



# DAVID THOMPSON COUNTRY VISITOR FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT

FINAL REPORT (NOVEMBER 23, 2017)

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Project Overview

Expedition Management Consulting Ltd. was commissioned to undertake a Visitor Friendly Assessment of David Thompson Country from July to November 2017. The main objective of the assessment was to analyze how the region presents itself to visitors – its ambience and visual appeal, wayfinding and signage, customer service, public services and amenities and visitor information services. Based on this assessment, a practical action plan was developed that will lead to tangible improvements in the visitor friendliness of David Thompson Country.

## Situational Analysis

The David Thompson Country Tourism region has long been a destination for visitors seeking wilderness experiences. Clearwater County defines the border of David Thompson Country; while the Town of Rocky Mountain House and Village of Caroline are gateways to the backcountry. The municipalities have long recognized the value of tourism to the economy, and significant investment has been made in plans and policies that directly or indirectly impact tourism development.



## Tourism Supply

Tourism in David Thompson Country is built on businesses, services and amenities that support the visitor experience and serve visitors. Much of the tourism supply is enjoyed by residents and vacation property owners. When locals support what visitors enjoy, a region is in a strong position to leverage the positive social and economic benefits of tourism.

David Thompson Country's tourism supply offers a wide variety of attractions and experiences, most of which are related to the rich history and the nature-based assets. A range of accommodations, restaurants and services support tourism, while several boutique shops and tourism festivals and events enhance the visitor experience.

## Current Target Markets

David Thompson Country has yet to complete a detailed market analysis to define target markets. Travel Alberta, however, uses the Explorer Quotient (EQ) Traveller Type to identify Free Spirits as the primary target market and Cultural Explorers as the secondary target market

for Alberta. The region has the experiences that Free Spirits and Cultural Explorers seek, therefore, we propose the region utilize the following primary target market as a starting point for discussion:

*Youthful adventurers from the Edmonton region and Central Alberta seeking off-the-beaten path experiences in town or in the backcountry beyond.*

## Competitive Advantage

David Thompson Country's competitive advantage is a combination of its accessibility to regional markets, and its seclusion. The wilderness experience is less prescribed and less structured which sets the region apart from nearby destinations that draw from the same geographic markets. It is these wilderness activities along with cultural experiences that will continue to distinguish David Thompson Country as a destination.

## Visitor Friendly Assessment

In July 2017, the assessment team spent two full days in David Thompson Country tourism region and experienced the destination from a visitor's view of point. During the tour, the team recorded what they saw through photographs and notes. Each team member focused on their area of expertise but also took a holistic view of the tour and commented on all five visitor friendly categories. Upon completion of the tour, the assessment team evaluated the visitor friendliness of the region using five key assessment categories:

1. Overall Ambience/Community Visual Appeal
2. Wayfinding/Signage
3. Public Services/Visitor Amenities
4. Quality of Service/Professionalism
5. Visitor Information



The assessment team highlighted seven key strengths and five main growth areas as follows:

### Key Strengths

1. There is a fair amount of information about the region on many online sites making it easy for the visitor to plan before visiting.
2. There are vast areas of natural untouched wilderness areas that attract adventure seekers and cultural explorers who seek holistic outdoor experiences the region can offer.

3. The Region generally comes across as visually appealing and friendly to visitors.
4. Businesses have recognized the importance of tourism in the region and are increasing efforts to enhance customer service, information and their capacity to leverage the opportunities of increased visitorship.
5. The Nordegg area is a popular location in the region for camping, hiking, mountain biking, cross country skiing, artists and photographers.
6. Located near and en route to two of Canada's most famous National Parks, Banff and Jasper, offering a less commercialized tourism and recreation experience.
7. Generally warm and welcoming customer service staff.

### Main Growth Areas

1. The online information is extensive, however, the term "David Thompson Country" may not be as well known, it would be useful to consistently use the same verbiage on all online portals.
2. Rocky Mountain House is the only full-service community in the region. There may be an opportunity for Nordegg or Caroline to increase visitor-like amenities & attractions.
3. The directional and wayfinding assets vary throughout the region, and it would benefit all communities to collaborate on enhancing both highway and urban wayfinding. See examples in Appendix E.
4. There is a lack of basic tourism amenities for the travelling public (e.g. public washrooms, showers, and rest stops).
5. There is limited diversity in programs, activities, entertainment, restaurants and accommodations.

## Action Planning

Specific and actionable initiatives (99 in total) were developed within each of the five assessment categories that will improve the visitor friendliness of David Thompson Country. With input from the committee, each initiative was assigned a priority, cost rating, initiative lead and timeline for completion.

The following action items have been identified as the top priorities. These are organized in order of priority.

1. Develop a consistent and comprehensive signage program (vehicular and pedestrian) that includes directions to key amenities, facilities and services.
2. Develop a new comprehensive map for each community and the overall region that includes the development of consistent symbols and/or language-based system to help locate key visitor attractions, sites and amenities.

3. Re-develop the regional visitor guide to reduce clutter, enhance readability and further the regional brand (Refer to Appendix E for more information).
4. Develop a Program, Festival and Event Plan that will facilitate more daytime and evening entertainment options for visitors. The plan should also address the need for increased festivals and events, public interpretation and public programming related to local culture and history.
5. Review and enforce community standards and bylaws to address unsightly premises. (e.g. property maintenance, tree planting, fences, other landscaping).
6. Develop a plan to enhance basic tourism infrastructure within each community. Work with the Government of Alberta to provide roadside pull-outs, waste receptacles, washrooms, picnic areas and trail head signages along the David Thompson corridor.
7. Gather and share base level visitor data with all tourism partners (Municipality, Businesses, Operators) to support customer service.
8. Offer cross training to all VIC staff to learn about and understand offerings in each community and the DTC region.
9. Work with downtown business owners in Rocky Mountain House to expand the hours of operation to align with the evening and weekend special events (e.g. Farmers Market).
10. Replace benches, picnic areas and playground at the park adjacent to the Rocky Mountain House VIC.

## Next Steps

1. Obtain commitment from Councils in the Town of Rocky Mountain House, Village of Caroline and Clearwater County to work regionally to improve visitor friendliness.
2. Establish Regional and Local project committees to work on specific action items.
3. Begin implementation of the action plan. Particular focus should be directed towards the “quick wins” and the “top recommended” initiatives to achieve successes early and build momentum.
4. Evaluate action plan initiatives and re-align priorities at the end of year 1.

## Conclusion

The Visitor Friendly Assessment provides valuable information to David Thompson Country; a practical action plan, and a starting point to improve visitor friendliness. The plan will guide municipalities in David Thompson Country to enhance all aspects of their visitor friendliness. The successful implementation of this plan will ensure the David Thompson Country tourism region continues to be a destination of choice for tourists seeking wilderness experiences, and will contribute to the vitality and growth of the local tourism industry.



# 01

## INTRODUCTION

# 01 INTRODUCTION

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## What is Visitor Friendliness?

Being visitor friendly is about more than having friendly local residents. It's about the look and feel of a community—its warmth, attractiveness and welcoming feel, how easy it is for visitors to find their way around, and how well they are treated. Visitor friendliness contributes to creating positive memorable experiences for visitors. Visitor friendliness also ripples throughout a community, enhancing the quality of life for residents and encouraging community pride (Visitor Friendly AB).



## What is a Visitor?

The Alberta Government Visitor Friendly Guide defines a visitor as follows:

*“A visitor is someone who visits your community for reasons other than commuting to work or school, or for routine visits such as conducting sales or service calls, household grocery shopping and appointments. Not all visitors to your community will be tourists. You may find that many of your visitors are locals coming into town for shopping, appointments or community events. Being visitor friendly will encourage locals to support your community rather than driving to major centres. This will help keep money in the community. ”*

The Guide identifies “types” of visitors as follows:

### Day-use Visitors (same day trips)

- Do not stay overnight
- Come to your community from more than 40km away
- Come to your community:
  - a) for a specific attraction, activity or event or,
  - b) by stopping en route to another destination
- May require services related to travel (service stations) and food and beverage (lunch, supper or light groceries).

- May look for shopping and retail services or public amenities like picnic areas, walking trails or public washrooms.

### Overnight Visitors En Route to Somewhere Else

- Stay overnight, likely arriving in the evening and departing in the morning. They don't necessarily visit attractions.
- Require support facilities and services including accommodation, service stations, food and beverage services.
- May look for food and beverage services that are open in the evening, and possibly some evening activities.

### Multi-day Visitors

- Stay for one or more nights. They visit attractions and participate in activities or events in the area.
- Could be visiting for the weekend.
- Require support facilities and services including accommodation (e.g. hotel, bed and breakfast, campgrounds), food and beverage services that are open in the evening, evening activities, retail shopping and craft outlets, travel services (gas stations, sewage dump stations, grocery stores), picnic areas, walking/biking trails, events and festivals.

## Project Objectives

The objective of the project was to complete a visitor friendly assessment and develop an action plan for the David Thompson Country region. This assessment analyzed how the region presents itself to visitors in the following categories:

1. Ambience and visual appeal
2. Wayfinding and signage
3. Customer service
4. Public services and amenities
5. Visitor information services

The plan has action items that will lead to tangible improvements in the visitor friendliness of the David Thompson Country.



## Project Team Members

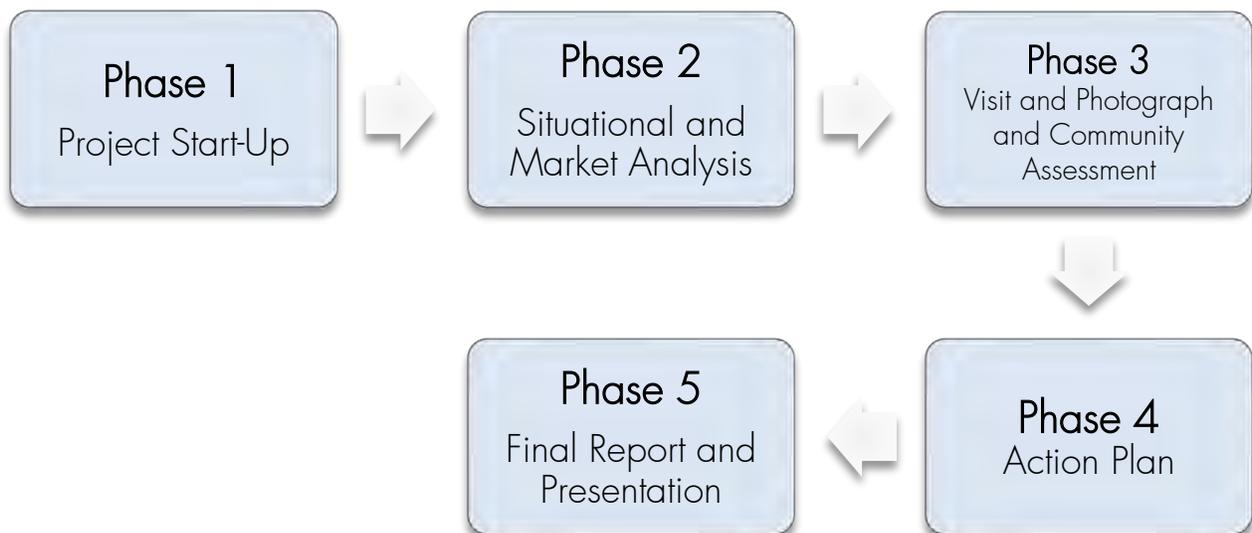
The VFCA committee was established in the summer of 2017 for the purpose of providing input and direction to the project. Below is a list of committee representatives:

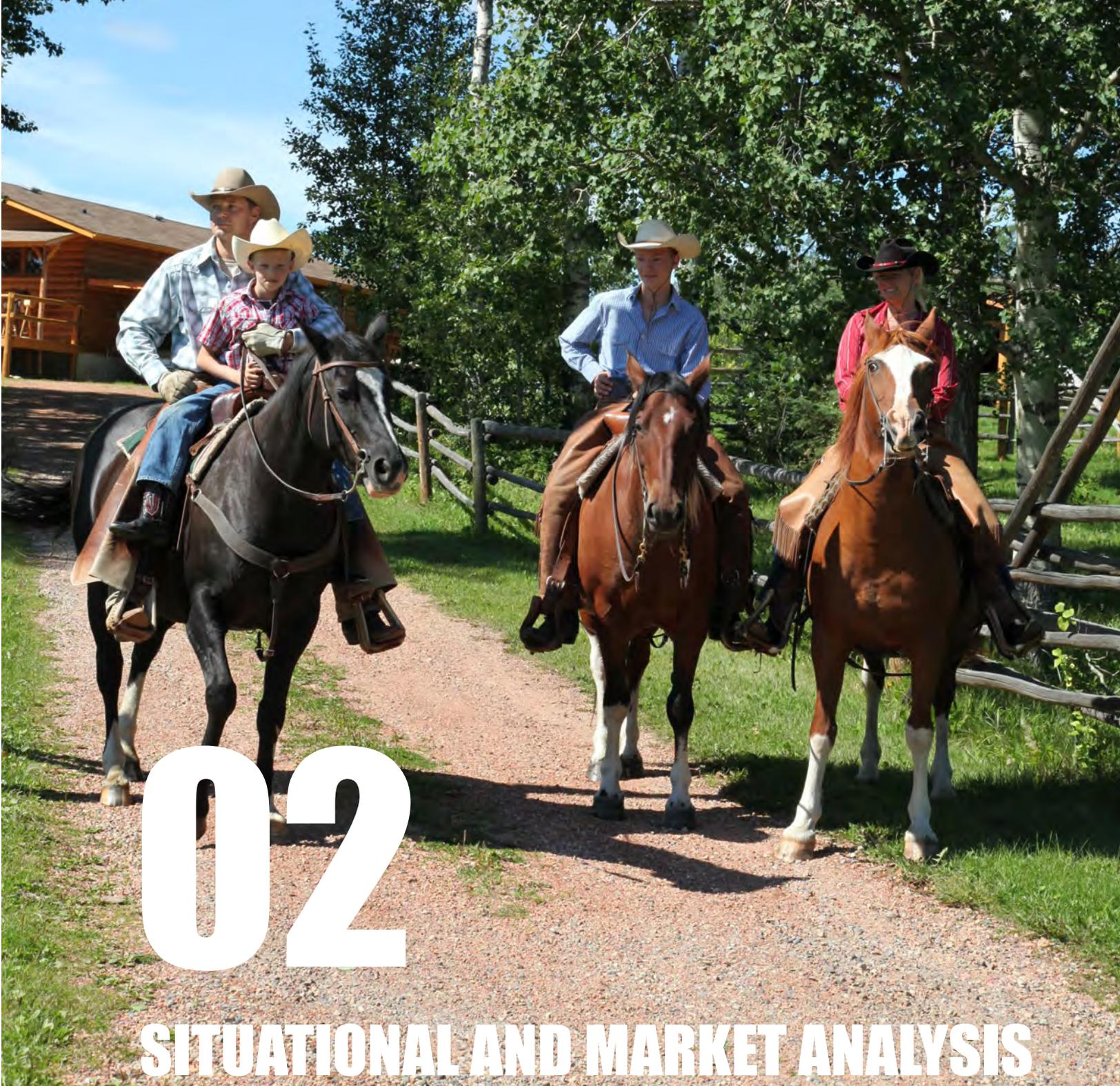
David Thompson Country Steering Committee	
Organization	Representatives
David Thompson Country	Dean Schweder, Jereld Pratt, Lyndsay Hindbo, Marla Zapach, Amanda Rodriguez
Alberta Culture and Tourism	Carolyn Smith
Consultant Team	
Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.	Justin Rousseau (Project Lead), Maxwell Harrison, Pankaj Nalavde, Bob Robertson, Sara Jean Sherman, Marliss Weber



## Project Process

The VFCA project had five, interconnected phases including Project Start-up, Situational and Market Analysis, Visitor and Photograph and Community Assessment, Action Plan and Final Report and Presentation.





02

**SITUATIONAL AND MARKET ANALYSIS**

## 02 SITUATIONAL AND MARKET ANALYSIS

This section provides a snapshot of tourism in David Thompson Country, with a focus on the Village of Caroline, Hamlets of Leslieville and Nordegg and the Town of Rocky Mountain House. The purpose of this section is to provide a sense of what the destination has to offer visitors.

### Regional Overview

The David Thompson Country tourism region is located in the ranching country, foothills and mountains of west-central Alberta. It is accessible, yet secluded, from Alberta's main transportation and urban corridor, the Queen Elizabeth Highway 2. From Highway 2, visitors can travel west for about 60 km on several paved secondary highways to reach the region.



The region's eastern area is primarily ranching and farming country. It is also where the hamlets of Alhambra, Condor, Withrow and Leslieville are located. Continuing west, visitors intersect with the Cowboy Trail Highway 22. Highway 22 rolls north-south along the forests and foothills, connecting the Village of Caroline in the region's south to Town of Rocky Mountain House, located just over 40 km north. Rocky Mountain House is the region's largest urban centre and is on The David Thompson Highway 11.

The David Thompson Highway is Alberta's least known, and arguably, most underrated route into the Canadian Rockies. From Rocky Mountain House, Highway 11 follows the North Saskatchewan River 90 km west to the Hamlet of Nordegg. Just past Nordegg is the Forestry Trunk Road. This gravel road rolls north-south along the eastern slopes and provides access to relatively remote public lands and provincial recreation areas. Continuing west from Nordegg, Highway 11 reaches Abraham Lake and Kootenay Plains to then begin the ascent to Banff National Park. Just past the Banff Park Gate, Highway 11 intersects with one of the world's most scenic drives, the Icefield Parkway, connecting Banff and Jasper National Parks.

The area described is large and spans about 18,000 square kilometers. Yet it is relatively unpopulated with a regional population and trading area of 20,000 people.

Clearwater County defines the borders of David Thompson Country; while the Town of Rocky Mountain House and Village of Caroline are gateways to the backcountry beyond.

### Clearwater County

Clearwater County is a vast, rural municipality of approximately 12,000 residents, most of whom live in or near the five hamlets of Alhambra, Condor, Withrow, Leslieville, and Nordegg.<sup>i</sup> The County's economy is based primarily on agriculture, forestry and oil and gas; with tourism playing an increasing role, particularly in the Hamlet of Nordegg.

### Hamlet of Nordegg

Nordegg is the best-known hamlet in Clearwater County. It is 90 km west of Rocky Mountain House on Highway 11. While its reputation as a ghost town endures on the Internet, tourism and vacation property development puts Nordegg on the map as an off-the-beaten path destination.<sup>ii</sup> The hamlet has only basic services and around 90 permanent residents. The North Nordegg Subdivision continues to expand with vacation property developments and work is underway within the townsite on a new gas station complex, a new park, and restoration of the historic bank.

### Hamlet of Leslieville

The Hamlet of Leslieville is located in farming and ranching country, 23 km east of Rocky Mountain House and 64 km west of the City of Red Deer. With a population of only 239 (2016 census), Leslieville offers visitors a glimpse into life in a rural community.

### Rocky Mountain House - *Where Adventure Begins!*

The Town of Rocky Mountain House is located in Clearwater County and is a separate municipal entity. The Town has a population of about 6,500 residents<sup>iii</sup> and a trading area of 20,000 people. The local economy follows the ebbs and flows of oil and gas, and the stable growth of the forestry industry. The Town serves as a centre for the agricultural industry; primarily cow-calf operations for beef export. It also serves the region in retail, construction, healthcare, and social and educational services.<sup>iv</sup> The Town's tourism and hospitality industries serve both business and leisure travelers.

### Village of Caroline - *Prospering at Nature's Doorstep*

The Village of Caroline is located about 40 km south of Rocky Mountain House on Highway 22 and is home to about 556 residents<sup>v</sup>. While its population is small, the Village has a wide range of services, including professional and retail services, agriculture, oil and gas, and trucking. It also has an unexpected number of visitor amenities for a community of its size, including boutique shopping, accommodation, restaurants, gas and service stations, grocers, and camping and outdoors supplies.<sup>vi</sup>

## Tourism in David Thompson Country

The forests, foothills and mountains west of Rocky Mountain House have long been a destination for visitors seeking wilderness experiences far from the crowds of Banff and Jasper National Park. The municipalities of Clearwater County, Rocky Mountain House and Caroline have long recognized the value of tourism to the economy and in positioning their communities to attract new residents and businesses. More recently, the municipalities have recognized the value of taking a regional approach to tourism, and in January 2017 announced:

*“David Thompson Country as Alberta’s newest tourism region, formed and named through the joint efforts of the Town of Rocky Mountain House, the Village of Caroline, and Clearwater County. The tourism region’s tagline, Challenge Your Inner Explorer, emphasizes that the natural beauty and landscape of the area also provides challenges for those who wish to push themselves to a new level.”<sup>vii</sup>*



## Tourism-Related Planning

Planning for tourism in David Thompson Country dates back to the 1970s (most likely before) and the extension of Highway 11 to Banff National Park. Undoubtedly, there must have been optimism for what this highway would do for Nordegg, Rocky Mountain House, and the province. The anticipated boom didn’t quite come but tourism always remained as an untapped opportunity.

In more recent years, a number of plans, strategies and initiatives have been undertaken that directly or indirectly impact tourism development and the visitor experience in the region. See below for a summary and Appendix A for a detailed description of these plans.

Figure 1 - Tourism-Related Plans



## Organizations Impacting Tourism

Organizations in the region have recognized the importance of working together to shape tourism. Several work together in planning, promoting and managing tourism development. A full description of these organizations can be found in Appendix B.

Organizations Impacting Tourism	
Municipal Governments and the David Thompson Country Tourism Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearwater County, Village of Caroline and Town of Rocky Mountain House are active leaders.</li> <li>• Formed David Thompson Country as a tourism region, guided by the David Thompson Country Regional Tourism Strategy.</li> </ul>
Chambers of Commerce	Nordegg <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 17 of the 25 members are tourism related.</li> <li>• Maintains Facebook page.</li> <li>• Distributes brochure.</li> </ul>
	Rocky Mountain House <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serves Rocky Mountain House and Clearwater County.</li> <li>• 360 members.</li> <li>• Operates year-round VIC.</li> </ul>
	Caroline & District <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manages Facebook page and website.</li> <li>• Business Directory of 111 businesses.</li> </ul>
Alberta Environment and Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manages Crimson Lake Provincial Park and Bighorn Backcountry.</li> <li>• Regulates recreation use on public lands.</li> </ul>
Parks Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owns and operates Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site.</li> </ul>

## Tourism Supply

Tourism in David Thompson County is built on the businesses, services and amenities that support the visitor experience. Much of the tourism supply, such as restaurants and campgrounds, are also enjoyed by residents and vacation property owners. When locals also enjoy what people travel to experience - this can be a win-win for tourism and community development.

The following is a look at the tourism supply in David Thompson County. It is based on visitor information available online and shared by travel counselors at visitor information centres. Although not an exhaustive list, the following descriptions offer a snapshot of assets and amenities that support tourism.

## Transportation

### Highways

David Thompson County has a limited network of paved provincial highways. Visitors can access the region on several secondary highways departing west from the Queen Elizabeth Highway 2 that connects Alberta's major urban centres: Edmonton, Red Deer and Calgary, and south to Lethbridge and the U.S border.

Highway 11, the David Thompson Highway, is the paved, east-west highway from Red Deer to Rocky Mountain House to Nordegg, reaching, at its western end, Banff National Park.

Highway 22, the scenic Cowboy Trail, is the paved north-south highway that rolls along the forests, foothills and ranching country. This highway connects Rocky Mountain House and the Village of Caroline.

The Forestry Trunk Road is a gravel road that runs north-south along the region's western foothills. It serves industrial and leisure traffic, and provides visitors with access to relatively remote public lands and provincial recreation areas.

### Airport

Rocky Mountain House is a 2-hour drive from both the Calgary and Edmonton International Airports. Both international airports have car rental services (there is no bus airporter service). There is a municipal airport jointly operated by the Town and the Clearwater County located just over 5 km northeast of Rocky Mountain House. It has a high pavement load rating and 5,500-foot runway, making it possible to accommodate planes generally unsuitable for small municipal airports. The airport also hosts a bi-annual airshow.

## Rail

Canadian National operates freight rail service in the region; however, there is no passenger service.

## Bus service

Greyhound identifies a bus station in Rocky Mountain House; however, there is no regularly scheduled service.

