

EMPLOYMENT LANDS UPDATE

March 2014



Research and Development

Cadastral data has been secured from all of the regional districts in the Basin-Boundary region¹ (RDEK, RDCK, RDKB, CSRD). Data refresh requests and multi-year data sharing agreements have been sent out to participating local governments. The Employment Lands Inventory will be integrated into the Digital Basin portal and will be ready for beta-testing in May 2014. Upon the release of the Employment Lands Inventory in May, local government, investors, planners, economic development practitioners and existing companies will be able to access and explore the inventory alongside over 100 economic, social, cultural and environmental indicator and asset data layers.

The site selection tool is in its final development stages. The beta release of the site selection tool will be dependent on the timeline required to address an emergent software issue. Upon its release, the site selection tool will enable property searches against the Employment Lands Inventory using the following criteria (where data is available):

- Location (Required)
 - Point and distance (select lat/lon, or Community)
 - Or Area (sub-corridor or RD electoral area)
- Zoning (choose one of our 5 or 6 major zoning types) – or N/A
- Developed (has bldg.) or undeveloped – or N/A
- Transportation (distance to major highway, airport) – or N/A
- Services (distance to highways, roads, muni-boundary) – or N/A
- Water (distance to water service area or muni-boundary or community watershed) or N/A
- Minimum and Maximum Parcel Size

Research and Development

In an effort to better understand land supply, usage, constraints and areas of demand for wealth generating land in the region, a multi-level, integrated economic development-geospatial analysis was undertaken. First, BC Assessment Roll Data was geospatially mapped. BC Assessment's Roll-Data, a detailed database of individual properties across BC, contains usage information. The Roll-Data is subject to some accuracy issues because detailed information on individual properties is typically updated only after transfer of ownership or major renovations requiring a building permit. Despite this limitation, the Roll-Data represents the most comprehensive approach to determining the level of development / usage on a given property. The 2008 Assessment Roll Data will be used until more current data can be secured from BC Assessment (estimated Spring 2014). Second, potential tension zones were identified by applying watershed, ALR, forestry tenures, mining claims and park lands against cadastral data. This layer of analysis attempted to address feedback from the advisory group related to certainty of the land base, regardless of designated use. Finally, relevant data from the regional business retention and expansion project (n=550) was geospatially mapped to identify possible areas of demand as signalled by businesses indicating 'lack of appropriately zoned lands' as a barrier to expansion. This level of analysis was undertaken to better understand demand side of the employment lands question: are there enough appropriately zoned wealth generating lands to accommodate growth? The final report will present the findings from this multi-level analysis, including an exploration of supply, usage, constraints on supply, and possible areas of demand at regional, regional district, and corridor levels.

¹ The Advisory group's representative from the Ktunaxa Nation is no longer with the Nation. A new contact will need to be identified and a follow up request will be initiated.

Advisory Feedback

The Employment Lands Advisory group met in early October 2013. Discussion at this meeting focused on the need to draw attention to available employment lands and begin discussion around the certainty of the land base (businesses / investors comfortable that land is available for its designated use). There was also some discussion around the question of demand (i.e. this may be an issue in some areas and not in others). It was also discussed that in order to mobilize the findings from this project, political support and buy in is needed (i.e. decision makers and planners to consider the inventory and project findings in future updates to Official Community Plans, zoning decisions cross electoral boundary areas). Further, the application of the inventory and site selection tool should be prioritized in the roll out (i.e. showing EDOs, Chambers, Real Estate stakeholders, and planners how they can use the inventory and site selection tool to support growth and prosperity in the region).

Project Wrap Up and Roll Out

RDI met with the project steering committee (Community Futures East Kootenay, Province of BC) in early February to finalize plans for project roll out. Initial findings from the Employment Lands project will be presented at the Association of Kootenay Boundary Local Government Conference in early April.

The Employment Lands final report will be released in late April, the inventory (and site selection tool pending timely resolution of software issues) will 'go live' in early May, and a series of six forums across the region will be held. Local government representatives and economic development practitioners will be invited to the forums to discuss findings and possible next steps.

These forums will:

- Showcase the value and power of the Digital Basin (which includes the Employment Lands Inventory and site selection tool) as an integrated economic development and planning tool
- Present findings generated from the project's multi-level, integrated economic development – geospatial analysis of existing Employment Lands
- Provide an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss the existing landscape of wealth generating lands in the region
- Identify areas for future research and development

Tentative dates and locations for the forums are:

East Kootenay

May 6 - Sparwood

May 7 - Radium Hot Springs

May 8 - Cranbrook

West Kootenay

May 12 - Nakusp

May 13 - Castlegar

May 14 - Grand Forks

A video conferencing call will be scheduled with representatives from Golden, Revelstoke and Columbia Shuswap Areas A and B in late May.