.86	Moderate
61 - Educational services	0.81	Moderate
62 - Health care and social assistance	0.91	Moderate
71 - Arts, entertainment and recreation	1.39	High
72 - Accommodation and food services	1.13	Moderate
81 - Other services (except public administration)	1.50	High
91 - Public administration	0.53	Low

Source: Statistics Canada; Canadian Business Counts December 2018. Adapted by MDB Insight.



## Appendix C: Triage BR+E Local Business Interview Findings



Following the business survey (attached as appendix item), a list of 19 high-priority businesses was produced whose survey responses signaled either high or low satisfaction with doing business in Ponoka. Those whose responses signalled high satisfaction, “green flag” businesses, were those who were looking to expand their operations. Those that were deemed a “red flag” included those that were looking to downsize, shut down or relocate. Red flags also included those whose leases were coming due, as the expiry of a lease is often a moment when business owners make key decisions about relocation.

The purpose of those follow-up interviews was to strengthen the relationship between the Town of Ponoka and the business community and add qualitative nuance to survey responses. They were conducted by a Town staff member and an MDB Insight team member.

Follow-up interviews revealed the following themes:

**Government & business community relations:** Overall, business owners embraced the opportunity to meet with a member of Town staff about their business and seemed pleased to be provided a forum to discuss their needs. These positive interactions signalled that maintaining those relationships would likely lead to positive results and increased morale in the business community. Some interviews signaled that a coordinated and central approach to marketing the town and its businesses would be welcomed.

**Business resources awareness:** At least three red flag businesses stated that their reasons for closing or downsizing in the next two years were due to retirement and lack of a succession plan. Those businesses had either not considered creating a succession plan or were unaware of any resources that might exist to assist with that process.

**Availability of Funding Programs for Business & Property Improvement:** Following up to the first priority identified in the survey’s business factor priority matrix, availability of funding programs for business and property improvement, business owners explained that they were unaware that funding programs like these might exist at all. Overall, the gaps in business owners’ awareness of funding programs or resources signaled that Ponoka could benefit from the presence of Community Futures in town, or an Economic Development Officer to make them aware of programs, resources and funding opportunities.





# Appendix D: External Perspective Interview Findings



To gauge perceptions of Ponoka by potential investors and business owners, eight interviews were conducted. These individuals were asked about their perceptions of Ponoka's strengths, shortfalls, and opportunities. The following key themes emerged from these interviews:

- **Perceptions of the Town's permitting process:** Interview respondents noted that over time, the permitting process in Ponoka had improved but that they perceived the Town's development permitting process to be complicated.
- **The desire for an Economic Development Officer:** Respondents identified that a well-networked EDO to respond to inquiries and maintain relationships with the business community would be a great benefit to the Town.
- **Senior's community:** The potential for Ponoka to be a senior's destination was noted, due to its lifestyle amenities (the Battle River trail system) and excellent health care access.
- **Industrial development is a significant challenge:** due to lack of land supply/market choice for investors. The market is currently slow, and the County is very competitive on price and availability putting the Town at a disadvantage. There is a hope that the Town could be more aggressive at designating sites and getting developers in.
- **Optimism around recent developments:** The new Town Hall which has CAC presence, and some new industrial developments were good news stories that were noted by these interview respondents.