## Accommodations

David Thompson Country has an enviable range of accommodation, including tipis, trappers' cabins, wilderness lodges, bed and breakfasts, rustic campsites, full-service RV resorts, motels and hotels.

As the service centre for the larger region, Rocky Mountain House has nine hotels/motels that serve business and leisure travelers. Caroline has three hotels/motels and Leslieville has the Leslieville Hotel, a classic small town hotel and pub. There are no bed and breakfasts in Rocky Mountain House, however there are eight just a short drive out of town.

There are about 16 cabin and cottage style accommodation in the region, varying from rustic or full-service to ranch or wilderness settings. There is one youth hostel located in Nordegg and seven retreat facilities in the region that offer accommodation and programming for large groups.

David Thompson Country boasts an impressive number of campgrounds totaling about 1,500 individual camping sites.<sup>viii</sup> In Rocky Mountain House there are two campgrounds with 38 sites total.<sup>ix</sup> There are nine campgrounds within 20 km of town: five are privately-operated with a total of 550 unserviced to full-serviced sites; one is a member-based RV resort open to non-members with 388 sites; two are located in Crimson Lake Provincial Park and total 209 sites; and Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site has a campground as well as tipi and trapper tent camping.

Travel more than 20 km from Rocky Mountain House and visitors are deep in camping country. Westward Bounds Campgrounds operates 12 campgrounds and nine group campgrounds in Provincial Recreation Areas.<sup>x</sup> There are seven private campgrounds with approximately 417 sites. The campgrounds vary from rustic to full-service and some have amenities for ATV riders.

Bighorn Backcountry in David Thompson County is a popular destination for visitors looking to random camp on public land. There are six Public Land Use Zones (PLUZ), each of which permits random camping. Restrictions apply (e.g. sites and fires must be 1 km from a roadway

or recreation area; 14 days maximum in one location; and removal of all garbage). Camping on public land does not require a permit or registration; as such it is difficult to estimate the number of random campers in David Thompson County each year.

There are three RV resorts in the region that provide RV rentals for visitors seeking a camping experience.

## Places to Eat and Drink

There are approximately 30 restaurants and cafes in Rocky Mountain House.<sup>xi</sup> Visitors seeking food on-the-go will find familiar franchises and can search out local options on main street, such as Copper Creek Cafe and Pebble Ridge Coffee House. There are a number of casual dining options for burgers, pizza and steak. Visitors can also enjoy Korean, Chinese and Japanese cuisine. For fine-dining, it's worth the trip 18 km south to Hearthstone at The Prairie Creek Inn.

Nordegg has three places to eat. Miners Cafe in the Nordegg Museum has homemade sandwiches and pies. The Nordegg Lodge has "a small town no nonsense vibe" and is adorned with antiques and archival photographs. The Town of Caroline has four restaurants/cafes, as well as the Longbranch Saloon; complete with a chuckwagon above the entrance and vintage saddles at the bar. Leslieville has a restaurant in the Leslieville Hotel.

## Shopping and Services

Rocky Mountain House is the region's retail and service centre. While it has a small town feel, it has many big city amenities. Visitors can stock up (or restock) on food, fuel and supplies at familiar grocery stores, gas stations and retail stores. There are two RV repair shops and about a dozen locations to service vehicles. For outdoor supplies, visitors can find three ATV sales and/or service locations,<sup>xii</sup> four hunting and/or fishing stores,<sup>xiii</sup> and one location for mountain bike and snowboard sales and services.<sup>xiv</sup> Visitors seeking western supplies can check out Henry's Western Wear and Saddlery and The Tack Trunk. Local and Canadian-made clothing can be found at Earthly Fibers and More, antiques at Prairie Creek Antiques, and home and country decor and gifts at Country Basics, Cherubs Gift Boutique and The Angel Tree. Visitors can also seek out a half dozen or so local artists who work in bronze sculpture, clay, watercolours, alpaca fiber, weaving, pottery and glasswork.

In the Hamlet of Nordegg, there is one general store/gas station and a liquor store. Visitors can shop for local arts and crafts at Miner's Cafe and Coliseum Gift Shop.

The Village of Caroline has one gas station, a local grocery store, two liquor stores and one auto parts store. Two boutique shops recently opened on main street. These shops provide visitors an opportunity to purchase local woodwork and art. For hunting, fishing and camping supplies, visitors can head to Caroline Supplies. Visitors can shop for antiques, western wear and gifts at Whiskey Jaxx in Leslieville.

## Tourism Festivals and Events

David Thompson Country showcases its rural roots with its festivals and events. There are seven cowboy-related events that draw visitors to the region, starting with the Big Horn Stampede each May (8 km west of Caroline) to the Battle of the Rockies, a professional chuckwagon race held in Rocky Mountain House in August. Other summer events include the tractor pull at Leslieville Antique Days and the Western Wheels Car Show in Rocky Mountain House.

Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site hosts special events during its May to September season. On National Aboriginal Day visitors can experience First Nations and Metis crafts, games and storytelling. The site opens for a special holiday event, a Fur Trade Christmas.

There is a music series and various concerts in the region. The Music Shop Concert Theatre and SOUP House in Rocky Mountain House hosts local to well-known artists in its year-round concert series. The David Thompson Resort has a Cowboy Country Music Weekend in May. Grandview Stage Country Resort, located 12 km south of Rocky Mountain House, runs a year-round concert series that attracts emerging and established artists from Canada's folk music scene. It also has an open mic every Wednesday.

O'Chiese First Nation holds a Competition Powwow on the July long weekend. The Rocky Native Friendship Centre has an Aboriginal Day Celebration with pow wow dancers and craft sales.

Fat Tire Festival at Frontier Lodge, 11 km from Nordegg, is a mountain bike festival for beginner and advanced riders, and even includes heli-biking.



Each Thursday evening of summer, main street in Rocky Mountain Houses closes for Marketplace on Main. This weekly event animates main street with live entertainment and local vendors and artisans.

In winter, visitors can head to Crimson Lake Snowy Saturdays for snow fort building, a snowman contest and activities like cross country skiing and fat-tire biking. During the Christmas season, visitors can take in events like Festival of Trees and Caroline Christmas Lightup.

## Attractions and Experiences

The foothills, mountains, lakes and rivers in David Thompson Country are the foundation for its tourism industry, attracting visitors seeking nature-based experiences. The region is also rich in history, drawing visitors to its museums and National Historic Sites. The discussion below highlights the outdoor and cultural experiences available in the region.

### Angling

David Thompson Country is an angling destination thanks to an abundance of lakes, rivers and streams. The region attracts anglers for open water fishing, fly fishing, ice fishing, and even heli-fishing. Ahlstrom Air located in Nordegg offers heli-fishing into the South Ram River Canyon and Brazeau River.

The North Raven River is one of Alberta's finest brown trout spawning streams and attracts out of province and international anglers. Alberta-based fishing guides like Alberta Brown Trout Fly Fishing offer excursions to the North Raven and elsewhere in David Thompson Country. They partner with accommodation providers such as The Lazy M Lodge near Caroline or Prairie Creek Inn near Rocky Mountain House.

Hunting and fishing stores in the region are a source for information on fishing locations and outfitters. Visitors can purchase an Alberta Sportfishing License at hunting and fishing stores in Rocky Mountain House and Caroline, as well as at gas stations in the region. Anglers can also purchase and print licenses online at [www.albertarelm.ca](http://www.albertarelm.ca).

### Biking

The region's terrain attracts mountain bikers of all skill levels. There are beginner trails with smooth surfaces and slight slopes, such as the trail from Rocky Mountain House to Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site and the trail from town to Crimson Lake Provincial Park. For bikers looking for more challenging terrain, there are five popular intermediate trails and four popular expert trails accessible from the Highway 11 corridor. Rocky Mtn Bike 'N Board and Frontier Lodge offer mountain bike packages and Ahlstrom Air offers heli-biking.

### Canoeing, Kayaking and Rafting

The region's lakes and rivers attract paddlers of all levels of experience. The North Saskatchewan River from Nordegg to Rocky Mountain House is a popular three to five day, 110 km canoe trip. The route is a mix of Class I to Class III rapids and it best suited for intermediate paddlers; novice paddlers should have experienced paddlers with them. Class II and III rapids can be paddled around, making it a route-of-choice



for canoe clubs and outfitters. HeLa Ventures Outdoor Adventure Education Centre located in Rocky Mountain House offers shuttles, canoe and gear rentals, and guided river trips. Visitors can also find canoe and rafting packages offered by clubs and outfitters based in Canmore, Edmonton and Calgary. Western Wilderness Adventures has canoe rentals with delivery to Goldeye Lake and Fish Lake.

### Cross Country Skiing and Snowshoeing

While there are no alpine ski resorts in the region, visitors cross country ski, backcountry ski or snowshoe. There are groomed trails at Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site and Pines Hills Golf Course near Rocky Mountain House. Skiers and snowshoers with backcountry skills can access ungroomed trails in Bighorn Backcountry. Terratima Lodge and Klondike Ventures offer ski rentals and/or guide services.

### Dog sledding and skijoring

Klondike Ventures near Rocky Mountain House offers half-day to full-day dog sled and skijoring experiences, including a learn-to-mush that puts visitors in the driver's seat.

### Hunting

Fall is Alberta's shoulder season for leisure travel, but high season for hunters and outfitters. The eastern part of the region is ranching country and home to whitetail and mule deer, elk and moose. Bighorn sheep and mountain goat are found further west in mountains and high alpine. Hunting and fishing stores in Rocky Mountain House and Caroline are a source for supplies and information. Outfitters offer guided hunting trips in the region and can be found through the Alberta Professional Outfitters Society at [www.apos.ab.ca](http://www.apos.ab.ca).

### Golfing

There are five golf courses in the region; two are a short drive from Rocky Mountain House and one is just north of the Village of Caroline. Dark Horse Golf Course is 25 minutes east of Rocky Mountain House, and there is one golf course in Nordegg townsite. The courses typically offer club and cart rentals with food and refreshments in the clubhouse.



### Helicopter tours

Ahlstrom Air based in Nordegg and Alhambra offers sightseeing, heli-fishing, heli-hiking, and heli-biking tours.

### Heritage and culture

The region has two National Historic Sites. Visitors learn how the fur trade shaped Canada as a nation at Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site. The site is operated by Parks Canada and has hands-on programs and events. The Brazeau Collieries Mine Site is a designated as a national and a provincial historic site. Visitors can book mine tours at the Nordegg Heritage Museum. In Rocky Mountain House there is a museum, Historic Walk on Main Street and Visitor Information Centre.

### Hiking

From scenic strolls to multi-day backcountry excursions, there are trails for all ages and abilities of hikers. One of the most popular and accessible trails is Siffleur Falls in the Kootenay Plains. This trail offers a scenic walk over the North Saskatchewan River to the falls. Experienced hikers can enjoy trails in Public Land Use Zones in Bighorn Backcountry. Alberta Environment and Parks posts on its website information on permitted uses (motorized or non-motorized), trail updates and closures. There are local operators offering guided hiking and backcountry trips, such as Pursuit Adventures and Skadi Wilderness Adventures.

### Ice climbing

The natural ice features along the Highway 11 corridor west of Nordegg attract ice climbers to the region. There are also man-made ice walls at the Centre for Outdoor Education, Frontier Lodge and Shunda Creek Hostel. These three facilities jointly host the annual Tri-ice-a-thon in February.



### OHV/ATV riding

The region is a destination for off-highway and all-terrain vehicle enthusiasts. The Forestry Trunk Road provides access to a number of popular trails and riding areas. Many riders look to access Public Land Use Zones in Bighorn Backcountry where motorized recreation is permitted. Alberta Environment and Parks posts trail updates and closures on the department website. Clearwater County has an Off-Highway Vehicle bylaw for OHV/ATV use in hamlets and on roadways.



There are RV parks and campgrounds in the region that cater to riders and have amenities such as a kids riding area, ATV loading and off-loading, and ride-in-ride-out access. Boundary RV Park, 27 km west of Caroline, rents ATVs. Outsy Wilderness Adventures based in Rocky Mountain House offers guided ATV adventures.

### Outdoor skating

Weather and ice conditions permitting, visitors can skate on frozen lakes in the region. Goldeye Centre on Goldeye Lake clears the snow for ice skating, and Rocky Mountain House maintains an oval across from the Arena Complex.

### Snowmobiling

Snowmobile trail systems have been developed at Chambers Creek area west of Rocky Mountain House. There is a staging area with a warm up shelter, toilets, parking lot and loading ramp.

### Trail riding and pack trips

The region is a destination for horseback riders, thanks to an extensive trail system and the many well-maintained staging areas along the Highway 11 corridor and the Forestry Trunk Road. The staging areas typically have loading/unloading ramps, hitching rails, and camping units. There are about a dozen outfitters<sup>xxv</sup> offering day and multi-day pack trips in the

region<sup>xvi</sup>. Visitors can find trail ride outfitters through the Alberta Outfitters Association at [www.albertaoutfitters.com](http://www.albertaoutfitters.com).

### Visitor Information Centers

There are three Visitor Information Centres in the region.

**Caroline Visitor Information Centre** is located on the eastern entry to the Village of Caroline on Highway 22. It shares the site with the Caroline and District Museum.

**Nordegg Visitor Information Centre** is operated by Clearwater County from May to September long weekends. It is located in the Nordegg Heritage Centre.

**Rocky Mountain House Visitor Information Centre** is operated by the Rocky Chamber of Commerce through a partnership with the Town of Rocky Mountain House and Clearwater County. The centre is located in the Rocky Museum on Hwy 11 and is open year-round and on weekends.

### Emergency and Protective Services

Clearwater County is supported by various law enforcement entities including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Alberta Sheriffs, Community Peace Officers and various provincial entities such as Fish and Wildlife Officers and Conservation Officers.

Rocky Mountain House has a local detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) that serves the Town and surrounding area. Rocky Mountain House Search and Rescue has highly-trained volunteers for backcountry, alpine and water search and rescue. The Town also has the region's hospital, while Clearwater County is served by ground and air ambulance. The Village of Caroline has volunteer ambulance that serves an area of 3000 residents.

## What Do We Know About Current Visitors to David Thompson Country?

David Thompson Country draws increasing numbers of visitors year round. The region attracts visitors from Edmonton and area, as well as regional day trippers. This parallels visitation in the Alberta Central Tourism Region, of which David Thompson Country is a part. Edmonton accounts for 33% of all visits made to central Alberta; with central Alberta residents accounting for 37%. Calgary and area residents make up 16% of visits with overseas and US visitors at 1% each.<sup>xvii</sup> David Thompson Country does attract overseas and US visitors, as reported in statistics collected by the visitor information centres and area attractions.

About half of all the 3 million overnight trips to central Alberta are for the purpose of visiting family and friends. The vast majority of these visitors stay in private homes. In David Thompson

Country, trip purpose and accommodation trends tend to be different. While the 20,000 trading area residents surely attract overnight visits from family and friends, the region likely has a higher percentage of trips where pleasure is the primary purpose.

In central Alberta, only 21% of overnight stays are at campgrounds. In David Thompson Country, however, this rate is likely much higher, along with overnight stays in hotel/motel and other fixed roof properties (e.g., cabins or cottages). The high use of campgrounds may also mean longer stays than the average of 2.8 nights for central Alberta.

The seasonality of trips to David Thompson Country closely follows the Alberta Central Tourism Region. Central Alberta sees its highest visitation from July to September (42%), followed by April to June (26%), October to December (19%) and January to March (13%).<sup>xviii</sup> David Thompson Country does see a bump in traffic counts in February and March, perhaps with winter conditions attracting snowmobilers and ice climbers.

Traffic counts on the region's main David Thompson Highway 11 give an indication of travel patterns. Traffic counts do not differentiate work or leisure-related trips or multiple trips in a day; however, the data does indicate that David Thompson Country is attracting and retaining traffic. For example, in August, the average daily two-way traffic count just west of Rocky Mountain House on Highway 11 was around 3000; just west of Nordegg was around 2000; and near the Banff Park Gate was around 1000.<sup>xix</sup> Highway 11 is not simply a route to get to or from Banff and Jasper National Parks.

Interesting to note, traffic counts on Highway 11, just south of Rocky Mountain House are steady year round with an average two-way daily count of 2,240 and only small variability month-to-month (summer months see an increase in daily traffic to an average of 2,470). The west side of Rocky Mountain House on Highway 11 tells a different story. Daily traffic counts peak in August to about 3000, dipping to average daily traffic of 1,580 in December and January. This suggests traffic on Highway 11 west of Rocky Mountain House follows the ebbs and flows of the seasonality of tourism; less so for traffic south of Rocky Mountain House.<sup>xx</sup>

The Visitor Information Centre in Rocky Mountain House also experiences this seasonality. Over 14,300 people accessed the Visitor Information Centre, primarily in the spring and summer. In high season staff are in contact with, on average, 94 people each day. They increasingly spend time assisting visitors with trip planning, which means they are able to influence length of stay, number of activities and expenditures. Visitation to the Visitor Information Centre also reflects increased visitation to the region over the years. In 2010 only 5,500 people accessed the centre.<sup>xxi</sup>

## What Inspires Visitors to Choose David Thompson Country?

In 2016, the Regional Tourism Group conducted an online survey asking residents and visitors to identify the must-see things to see and do. There were 223 responses; about half were residents of the region and half were outside of the region (e.g. primarily Edmonton, Red Deer and Calgary).

Outdoor activities and nature-based attractions dominated the responses, ATVing, camping, hiking, fishing, and interestingly, kiteboarding. When asked what two things can be done to improve the tourism experience, better trail systems for ATV use topped the list, followed by more backcountry accommodation and amenities in the Nordegg area.

Clearly, access to the backcountry is a driver for residents and visitors to David Thompson Country. So, what do we know about people who seek backcountry activities while on a trip?

In 2006, the provincial and national tourism governments co-funded an assessment of travel behaviour and motivations of leisure travel to and in Canada. The Travel Activity and Motivation Survey (TAMS) examined the activities and travel habits of Canadians and Americans on overnight trips. The findings provide insights on Canadians who seek wilderness activities, and sheds light on differences between those who hike and those who ATV while on trips. A full description can be found in Appendix C.

### Canadians who seek wilderness activities while on trips

- Young singles, young couples and mature singles
- Higher levels of education yet lower levels of household income
- Active, but to a lesser extent, in other outdoor activities associated with a wilderness setting
- Interest in educational or experiential cultural experiences
- Tend to camp

### Canadians who snowmobile or ATV while on trips

- Male, young singles or couples or have young families (children under 12)
- Lower levels of education and household income
- Active in other nature-based activities
- Tend to camp

### Canadians who hike, climb and paddle while on trips

- Equally divided among males and females and young singles or couples
- Higher levels of education and above-average household incomes
- Active in high-energy, strenuous activities while traveling and not traveling
- Participate in cultural activities
- Stay in campgrounds and resorts

The travel behaviours and motivations of Canadians who seek wilderness activities, in particular hiking and ATViing, reflect perhaps the biggest challenge facing tourism in David Thompson Country: managing visitor expectations and experiences for both motorized and nonmotorized recreation.

While there are differences between hikers and ATV riders, visitors seeking wilderness activities share some of the characteristics of Alberta’s two primary target markets - Free Spirits and Cultural Explorers.

## Current Target Market

Travel Alberta uses the Explorer Quotient (EQ) to identify Free Spirits as the primary target market and Cultural Explorers as the secondary target market for the province. While David Thompson Country has yet to complete a detailed market analysis to define its target markets, the region has the experiences that Free Spirits and Cultural Explorers seek, and as such, these are a worthwhile starting point for discussion.

Explorer Quotient is a market segmentation tool developed by Destination Canada to help destination marketers and managers understand the values, motivations and worldviews of different types of travellers, termed Traveller Types. Marketers and managers identify their destination’s ideal Traveller Type, and, along with traditional demographic and geographic data, tailor tourism experiences and marketing to reach their identified travellers.

Free Spirits are Alberta’s primary target market. These travellers are young and young at heart. They are highly social and have an enthusiastic outlook on life and travel. They are experimental and adventurous and share their travel stories with others. Free Spirits like to be active while on holidays. Nature-based adventures, wildlife viewing, local dining, and visiting well-known historic sites or interpretive centres appeal to them.<sup>xxii</sup>

Culture Explorers are Alberta’s second target market. Cultural Explorers seek to learn and understand the people and places they visit; both the past and the present. They are spontaneous and like to let each day unfold. They visit historic sites and unique urban districts, but really want to go beyond the obvious tourist attractions to discover what is off the beaten path.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Considering what inspires travel to Alberta, we propose David Thompson Country primary target:

*Youthful adventurers from the Edmonton region and Central Alberta seeking off-the-beaten path experiences in town or in the backcountry beyond.*

It is important to note that Explorer Quotient Traveler Types transcend geography. This means that regardless of whether Free Spirits or Cultural Explorers are from Edmonton, out-of-province or out of country, they share similar values, motivations and worldviews. As David Thompson Country grows and looks to expand its reach in Calgary or to out-of-country geographic markets (e.g., European travelers seeking wilderness experiences or Germans travellers seeking aboriginal cultural experiences) tourism marketers and managers can apply their understanding of Free Spirits and Cultural Explorers to these new geographic markets.

## David Thompson Country's Competitive Advantage

What sets David Thompson Country apart as a destination is a combination of its accessibility and seclusion. Accessible in that Rocky Mountain House is a 2.5 hour drive from Edmonton and Calgary and only one hour from Red Deer. Secluded in that it has wilderness experiences far from the hustle and bustle (and fees and backcountry permits) of Banff and Jasper National Park. Rules and regulations still apply, but the wilderness experience is less prescribed, less structured, and with a little more grit. The combination of accessibility and seclusion gives David Thompson Country a competitive advantage over other destinations that also attract visitors seeking wilderness activities and cultural experiences.

*The wilderness experience is less prescribed, less structured, and with a little more grit.*

## Comparative Destinations

### Town of Clearwater

The Town of Clearwater in the North Thompson Valley of British Columbia has forests, mountains, lakes and rivers that attract visitors seeking wilderness experiences. Much like Rocky Mountain House, Clearwater acts as a service centre and gateway to the surrounding backcountry and well-known Wells Gray Provincial Park. And, like Rocky Mountain House, Clearwater has festival, events, a farmers' market, and unique local shops and restaurants. It is, however, not a weekend trip for most Albertans. The Town is a 7.5 and 8.5 hour drive from Edmonton and Calgary, respectively.

### Town of Hinton

The Town of Hinton is a growing Alberta tourist town located in the Athabasca River Valley and 15 minutes from Jasper National Park. Hinton is 3 hours from Edmonton, and 5 hours for those travelling from Calgary. Hinton is known for the three-kilometer fresh water Beaver Boardwalk (the longest freshwater boardwalk in Canada), the annual Fohn Festival, the Mary Reimer Memorial Rodeo, the Wild Mountain Music Festival, and the one of a kind Mountain

Bike Park. The Town is geographically situated to offer options for camping, hiking, skiing, fishing, water sports, hunting, and off-road vehicle riding. Hinton has embraced the natural assets particularly with the development of the Mountain Bike Skills Park. This is a good example of a small community leveraging its greatest assets to target a very specific activity, and developing these assets to attract visitors.

### City of Revelstoke

The City of Revelstoke in British Columbia is an impressive adventure destination; however, it is not a weekend trip for most Albertans either. It is a 5 hour drive from Calgary and 7.5 hours from Edmonton. The city's investment in its downtown core over the years has resulted in a vibrant, historical core where the majority of the shops are small, locally operated specialty retailers. The food scene is active with over 40 dining options and a local brewery. Festivals and weekly events animate urban spaces and there is an impressive range of accommodations. Unlike Rocky Mountain House, Revelstoke is right in the mountains. However, like Rocky Mountain House, Revelstoke is surrounded by the kind of terrain sought after by ATV riders, snowmobilers and dirt bikers. The dirt biking tracks and trail system is just 10 km north of downtown and there are over 75 km of trails built specifically for dirt biking. Rocky Mountain House may want to look to Revelstoke as an example of a destination that embraces both motorized and nonmotorized recreation.

### Town of Sylvan Lake

The Town of Sylvan Lake is a vibrant lakeside community with well-developed water front attractions and amenities. The Town is a short distance from the major metropolitan centres of Red Deer, Edmonton and Calgary, attracting a high number of day-tripper visitors. A range of accommodation and restaurant options support visitors with a number of specialty shops and tourism festivals and events enhance the visitor experience. The community has leveraged their central location and natural assets to target the tourism industry for private investment.

