



Principle Researcher(s) & Affiliations

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Research Field

Land Use Planning
 Economic Development

Student Involvement

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 Bart Fyffe (SGRC Co-Op Student)

Partners & Collaborators

This project was sponsored by Community Futures East Kootenay and guided by a regional project advisory committee that included representation from the provincial government, local governments, Columbia Basin Trust and economic development practitioners.

Funding Sources

Southern Interior Beetle Action Coalition
 Community Futures East Kootenay
 Columbia Basin Trust (RDI Funder)



Project Period

From: (Month/Year)	January 2012
To: (Month/Year)	December 2014
Funder Contribution	\$65,000
RDI Contribution	\$50,000
Partner Inkind	\$15,000
Total	\$130,000

Columbia Basin-Boundary Employment Lands

Understanding Supply, Demand & Utilization

December 2014

The purpose of this research project was to better understand the landscape of wealth generating lands in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region of BC. With an improved regional-level understanding of the region's 'employment lands' landscape, the region will be in a better position to make informed land use decisions and attract and retain business and investment. The project explored assets and gaps in the region's employment lands landscape, assessed whether employment lands can accommodate investment and business growth, and explored the utilization of existing employment lands and possible constraints to use.

Researchers from the Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute (RDI) and Selkirk Geospatial Research Centre (SGRC) at Selkirk College worked under the guidance of a regional advisory committee and the project sponsor: Community Futures East Kootenay. Community Futures East Kootenay, the Province of BC, the Southern Interior Beetle Action Coalition, and Columbia Basin Trust provided funding for this 2-year applied research project. The primary goals of the project were to:

- produce a regional baseline employment lands, infrastructure and related economic assets inventory database and web-based geospatial tool,
- assess whether there is an adequate inventory (supply) of employment lands available for the development of new or expanding investment and job creation,
- bring together key stakeholders to generate regional discussion and analysis of the employment lands landscape, and
- create a geospatial site selector tool designed to identify land parcels demonstrating user-specified attributes.

The following questions guided the research:

1. What assets and gaps exist in the region's employment lands inventory?
2. Can employment lands accommodate investment and business growth?
3. Are there areas where existing employment lands are being underutilized?
4. What factors might constrain the use of employment lands?

Primary data included cadastral data from local governments and the Integrated Cadastral Information Society (ICIS), BC Assessment Roll data, and data generated from the Regional Business Retention and Expansion project. Data suggest there is an adequate supply of employment lands in the region to accommodate new investment and growth with the exception of commercial lands in the Elk Valley Corridor and industrial lands in the Columbia Valley and Elk Valley Corridors. It is important to note that this analysis did not include real estate or topographic data and therefore it is unknown if the identified vacant land supply is for sale and / or on a useable slope. Future research could address these analytic gaps. Future research could also focus on addressing zoning data gaps for five communities within the Regional District of East Kootenay.

Investors, business owners and economic development practitioners are encouraged to use the Digital Basin site selector tool (www.cbrdi) to search the employment lands inventory against a set of selection criteria (including grade/slope).

STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research project was to better understand the landscape of wealth generating lands in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region of BC. With an improved regional-level understanding of the 'employment lands' landscape, the region will be in a better position to attract and retain business and investment. This research also supports informed land use planning and related policy development. Guiding research questions explored dimensions of supply, demand, utilization and land use constraints.

METHODOLOGY

An integrated economic development-geospatial analysis was undertaken to better understand 'employment lands' in the region. The project drew primarily on three datasets, including: government cadastral data from local sources and the Integrated Cadastral Information Society (ICIS), BC Assessment data, and business retention and expansion (BRE) data. Cadastral and BC Assessment data was used to better understand land supply and utilization and BRE data was used to better understand demand. Supplemental data generated from interactions with economic development practitioners and from statistical data sources were used to better understand the regional economy, economic development capacity, and possible constraints to employment lands use.

RESULTS

Data suggest that, in general, the region's commercial and industrial lands are effectively being utilized, and there is an ample supply of available lands for expansion and new investment. However, it is important to note that it is still unclear if vacant parcels are on a useable slope or if these parcels are for sale or lease. 95% of the regions' commercial parcels (9,493 of 10,029) are being utilized, including 66% of the commercial land base (76,436 of 80,884 hectares). 75% of the regions' industrial parcels (1425 of 1902) are being utilized, including 81% of the industrial land base (72,679 of 89,446 hectares). There may, however, be some overutilization / constraints to expansion and new investment of commercial lands in the Elk Valley, Columbia Valley and Valemount Corridors and of industrial lands in the Elk Valley Corridor. Commercial lands also appear to be somewhat underutilized in the Valemount Corridor and industrial lands appear to be somewhat underutilized in the West Kootenay, Boundary and Valemount Corridors. In terms of constraints to use, data suggest primary factors that may constrain the use of available employment lands include conflicting land use in cases where impact may impede adjacent lands (i.e. watersheds) and the presence or absence of an Official Community Plan (investors prefer clear land use designations and restrictions).

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In order to facilitate expansion and new investment in light of findings that suggest a matching problem between investors and available lands, a site selector tool was developed. Existing businesses, new investors and economic development practitioners are encouraged to use and provide feedback on this tool. Also, the utility of the inventory and relevance of related tools is dependent on accurate and up-to-date data. Planning departments are encouraged to work with the RDI to address identified data gaps and to continue to provide requested data on an annual basis. Finally, the region is encouraged to engage in development planning processes at a regional scale in order to capture landscape level land use opportunities and possible conflicts. Future research could explore topography, real estate data, property values, agricultural lands, brownfield and greyfield sites, and changes to the inventory over time.

PUBLICATIONS/PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS

PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS:

Employment Lands Final Report
Municipal Retail Trade Area Employment Lands Inventories (28)

PLANNED PRESENTATIONS AND INFORMATION SHARING EVENTS

West Kootenay Economic Development Dialogue Group
Elk Valley Regional Economic Development Committee
Association of Kootenay Boundary Local Governments
Regional District of East Kootenay
Regional District of Central Kootenay
Regional District of Kootenay Boundary
Columbia Shuswap Regional District Areas A, B, Revelstoke, Golden and Valemount
Kootenay Economic Development Network
Kootenay Real Estate Board
Invest Kootenay
Local Government Management Association
Kootenay Rocky Mountain Planners