### Town of Canmore

The Town of Canmore is located in the Canadian Rocky Mountains, just 20 minutes from Banff National Park and in Kananaskis Country. The town is only 4 hours from Edmonton and an hour outside of Calgary. Canmore has over 71 km of multi-use trails, and is in close proximity to 5 major ski resorts, hiking, climbing, mountain biking, kayaking, canoeing and rafting. The Town is also home to the world-renowned Nordic Centre and several Olympic athletes. The downtown is well developed with boutique shops, art galleries and dining experiences. Canmore is a bustling tourist town year - round developed specifically for the outdoor enthusiasts.



## 03 VISITOR AND BUSINESS SURVEY RESULTS

To support the David Thompson Country Visitor Friendly Assessment project, we conducted a visitor and business survey. The highlights from these surveys are provided below. To see the full results, please see Appendix F and G.

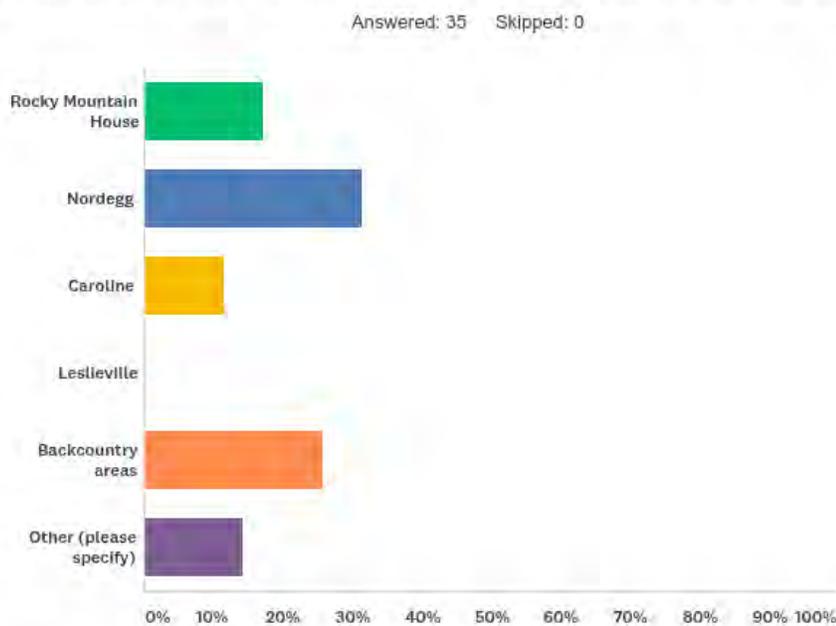
### Visitor Survey

The visitor survey took place throughout the summer of 2017. Visitors were provided hard copies of the survey to fill out at Visitor Information Centres in the region and a link was available on various websites. A total of 35 responses were collected.

Respondents to the visitor survey primarily visited Nordegg (31%) followed by backcountry areas (26%), and Rocky Mountain House (17%). Other responses included the Bighorn backcountry, David Thompson Resort, Cline River area and camping areas along the David Thompson Highway (see Figure 2).

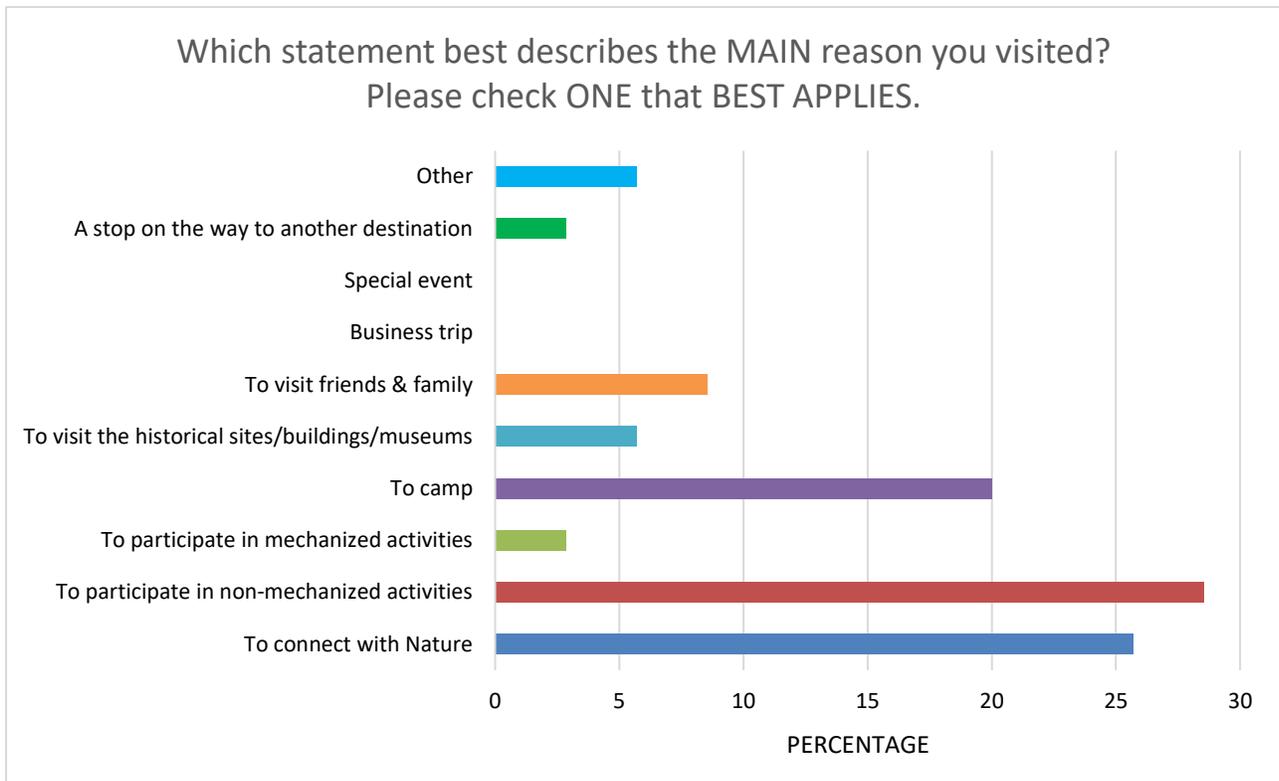
Figure 2- The area primarily visited by respondents

#### Q1 Where in David Thompson Country did you primarily visit?



Respondents visited the David Thompson Country primarily to participate in non-mechanized activities such as mountain biking, paddling, hiking, horseback riding, fishing etc (28.5%). Additional respondents indicated they wanted to connect with nature (25.7%) and to camp (20%). For the rest of the results, see Figure 3 below.

Figure 3 - Main reason respondents visited the region



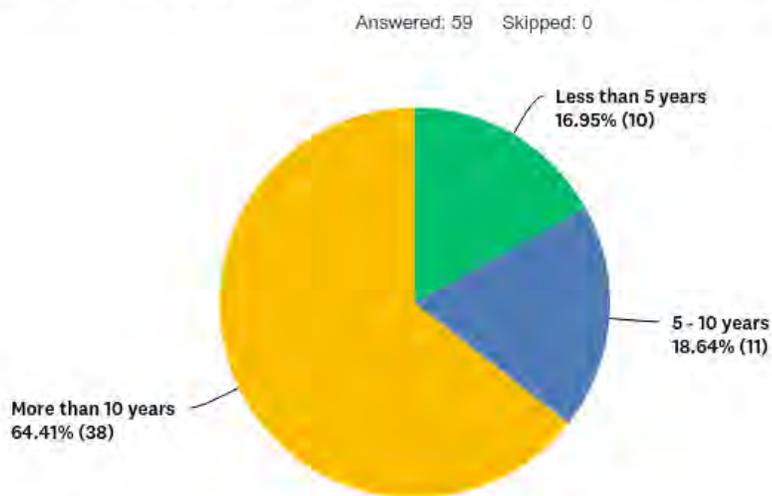
## Business Survey

The business survey took place in June of 2017. Businesses were given an online link that allowed them to participate in the survey. A total of 59 responses were collected.

The majority of respondents' businesses are located in Rocky Mountain House (67.8%) and have been in operation for 10 years or more (64%), indicating that business owners have a great deal of experience in the David Thompson Region (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 - How many years has your establishment been operating?

### Q3 How many years has your establishment been operating?



Respondents rated David Thompson Country as "Great" or "OK" in regard to the cleanliness of the municipality (86%) overall visual appeal (85%), visitor information available at the Visitor Information Centre (81%), and access to public parking (76%).

Respondents rated David Thompson Country as "Poor" in regard to access to public washrooms (37%), quality of shopping (36%), access to highway rest stops (27%), access to picnic areas (24%) and quality of customer service (24%).

81% of respondents felt that it is their role to provide visitor information to customers, while 70% of respondents felt that they have enough information about David Thompson Country to provide sound visitor information.

Respondents indicated the David Thompson Country region could enhance tourism marketing & advertising (20%), produce regional maps and planning guides (17%), improve wayfinding

& signage (19%) and engage the business community further to increase customer service (17%) to improve its visitor friendliness.

Many businesses felt they could improve customer service (17%) to improve their visitor friendliness. Some respondents also felt they could enhance efforts to increase staff knowledge of tourism amenities and attractions (13%), and felt it would be beneficial to collaborate with tour operators and individuals offering tourism services or amenities (13%).

Additionally, respondents provided general comments relating to visitor friendliness in David Thompson Country:

- Enhance the downtown of Rocky Mountain House with additional shopping amenities.
- Rocky Mountain House newsletter is excellent for sharing information with locals which is helpful to share information with visitors.
- Businesses need to be aware of the economic impact tourism has on the region, and that they are profiting.
- Rocky Mountain House could benefit from hosting additional high quality events.
- Overall, improvements are needed in all areas of tourism (signage, public facilities, infrastructure, branding).
- Pet friendly lake/beach areas would be helpful in attracting more visitors.



# 04

## VISITOR FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT KEY FINDINGS

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### Overview

On July 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>, the assessment team spent full days in David Thompson Country and experienced the destination from a visitor's point of view. The team navigated its way to various attractions, stopped at the Visitor Information Centers, took in the sights and sounds of the region, mystery shopped select businesses and stayed overnight in Rocky Mountain House. During the tours, the team recorded what they saw through photographs and notes. Each team member focused on their respective area of expertise, but also took a holistic view of the tour and commented on all five visitor friendly categories.

The assessment team enjoyed our time in David Thompson Country. Highlights of our experience include tasty meals at local restaurants and ice cream in Nordegg. Activities included shopping, a hike to Siffleur Falls and the night market in Rocky Mountain House. We had very good weather on both days of the assessment and even had encounters with local wildlife (including deer, coyote and even a skunk).

Upon completion of the tour the assessment team evaluated the visitor friendliness of the community using five key criteria:

1. Overall Ambience / Community Visual Appeal
2. Wayfinding / Signage
3. Public Services / Visitor Amenities
4. Quality of Service / Professionalism
5. Visitor Information

The information below provides a brief summary of key findings from the visitor friendly assessments. Please see Appendix D for the full assessment.



## Region as a Whole

The David Thompson Country region has outstanding natural assets combined with several quaint communities weaved throughout the region. The municipalities have recognized the importance and value in collaborating on promoting tourism product and making the region more visitor friendly. This project is the first step to understanding the key strengths and identifying areas of opportunity.

### Key Strengths

1. There is a fair amount of information about the region on many online sites making it easy for the visitor to plan before visiting.
2. There are vast areas of natural untouched wilderness areas that attract adventure seekers and cultural explorers who seek holistic outdoor experiences the region can offer.
3. The Region generally comes across as visually appealing and friendly to visitors.
4. Businesses have recognized the importance of tourism in the region and are increasing efforts to enhance customer service, information and their capacity to leverage the opportunities of increased visitorship.
5. The Nordegg area is a popular location in the region for camping, hiking, mountain biking, cross country skiing, artists and photographers.

6. Located near and en route to two of Canada’s most famous National Parks, Banff and Jasper, offering a less commercialized tourism and recreation experience.
7. Generally warm and welcoming customer service staff.

#### Main Growth Areas

1. The online information is extensive, however, the term “David Thompson Country” may not be as well known, it would be useful to consistently use the same verbiage on all online portals.
2. Rocky Mountain House is the only full-service community in the region. There may be an opportunity for Nordegg or Caroline to increase visitor-like amenities & attractions.
3. The directional and wayfinding assets vary throughout the region, and it would benefit all communities to collaborate on enhancing both highway and urban wayfinding. See examples in Appendix E.
4. There is a lack of basic tourism amenities for the travelling public (e.g. public washrooms, showers, and rest stops).
5. There is limited diversity in programs, activities, entertainment, restaurants and accommodations.

## The Village of Caroline

Caroline depicts a western style community marked by saloon style pubs, road side diners and a few local artisan gift shops.

### Overall Ambience / Community Visual Appeal

#### Key Findings

- Buildings along 50th Ave consistently use a western style theme in building facades and store fronts although this isn’t carried throughout the community for a consistent feel (see Figures 5).
- Occupied buildings are generally in good condition. However, there are number of empty parcels and unoccupied buildings that need repair and maintenance as well as screening and cleanup.
- The Village administration building appears outdated and could benefit from façade improvement and landscaping to improve appearance and appeal (see Figure 6).
- The Visitor Information Centre and Heritage Park are well maintained and offer visitor amenities such as



Figure 5 - Western Style facades found on buildings along 50th Ave



Figure 6 - The Village Office could benefit from signage and a façade update

recreational trails, washrooms, RV dump as well as overnight camping (see Figure 7).

- The streetscape in general is well maintained, but is lacking in street furniture, decorative lighting or landscaping, and could benefit from widening the sidewalks for enhanced accessibility and pedestrian friendly space (see Figure 8).
- The banners outside the Village Administration Office are effective and might be expanded to both sides of the main thoroughfare.



Figure 7 – Visitor Information Centre at Heritage Park

## Wayfinding / Signage

### Key Findings

- The welcome signs on the highway are clear and inviting.
- Street signage is clear and uses the Village's visual identity well.
- Public destination signage is not consistent.

## Public Services / Visitor Amenities

### Key Findings

- The Visitor Information Centre (VIC) and Heritage Park are appealing and are conveniently located along 50<sup>th</sup> avenue.
- There are unique saloon style pubs and restaurants and well decorated gift shops with unique artifacts which are attractive to visitors.
- There is a reasonable supply of eating options including diners, fast food, pubs and restaurants all located along 50<sup>th</sup> avenue. Diversity of these offerings could be improved.
- The Farmers Market was a nice treat.
- There are some unique shops that display and sell local artwork.
- The only gas station is easily accessible and parking space is available.
- Camping options including RV camping is available at the VIC and Heritage Park.
- Options for overnight accommodation are available, but the buildings do not appear well maintained nor attractive from a visitor perspective.



Figure 8: The sidewalks are not pedestrian friendly with narrow walkways and no street furniture.

## Quality of Service / Professionalism

### Key Findings

- Businesses were open, warm and inviting.
- Businesses were able to answer basic questions related to local visitors amenities.

## Visitor Information

### Key Findings

- The rustic regional map on the outside of the VIC needs improving.
- There is good local information at the VIC, but regional and provincial information could be improved upon.

## Hamlet of Leslieville

Leslieville is a small and quiet hamlet surrounded by a large rural agricultural community. As you approach the Hamlet, you see an old church and the fire hall. The streets appear clean and safe given the lack of any traffic. The hamlet offers easy access to a beautiful ravine and trails and an open field that can be used for camping.

## Overall Ambience / Community Visual

### Key Findings

- The streets, sidewalks and open spaces were safe and clean with no visible signs of graffiti.
- Occupied buildings appear well maintained, but there are number of empty lots and industrial sites that could benefit from proper screening and maintenance (see Figure 9).
- Public amenities such as waste baskets or washrooms are available at the gas station or at the shops.
- Pedestrian environment appears safe due to lack of traffic, but the sidewalks are narrow with a lack of any street furniture.
- The streetscape in general lacks any landscaping and trees or public parks and picnic spots.
- There is an overall lack of any public art and an overall theme throughout the community.
- There is ravine with open fields at the south end of the Mainstreet which offers a scenic view although locating a dedicated trail accessing the ravine was not found.



Figure 9 - Industrial uses could benefit from landscape screening



## Wayfinding / Signage

### Key Findings

- Public destination and amenity signage is inconsistent throughout the community.

## Public Services / Visitor Amenities

### Key Findings

- The Whiskey Jaxx store on the Mainstreet sells collection of western style artifacts, basic food options and beverages serving the local community.
- There is ample space for public parking although there were no designated parking spaces for RVs.
- There is an overall lack of public amenities such as a designated park space or a visitor information centre, eating options or public washrooms.
- There is overnight accommodation available in the hamlet, but the building does not appear visually appealing. There is an overall lack of accommodation options within the hamlet.

## Quality of Service / Professionalism

### Key Findings

- We had pleasant interactions with the few businesses owners there are in the community.

## Visitor Information

### Key Findings

- Limited visitor information is available.

## Hamlet of Nordegg

The community of Nordegg provides a quaint and rural atmosphere surrounded by a picturesque mountain landscape and open blue skies. There are a few shops such as the Painted Pony Trading Post or the Miners Café where you are greeted by friendly shop keepers.

### Overall Ambience / Community Visual

#### Key Findings

- Generally speaking the Hamlet of Nordegg offers a quaint a rural atmosphere surrounded by picturesque landscape offering views of the mountains (see Figure 10).
- The streetscape surrounding Stuart Street which is the main street providing access to the Hamlet is well maintained although it does not offer the streetscape expected in urban areas.
- There are no provisions for sidewalks or street side furniture.
- Landscaping and public art or murals along the main street are limited.
- The community is inviting for visitors to explore the local shops and the museum (see Figure 11).
- The hotel building appears dated although renovations on the inside of the building are noticeable.
- Commercial shops mostly offer gas, convenience store, food, beverages, ice cream, artifacts and gifts that promote local artisans and are beautifully situated against the backdrop of the Historic Nordegg golf course.
- The Hamlet could significantly benefit from providing improved development standards along Stuart Street such as a paved road, trees and shrubs along both sides of the road, placement of street side furniture and provision of a dedicated picnic area and park space with basic amenities such as washrooms for visitors. When completing this work, caution should be exercised to ensure the rustic feel of the community is preserved.
- Lack of roadside amenities on HWY 11 west of Nordegg.



Figure 10 - Picnic area outside Museum overlooking the Golf Course



Figure 11 - Museum and VIC building

## Wayfinding / Signage

### Key Findings

- The welcome sign to the Hamlet is pleasing and inviting.
- Public destination signage is not consistent.
- The wayfinding and general directions to amenities and attractions are not consistent.

## Public Services / Visitor Amenities

### Key Findings

- Key locations within Nordegg are the gas station, the Museum/VIC building and the shops, located along Stuart St which provide basic services for visitors and those camping in the surrounding areas.
- Public amenities such as washrooms can be found at the Museum building as well as the gas station. A public library and post office are located close to the shops along Stuart St.
- While there are limited options for overnight accommodation visitors can stay at the Nordegg Lodge which also has a sit down restaurant.
- Recreational opportunities in the Hamlet include the Nordegg Historic Golf Course as well as a number of trails and unrestricted camping areas along David Thompson Highway in the vicinity of the Hamlet.
- Food and beverages can be found at the Gas Station, the Museum, food trucks and the Nordegg Lodge but diverse choice of restaurants or evening entertainment options are lacking.
- The community could benefit from paving the main roadways and provisions for sidewalks to increase accessibility and pedestrian experience (see Figure 12).



Figure 12 - Shops and other development with gravel roads.

## Quality of Service / Professionalism

### Key Findings

- Most local businesses were open, inviting and able to answer questions. Some were not as helpful indicating a need for consistency.
- The Miners Café and Gift Shop at the VIC building are excellent.

## Visitor Information

### Key Findings

- The regional map on the outdoor structure outside the general store needs improving.
- More comprehensive information should be available at the VIC.

## Siffleur Falls Trail

Siffleur Falls Trail is a popular hiking location outside of Nordegg with a featured suspension bridge crossing the North Saskatchewan River. Overall, Siffleur Falls received a satisfactory/excellent assessment.

### Key Findings

- Onsite signage is clear, however, highway signs leading to the trailhead parking lot are not clear.
- The parking area where the Siffleur Falls Trail begins offers public washrooms which are well maintained and visitor friendly.
- The ecological reserve map and the staging area map provides limited information and could benefit from adding features such as: hiking distances, ability level and distance to the suspension bridge.
- Commemorative features and interpretive panels are visually appealing and informative.
- Lack of roadside amenities on HWY 11 west of Nordegg.

## Town of Rocky Mountain House

As you approach the Mainstreet in Rocky Mountain House you are pleasantly surprised by the vibrant streetscape that fosters a healthy pedestrian environment and community interaction. The streets are beautifully lined with high quality street furniture, well appointed light fixtures and landscaping and universally accessible to all residents and visitors.



Figure 13 - Main Street business facade

## Overall Ambience / Community Visual Appeal

### Key Findings

- Mainstreet features a high quality public realm modelled as a complete street and is the main attraction in Town.
- Universally accessible pedestrian friendly environment with ample opportunities for public seating along store fronts as well as street corners.
- Many instances of creative business frontages but not consistent throughout the Mainstreet and some of the store fronts look dated and could be better designed to interact with the street (see Figure 13).



Figure 14 - Inside the Rocky Mountain VIC

- There are a number of empty retail space which could be maintained with advertising to attract new businesses.
- The VIC, the Wellness Centre and main street area are well served in terms of landscaping with well-maintained flower baskets and trees planted to amplify the visitor experience.
- Overall landscaping and trees along streets are lacking in other parts of the Town.
- Public amenities outside the VIC include public washrooms which were not well maintained at the time of the visit and generally appear to be in need of maintenance. Benches for seating also appear old and in need of repair and the playground needs replacing.
- The Highway 11 corridor passing through the Town represents a significant challenge in the context of attracting visitors due to a high number of industrial land uses facing the highway corridor without sufficient screening or landscaping. The corridor is also heavily used by truck traffic resulting in significant noise.
- RMH would benefit from developing and implementing highway corridor design guidelines that would result in consistent frontages, landscaped buffers as well as business frontages that are inviting to visitors.
- The Clearwater County mural outside the Museum is effective as it highlights the background of this 150th anniversary project. The student involvement in this great initiative could be described in a plaque on the wall beside the mural and on the back of the free poster that depicts the mural.
- The “Walk of History” plaques on Main Street are very informative, but not always easy to find unless you are using the brochure.

## Wayfinding / Signage

### Key Findings

- Highway signage is clear and direct.
- The east and west gateway signage is aesthetically pleasing and welcoming (see Figure 15). The east gate sign on the right-hand side of the road is partially obscured for motorists by trees.
- The blue and white, metal slat and wooden post signage system applied at various locations in the Town needs to be reconsidered.
- The symbols used on the blue slat and wooden post signs should be redesigned and used consistently on all maps and for other



Figure 15 - Main east entry signage

wayfinding applications.

- The typography used on all public signage should be the same.
- A clean sans serif font should be introduced for all signage.
- The finger post multi-directional sign at 49th and Main should be expanded to other areas around Main Street. This street is a pleasant and important corridor and the public signage should provide good directions (see Figure 16).
- The signage at the front entrance to the VIC/Museum is a patchwork of information and should be consolidated along the lines of the freestanding sign outside the Lou Soppit Community Centre.
- The directional signage to the VIC /Museum needs to be improved.



Figure 16 - Directional Signage - Main Street

## Public Services / Visitor Amenities

### Key Findings

- Diverse land use with stores related to fitness, clothing, jewellery, cafes, music store, provincial government buildings, post office as well service retail uses such as banks, dentist offices and clinics.
- There is a visible shortage of sit down restaurants along the main street as most restaurants are located along Highway 11.
- Two or three cafés are utilizing the wide sidewalk to create patio spaces for customers. It would be advantageous to encourage business owners to open patio spaces.
- The newly built Christenson Sports and Wellness Centre is built to a high standard and offers opportunities for a number of daytime recreation activities and offers ample parking and amenities for visitors (see Figure 17).



Figure 17 - Christenson Sport & Wellness Centre exterior

- The Visitor Information Centre (VIC) is well located in proximity to Highway 11 and offers easy access. The VIC building is not prominent enough and is hidden behind the trees facing the highway.
- The VIC building is well maintained with a landscaped garden and a large collection of artifacts inside the museum. The VIC offers plenty of parking for visitors and servicing options for RV owners including garbage bins, RV sanitary dump station and water fill.
- There are many underutilized sites along the highway corridor, which could potentially accommodate a rest stop for visitors.
- There are a number of newer commercial developments with grocery stores and shopping centres located along Highway 11 and 52nd Avenue. These properties reflect a higher standard of development and landscaping, which should be replicated along the rest of the highway corridor to make the entry into the town more appealing to visitors.
- Most of the hotel accommodation and restaurants are also located along the Highway 11 corridor, further emphasizing the need to create a more visitor friendly atmosphere along this area.

## Quality of Service / Professionalism

### Key Findings

- We received excellent customer service in many locations and good customer service in others. There were no negative experiences anywhere.
- We were impressed by some of the local shops downtown such as the Guitar Shop/Café, bike shop, western shop and Rib place. A unique and interesting vibe is beginning to emerge in downtown reminding us of mountain towns like Revelstoke, British Columbia.

## Visitor Information

### Key Findings

- A feature sign could be developed on the highway to direct people to high quality amenities downtown.
- The VIC had extensive information, well organized and easy to access. The staff member who helped us was very well informed, courteous and helpful.
- The outdoor mapping and brochure box at the VIC/Museum parking area are in the right place, but they need a redesign to improve their graphic standards.

- The Regional map and Town map should be redesigned and used consistently in all media applications (see Figure 18).
- The Town map in the Visitor Guide is too small.
- The wall mounted “kiosk/map” frames used on Main Street need to be refurbished or replaced with free-standing kiosk structures that allow information to be updated.
- The Town should assess how its overall visual identity is being applied in places where public information and site identities have “official” status for audiences.
- Our team found the Regional Visitors Guide very difficult to use, unclear and incomplete. We were unable to access comprehensive accommodation information which is a major gap that should be addressed. Users of the guide have to wade through pages and pages of advertisements in order to glean any useful information at all. This is far too much work to expect of your customers. We eventually gave up on this publication and sourced out information via google searches.
- The Regional Visitors Guide should undertake a complete redesign to appear less cluttered with business advertising. Tourism amenities, attractions and information should be the focus of the publication including but not limited to:
  - Organized by activity/experience versus community
  - Tourism operators and attractions
  - Points of interest
  - Accommodations
  - Dining and eateries
  - Annual Events
  - Basic tourist amenities and locations
  - Community overview
  - Local and regional map

Refer to Appendix E for visitor guide and map examples.

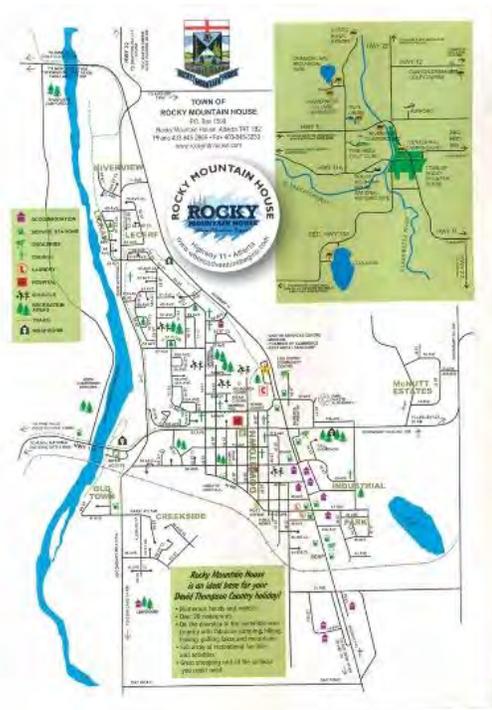


Figure 18 - Town Map

## Digital and Online Presence Assessment

Our team conducted a digital and online presence assessment of the community. The information below provides a summary of key findings. See Appendix H for a detailed description.

Digital and Online Presence Assessment		
<b>Websites</b>		
davidthompsoncountry.ca		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modern, well-designed and well written</li> <li>• Outstanding images</li> <li>• Intuitive navigation</li> <li>• Easy link to contact page</li> <li>• Requires better SEO optimization</li> </ul>
clearwatercounty.ca		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good information</li> <li>• Banner image on each page is attractive and well-sized</li> <li>• Visitor Information Centre link is buried</li> <li>• Site layout is dated</li> <li>• Content is over-written and too corporate-like</li> </ul>
rockymountainhouse.com		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Useful information</li> <li>• Visitor Information Centre page is useful and well presented</li> <li>• The "What to Do" content is excellent, but presentation is not appealing</li> <li>• Photo gallery is great, but images need to be updated</li> <li>• The site needs an update and content re-written to better present information</li> </ul>
whereadventurebegins.com		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good blog site</li> <li>• Well-structured information hierarchy</li> <li>• Great internal links to maps</li> <li>• Requires a professional edit</li> </ul>
travelnordegg.com		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business listings are well organized and provide a lot of useful information</li> <li>• Easy to navigate</li> <li>• Site is dated, requires a content review and additional images</li> </ul>
Travel Sites		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited information on any of the Alberta travel sites.</li> <li>• The region should reach out and provide content to Travel Alberta, Alberta Culture and Tourism and Come Explore Canada</li> </ul>
<b>Social Media</b>		
Facebook	/davidthompsoncountry/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good, consistent posting schedule</li> <li>• Content is useful for visitors and good use of images</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hashtag overuse - hashtags are less effective on FB as they tend to clutter the post</li> </ul>
	/clearwatercnty/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posting schedule is too frequent - averaging 3 posts per day</li> <li>• Engagement is low, and community size is relatively small</li> </ul>
	/TownofRocky/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent cover image</li> <li>• Inconsistent posting schedule. Aim for one post every day, or every other day.</li> <li>• Engagement is very low</li> </ul>
Twitter	/DTCountryAB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good use of images.</li> <li>• Posts could be more frequent - aim for daily presence to build trust with the audience.</li> <li>• Follow more like-minded accounts, and engage directly with influencers.</li> </ul>
	/TownofRocky	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posts appear to be auto-posted from the newsletter service which does not load images.</li> <li>• Engagement is very low - create more engaging content, with colourful and experiential writing.</li> <li>• Content schedule is inconsistent - aim for a daily presence</li> </ul>
Instagram	David Thompson Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent images - very appealing, and inspiring for visitors.</li> <li>• Use more hashtags for greater searchability</li> </ul>



# 05

## ACTION PLAN

## 05 ACTION PLAN

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The action plan is organized in a way that will encourage the ongoing development of key initiatives. Within each assessment category, initiatives have been developed that speak to observations stemming from the community assessment portion of the project. Attached to each of the initiatives is an “order of magnitude cost” and a suggested priority rating (see below). Recommended leads and timelines have also been provided for each initiative. The criteria for timeline, costing and priority ratings are described below.

### Timeline

Abbreviation	Time Frame
ST	Short term (Within 3 years)
MT	Medium term (3-5 years)
LT	Long term (Over 5 years)

### Cost Criteria

Low Cost	Less than \$5,000
Medium Cost	\$5,000 - \$10,000
High Cost	Over \$10,000

### Priority Criteria

Low Priority      There is moderate benefit to strengthening visitor friendliness, and because of phasing considerations, cost, organizational readiness, or relative importance in relation to other initiatives, these initiatives are deemed a lower priority **at this time**.

Medium Priority      There is a considerable benefit to strengthening visitor friendliness, however; because of phasing considerations, cost, organizational readiness, or relative importance in relation to other initiatives, these initiatives are deemed a lower priority than high priority items **at this time**.

High Priority      There is a strong benefit to strengthening visitor friendliness and because of phasing considerations, cost, organizational readiness, or relative importance in relation to other initiatives, these initiatives are deemed a high priority **at this time**.

## Quick Wins



A blue star indicates that an initiative is a “Quick Win.” Quick wins are initiatives that can be implemented within a year or two, have a high probability of success and have a relatively low cost.

### Establishment of a Visitor Friendly Working Group

It is recommended that the region develop a Visitor Friendly Working Group (this may be a sub-committee of the DTC Tourism Group or be a standing item on the DTC Tourism Group agenda). This group should be struck within 60 days of the approval of the Visitor Friendly final report and should be comprised of key stakeholders that will be involved in action plan implementation. The working group should assign project leads for each initiative, review project phasing, review suggested prioritization and begin implementation. In addition, Project Working Groups should also be established. The role of these groups will be to implement specific initiatives.

### Future Planning, Evaluation, and Reporting

A key component of the success of the action plan will be the evaluation of its initiatives. The plan should be reviewed quarterly, at which time priorities should be re-evaluated and a discussion of any variances should occur. If new projects are added (or old projects removed) as the plan progresses, this should be done by weighing the relative priority of all projects in the plan. The action plan should be updated on a yearly basis; therefore, the third quarter evaluation period will set the stage for the updated version of the plan. In the fourth quarter, the updated plan should be formalized and a draft approved by the end of the year.

## Project Leads

The Action Plan identifies organizations and departments responsible for leading initiatives. Please see below for a list of these organizations.

Abbreviation	Organization
DTC	David Thompson Country Tourism Group
Town	Town of Rocky Mountain House
Village	Village of Caroline
Hamlet	Hamlet of Leslieville or Nordegg
County	Clearwater County
All	All communities
Chamber	Rocky Mountain House & District Chamber of Commerce
VIC	Visitor Information Centre

## 1. Overall Ambiance/Visual Appeal

All Communities				
	Initiative	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline	Notes
1.1	Establish a public art policy and program that would incorporate more art to enhance the visitor experience.	M/M	All/ST	Examples of public art include sculptures, site furnishings and murals.
1.2	Review and enforce community standards and bylaws to address unsightly premises. (e.g. property maintenance, tree planting, fences, other landscaping).	H/L	All/ST	★
Caroline				
	Initiative	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline	Notes
1.3	Apply the existing 'Western' theme consistently throughout the community.	H/M	Village/ST	Store front signage, public signs, streetscapes.
1.4	Enhance the visual appearance of the Village Office with façade improvements and landscaping.	H/L	Village/ST	★
1.5	Develop and promote a business façade improvement program to support initiative 1.3 above.	H/M	Village/ST	Rocky Mountain House has an existing program that can be used as a resource.
1.6	Develop a plan to enhance the streetscape with street furniture, decorative lighting, landscaping and widened sidewalks.	H/H	Village/MT	This could occur in stages as part of a 5-year plan. Pay particular attention to the entrances and the main street.
Leslieville				
	Initiative	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline	Notes
1.7	Work with business owners to develop a visual identity/theme that celebrates Leslieville's heritage.	H/M	Hamlet /ST	
1.8	Develop a plan to enhance streetscape with landscaping, street furniture and wider sidewalks.	H/M	Hamlet /MT	This could occur in stages as part of a 5-year plan.
1.9	Identify and dedicate a trailhead with signage to access ravine area.	H/L	Hamlet/ST	
Nordegg				
	Initiative	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline	Notes
1.10	Develop a plan to enhance the main street area to allow for road paving, sidewalks, street furniture, landscaping and public art.	H/H	Hamlet/MT	Start with Stuart Street as the main thorough way into the community.

1.11	Review the need to add additional enforcement resources to improve health and safety in the community.	H/H	Hamlet	
<b>Rocky Mountain House</b>				
	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Priority/Cost</b>	<b>Lead/Timeline</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1.12	Continue to promote the existing façade improvement program to engage more businesses.	M/M	Town/ST	★
1.13	Recognize and celebrate successful storefront improvement initiatives through promotion on the Town web site, newsletters, ribbon cuttings, etc.	M/L	Town, Chamber/ST	★
1.14	Inventory main street commercial spaces available for lease and promote the area through trade shows and other economic development initiatives.	H/M	Town, Chamber/ST	
1.15	Encourage existing downtown restaurants to develop patios to help animate main street.	H/L	Town/ST	
1.16	Review relevant property standards, bylaws and enforcement procedures for the Highway 11 business corridor to identify key properties/property owners to encourage well maintained and visually appealing properties.	H/L	Town/ST	
1.17	Implement development guidelines along the Highway 11 corridor to better guide future improvements and new developments.	H/L	Town/ST	
1.18	Enforce property standard regulations on existing non-compliant developments along the Highway 11 corridor to address maintenance standards.	H/M	Town/ST	
1.19	Develop a plan to expand the Town’s horticulture program throughout the entire community (flowers, landscaping, trees) as resources permit.	M/H	Town/MT	Particularly the downtown core, Highway 11 corridor and the VIC. Explore the Youth Green Jobs funding: <a href="https://goo.gl/zTQgMk">https://goo.gl/zTQgMk</a>
1.20	Explore opportunities to introduce permanent and/or temporary pocket parks in the downtown core.	H/M	Town	
1.21	Public washrooms should be made available in the Downtown / Mainstreet area with sufficient signage to provide direction for visitors. Potential opportunities may be to locate near pocket parks on the Mainstreet or near any public building.	H/H	Town	

## 2. Signage/Wayfinding

All Communities				
	Initiative	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline	Notes
2.1	Develop a consistent and comprehensive signage program (vehicular and pedestrian) that includes directions to key amenities, facilities and services.	H/H	All/MT	See Appendix E for examples of successful sign programs.
Caroline				
	Initiative	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline	Notes
2.2	Apply the Villages 'Western' theme to all community wayfinding signage and in public information applications.	H/M	Village/ST	
2.3	Implement new directional signage to the VIC /Museum site.	H/M	Village/ST	 Refer to the Tourist Orientated Directional Signage program: <a href="https://goo.gl/2R1Nix">https://goo.gl/2R1Nix</a>
2.4	Apply the banner program seen at the Village Office to other areas of the Village.	L/M	Village/MT	
Leslieville				
	Initiative	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline	Notes
2.5	Apply the Villages heritage/identity to a welcome entrance sign, wayfinding and to other public information applications.	H/M	Hamlet/ST	
Nordegg				
	Initiative	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline	Notes
2.6	Apply the visual elements of the Highway entrance signs on Stuart Street & Highway 11 to community wayfinding, public facility signage and public information applications.	M/M	Hamlet/MT	This could be a phased approach, starting with existing public facilities such as the Museum sign.
Rocky Mountain House				
	Initiative	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline	Notes
2.7	Apply the Town's visual identity on all wayfinding signage and in public information applications.	H/L	Town/MT	 This should be done when new signage is required or old signage is replaced.
2.8	Redesign the symbols used on the blue slat and wooden post directional signs downtown and apply them consistently.	H/M	Town/MT	This should be done when new signage is required or old signage is

				replaced.
2.9	Enhance public signage with the use of a clean sans serif font.	M/M	Town/MT	This should be done when new signage is required or old signage is replaced.
2.10	Expand the finger post multi-directional sign at 49th and Main intersection to other areas around Mainstreet.	H/M	Town/MT	
2.11	Consolidate the signage at the front entrance to the VIC/Museum similar to the free-standing signs as seen outside the Lou Soppit Community Centre.	H/M	Town, VIC/ST	
2.12	Apply the banner program that exists on Mainstreet in other areas of Town.	M/M	Town/MT	
2.13	Install Tourist Orientated Directional signage (TODS) at Town entrances to identify key amenities, facilities and services.	H/L	Town/ST	
2.14	Work with Alberta Transportation to develop a large feature sign on Highway 11 to direct people to high quality amenities downtown.	M/H	Town/ST	
2.15	Review potential sites along the Highway 11 corridor to accommodate a roadside pullout and community map.	M/H	Town/ST	

### 3. Quality of Service/Professionalism

All Communities				
	Initiative	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline	Notes
3.1	Develop and distribute local visitor information to local businesses (e.g. brochures). Also develop a one-page FAQ that provides answers to the top 10 visitor questions.	H/L	DTC/ST	★
3.2	Offer cross training to all VIC staff to learn about and understand offerings in each community and the DTC region	M/L	DTC/ST	★ FAM Tours (familiarization); online webinar; use of drones to capture imagery for online use.
3.3	Work with business owners to incorporate customer service standards into human resource processes and training.	H/L	DTC, All/ST	Targeted at service orientated businesses (restaurants, gas stations) and main street businesses (storefront)
3.4	Provide customer service training workshops in May of each year for seasonal employees.	H/L	Town, Chamber/ST	★ Targeted at service orientated businesses (restaurants, service stations), tour operators, and main street businesses.
3.5	Provide marketing training for business owners. Travel Alberta offers a suite of workshops that include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Getting to Know Your Best Customer</li> <li>- Building a Basic Marketing Plan</li> <li>- Media Relations 101</li> <li>- Understanding Branding</li> </ul>	H/L	Town, Chamber/ST	<a href="http://www.travelalberta.com">www.travelalberta.com</a> Industry Development Contact: Lisa Lima 403.803.8956 Lisa.lima@travelalberta.com
3.6	Identify key community tourism leaders in the private and public sector to attend the annual Growing Rural Tourism Conference.	H/L	All	February 20 - 22, 2018 <a href="http://www.growingruraltourism.ca">www.growingruraltourism.ca</a>
3.7	Gather and share base level visitor data with all tourism partners (Municipality, Businesses, Operators) to support customer service.	H/L	DTC/ST	★ This would include numbers of visitors, why they are visiting, and where they are coming from (e.g. collect postal codes).

#### 4. Public Services/Visitor Amenities

All Communities				
	Initiative	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline	Notes
4.1	Develop a Tourism Program, Festival and Event Plan that will facilitate more daytime and evening entertainment options for visitors. The plan should also address the need for increased festivals and events, public interpretation and public programming related to local culture and history.	H/H	DTC, All/ST	Work with Alberta Culture and Tourism to explore funding options.
4.2	Work with the Government of Alberta to provide roadside pullouts, waste receptacles, washrooms, picnic areas and trail head signage along the David Thompson corridor.	H/H	County/MT	
4.3	Increase diversity in programs, activities, entertainment, restaurants and accommodations by promoting business development opportunities in tourism.	H/M	DTC, All, Chamber/ST	
4.4	Offer incentives for tourism-related businesses in the David Thompson Corridor Development Nodes through discounted business permit fees, priority development approval process, etc.	H/H	All/ST	
4.5	Develop a plan to enhance basic tourism infrastructure within each community (e.g. public washrooms, showers, rest stops, park space, etc.).	H/H	DTC, All/MT	Funding opportunity - Community Facility Enhancement Program Grant – Alberta Culture and Tourism.
4.6	Develop a tourism product development plan that would identify key opportunities for new tourism product in the region. Elements of the plan include inventory, gap analysis, market analysis and opportunity analysis.	H/H	DTC, Chamber/MT	Work with Alberta Culture and Tourism to explore funding options.
4.7	Perform an accessibility audit to key visitor attractions and sites to ensure availability to visitors with reduced mobility.	H/L	ALL	
4.8	Work with downtown business owners in Rocky Mountain House to expand the hours of operation to align with the evening and weekend special events (e.g. Farmers Market)	H/L	Town/Chamber	

Leslieville				
	Initiative	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline	Notes
4.9	Identify any municipal reserve lands that can become the focal point for visitors and develop a public park space for visitors. Include an information kiosk/map.	H/H	Hamlet/ST	
4.10	Designate RV parking spaces within the community.	M/L	Hamlet/ST	
Nordegg				
	Initiative	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline	Notes
4.11	Establish a pedestrian trail that enhances connection to commercial areas and the Historic Nordegg Golf Course along Stuart Street.	H/H	Hamlet/ST	
Rocky Mountain House				
	Initiative	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline	Notes
4.12	Upgrade and maintain public washrooms outside the VIC.	H/H	Town, Chamber/ST	
4.13	Replace benches, picnic areas and playground at the park adjacent to the VIC.	H/H	Town, Chamber/ST	
4.14	Consider relocating or screening the RV Sani dump at the VIC.	H/H	Town, VIC/ST	
4.15	Install a plaque explaining the history/significance of the Canada 150 mural installed outside the VIC.	M/L	VIC/ST	
4.16	Enhance the gift shop at the VIC to make more local art available for sale.	H/L	VIC	
4.17	Improve the visibility of the VIC from the highway by trimming trees facing the highway.	M/L	Town/ST	★
4.18	Work with the Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site to significantly increase promotion of this highly attractive asset.	H/L	Town, Chamber/ST	★
4.19	Enhance directional signage and information to the “Walk of History” plaques in the downtown.	M/L	Town, Chamber/ST	
4.20	Encourage existing or new businesses to add bike/canoe/kayak rentals to their service offerings.	M/L	Town, Chamber/ST	★
4.21	Work with investors to attract unique and interesting sit-down restaurants along main street.	M/L	Town, Chamber/ST	
4.22	Undertake a study examining the development of river side access amenities which could include a boat launch, picnic areas and washrooms.	M/M	Town	

## 5. Visitor Information

All Communities				
	Initiative	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline	Notes
5.1	Re-develop the regional visitor guide to reduce clutter, enhance readability and further the regional brand.	H/M	DTC, Chamber/ST	 Refer to Appendix E for more information.
5.2	Develop a Public Information Strategy as part of a comprehensive program that works in tandem with existing and new wayfinding and mapping.	H/L	DTC/MT	
5.3	Develop a new comprehensive map for each community and the overall region that includes the development of consistent symbols and/or language-based system to help locate key visitor attractions, sites and amenities.	H/M	DTC, All/ST	See Appendix E for examples of successful sign programs, visitor map & guide resources. The Nordegg Chamber of Commerce is reprinting its brochure in 2018 with plans to update it and produce more maps.
5.4	Develop a comprehensive regional tourism APP to share visitor attractions, sites and amenities.	H/M	DTC	Refer to the GP Tourism App (Grand Prairie): <a href="https://goo.gl/N5eNas">https://goo.gl/N5eNas</a>
5.5	Develop information panels/kiosks at all public facilities and parking areas.	H/H	All/MT	
5.6	Enhance the online search optimization of the davidthompsoncountry.ca website by re-writing content to enhance the use of tourism specific language and major regional assets (backcountry, camping, ATVing).	H/L	DTC/ST	
5.7	Develop a Google AdWords campaign to help further enhance the searchability of the davidthompsoncountry.ca website.	H/L	DTC/ST	
5.8	Enhance and re-design the clearwatercounty.ca website to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Links to visitor information.</li> <li>- More experiential images.</li> <li>- More content using experiential language.</li> <li>- Mobile friendly webpages.</li> </ul>	M/M	County/MT	

5.9	Limit the use of auto posting on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to increase engagement more with followers and influencers.	M/L	All/ST	This will help your online community to grow faster, and build stronger relationships with your followers.
5.10	Craft engaging experiential content on all social media to drive conversations about the destination and convert more travellers.	M/L	All/ST	★
5.11	Leverage Facebook advertising to engage and build connections within the region.	M/L	All/ST	
5.12	Expand advertising opportunities on tourism focused websites (e.g. Alberta Tourism Information Service (Travel Alberta).	H/L	DTC/ST	★ Refer to: industry.travelalberta.com/atis
5.13	Build relationships and solicit media influencers and bloggers for enhanced third party promotion.	M/L	All/ST	
5.14	Ensure infant change tables are available in both male and female washrooms in all VIC's.	H/L	ALL	★
<b>Caroline</b>				
	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Priority/Cost</b>	<b>Lead/Timeline</b>	<b>Notes</b>
5.15	Enhance and upgrade the outdoor regional map at the VIC while maintaining the current artistic design.	H/M	VIC/MT	
5.16	Enhance regional and provincial information offerings at the VIC.	H/L	VIC, DTC/ST	
<b>Leslieville</b>				
	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Priority/Cost</b>	<b>Lead/Timeline</b>	<b>Notes</b>
5.17	Build a public, centrally-located and easily-accessed kiosk for mapping and posting information in the Hamlet.	H/M	Hamlet, DTC/MT	
<b>Nordegg</b>				
	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Priority/Cost</b>	<b>Lead/Timeline</b>	<b>Notes</b>
5.18	Redesign and enhance the regional map outside the general store with consistent community design (theme) and information found in other communities.	H/L	Hamlet, DTC/MT	
5.19	Enhance visitor regional and provincial information offerings at the VIC.	H/L	VIC, DTC/ST	★
5.20	Work with the owners of the travelnordegg.com site to either remove the site or make improvements to design, content and visitor information.	H/M	Hamlet, VIC 2018-2020	
5.21	Enhance training for Visitor Information Centre staff.	H/L	VIC/ST	

Rocky Mountain House				
	Initiative	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline	Notes
5.22	Remove the wall mounted map and information panels on Main street and replace with information kiosks at all public facilities and parking areas for visitor attractions, sites and amenities	H/M	Town, Chamber/MT	
5.23	Implement an interior information/bulletin board at key facilities, services centres and retail stores to share visitor attractions, sites and amenities.	H/M	Town, Chamber/ST	
5.24	Re-design and replace the outdoor map and brochure box at the Visitor Information Centre.	H/M	VIC/ST	
5.25	Enhance and re-design the rockymtnhouse.com website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mobile Friendly</li> <li>- Works on all common browsers</li> <li>- Re-write content in an experiential style</li> <li>- Increase the use of images</li> <li>- Increase and highlight visitor information</li> </ul>	H/H	Town/ST	

## 6. Action Plan Implementation

All Communities				
	Initiative	Priority/Cost	Lead/Timeline	Notes
6.1	Obtain commitment from Councils in the Town of Rocky Mountain House, Village of Caroline and Clearwater County to work regionally to improve visitor friendliness.	H/L	DTC, All/ST	
6.2	Establish Regional and Local project committees to work on specific action items.	H/L	DTC/ST	★ An example where this has been developed is in Mountain View County/ Sundre/Olds.
6.3	Evaluate action plan initiatives and re-align priorities annually.	H/L	DTC/Annually	
6.4	Formally celebrate success of completed initiatives annually.	H/L	DTC/Annually	
6.5	Complete follow-up assessments for each community and the region in 5 years to measure improvements/success.	M/H	DTC, All/MT	
6.6	Using this report as a starting point, build an ongoing annual work plan that identifies initiatives and reports on results.	H/L	All/ST	
6.7	Complete a visitor survey to monitor progress from initiatives.	H/L	DTC/ST	
6.8	Complete a business survey to monitor progress from initiatives.	H/L	DTC/ST	

## Top 10 Action Items

The following action items have been identified as the top priorities. These are organized in order of priority.

1. Develop a consistent and comprehensive signage program (vehicular and pedestrian) that includes directions to key amenities, facilities and services.
2. Develop a new comprehensive map for each community and the overall region that includes the development of consistent symbols and/or language-based system to help locate key visitor attractions, sites and amenities.
3. Re-develop the regional visitor guide to reduce clutter, enhance readability and further the regional brand (Refer to Appendix E for more information).
4. Develop a Tourism Program, Festival and Event Plan that will facilitate more daytime and evening entertainment options for visitors. The plan should also address the need for increased festivals and events, public interpretation and public programming related to local culture and history.
5. Review and enforce community standards and bylaws to address unsightly premises. (e.g. property maintenance, tree planting, fences, other landscaping).
6. Develop a plan to enhance basic tourism infrastructure within each community. Work with the Government of Alberta to provide roadside pull-outs, waste receptacles, washrooms, picnic areas and trail head signages along the David Thompson corridor.
7. Gather and share base level visitor data with all tourism partners (Municipality, Businesses, Operators) to support customer service.
8. Offer cross training to all VIC staff to learn about and understand offerings in each community and the DTC region.
9. Work with downtown business owners in Rocky Mountain House to expand the hours of operation to align with the evening and weekend special events (e.g. Farmers Market).
10. Replace benches, picnic areas and playground at the park adjacent to the Rocky Mountain House VIC.

## Visitor Friendly Scorecard

The Visitor Friendly Scorecard will assist during the implementation of the top 10 action items. The scorecard outlines key performance measures and tools to easily track progress and success.

Top 10 Action Items		Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Measurement Tool	Progress Report
1. Develop a comprehensive signage program	1.1	Signage program developed, approved, resourced, and implemented.	Council Minutes	
	1.2	75% of visitors rate the usefulness of directional signage as ok or great.	Visitor Survey	
2. Develop a comprehensive map	2.1	Map developed, approved, and distributed.	Annual Report	
	2.2	75% of visitors rate the usefulness of the map as ok or great.	Visitor Survey	
	2.3	75% of businesses rate the usefulness of the map as ok or great.	Business Survey	
3. Redevelop the regional visitor guide	3.1	Guide developed, approved, and distributed.	Annual Report	
	3.2	75% of visitors rate the usefulness of the guide as ok or great.	Visitor Survey	
	3.3	75% of businesses rate the usefulness of the guide as ok or great.	Business Survey	
4. Develop a Tourism Program, Festival and Event Plan	4.1	Plan developed, approved, resourced, and implemented.	Council Minutes	
	4.2	10% increase in tourism programming each year.	Program, F&E Plan	
	4.3	75% of visitors rate the overall experience as ok or great.	Visitor Survey	
5. Address unsightly properties	5.1	Review completed.	Annual Report	
	5.2	75% of identified properties in compliance by year 5.	Annual Report	

	5.3	75% of visitors rate region businesses as visually appealing.	Visitor Survey	
6. Increase the accessibility and availability of basic tourism infrastructure	6.1	Review completed.	Annual Report	
	6.2	Municipal and non-municipal organizations partner to undertake new projects.	Operating Budget	
	6.3	75% of visitors rate amenities as ok or great by year 5.	Visitor Survey	
7. Gather and share visitor data	7.1	Information gathered and distributed to businesses by 2018.	Annual Report	
	7.2	75% of businesses are actively using the information by 2021.	Business Survey	
8. Offer cross-training to all VIC staff	8.1	Program developed and delivered.	Annual Report	
	8.2	Staff report increased understanding of regional product.	VIC Staff Survey	
	8.3	75% of visitors rate the ability of VIC staff to provide information on the region as ok or great.	Visitor Survey	
9. Expand hours of operation for downtown businesses in RMH during special events/programs	9.1	75% of businesses are open during key periods.	Annual Report	
	9.2	Businesses report 10% increase in foot traffic and/or revenue during events.	Business Survey	
	9.3	75% of visitors rate the overall experience as ok or great.	Visitor Survey	
10. Complete upgrades to the RMH VIC park	10.1	Upgrade plan developed, approved, resourced, and implemented by 2019.	Annual Report	
	10.2	75% of visitors rate outdoor amenities at the RMH VIC as ok or great.	Visitor Survey	



# 06

## NEXT STEPS AND CONCLUSION

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### Next Steps

There are several key initiatives the region and each municipality should consider moving forward. Activities that should occur within the next year include:

1. Obtain commitment from Councils in the Town of Rocky Mountain House, Village of Caroline and Clearwater County to work regionally to improve visitor friendliness.
2. Establish Regional and Local project committees to work on specific action items.
3. Begin implementation of the action plan. Particular focus should be directed towards the “quick wins” and the “top recommended” initiatives to achieve successes early and build momentum.
4. Evaluate action plan initiatives and re-align priorities at the end of year 1.

### Conclusion

The Visitor Friendly Assessment provides valuable information to David Thompson Country; a practical action plan, and a starting point to improve visitor friendliness. The plan will guide municipalities in David Thompson Country to enhance all aspects of their visitor friendliness, including ambience and visual appeal, wayfinding and signage, customer service, public services and amenities, and visitor information. The successful implementation of this plan will ensure the David Thompson Country tourism region continues to be a destination of choice for tourists seeking wilderness experiences, and will contribute to the vitality and growth of the local tourism industry.



# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: Tourism – Related Planning (Expanded Version)

### Central Alberta Destination Management Plan: Realizing Our Potential, 2015

In 2015, Clearwater County and the Town of Rocky Mountain House joined nine other municipalities in Central Alberta to develop a plan that charts a shared path forward for tourism development, marketing and management of Central Alberta as a destination. The ten-year plan identifies Central Alberta's unique selling proposition as "*Unspoiled, uncrowded, uncomplicated, welcoming and ready to be explored.*" David Thompson Country embodies these characteristics and the region is core to the plan's proposed tourism zone, *Nature-based Adventure and Ecotourism*. Rocky Mountain House is identified as the gateway to this tourism zone and Highway 11 as a themed touring route sharing the story of David Thompson and First Nations peoples. Navigation

### Clearwater County Strategic Plan, 2015-2018

The strategic plan identifies priorities for Clearwater County to realize its vision as the best place to work, live and play in Alberta. The plan is a core document of County Council's governance and is implemented jointly by Council and administration. Tourism benefits from the implementation of strategies that improve transportation, support business attraction, and protect the natural environment. For example, the plan identifies the need to continue to monitor impacts of recreational use in west-central Alberta and advocate for programs that support the sustainability of public lands/eastern slopes areas; and to continue to encourage the provincial government to develop trail and recreation areas to reduce levels of random recreation and environmental damage occurring in west-central Alberta.<sup>24</sup>

### David Thompson Country Regional Tourism Strategy, 2016

This 2017 strategy identifies objectives and actions required to achieve the vision for the region: *Where the adventurous can renew their spirit through experiencing the challenge of water, wildlife and wilderness unique to the David Thompson Country*. Implementation is led by the David Thompson Country Tourism Group, which has representation from all three municipalities. A logo, website, Facebook page and YouTube channel have been developed to help visitors plan their stay in the region.<sup>25</sup>

This regional tourism strategy is an outcome of work undertaken in 2012-13 as part of the Clearwater County *Reeve's Economic Summit*. The resulting Tourism Working Group Report, published in 2013, recommended the development of a regional tourism group that focuses on promoting the region as a whole.

### Rocky Mountain House Economic Development Strategic Plan, 2012-2015

Developed by the Rocky Mountain House and Area Tourism and Economic Development Board with industry and community input, the plan identifies goals to develop tourism assets,

businesses and experiences. By 2015, actions had been taken to increase availability of land for development; grow events and attractions (e.g., Marketplace on Main); implement a business mentorship program; and foster regional tourism collaboration and marketing.

The municipality invested significantly in the strategy's goal to create downtown Rocky Mountain House as a central point for residents and visitors. Architectural guidelines adopted in 2011 guided (and continue to guide) new residential, commercial and public developments.<sup>26</sup> Implementation of the theme, "Historical Hudson's Bay Trading Fort" has strengthened community identity and branding. The associated Storefront Improvement Program gained momentum with private property owners helping refresh the look of main street and downtown. And, in 2012, the Town began its Main Street Reconstruction Project, resulting in full infrastructure replacement and revitalization of Main (50th) Street from 48th Avenue to 52nd Avenue between 2014 and 2016.<sup>27</sup>

### **Rocky Mountain House Community Sustainability Plan, 2010**

Developed in 2010 with input from community members, the plan presents ways in which Rocky Mountain House can move towards being a more sustainable community, based on the five pillars of sustainable development: economic, social, environmental, cultural and governance. Tourism will benefit from the action items that foster sustainability and position the Town as environmentally friendly in the eyes of a visitor. For example, the plan identifies phasing out plastic bags, no idling in public and high use areas, natural and ecofriendly approach to landscaping and design of public spaces, green events, farmers' market, community garden, 100 mile diet/local food, renewable energy, celebrating the arts, and a vibrant downtown. The plan is intended to stimulate citizen-led initiatives towards sustainability.

### **Nordegg Development Plans**

Clearwater County has various plans to guide development in the Hamlet of Nordegg. The Nordegg Development Plan dates to the 1990s and continues to guide growth and development within the townsite. In 2011, the Nordegg Development Plan - Design Guidelines was created to guide development of residential lots in the historic townsite and cottage and residential lots in the north Nordegg subdivision.<sup>28</sup> The North Nordegg Development has both leisure (cottage) residential and rural (country) residential. The townsite (South Nordegg Development) includes residential and commercial. The Nordegg Industrial Subdivision is adjacent to the townsite and services industrial use. A recent plan is the Nordegg Trail Plan, approved in 2016. This plan maps out a trail system to link facilities and attractions in the townsite and connect the Rocky-Nordegg trail and other trails in the surrounding Bighorn Backcountry.<sup>29</sup>

## APPENDIX B: Organizations Impacting Tourism (Expanded Version)

### Municipal Governments and the David Thompson Country Tourism Group

The municipalities of Clearwater County, Village of Caroline and Town of Rocky Mountain House are active leaders in shaping tourism in the region. The municipalities recognize that the region is tied by geography and requires cooperation, not competition. The cooperative working relationship is guided by the principles set out in Stronger Together: Building Opportunities for Our Future. The three municipalities came together to form David Thompson Country as a tourism region, guided by the David Thompson Country Regional Tourism Strategy. The David Thompson Country Tourism Group, which has representatives from all three municipalities, plays a strong role in implementation of the strategy.<sup>30</sup>

### Chambers of Commerce

The region has three Chambers of Commerce that act as the voice of the business community and work to promote business and the local economy.

#### Nordegg Chamber of Commerce

Works to enhance the community and Highway 11 corridor. 25 members are profiled on the Chamber website ([nordeggchamberofcommerce.com](http://nordeggchamberofcommerce.com)), 17 of which are tourism-related businesses. The Chamber maintains a Facebook page ([/Nordeggbusiness](https://www.facebook.com/Nordeggbusiness)) with updates on the work of the Chamber, its member's tourism offerings and timely public service announcements. The Chamber also distributes a long-standing brochure titled, "Nordegg? What could I possibly do in Nordegg?"

#### Rocky Mountain House Chamber of Commerce

Serves Rocky Mountain House and Clearwater County, including Caroline, Condor, Leslieville, Nordegg and Sunchild/O'Chiese. It is a member-driven organization and, through its membership of 360 businesses and organizations, undertakes initiatives and advocacy to grow the local and regional economy. The Chamber operates a year-round Visitor Information Centre.

#### Caroline & District Chamber of Commerce

Promotes business, community and tourism development in the Village of Caroline and surrounding areas. The Chamber manages a Facebook page ([/Caroline Chamber of Commerce](https://www.facebook.com/CarolineChamberofCommerce)) and maintains a website ([carolinelive.ca](http://carolinelive.ca)) with a business directory of 111 businesses.

## Alberta Environment and Parks

The Department of Environment and Parks plays a significant role in the region. The Parks Division manages the popular Crimson Lake Provincial Park, 15 km northwest of Rocky Mountain House, as well as numerous Provincial Recreation Areas along Highway 11 and the Forestry Trunk Road. The department also regulates recreation on public lands, including camping, fishing, hunting and off-highway vehicles use. It is responsible for managing Bighorn Backcountry, more than 5000 square kilometers of public lands east of Banff and Jasper National Parks. The area is subdivided into six Public Land Use Zones, each with its own permitted recreational activities. The provincial parks, provincial recreation areas and public lands managed by Alberta Environment and Parks are a major draw for visitors to David Thompson Country. As such, the department has a significant impact on tourism in the region.

## Parks Canada

Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site is owned and operated by Parks Canada. The site is a key attraction and provides place and name recognition for Rocky Mountain House. It also acts as a space where Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents and visitors share stories and traditions through programming and special events. Parks Canada named Brazeau Collieries as a national historic site, elevating its recognition as a valued historical feature to experience.

## APPENDIX C: Activities and Travel Habits of Canadians

Canadians who seek wilderness activities while on trips<sup>31</sup>:

- Tend to be young singles, young couples and mature singles
- Tend to have higher levels of education yet lower levels of household income
- Most frequently go wildlife viewing, hiking, climbing, paddling, boating and swimming (in lakes) while on trips.
- Are active, but to a lesser extent, in other outdoor activities associated with a wilderness setting, including fishing, skiing and snowshoeing, snowmobiling and ATVing, hunting and horseback riding.
- Keen interest in educational or experiential cultural experiences (e.g. aboriginal cultural experiences, wilderness tours)
- Tend to stay in a public campground in a national, provincial or municipal park, as well as a camp (not in a campsite) in a wilderness setting
- Seek travel that is physically challenging, inexpensive and highly social.

Canadians who snowmobile or ATV while on trips<sup>32</sup>:

- Tend to be male (58%), young singles or young couples or have young families (with children under 12)
- Tend to have lower levels of education and household income
- Are very active in other nature-based activities such as hunting, fishing, camping and wilderness activities
- Also enjoy motorcycling, horseback riding, team sports and winter outdoor activities, and are interested in sporting events and western events (e.g., rodeos)
- Tend to stay most often in public and private campgrounds and wilderness settings
- Enjoy vacations that are relaxing, unstructured and offer solitude.

Canadians who hike, climb and paddle while on trips<sup>33</sup>:

- Tend to be equally divided among males and females and young singles or couples
- Tend to hold higher levels of education and above-average household incomes
- Very active in high-energy, strenuous activities while traveling and not traveling
- More likely to participate in cultural activities (historical or aboriginal cultural experiences) and take in live music and the arts.
- Typically stay in campgrounds and resorts
- Seek novelty, intellectual stimulation and physical challenges when they travel

## APPENDIX D: Visitor Friendly Assessments

### Score Guide:

1	Poor performance throughout the community
2	Poor to Satisfactory performance in most of the community
3	Satisfactory to Excellent performance in most of the community
4	Excellent performance throughout the community
N/A	Criteria is not applicable in this community

CAROLINE - OVERALL AMBIANCE/VISUAL APPEAL			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
1	Public waste baskets are readily available	2	Only at key locations such as Gas Stations, Library or the VIC
2	Public waste baskets appear well maintained	2	
3	Key locations appear free of graffiti	3	
4	Buildings (empty and occupied) appear well maintained	2	Some of the main street buildings, like the old gas station, are in need of repair or reuse.
5	Streets appear clean	3	
6	Industrial sites/power lines etc. are camouflaged (e.g. with plantings, banners etc.)	2	

7	Empty space is well maintained	2	
8	Heritage buildings appear well maintained	3	The heritage buildings at the museum site are in good shape.
9	Public green spaces are visually appealing	2	
10	Streetscapes are visually appealing (i.e. banners, decorations, plantings visible, etc.)	2	<p>The banners outside the Village Administration Office are effective and might be expanded to both sides of the main thoroughfare.</p> <p>There are no strong indications of an overall theme in the community.</p> <p>There are a few businesses that have addressed theming and façade treatment.</p> <p>One key area where themes and public information combine is at the RV Park, Visitor Information Centre and Museum site.</p>
11	Public art/murals are prominent throughout the community	2	The Caroline “Wheels of Time” mural at the museum is very good but other than that very little public art.
12	Pedestrian areas are easy to navigate	3	A crosswalk light might help where pedestrian traffic is highest
13	Pedestrian areas appear safe	2	Traffic is intense at times.
14	Key locations appear to be well lit	2	
15	There are adequate	2	A dedicated walking trail exists at the Museum site. Other

	walking trails along scenic viewpoints		than that, limited trails exist.
16	There is an overall theme to the community (e.g. consistent signage, etc.)	2	There are some indications of an overall theme in the Village, but not consistently applied. Local historical themes are well presented in the museum.

CAROLINE - SIGNAGE/WAYFINDING			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
17	Highway signage appears well maintained	2	Clear and informative.
18	Highway signage effectively directed me to the community	3	Clear and informative.
19	Gateway signage is visually appealing	2	The gateway/welcome signage is aesthetically pleasing and welcoming.
20	Gateway signage effectively welcomed me to the community	2	The gateway signs are effective and welcoming.
21	Business signs are visually appealing	2	Some businesses are promoting a historic or fresh theme with signage.
22	Business signs effectively directed me to appropriate services	2	Some signs are clear and informative, especially for public services.

23	Signage to sites and attractions is visually appealing	1	The general comment here is that the Village should develop a public signage and wayfinding program and build on the effective visual identity of the Village.
24	Signage to sites and attractions effectively directed me to attractions	1	No clear directional signage to the VIC/Museum from the Village.
25	Signage to VIC is visually appealing	1	No clear directional signage to the VIC/Museum from the Village.
26	Signage to VIC effectively directed me to the VIC	1	Could be part of a wayfinding system. (See 23)
27	Signage to key parking areas is visually appealing	1	Could be part of a wayfinding system. (See 23)
28	Signage to key parking areas effectively directed me to parking	1	Could be part of a wayfinding system. (See 23)
29	Signage at key attractions is visually appealing	1	Could be part of a wayfinding system. (See 23)
30	Signage at key attractions effectively directed me around the attraction site	1	Could be part of a wayfinding system. (See 23)

CAROLINE - QUALITY OF SERVICE			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
31	Service Sector employees/volunteers (other than VIC Staff) were courteous	4	We spoke to merchants in a restaurant, grocery store, supply store, 2 boutique shops and at the Farmers Market and all were pleasant and inviting.
32	Service Sector employees/volunteers (other than VIC Staff) were attentive	4	As above
33	Service Sector employees/volunteers (other than VIC Staff) were able to answer questions effectively	4	As above
34	Service Sector employees/volunteers (other than VIC Staff) were neat in appearance	4	As above
35	There are opportunities available to provide feedback on service (e.g. surveys etc.)	1	Not that we saw.
36	Local residents are welcoming	4	

CAROLINE - PUBLIC SERVICES/VISITOR AMENITIES			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
37	Public restrooms are available at key locations in the community	2	The public washrooms at the VIC have showers which is excellent. The only public restroom is at the VIC/Museum site, however businesses seemed welcoming enough that they would allow non-patrons to use their washrooms.
38	Public restrooms appear well maintained	2	Floor in the public washroom is in desperate need of a paint job.
39	Public parking is available at key locations in the community	3	Street parking and parking lot at the VIC/Museum.
40	Transportation options are available to travel within the community (e.g. taxi, transit, shuttle service, etc.)	1	
41	Picnic areas are available at key locations in the community	2	
42	Picnic areas appear well maintained	3	
43	An adequate supply of overnight accommodations are available	2	Not visually appealing.
44	Diverse overnight accommodation options are available	1	
45	An adequate supply of restaurants are available	3	

46	Diverse restaurant options are available	2	Could use more diversity.
47	An adequate supply of other visitor amenities is available (gas stations, banks, restaurants, shopping, internet access, pharmacies, supermarkets, etc.)	3	For the size of community, there are adequate services. We were pleasantly surprised that there were some unique shops.
48	Facilities are accessible to users with different needs (wheelchairs, seeing or hearing impaired)	N/A	A more detailed audit would need to be completed.
49	An adequate supply of evening entertainment/activities are available	2	
50	Diverse evening entertainment/activity options are available	2	
51	An adequate supply of daytime entertainment/activities are available	2	The farmers market & museum were a nice treat, but other than that there does not appear to be other programming.
52	Diverse daytime entertainment/activity options are available	2	As above

CAROLINE - VISITOR INFORMATION			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
53	Community website effectively welcomed me to the community	3	
54	Community website effectively directed me to appropriate tourism services and attractions	3.5	All of the websites do a good job of listing services and attractions, though some are more dated and less appealing than others.
55	Phone line for tourism information is well advertised	2	Contact information is difficult to locate.
56	Tourism business websites effectively welcomed me to the community	3	The appearance of the site is dated, which impacts perceived professionalism and appeal of the area.
57	Tourism business websites effectively directed me to appropriate services	3	The information is there, but it's not presented as effectively as it could be.
58	Information (e.g. maps, products, services) is available at outdoor kiosks for 24-hr access	2	The regional map on the outside of the VIC needs improving.
At the Visitor Information Centre:			
59	VIC is open for visitors at convenient times	3	Hours appear reasonable.
60	Comprehensive information is available at the VIC related to the community	3	The VIC provided good local information and some regional information.
61	Comprehensive information is available at the VIC related to the region	2/3	The VIC provided some regional information.

62	Comprehensive information is available at the VIC related to the province	2	The VIC provided limited provincial information.
63	Information is available in different languages	N/A	
64	An up-to-date calendar of events is available at the VIC	1	No public posting found.
65	Adequate public internet access is available at the VIC	N/A	
66	An opportunity to book accommodations, restaurants, entertainment, etc. is available at the VIC	N/A	
67	VIC employees/volunteers were courteous	3	We enjoyed our conversation with the representative. She had good local information.
68	VIC employees/volunteers were attentive	3	
69	VIC employees/volunteers were able to answer questions effectively	3	
70	VIC employees/volunteers were neat in appearance	3	

LESLIEVILLE - OVERALL AMBIANCE/VISUAL APPEAL			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
1	Public waste baskets are readily available	1	At Gas Station Locations
2	Public waste baskets appear well maintained	1	Not visible.
3	Key locations appear free of graffiti	3	
4	Buildings (empty and occupied) appear well maintained	2	
5	Streets appear clean	3	
6	Industrial sites/power lines etc. are camouflaged (e.g. with plantings, banners etc.)	2	
7	Empty space is well maintained	2	
8	Heritage buildings appear well maintained	NA	
9	Public green spaces are visually	2	Ball park area looks appealing. Limited public green space in core.

	appealing		
10	Streetscapes are visually appealing (i.e. banners, decorations, plantings visible, etc.)	1	Not visible.
11	Public art/murals are prominent throughout the community	1	
12	Pedestrian areas are easy to navigate	2	
13	Pedestrian areas appear safe	2	
14	Key locations appears to be well lit	2	
15	There are adequate walking trails along scenic viewpoints	N/A	
16	There is an overall theme to the community (e.g. consistent signage, etc.)	1	No overall theme. The banner signs are consistent.

LESLIEVILLE - SIGNAGE/WAYFINDING			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
17	Highway signage appears well maintained	3	
18	Highway signage effectively directed me to the community	2	
19	Gateway signage is visually appealing	1	No gateway signage. The metal banners are very appealing and effective.
20	Gateway signage effectively welcomed me to the community	1	The gateway signs are effective and welcoming.
21	Business signs are visually appealing	2	
22	Business signs effectively directed me to appropriate services	1	
23	Signage to sites and attractions is visually appealing	N/A	
24	Signage to sites and attractions effectively directed me to attractions	N/A	
25	Signage to VIC is	N/A	

	visually appealing		
26	Signage to VIC effectively directed me to the VIC	N/A	
27	Signage to key parking areas is visually appealing	N/A	
28	Signage to key parking areas effectively directed me to parking	N/A	
29	Signage at key attractions is visually appealing	N/A	
30	Signage at key attractions effectively directed me around the attraction site	N/A	

LESLIEVILLE - QUALITY OF SERVICE			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
31	Service Sector employees/volunteers (other than VIC Staff) were courteous	3	The shop owners we spoke with were pleasant and informed. Limited sample.
32	Service Sector employees/volunteers (other than VIC Staff) were attentive	3	As above

33	Service Sector employees/volunteers (other than VIC Staff) were able to answer questions effectively	3	
34	Service Sector employees/volunteers (other than VIC Staff) were neat in appearance	3	
35	There are opportunities available to provide feedback on service (e.g. surveys etc.)	1	No
36	Local residents are welcoming	3	

LESLIEVILLE - PUBLIC SERVICES/VISITOR AMENITIES			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
37	Public restrooms are available at key locations in the community	N/A	
38	Public restrooms appear well maintained	N/A	
39	Public parking is available at key locations in the community	3	
40	Transportation options are available to travel within the community (e.g. taxi, transit, shuttle service, etc.)	1	

41	Picnic areas are available at key locations in the community	1	
42	Picnic areas appear well maintained	2	
43	An adequate supply of overnight accommodations are available	1	The hotel.
44	Diverse overnight accommodation options are available	1	
45	An adequate supply of restaurants are available	1	
46	Diverse restaurant options are available	N/A	
47	An adequate supply of other visitor amenities is available (gas stations, banks, restaurants, shopping, internet access, pharmacies, supermarkets, etc.)	2	Gas station available.
48	Facilities are accessible to users with different needs (wheelchairs, seeing or hearing impaired)	N/A	
49	An adequate supply of evening entertainment/activities are available	1	
50	Diverse evening	1	

	entertainment/activity options are available		
51	An adequate supply of daytime entertainment/activities are available	1	
52	Diverse daytime entertainment/activity options are available	1	

LESLIEVILLE - VISITOR INFORMATION			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
53	Community website effectively welcomed me to the community	N/A	
54	Community website effectively directed me to appropriate tourism services and attractions	N/A	
55	Phone line for tourism information is well advertised	N/A	
56	Tourism business websites effectively welcomed me to the community	N/A	
57	Tourism business websites effectively directed me to appropriate services	N/A	
58	Information (e.g. maps, products, services) is available at outdoor kiosks for 24-hr access	1	A community map was not visible.

At the Visitor Information Centre:			
59	VIC is open for visitors at convenient times	N/A	
60	Comprehensive information is available at the VIC related to the community	N/A	
61	Comprehensive information is available at the VIC related to the region	N/A	
62	Comprehensive information is available at the VIC related to the province	N/A	
63	Information is available in different languages	N/A	
64	An up-to-date calendar of events is available at the VIC	N/A	
65	Adequate public internet access is available at the VIC	N/A	
66	An opportunity to book accommodations, restaurants, entertainment, etc. is available at the VIC	N/A	
67	VIC employees/volunteers were courteous	N/A	
68	VIC employees/volunteers were attentive	N/A	
69	VIC employees/volunteers were able to answer questions effectively	N/A	

70	VIC employees/volunteers were neat in appearance	N/A	
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NORDEGG - OVERALL AMBIANCE/VISUAL APPEAL			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
1	Public waste baskets are readily available	1	Public waste baskets not readily available, with the exception of Gas Station and the VIC. The new bear-safe receptacle at the VIC should be the standard moving forward.
2	Public waste baskets appear well maintained	1	As above
3	Key locations appear free of graffiti	3	
4	Buildings (empty and occupied) appear well maintained	2	Some of the main street buildings, like the old gas station, are in need of repair or reuse.
5	Streets appear clean	3	
6	Industrial sites/power lines etc. are camouflaged (e.g. with plantings, banners etc.)	2	
7	Empty space is well maintained	2	
8	Heritage buildings	3	The museum/VIC building is an excellent local resource.

	appear well maintained		
9	Public green spaces are visually appealing	3	
10	Streetscapes are visually appealing (i.e. banners, decorations, plantings visible, etc.)	1	No visible evidence.
11	Public art/murals are prominent throughout the community	2	The only public mural is at the VIC/Museum.
12	Pedestrian areas are easy to navigate	2	Lacking sidewalks.
13	Pedestrian areas appear safe	2	
14	Key locations appears to be well lit	2	No visible evidence.
15	There are adequate walking trails along scenic viewpoints	3	
16	There is an overall theme to the community (e.g. consistent signage, etc.)	1	There are no strong indications of an overall theme in the Hamlet. There are a few businesses that have addressed themes with façade treatments. That said, there is a certain charm to the lack of uniformity.

NORDEGG - SIGNAGE/WAYFINDING			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
17	Highway signage appears well maintained	2	Highway signage is clear and direct.
18	Highway signage effectively directed me to the community	3	The hamlet's main gateway signage is aesthetically pleasing and welcoming.
19	Gateway signage is visually appealing	2	The gateway/welcome signage is aesthetically pleasing and welcoming.
20	Gateway signage effectively welcomed me to the community	2	The gateway signs are effective and welcoming.
21	Business signs are visually appealing	1	Not very effective.
22	Business signs effectively directed me to appropriate services	1	Not very effective.
23	Signage to sites and attractions is visually appealing	1	Not very effective.
24	Signage to sites and attractions effectively directed me to attractions	1	Not very effective.
25	Signage to VIC is	1	No clear directional signage to the VIC/Museum from the

	visually appealing		Village.
26	Signage to VIC effectively directed me to the VIC	1	Not very effective.
27	Signage to key parking areas is visually appealing	1	Not very effective.
28	Signage to key parking areas effectively directed me to parking	1	Not very effective.
29	Signage at key attractions is visually appealing	1	Not very effective.
30	Signage at key attractions effectively directed me around the attraction site	1	Not very effective.

NORDEGG - QUALITY OF SERVICE			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
31	Service Sector employees/volunteers (other than VIC Staff) were courteous	2/3	We spoke to several shop keepers and most were welcoming. Some were difficult to get information from.
32	Service Sector employees/volunteers (other than VIC Staff) were attentive	2/3	As above

33	Service Sector employees/volunteers (other than VIC Staff) were able to answer questions effectively	2/3	
34	Service Sector employees/volunteers (other than VIC Staff) were neat in appearance	2/3	
35	There are opportunities available to provide feedback on service (e.g. surveys etc.)	N/A	
36	Local residents are welcoming	2/3	

NORDEGG - PUBLIC SERVICES/VISITOR AMENITIES			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
37	Public restrooms are available at key locations in the community	3	There is a public restroom at the VIC/Museum. There is a change table at the VIC.
38	Public restrooms appear well maintained	3	
39	Public parking is available at key locations in the community	3	Adequate parking is available.
40	Transportation options are available to travel within the community (e.g. taxi, transit, shuttle service, etc.)	1	

41	Picnic areas are available at key locations in the community	3	Golf Course and play areas being developed adjacent to VIC. Score is reflective of what the final product will be.
42	Picnic areas appear well maintained	3	As above
43	An adequate supply of overnight accommodations are available	3	For the size of community there is good supply.
44	Diverse overnight accommodation options are available	1	
45	An adequate supply of restaurants are available	3	Miners Café is an excellent resource. Love the pie. For the size of community there is good supply. Food trucks are a good addition.
46	Diverse restaurant options are available	2/3	
47	An adequate supply of other visitor amenities is available (gas stations, banks, restaurants, shopping, internet access, pharmacies, supermarkets, etc.)	2	A new gas station and supporting commercial development is under construction and may add more visitor amenities once complete. Gift shop at the VIC is excellent. Some boutique shopping is available.
48	Facilities are accessible to users with different needs (wheelchairs, seeing or hearing impaired)	1	
49	An adequate supply of evening entertainment/activities are available	1	

50	Diverse evening entertainment/activity options are available	1	
51	An adequate supply of daytime entertainment/activities are available	1	Mine Tours available daily. Recreational trails and camping close by.
52	Diverse daytime entertainment/activity options are available	2	

NORDEGG - VISITOR INFORMATION			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
53	Community website effectively welcomed me to the community	3	
54	Community website effectively directed me to appropriate tourism services and attractions	3.5	All of the websites do a good job of listing services and attractions, though some are more dated and less appealing than others.
55	Phone line for tourism information is well advertised	2	Contact information is difficult to locate.
56	Tourism business websites effectively welcomed me to the community	3	The appearance of the site is dated, which impacts perceived professionalism and appeal of the area
57	Tourism business websites effectively directed me to appropriate services	3	The information is there, but it's not presented as effectively as it could be
58	Information (e.g. maps, products, services) is available at outdoor kiosks for 24-hr access	2	Only at the outdoor regional map and public notice board. The regional map should be redesigned.

At the Visitor Information Centre:			
59	VIC is open for visitors at convenient times	3	Hours appear reasonable.
60	Comprehensive information is available at the VIC related to the community	2	Some local information available. The VIC in the museum has a public notice board. The interpretive items in the Museum need to have some context panels added. The Nordegg history video is very good.
61	Comprehensive information is available at the VIC related to the region	1	Limited information available.
62	Comprehensive information is available at the VIC related to the province	1	Not available.
63	Information is available in different languages	N/A	
64	An up-to-date calendar of events is available at the VIC	2	Bulletin board postings in the Museum.
65	Adequate public internet access is available at the VIC	1	Not available.
66	An opportunity to book accommodations, restaurants, entertainment, etc. is available at the VIC	1	Not available.
67	VIC employees/volunteers were courteous	2	Courteous but not very helpful.
68	VIC employees/volunteers were attentive	2	Courteous but not very helpful.
69	VIC employees/volunteers were able to answer	2	Courteous but not very helpful.

	questions effectively		
70	VIC employees/volunteers were neat in appearance	2	

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE - OVERALL AMBIANCE/VISUAL APPEAL			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
1	Public waste baskets are readily available	3	
2	Public waste baskets appear well maintained	3	
3	Key locations appear free of graffiti	4	
4	Buildings (empty and occupied) appear well maintained	2	Public washroom at the Visitor Centre was unclean and not maintained. Number of empty buildings in the downtown core could be better maintained with the objective of attracting new businesses. There are a few empty lots at the south end of the Mainstreet that could be better maintained with landscaped screening.
5	Streets appear clean	3	Streets appeared clean and well maintained. Downtown is excellent. We observed maintenance workers cleaning up in the morning.
6	Industrial sites/power lines etc. are camouflaged (e.g. with plantings, banners etc.)	2	Industrial sites along the highway are not consistently maintained with storage and unkept yards visible from the road. The highway corridor could benefit from Highway Corridor design guidelines. There are numerous instances where open industrial storage is visible from the highway. Landscaping and screening is lacking. Power lines are visible along highway corridors.

7	Empty space is well maintained	2	Empty lots along high visibility highway corridors are not screened. Some of the Commercial lots in the vicinity of the main street are being used for outside storage without appropriate level of screening.
8	Heritage buildings appear well maintained	2	
9	Public green spaces are visually appealing	2/3	Excellent pocket park along the Mainstreet with well maintained furniture and landscaping. VIC park behind the VIC is not visually appealing and lacks functionality. The VIC itself is visually appealing and we appreciated the flowers and green space immediately adjacent.
10	Streetscapes are visually appealing (i.e. banners, decorations, plantings visible, etc.)	3	The Downtown in particular has excellent performance in terms of creating a visually appealing streetscape
11	Public art/murals are prominent throughout the community	3	Good use of murals/public art on some of the blank walls along the Mainstreet
12	Pedestrian areas are easy to navigate	3	There is presence of well maintained sidewalks throughout the community
13	Pedestrian areas appear safe	3	
14	Key locations appear to be well lit	3	

15	There are adequate walking trails along scenic viewpoints	N/A	
16	There is an overall theme to the community (e.g. consistent signage, etc.)	2/3	The theme is visible in some of the newer developments. Not so prevalent in older parts of the city.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE - SIGNAGE/WAYFINDING			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
17	Highway signage appears well maintained	2	Highway signage is clear and direct.
18	Highway signage effectively directed me to the community	3	
19	Gateway signage is visually appealing	2	The east and west gateway signage is aesthetically pleasing and welcoming. The east town entry gate sign on the right hand side of the road is partially obscured for motorists by trees.
20	Gateway signage effectively welcomed me to the community	2	The gateway signs are effective and welcoming.
21	Business signs are visually appealing	2	The signs indicating businesses and services are clear.
22	Business signs effectively directed me to appropriate	2	Directions to the Visitor Information Centre could be more pronounced. A feature sign could be established on the highway to

	services		draw people to the high quality downtown amenities.
23	Signage to sites and attractions is visually appealing	1	The general comment here is that the Town should develop of a comprehensive public signage and wayfinding program. The blue and white, metal slat and wooden post signage system applied at various locations in the Town needs to be reconsidered. The symbols used on the blue slat and wooden post signs should be redesigned and used consistently on all maps and for other wayfinding applications. The typography used on all public signage should be the same. A clean sans serif font should introduced for public signage. The finger post multi-directional sign at 49th and Main should be expanded to other areas around Main Street. This street is a pleasant and important corridor and the public signage should provide good directions. The signage at the front entrance to the VIC/Museum is a patchwork of information and should be consolidated along the lines of the freestanding sign outside the Lou Soppit Community Centre.
24	Signage to sites and attractions effectively directed me to attractions	1	The welcoming sign on the west side of Main Street at 52nd Avenue is set back too far to be seen easily.
25	Signage to VIC is visually appealing	1	The directional signage to the VIC needs to be improved.
26	Signage to VIC effectively directed me to the VIC	1	Could be part of a comprehensive wayfinding system. (See 23)
27	Signage to key parking areas is visually appealing	1	Could be part of a comprehensive wayfinding system. (See 23)
28	Signage to key parking areas effectively directed me to parking	1	Could be part of a comprehensive wayfinding system. (See 23)

29	Signage at key attractions is visually appealing	1	Could be part of a comprehensive wayfinding system. (See 23)
30	Signage at key attractions effectively directed me around the attraction site	1	Could be part of a comprehensive wayfinding system. (See 23)

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE - QUALITY OF SERVICE			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
31	Service Sector employees/volunteers (other than VIC Staff) were courteous	3/4	We received excellent customer service in many locations and good customer service in others. There were no negative experiences anywhere.
32	Service Sector employees/volunteers (other than VIC Staff) were attentive	3/4	
33	Service Sector employees/volunteers (other than VIC Staff) were able to answer questions effectively	3/4	As above
34	Service Sector employees/volunteers (other than VIC Staff) were neat in appearance	3/4	As above
35	There are opportunities available to provide feedback on service (e.g.	3/4	

	surveys etc.)		
36	Local residents are welcoming	3/4	

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE - PUBLIC SERVICES/VISITOR AMENITIES			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
37	Public restrooms are available at key locations in the community	2/3	Public restroom outside the Visitor Information Centre was not clean nor maintained properly. Public restroom in the VIC was well maintained. Should be a change table in the VIC.
38	Public restrooms appear well maintained	2/3	As above
39	Public parking is available at key locations in the community	3/4	RV parking available downtown merchants. Dump station at the VIC is helpful for RV owners. But is not pleasant to general public as it is located in the main parking area.
40	Transportation options are available to travel within the community (e.g. taxi, transit, shuttle service, etc.)	N/A	
41	Picnic areas are available at key locations in the community	2/3	Good in some locations and not in others.
42	Picnic areas appear well maintained	2/3	
43	An adequate supply of overnight accommodations are available	3	

44	Diverse overnight accommodation options are available	2	Lacking diversity.
45	An adequate supply of restaurants are available	3	
46	Diverse restaurant options are available	2/3	More restaurant options are needed on Main Street.
47	An adequate supply of other visitor amenities is available (gas stations, banks, restaurants, shopping, internet access, pharmacies, supermarkets, etc.)	3	We were impressed by some of the local shops downtown such as the Guitar shop/Café, bike shop, western shop and rib place. A unique and interesting vibe is beginning to emerge downtown.
48	Facilities are accessible to users with different needs (wheelchairs, seeing or hearing impaired)	3/4	Excellent wheelchair, walker, stroller access on Main Street.
49	An adequate supply of evening entertainment/activities are available	2/3	More programming and animation would make the destination more appealing.
50	Diverse evening entertainment/activity options are available	2/3	As above
51	An adequate supply of daytime entertainment/activities are available	2/3	As above
52	Diverse daytime entertainment/activity options are available	2/3	As above

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE - VISITOR INFORMATION			
#	Indicators	Score	Comments
53	Community website effectively welcomed me to the community	3	
54	Community website effectively directed me to appropriate tourism services and attractions	3.5	All of the websites do a good job of listing services and attractions, though some are more dated and less appealing than others.
55	Phone line for tourism information is well advertised	2	Contact information is difficult to locate.
56	Tourism business websites effectively welcomed me to the community	3	The appearance of the site is dated, which impacts perceived professionalism and appeal of the area.
57	Tourism business websites effectively directed me to appropriate services	3	The information is there, but it's not presented as effectively as it could be
58	Information (e.g. maps, products, services) is available at outdoor kiosks for 24-hr access	2	<p>The outdoor mapping and brochure box at the VIC/Museum parking area are in the right place, but they need a redesign to improve their graphic standards. The regional map and town map should be redesigned and used consistently in ALL media applications. The Town map in the Visitor Guide is too small. The wall mounted "kiosk/map" frames used on Main Street need to be refurbished or replaced with free-standing kiosk structures that allow information to be updated. The Town should also assess how the Town's overall visual identity is being applied in places where public information and site identities have "official" status for audiences.</p> <p>The Visitors Guide could use a redesign to make it appear less cluttered and help to focus on the public information that needs to be found beside and amidst advertising and promotional</p>

			information.
At the Visitor Information Centre:			
59	VIC is open for visitors at convenient times	3	Hours appear reasonable, however during the peak periods (July/August) consider opening later in the evening.  An investment should be made in the playground and picnic area at the VIC.  The gift shop should have more local art and broader supply/diversity of products.
60	Comprehensive information is available at the VIC related to the community	4	The VIC had extensive information... well organized and easy to access. Very well informed, courteous and helpful staff members.
61	Comprehensive information is available at the VIC related to the region	4	
62	Comprehensive information is available at the VIC related to the province	4	
63	Information is available in different languages	N/A	
64	An up-to-date calendar of events is available at the VIC	4	
65	Adequate public internet access is available at the VIC	4	
66	An opportunity to book accommodations, restaurants, entertainment, etc. is available at the VIC	N/A	
67	VIC employees/volunteers	4	

	were courteous		
68	VIC employees/volunteers were attentive	4	
69	VIC employees/volunteers were able to answer questions effectively	4	
70	VIC employees/volunteers were neat in appearance	4	

## APPENDIX E: Examples of Successful Wayfinding Strategies and Map & Visitor Guides

### The Town of Devon

The wayfinding strategy for the Town of Devon incorporates a symbol-based approach in order to allow multiple amenities and services to be identified on street sign blades and on stand-alone main reference signs. The Town of Devon symbol system is based on international symbol standards for public information and therefore displays common features that may have been seen in other contexts, such as national parks. The challenge with this approach is that visitors and residents are required to “learn” the symbol language.



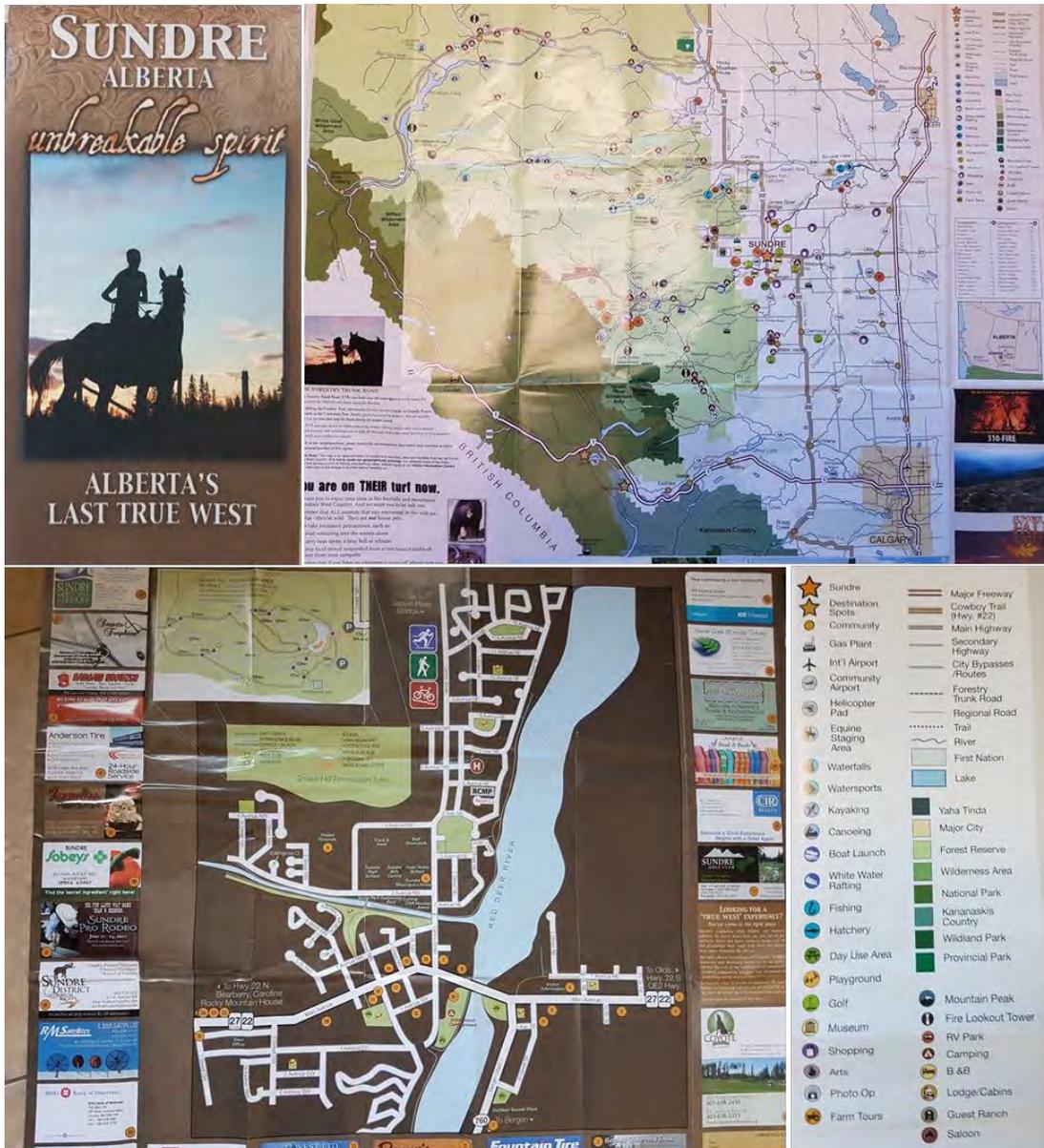
## City of St. Albert

The wayfinding strategy for The City of St. Albert is text-based and very clear. The signs lead the viewer progressively and include only key directions to parts of the City where further details in the form of combined and framed sign blade posts provide direction to particular amenities and services. Parking locations are clearly marked and parking areas display maps that allow visitors to orientate themselves, and that show other parking options in the general vicinity.



## Town of Sundre

The Visitor Information Map highlights information important to tourists such as points of interest, accommodations, attractions, and basic visitor amenities. The map also features advertisements from local business, information about the region and a detailed community street map and regional map.



## Lac La Biche Region

The Visitor Guide is designed to highlight the experiences and attractions offered throughout the region. The easy to find tabs on the side clearly identify the regional map; attractions such as beaches, lakes and museums; the experiences such as events, fishing, camping and bird watching; and all regional accommodations and dining. Business advertising and promotional information is strategically placed throughout to compliment the main content.

Visit the online guide: <http://www.myvirtualpaper.com/doc/go-east/2017-lac-la-biche-visitor-guide/2017012401/#0>

**Lac La Biche REGION**  
Your Bucket List Starts Here!

**2017 Visitor Guide**  
www.laclabiche.com

**Campgrounds**  
There are more than 1,200 campground sites in the Lac La Biche Region with plenty of serviced and non-serviced sites to suit your camping experience. Campsites are available in a variety of sizes and locations, whether you are bringing your RV or looking for a backcountry tenting experience.

**Beaver Lake**  
**BEAVER LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK CAMPGROUND**  
Reservations Accepted  
1-877-537-2757 reserve.albertaparks.ca  
Features: Tenting, RVs, Showers, Fishing, Playground, Boat Launch, Store, Swimming  
6km east of Lac La Biche on HWY 663, 96 sites with 60 serviced sites with water and power hook-ups available. This campground has a range of facilities for visitors: showers, boat launch, playground, on-site store, day-use beach, and a swimming area. Firewood is available for purchase.

**BEAVER LAKE GROUP CAMP AREA**  
Reservations Accepted  
1-877-537-2757 reserve.albertaparks.ca  
Features: Tenting, RVs, Group Camping, Fishing, Firewood, Swimming  
Just east Beaver Lake Provincial Park Campground, 6km east of Lac La Biche, on HWY 663, there are 5 sites with water and power hook-ups available. Firewood is provided at no cost, and there is a boat launch, with some group sites having easy access to beach and swimming areas.

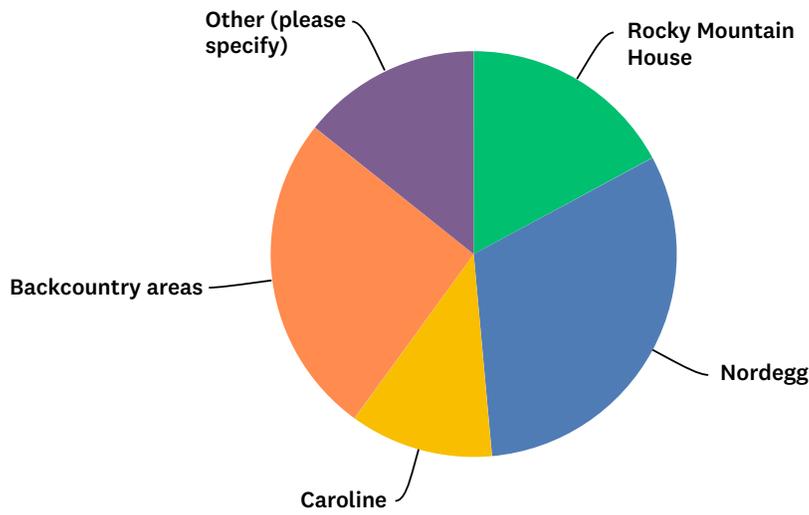
**SPRUCE POINT RESORT**  
Reservations Accepted, starting Mid-May  
1-780-623-3930 www.beaverlakeacreation.ca  
Features: Tenting, RVs, Group Camping, Showers, Fishing, Firewood, Playground, Boat Launch, Swimming  
The campground is within Beaver Lake Cree Nation. Head 6km south of Lac La Biche on HWY 36, follow the signs for another 12km to get to the campground. 271 sites with a variety of water and power hook-ups and dumping station on-site. Shower facilities, boat launch, playground, with beaches and swimming areas at various points throughout the campground.

**YOUNG'S BEACH CAMPGROUND**  
Reservations Accepted, starting Mid-May  
Features: Tenting, RVs, Group Camping, Showers, Fishing, Firewood, Playground, Boat Launch, Swimming  
Only 3km east of Lac La Biche along HWY 883, turn south onto Young's Beach Road, then drive for 5km. Here you will find 89 sites with water, sewage, and power hook-ups. Firewood is provided at no cost, with amenities like showers, a playground, boat launch, boat rentals, and a large beach and swimming area for everyone to enjoy.

## APPENDIX F: Visitor Survey

# Q1 Where in David Thompson Country did you primarily visit?

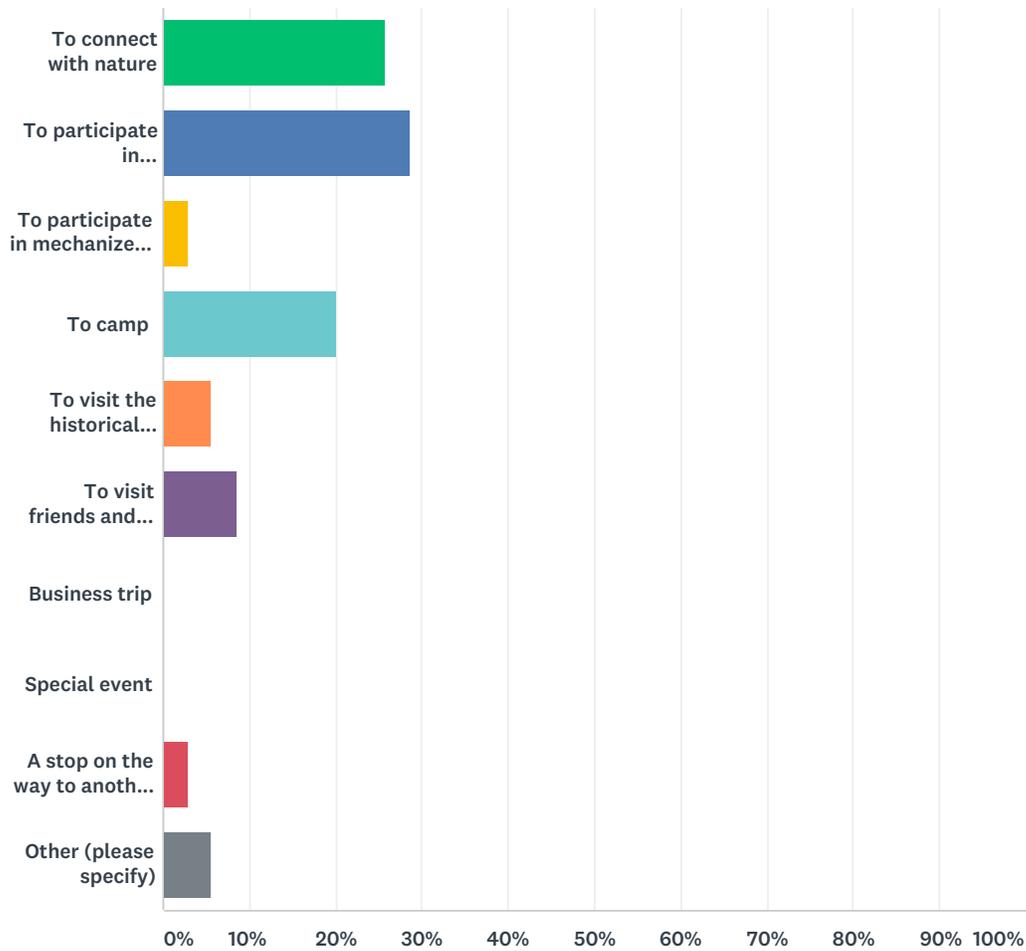
Answered: 35 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Rocky Mountain House	17.14%	6
Nordegg	31.43%	11
Caroline	11.43%	4
Leslieville	0.00%	0
Backcountry areas	25.71%	9
Other (please specify)	14.29%	5
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>35</b>

## Q2 Which statement best describes the MAIN reason you visited? Please check the ONE that BEST APPLIES.

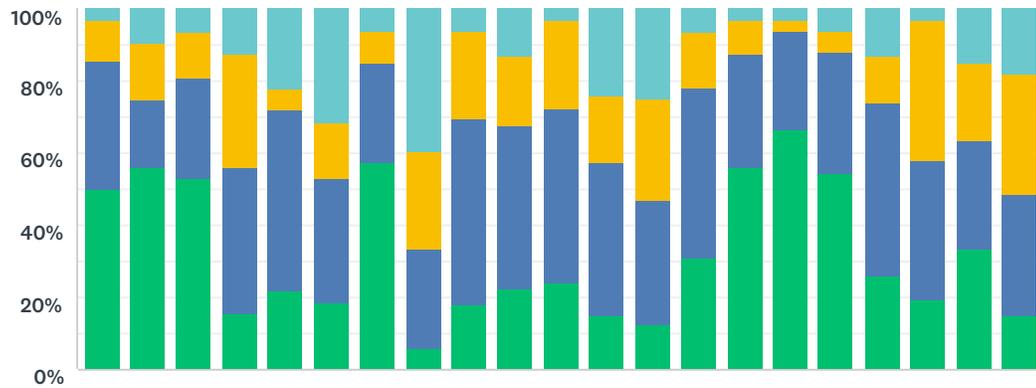
Answered: 35 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
To connect with nature	25.71%	9
To participate in non-mechanized activities (e.g. mountain bike, paddling, hiking, horseback riding, fishing)	28.57%	10
To participate in mechanized activities (e.g. Off-Highway-Vehicle Use)	2.86%	1
To camp	20.00%	7
To visit the historical sites/buildings/museums	5.71%	2
To visit friends and family	8.57%	3
Business trip	0.00%	0
Special event	0.00%	0
A stop on the way to another destination	2.86%	1
Other (please specify)	5.71%	2

### Q3 Please rate the following amenities in the location you identified in question 1.

Answered: 34 Skipped: 1



Access to Public Parking  
 Access to Picnic Areas  
 Access to Water Bodies  
 Access to Highway Rest Stops  
 Quality of Restaurants  
 Quality of Accommodations  
 Quality of Attractions  
 Quality of Shopping  
 Access to Public Washrooms  
 Cleanliness of Public Washrooms  
 Usefulness of Directional Signage  
 Safety (e.g. access to emergency response)

Great Ok Poor N/A

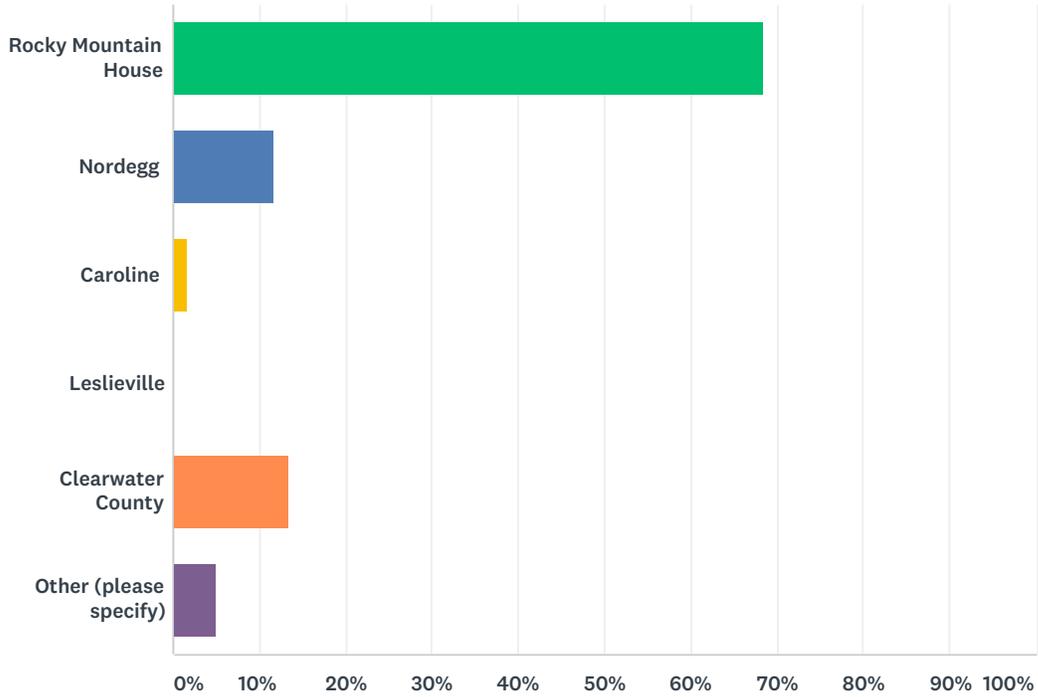
	GREAT	OK	POOR	N/A	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Access to Public Parking	50.00% 17	35.29% 12	11.76% 4	2.94% 1	34	1.68
Access to Picnic Areas	56.25% 18	18.75% 6	15.63% 5	9.38% 3	32	1.78
Access to Water Bodies	53.13% 17	28.13% 9	12.50% 4	6.25% 2	32	1.72
Access to Highway Rest Stops	15.63% 5	40.63% 13	31.25% 10	12.50% 4	32	2.41
Quality of Restaurants	21.88% 7	50.00% 16	6.25% 2	21.88% 7	32	2.28
Quality of Accommodations	18.75% 6	34.38% 11	15.63% 5	31.25% 10	32	2.59
Quality of Attractions	57.58% 19	27.27% 9	9.09% 3	6.06% 2	33	1.64
Quality of Shopping	6.06% 2	27.27% 9	27.27% 9	39.39% 13	33	3.00
Access to Public Washrooms	18.18% 6	51.52% 17	24.24% 8	6.06% 2	33	2.18
Cleanliness of Public Washrooms	22.58% 7	45.16% 14	19.35% 6	12.90% 4	31	2.23
Usefulness of Directional Signage	24.24% 8	48.48% 16	24.24% 8	3.03% 1	33	2.06
Safety (e.g. access to emergency response)	15.15% 5	42.42% 14	18.18% 6	24.24% 8	33	2.52

Security (e.g. availability of law enforcement)	12.50% 4	34.38% 11	28.13% 9	25.00% 8	32	2.66
Pedestrian Friendliness	31.25% 10	46.88% 15	15.63% 5	6.25% 2	32	1.97
Cleanliness of Public Areas and Roadways	56.25% 18	31.25% 10	9.38% 3	3.13% 1	32	1.59
Overall Visual Appeal	66.67% 22	27.27% 9	3.03% 1	3.03% 1	33	1.42
Quality of Customer Service (e.g. service stations, restaurants, hotels)	54.55% 18	33.33% 11	6.06% 2	6.06% 2	33	1.64
Business Hours of Operation	25.81% 8	48.39% 15	12.90% 4	12.90% 4	31	2.13
Online Information Available	19.35% 6	38.71% 12	38.71% 12	3.23% 1	31	2.26
Visitor Information Available at the Visitor Information Centre	33.33% 11	30.30% 10	21.21% 7	15.15% 5	33	2.18
Visitor Information Available at Local Businesses	15.15% 5	33.33% 11	33.33% 11	18.18% 6	33	2.55

## APPENDIX G: Business Survey

# Q1 Where in David Thompson Country is your business located?

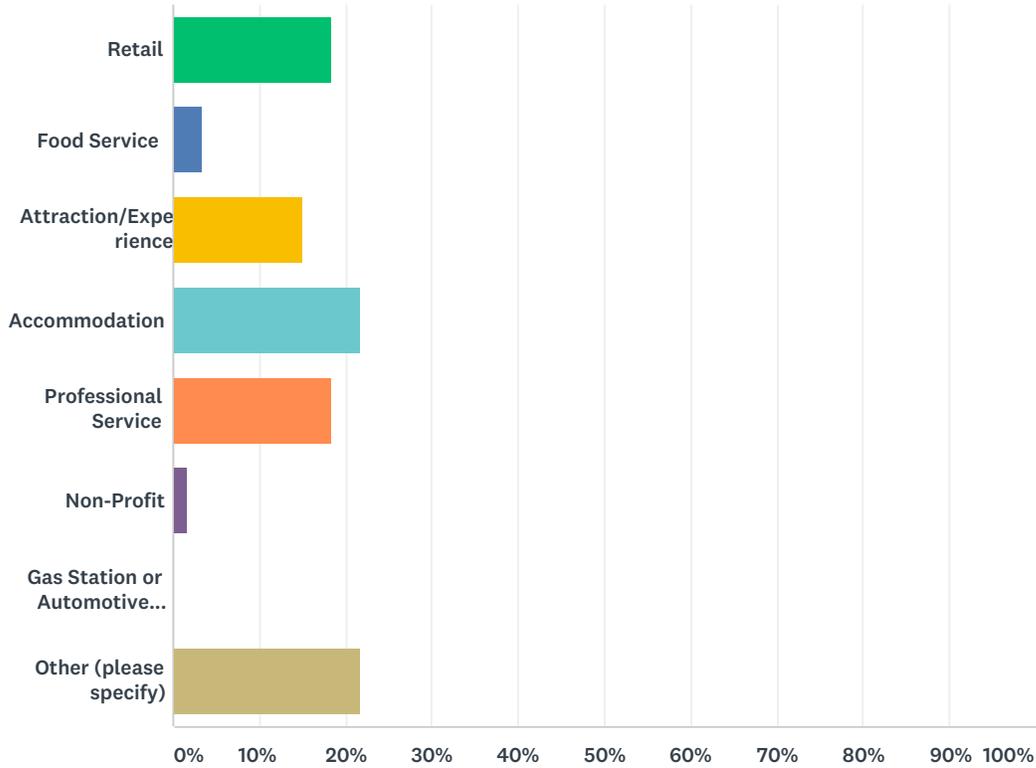
Answered: 60 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Rocky Mountain House	68.33%	41
Nordegg	11.67%	7
Caroline	1.67%	1
Leslieville	0.00%	0
Clearwater County	13.33%	8
Other (please specify)	5.00%	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>60</b>

## Q2 What is the primary purpose of your business?

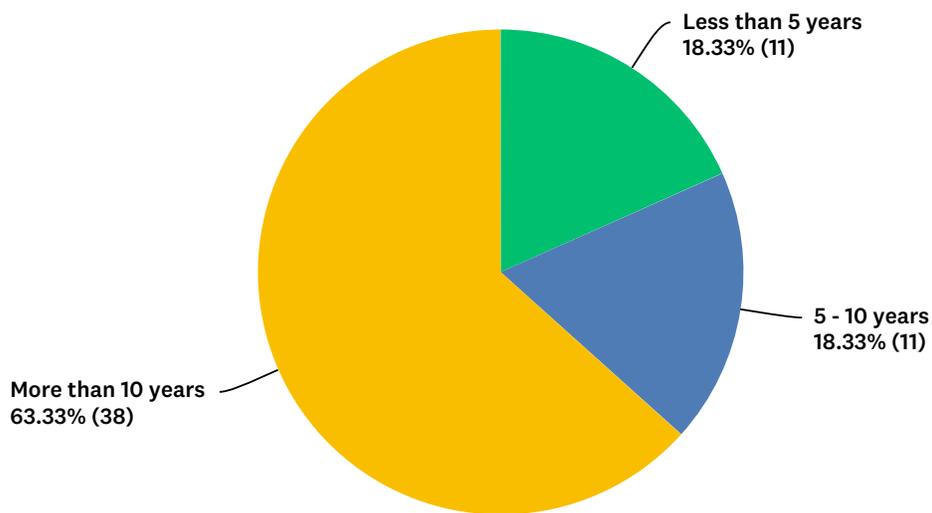
Answered: 60 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Retail	18.33%	11
Food Service	3.33%	2
Attraction/Experience	15.00%	9
Accommodation	21.67%	13
Professional Service	18.33%	11
Non-Profit	1.67%	1
Gas Station or Automotive Service	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	21.67%	13
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>60</b>

### Q3 How many years has your establishment been operating?

Answered: 60 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 5 years	18.33%	11
5 - 10 years	18.33%	11
More than 10 years	63.33%	38
TOTAL		60

**Q4 Judging from feedback you receive from your customers and your own observations, please rate the quality of the following amenities provided to visitors in your Municipality.**

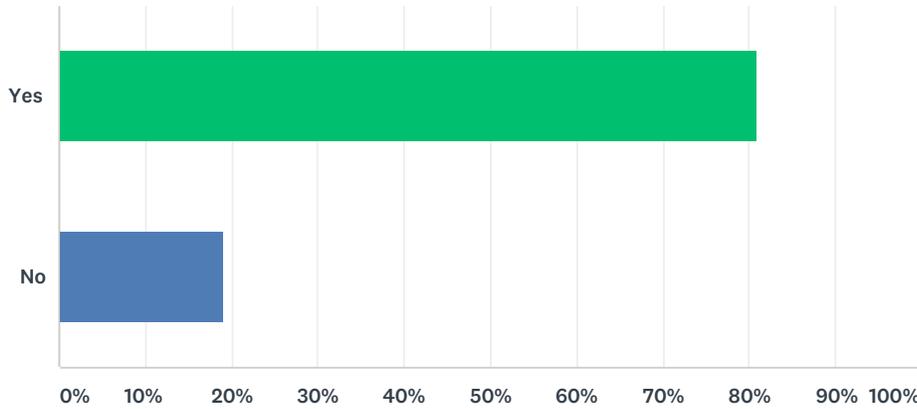
Answered: 60 Skipped: 0



	GREAT	OK	POOR	N/A	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Overall Visual Appeal of your Municipality	36.67% 22	48.33% 29	10.00% 6	5.00% 3	60	1.83
Cleanliness of your Municipality	33.33% 20	53.33% 32	6.67% 4	6.67% 4	60	1.87
Visitor Information Available at the Visitor Information Centre	40.00% 24	41.67% 25	5.00% 3	13.33% 8	60	1.92
Access to Public Parking	37.29% 22	38.98% 23	15.25% 9	8.47% 5	59	1.95
Access to Water Bodies	41.67% 25	31.67% 19	15.00% 9	11.67% 7	60	1.97
Quality of Customer Service (e.g. service stations, restaurants, hotels)	30.00% 18	41.67% 25	23.33% 14	5.00% 3	60	2.03
Quality of Restaurants	20.00% 12	60.00% 36	13.33% 8	6.67% 4	60	2.07
Quality of Attractions	20.00% 12	55.00% 33	20.00% 12	5.00% 3	60	2.10
Safety and Security of your Municipality	20.34% 12	57.63% 34	13.56% 8	8.47% 5	59	2.10
Business Hours of Operation	16.67% 10	58.33% 35	21.67% 13	3.33% 2	60	2.12
Access to Picnic Areas	31.67% 19	33.33% 20	23.33% 14	11.67% 7	60	2.15
Online Information Available	18.33% 11	53.33% 32	20.00% 12	8.33% 5	60	2.18
Usefulness of Directional Signage	21.67% 13	46.67% 28	18.33% 11	13.33% 8	60	2.23
Visitor Information Available at Businesses in your Municipality	20.00% 12	48.33% 29	13.33% 8	18.33% 11	60	2.30
Pedestrian Friendliness of your Municipality	18.33% 11	48.33% 29	16.67% 10	16.67% 10	60	2.32
Quality of Shopping	1.67% 1	53.33% 32	35.00% 21	10.00% 6	60	2.53
Access to Public Washrooms	10.00% 6	40.00% 24	36.67% 22	13.33% 8	60	2.53
Access to Highway Rest Stops	18.33% 11	31.67% 19	26.67% 16	23.33% 14	60	2.55
Cleanliness of Public Washrooms	12.07% 7	43.10% 25	15.52% 9	29.31% 17	58	2.62

### Q5 Do you feel it is your role to provide visitor information about David Thompson Country to your customers?

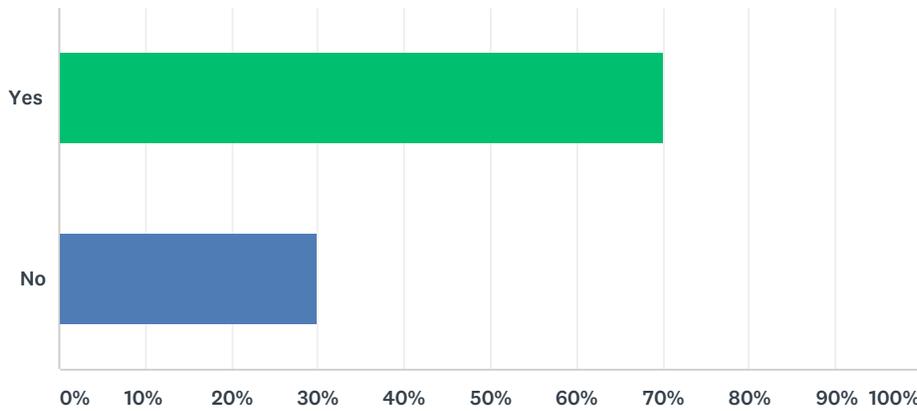
Answered: 58 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	81.03%	47
No	18.97%	11
TOTAL		58

### Q6 Do you feel that you have enough information about David Thompson Country to provide sound visitor information to your customers?

Answered: 57 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	70.18%	40
No	29.82%	17
TOTAL		57

## APPENDIX H: David Thompson Country's Digital and Online Presence

There is no shortage of information online about David Thompson Country. A quick Google search brings up a wide variety of sites featuring the region, and the web presence is as diverse as the area itself.

From a visitor's perspective, this is both a liability and an asset. There are a lot of sources of information to choose from - some feel updated, comprehensive, modern and easy to navigate. Others do not. And because the region is large, and the activities broad, there isn't a clear and easy hook with which to associate the area. Is it for back country hikers? History lovers? B and B weekend escapes? Camping?

Obviously, the answer is all of the above, and more - but the area, and the term "David Thompson Country" may not be as well known in visitors' minds as, say, the Rocky Mountains, or the Badlands, or other Alberta destinations. Therefore, visitors may not know what search terms to use to find the information they need, and while it may be "out there," visitors may not find it intuitively.

What follows is an analysis of the primary websites that come up in Google searches – you may have control of these sites, or you may not, but they all impact David Thompson Country visitor friendliness. We also analyzed David Thompson Country social media presence and visitors' access to logistical trip-planning information.

### Key Findings

Term: Rocky Mountain House

- The official site, [rockymnthouse.com](http://rockymnthouse.com), is well-represented on the first page of Google. Several relevant internal links are listed, which means the SEO is working well.
- The other pages that show up on the first page are useful for visitors - like TripAdvisor, Wikipedia and social media links.
- Easy links to accommodations or activities don't show up for several pages.

Term: David Thompson Country

- The first page of Google results is fortunately fairly relevant, though it's not the practical information a visitor is necessarily looking for. Instead, it's more travelogue-type content, which helps inspire visitors, but doesn't help them with practical trip-planning.
- The official David Thompson Country website doesn't show up on the first page of Google results, which means it's very likely getting missed by visitors to the area. We'd suggest doing a Google AdWords campaign, and make sure the website is search-engine optimized for better results.
- Of the "official" area sites, the only one to show up on the first page is [rockymnthouse.com](http://rockymnthouse.com). And unfortunately, rather than it taking the visitor to the main site, it

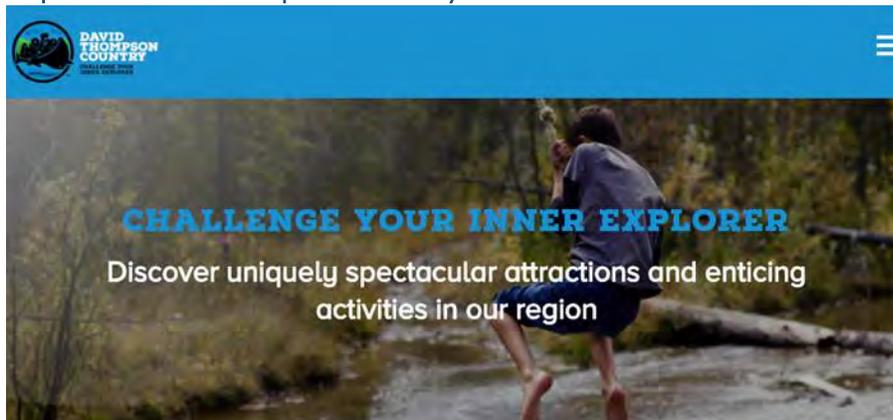
directs to an index page that lists David Thompson Country's website and social media profiles. Useful, but it's not the warmest welcome, nor is it the most efficient route to the content.

- Accommodations don't appear on the first page of Google results.

Term: Clearwater County

- clearwatercounty.ca is the first listing, which is great. That said, we'd recommend some slight SEO work to ensure a description of the site is available via Google - it currently says, "a description for this site is not available." It should be a simple back-end tweak to address this to make it more SEO-friendly.
- Websites relating to Clearwater County in Idaho also show up, which could be confusing to some visitors.
- Clearwater County is a less obvious term to search, as it requires some knowledge of the region to know the name. Though the information listed on clearwatercounty.ca is useful for visitors, without an advertising campaign it's unlikely that many visitors will know to search the term. Again, we'd recommend some SEO work, as well as a Google AdWords campaign to raise the profile of the name.
- Accommodations don't appear on the first page of Google.

<http://davidthompsoncountry.ca>



## Key Findings

- This site is modern, well-designed and well-written. It does a great job of showcasing the beauty and interest of the region. Very appealing to visitors.
- The images are outstanding, and help the visitor to imagine themselves on their trip.
- The site navigation is intuitive, with just the right ratio of words to images. There's enough written content.
- The information is relevant to visitors, and the information hierarchy is logical and consistent with best practices.

- Easy link to contact page.
- The site reads equally well on a desktop, as well as mobile. Good scaling.
- The business listings - accommodations and food - are well-organized and presented in an attractive way. Good consistency of live links - which is sometimes difficult when you're directing to third-party sites.
- The attractions list is well-written, with a genuine focus on the visitor's experience.
- All told, this is a fantastic site - one of the best of its kind we've seen in a long time.
- Only thing missing is some solid SEO - that it didn't show up on a Google search until half-way down the second page shows that there is need for better optimization, and as mentioned before, it could benefit from a Google AdWords campaign.

<http://clearwatercounty.ca>



## Key Findings

- While the site layout is dated, there is good information here for visitors.
- The banner image on each page is attractive and well-sized. Would like to see more images that showcase the area's natural beauty.
- The navigation is logical, and it defaults to the visitor information which is great. The site hierarchy makes sense, though there are too many categories in the left-hand menu.
- Visitor Information Centre contact link is buried. Would be great to see this information more easily accessible.
- The age of the site makes it difficult to navigate on a mobile - the drop-down menus are very small to accurately click on a touchscreen (both iPad and iPhone).
- While the content is useful, the writing style feels a bit dry and corporate. Would like to see more colour, more of a sense of "What's in it for me" in the writing. Some of the content feels paternalistic - lots of "Be sure to"-type phrasing, which makes it feel rule-bound, rather than capturing the spirit of the area.
- The content is also over-written. There's no longer a need for explanations like "Click on the link" etc. Better to keep the content clean and concise, with a focus on visitor experience.

- There is specific mention of the region’s settlement history, but no mention of the area’s Indigenous past or present. Particularly in this era of Reconciliation, it seems appropriate to acknowledge Indigenous history as well.
- Overall, this site is useful, just dated, and needs a content rewrite.

<http://rockymountainhouse.com>

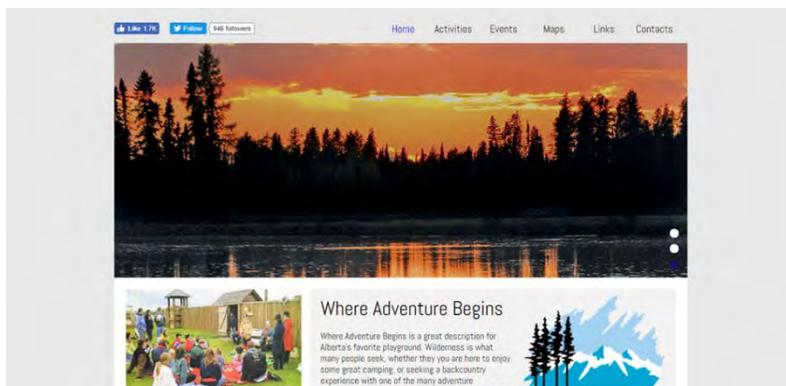


## Key Findings

- The site has lots of useful information, but is dated in its appearance.
- It feels busy, and difficult to navigate. Ironically, it’s a traditional navigation style, but as it makes use of several different fonts and a “busy” image, it looks more overwhelming than it is.
- Visitor Information Centre contact information is buried, it would be great to make it more easily accessible.
- The site reads well on safari mobile - though its menus suffer from the same issues as the clearwatercounty.ca site - but it defaults to an index listing on mobile Chrome. This is a significant issue as visitors are frequently on mobile, and Chrome is one of the most widely used search engines. This website is in need of an update.
- The Visitors tab provides useful information for visitors, but again, feels dated.
- The About page provides some great background and history, and we’re glad to see a significant focus on the Indigenous history of the area. That said, it’s a wall of words - it would be great to see the info broken up with more visuals and links. Would also be good to see more current information about Rocky Mountain House today.
- The photo gallery is a great idea, but the layout and the images are dated. Same can be said of the videos. An update is recommended.
- The visitor guide web-format needs a significant update - it took a long time to load, it’s awkward to use, and the lack of clickable hyperlinks makes it less than useful for visitors on the go.

- The Visitor Information Centre information is useful, and the word count vs. image ratio is good on this page.
- When presenting links, like on the David Thompson Country Tourism page - just use a hyperlink, rather than showing the multi-character address. This will help make it cleaner and more appealing.
- The “What to Do” content is excellent and detailed, but the presentation isn’t appealing. The business listings on davidthompsoncountry.ca could be emulated to great effect here. In essence, more images and more links are needed, and fewer words. The same can be said of the accommodations listing.
- Ideally, the “Where to Dine” listings should be hyperlinks to the restaurants’ websites. Barring that, it would be great if this page linked to a map.
- Information about many of the most interesting attractions is buried. It was difficult to find the “Walk of History” page, for example, and the National Historic Site content is very lean, and rather dry. The whole section around attractions and activities should be higher on the information hierarchy, and the content should be written from an experiential perspective. “Show,” with images and links, rather than “Tell” with lots of words.
- Overall, this website is chock-full of great information that visitors need to know. It just needs an update and content rewrite to better present the information.

<https://www.whereadventurebegins.com>



## Key Findings

- Generally, a good blog site filled with useful information.
- Some spelling errors throughout - needs a professional edit.
- Links to rockymnthouse.com for several pages, which is good practice, and a benefit for the referral site. However, as rockymnthouse.com doesn’t read well on mobile, it can be a turn-off.
- Well-structured information hierarchy, and great internal links to maps and other useful information, especially for outdoor activities.

- Good images, well-connected to the text. Good text to image ratio, though more images are always welcome.

<http://www.travelnordegg.com>



## Key Findings

- This site is very dated, though easy to navigate
- It's extremely wordy - though we do like some of the character in the writing. It just needs a solid edit, and a lot more pictures.
- The business listings are well organized and provide a lot of useful information - this is the best aspect of this site
- Generally, the information on this site is good and well organized - it's just dated, with too much text and too few pictures.

## Travel Sites

- Generally, there is limited information for visitors on any of the Alberta travel sites we looked at.
- TravelAlberta.com is lacking content that features this region, and while there are a few accommodations and attractions listed, they are not set within the context of the region as a whole, which means visitors have to be knowledgeable about the region for it to have any benefit.
- The historic site is not listed on the culture.tourism.ab.ca page.
- The region has no presence on comeexplorecanada.com, though on the Central Alberta segment, back country adventures are mentioned.
- Rocky Mountain House has a decent presence on discoveralberta.com, though the site is dated and difficult to use.
- It would serve visitors well to reach out to the above organizations and site owners to provide them with some content.

## David Thompson Country's Social Media

### Facebook (FB)

Site: <https://www.facebook.com/davidthompsoncountry/>

- Good, consistent posting schedule - if anything, posting may occasionally be too frequent, which is a good problem to have. For a small audience, once per day, or once every other day, is best practice, so as to not overwhelm the audience.
- Lots of hashtag use - hashtags are less effective on FB and are not generally part of FB culture, even though they technically work. In our opinion, they clutter up posts, and make them harder to read. Also indicates cross posting.
- Writing could be more experiential. Most posts are very brief, almost like tweets. There's opportunity to paint more of a picture for the culture of DTC, and to be more literary in the approach.
- Content is useful for visitors.
- Good use of images.
- Relatively small following, and low engagement. Could use some FB advertising to build community and increase engagement. A more experiential approach to the posts will also help to increase engagement.
- The davidthompsoncountry.ca website is so great, driving more traffic to it from social media could be very useful for visitors.

Site: <https://www.facebook.com/clearwatercnty/?fref=ts>

- FB posting schedule is too frequent - averaging 3 posts per day. This may overwhelm a small audience. Aim for quality posts, rather than quantity.
- This page is being treated more like a Twitter feed, rather than making use of Facebook's unique culture. Some posts appear to be automatically cross-posted, which is against professional best practices.
- Could make more use of images, and use fewer images that have a lot of text on them.
- The weed of the week series is very interesting. Rather than using the text-laden image, though, it would be better to post an image of the plant, describe it briefly in the text and then link to website for more info.
- The content feels quite dry and corporate. There is opportunity to make it warmer and more colourful to better reflect a community feeling. Aim for more experiential writing so readers better understand Clearwater community values.
- Engagement is low, and community size is relatively small. Try using FB advertising to boost community and engagement.

- When questions or comments present an opportunity for a response, be sure to do so. (For example, there was a brief community discussion on July 7th's post about whether a controlled burn was a good idea. This was a great opportunity to respond as to why the fire experts had chosen this particular moment in time, to build trust and to show receptiveness to conversation.)

Site: <https://www.facebook.com/TownofRocky/>

- Excellent cover image
- Inconsistent posting schedule. Aim for one post every day, or every other day, rather than multiple posts per day on some days, and the nothing for a week. Consistency builds trust with your audience.
- FB feed is treated like a Twitter feed. There is opportunity to make more use of FB's unique culture.
- Several posts seem to be auto-posted news releases. These posts do not populate with an image, and feel extremely impersonal. Best practice would be to summarize the content in an engaging way (using experiential writing), and post with a high quality image.
- Engagement is very low. Try using FB advertising to boost community engagement and size.
- Be sure to always respond to community members' questions, and if relevant, "like" comments. One question was answered by a community member, rather than from the official source - if the page answered it, it would help build trust and prove receptiveness to engagement.

### What can FB do for visitors?

- Provide concrete information in the digital sphere, in almost real time. Much trip planning happens in the online sphere, and after business hours, so it is a great opportunity to engage positively with visitors before they come to the Town (setting up positive expectations) and to answer questions quickly and "in the moment." It is best practice to respond to all questions and requests within 2 hours or less, if possible, and be ready to engage with audiences at all times of the day and night. That's the kind of benefit and service social media provides, and should be an expectation for your page management.
- FB is all about engaging with people. Sharing stories is one of the best ways of connecting with your audience in an authentic way and sharing visitor information. Experiential content works wonders in this context.
- Spread your message widely. Thanks to efficient and well-developed advertising algorithms, FB allows you to share your message widely, but targeted to the people who want to receive it. A relatively small budget is all that is needed (\$200-500 per month) to efficiently get the word out.

- Share your online community's experiences with your brand. Facebook is ultimately digitally amplified word-of-mouth advertising. Personal referrals are an incredibly strong form of advertising, and can help tip the balance from want to need.

## Twitter

Site: <https://mobile.twitter.com/DTCountryAB>

- Good use of images. While the logo'd images are great, they may look too much like stock images for social media success. Consider using pics without logos for more of an authentic feel.
- Posts could be more frequent - aim for daily presence to build trust with the audience.
- Very small community - follow more like-minded accounts, and engage directly with influencers - to build community size. Not only will this spread information further, it will build trust with visitors.
- Engagement is very low - posts work best when the writing style is colourful and experiential. Really paint the picture of what life is like in the region. Help visitors to picture themselves there.
- Good amplification of like-minded accounts. Do this even more. Try setting up a Twitter list of like-minded accounts and influencers, and retweet daily to crowdsource content relevant to visitors.
- Like other relevant posts for greater community engagement.

Site: <https://mobile.twitter.com/ClearwaterCnty>

- Content is primarily retweets, though the content shared is practical and valuable.
- Needs to make more use of images and experiential writing for greater engagement.
- Engagement is very low - consider reaching out to like-minded accounts and influencers to help messages to spread further.
- Content schedule is fairly good and consistent - aim for a daily presence to build trust with the audience.
- Look for more opportunities for bi-directional communication - ask questions, make use of polls for more engagement opportunities.
- Like other relevant posts for greater community engagement.

Site: <https://mobile.twitter.com/TownOfRocky>

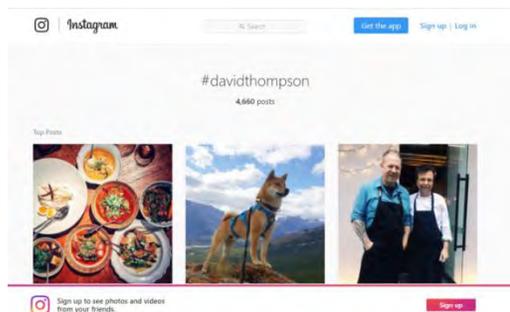
- Posts appear to be auto-posted from the newsletter service, which does not load images or other rich content. Therefore, the Twitter feed is a wall of words, with no images. If tweets must be scheduled, try using Buffer or Hootsuite, or a service that will load rich content. Images are so important, and help make the content stand out in the audience's feed. The content shared may be valuable to visitors, but at this point, it's not effective.

- Make sure to engage directly with others' content - like and retweet influencers' content for more engagement and audience building, in order to help messages spread further and more effectively.
- Engagement is very low - create more engaging content, with colourful and experiential writing. Really paint the picture of what life is like in the region. Help visitors to picture themselves there, and reflect the lifestyle of residents.
- Content schedule is inconsistent - aim for a daily presence to build trust with visitors.

## Instagram

### David Thompson Country

- Excellent images - Instagram feed is very appealing, and inspiring for visitors.
- Good engagement for the small audience - try following more accounts, and engaging with other accounts to build a larger audience.
- Could use more hashtags for greater searchability.
- Try using images without logos. The logos make the images look like stock images, or posed professional shots, rather than authentic, in-the-moment experiences.
- Try telling more of a story in the text.



## APPENDIX I: References

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- <sup>i</sup> The average age is 41 years old, slightly higher than the provincial average of 38.
- <sup>ii</sup> The hamlet was founded in the early 1900s on coal mining, supplying coal to the Canadian Northern Railway. Brazeau Collieries operated the mine from 1912 to the mid-1950s. In its heyday, 2,500 people lived in Nordegg with 800 working at the mine. Today there are about 90 permanent residents.
- <sup>iii</sup> 2016 census
- <sup>iv</sup> Rocky Mountain House Community Profile, Labour Market, accessed online July 14, 2017 at <http://rockymtnhouse.com/DocumentCenter/View/327>
- <sup>v</sup> <https://www.villageofcaroline.com/visitor-information.html>
- <sup>vi</sup> Visitor Information, accessed online July 28, 2017 at <https://www.villageofcaroline.com/visitor-information.html>
- <sup>vii</sup> News Release, announced Wed, Jan 11, 2017, accessed online July 13, 2017 at <https://www.rockychamber.org/announce.htm?ri=1061304>
- <sup>viii</sup> Clearwater Region Economic Profile, circa 2015
- <sup>ix</sup> Centennial Park and New Old Town Campground
- <sup>x</sup> See [www.westwardbound.ca](http://www.westwardbound.ca)
- <sup>xi</sup> 28 listed on [www.rockymtnhouse.com](http://www.rockymtnhouse.com) and 28 listed on Trip Advisor.
- <sup>xii</sup> Gateway Sales and Service, Glenn's Sports Line, and Peppi Small Engine Repair.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Tackles and Trails, Dingo's Outpost, Don's Gunsmithing and Canadian Tire
- <sup>xiv</sup> Rocky Mtn Bike 'N Board
- <sup>xv</sup> 7 listed on [www.rockymtnhouse.com](http://www.rockymtnhouse.com); 12 listed on [www.whereadventurebegins.com](http://www.whereadventurebegins.com)
- <sup>xvi</sup> See a list of equestrian staging areas and trail ride operators at <http://www.whereadventurebegins.com/horseback-riding.html>.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Alberta Central Tourism Region: A Summary of 2014 Visitor Numbers, Expenditures and Characteristics, published July 2016, accessed July 29, 2017 at <http://www.culturetourism.alberta.ca/tourism/research-and-statistics/visitor-profiles/tourism-region-visitor-profiles/pdf/PersonvisitsAlbertaCentral2014.pdf>.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Alberta Central Tourism Region: A Summary of 2014 Visitor Numbers, Expenditures and Characteristics, published July 2016, accessed July 29, 2017 at <http://www.culturetourism.alberta.ca/tourism/research-and-statistics/visitor-profiles/tourism-region-visitor-profiles/pdf/PersonvisitsAlbertaCentral2014.pdf>.
- <sup>xix</sup> 2016 ATR Report, accessed July 29, 2017 at <http://www.transportation.alberta.ca/Content/docType181/production/ATR-MonthlyVolumes2016.pdf>
- <sup>xx</sup> 2016 ATR Report, accessed July 29, 2017 at <http://www.transportation.alberta.ca/Content/docType181/production/ATR-MonthlyVolumes2016.pdf>
- <sup>xxi</sup> <http://www.transportation.alberta.ca/Content/docType181/production/ATR-MonthlyVolumes2016.pdf>

xxii EQ Profiles

xxiii EQ Profiles

<sup>24</sup> Also listed are Transportation Plan (2015), Regional Economic Development Strategy, Intermunicipal Development Plan (2015) and Environmental Stewardship Plan (by 2018).

<sup>25</sup> New Tourism Region Forms in Western Alberta, accessed July 28, 2017 on <http://www.rockymtnhouse.com/index.aspx?NID=381>.

<sup>26</sup> Town of Rocky Mountain House Architectural Guidelines, enacted by Town Council December 6, 2011, written by Brad Dollevoet, Director of Planning and Community Development.

<sup>27</sup> 2014-16 Main Street Reconstruction Project, accessed online July 11, 2017 at <http://rockymtnhouse.com/index.aspx?nid=192>

<sup>28</sup> Strategic Plan, 2015-2018, Clearwater County

<sup>29</sup> Nordegg Trail Plan, Clearwater County, accessed online July 28, 2017 at [http://www.clearwatercounty.ca/ckfinder/userfiles/files/west\\_country/Nordegg%20Trail%20Concept%20Plan%20-%20FINAL%2005\\_26\\_2016%20no%20existing%20trails%20map.pdf](http://www.clearwatercounty.ca/ckfinder/userfiles/files/west_country/Nordegg%20Trail%20Concept%20Plan%20-%20FINAL%2005_26_2016%20no%20existing%20trails%20map.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> See news release online at <http://www.rockymtnhouse.com/index.aspx?NID=381>.

<sup>31</sup> Canadian Travel Market: Wilderness Activities While on Trips, 2007, accessed online July 29, 2017 at [http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/research/travel\\_activities/CDN\\_TAMS\\_2006\\_Wilderness\\_Activities\\_Oct2007.pdf](http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/research/travel_activities/CDN_TAMS_2006_Wilderness_Activities_Oct2007.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Canadian Travel Market: Snowmobiling & ATVing While on Trips, 2007, accessed online July 29, 2017 at [http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/research/travel\\_activities/CDN\\_TAMS\\_2006\\_Snowmobiling\\_and\\_ATVing\\_Oct2007.pdf](http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/research/travel_activities/CDN_TAMS_2006_Snowmobiling_and_ATVing_Oct2007.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> Canadian Travel Market, Hiking, Climbing & Paddling While on Trips, accessed online July 29, 2017 at [http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/research/travel\\_activities/CDN\\_TAMS\\_2006\\_Hiking\\_Climbing\\_and\\_Paddling\\_Oct2007.pdf](http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/research/travel_activities/CDN_TAMS_2006_Hiking_Climbing_and_Paddling_Oct2007.pdf)

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