

Mayerthorpe & Area Tourism Plan

Town of Mayerthorpe and Surrounding Area

Group Non Profit

Detailed Environment

Economic Environment

As Mayerthorpe is primarily an agriculturally based community with access to a diverse group of supplementary industries. Agriculture is approximately 50%, Oil & GAS 15% and tourism 5% other 30%.

- Agricultural Industry.
- Oil and Gas Industry.
- Forest Industry.
- CanaMex Trade Corridor.
- Cowboy Trail Tourism Corridor.
- Senior Accommodation.
- Business Service Sector.
- Manufacturing.

Technological Environment

Within the town of Mayerthorpe the Technological Environment is fairly well advanced:

- High Speed Internet.
- Satellite Internet.
- Cable Television.
- Cell Phone Coverage.
- SuperNet.
- My Mayerthorpe Facebook Page.
- Community Access Program Free Internet Sites.
- Video Conference Capability.

Name and Location of the Video Conference Facilities

Elmer Elson Elementary School

4215 – 46th Avenue

Box 333 Mayerthorpe, Alberta, T0E 1N0

Phone: 780-786-2268 Fax: 780-786-2050 e-mail: ees@ngrd.ab.ca

Mayerthorpe Healthcare Centre
4417 – 45th Street, Mayerthorpe, Alberta, T0E 1N0
Ph: 786-2261 Fax: 780-786-2023

Mayerthorpe Junior & Senior High school
5310 – 50th Ave, Box 40, Mayerthorpe T0E 1N0
Ph: 786-2624 Fax: 786-2246 E-mail: mhs@ngrd.ab.ca

Political and Legal Environment

Alberta's municipalities are legally subordinate to the provincial government as is the case of municipalities in all of the provinces. Under the Constitution Act, national and provincial governments have separate spheres of power with local government falling under the purview of the provinces.

- Evolving Regional Tourism Framework structure, organization, responsibilities, and funding:
 - Silo'd approach to marketing limits collaboration and efficiencies.
 - Unknown year over year budget allocation hinder long-term strategy and growth.
- Important government priorities may impact tourism marketing programs and tourism industry.
- Tourism industry is not an identifiable group (according to Standardized Industry Codes) like other industries. It is therefore more difficult to determine size and composition of industry, economic impact, and direct employment figures. It also affects its ability to share a single voice or affect change.
- Lack of coordination between operators, municipalities, and non-profit organizations.
- Lack of coordination in development of multi use trail systems.
- Product Development Initiatives:
 - Gateway Strategy - impact of cities (Edmonton and Calgary) and its gateway strategy to use the cities as the focus for drawing travellers and then encouraging trips from the gateway.
 - Major Events - development and promotion within the province as an attraction for near-in and international visitors.
 - Rural Tourism Initiative.
 - Other Emerging Product Development Initiatives:
 - Heritage Tourism.
 - Agra-tourism.
 - Interpretive Features.
 - Recreational Vehicles Park.

Freedom of Information and Privacy Act - Privacy legislation and its impact on marketing to consumers

- Building trust and credibility with consumers.
- Heightened awareness by consumers of privacy and security issues.
- Email/Spam - increased annoyance on part of consumers, not reading emails, email filters, etc.

Social and Cultural Environment

From a consumer perspective there are certain factors that affect consideration and choice of destination for travel experience.

1. Money / Financial - operators offer affordable packages giving the consumer more buying power.
2. Short travel time from major urban centres.
3. Ability to travel within a 1 hour radius of major urban centre.
4. Convenience - competing against all inclusive packages, direct flights vs. driving conditions.
5. Past experience - most Albertans have not already traveled the province extensively generally travel two or three places in a year outside of visiting own cabin or major centre.
6. Easily accessible through major transportation corridors.
7. Rural Alberta experience offering wide open spaces.
8. Family friendly experiences.
9. Friendly country style hospitality.
10. Agriculturally related events, competitions, and training opportunities.
11. Rates are cheaper in rural area compared to major tourism centres.

Consumer personal debt load increasing

- More people own their own homes, a function of lower interest rates over past few years.
- Real estate prices have been lower in Alberta than similar municipalities in other provinces combined with high income.
- Spending on material goods for homes - spending more time in own backyard.
- Decline in disposable income and downturn in the economy.
- Economy starting to come back.
- Stock marketing starting to rise.

Time compressed

- Fewer people are taking full vacation time opting for more frequent shorter vacations.
- People are busy in both work and home life with more responsibilities and greater connectivity. They are always connected to work with cell phones, Blackberries, and Internet leaving little time to 'unplug'.
- Demand for vacations will at some point increase again as work-related stress issues become more of a monetary issue for organizations.
- "Not only are some Canadians not taking their full allotted holiday time, those who do manage to take time off often can't turn off completely, reveals an Expedia.ca survey. Whether they lug their laptop to the beach or stay plugged in via voice mail and e-mail, there's a growing trend to staying in touch."
- The 2nd annual Expedia.ca and Ipsos-Reid survey reported that 38% of employed Canadians are not taking all of their allotted vacation days every year, up from 33% in 2003.

- One-third of Canadians are not taking all of their allotted days off -- they miss an average of eight vacation days per year, netting the employers almost \$8 billion in unused holidays annually, reports the recent Expedia.ca/ Ipsos-Reid survey. And 36% of Canadian respondents reveal they're in contact with the office while away.
- According to the experts, taking time off not only reduces stress, but also increases productivity and fuels creativity. Getting away from the day-to-day grind is also great preventative medicine; regular vacations are actually linked to a lowered risk of death, reports a 2000 study at State University of New York at Oswego.
- "Vacations are nourishment and they're absolutely vital for a balanced, healthy life. They eliminate stress, promote relaxation and allow time to rejuvenate and get refreshed."
- Industry currently relates more to Sales Orientation vs. a Marketing Orientation.
- Time poverty as result of North American life style.

Media Environment

- Newspaper: Mayerthorpe Freelancer, Community Voice, Paddle River Post, Whitecourt Star.
- Radio: XM105, the Rig, CFCW.
- Television New: CFRN, Global, Breakfast Show.
- Grande Alberta Economic Region.
- Travel Alberta Canada.
- The Cowboy Trail Tourism Association.

Mission Statement

To attract and provide visitors with a friendly hometown experience, thereby enhancing the quality of life in our community.

Mayerthorpe Product and Services

Mayerthorpe Product and Services is a direct reflection of local economic environment that support business, social and cultural venues within the community.

Mayerthorpe wants to provide excellent service experience targeted toward potential visitors, to provide accurate information, assist visitors, and create a memorable experience during all encounters, whether by phone, website, or visit.

Current Assets include:

Attractions:

1. Fallen Four Memorial Park.
2. Dundee Park.
3. Paddle River Dam.
4. Rochfort Bridge Museum.
5. CN Wooden Train Trestle (Guinness book of records).

6. Sangudo Raceway.
7. Sangudo Sundial.
8. George Pegg Garden.
9. Pembina River (provides venue for water activity).
10. Heritage Elevator (under development).

Accommodations:

- Haven Inn.
- Hub Hotel.
- Sangudo Riverside Motel.

Guest Ranches:

- Lakeview Guest Ranch.

Bed and Breakfast:

- Bar D6 Country Retreat & Kennels.
- Lakeview Guest Ranch.
- Ohlers Acres.
- Where Paths Cross.

Restaurants:

- Burger Baron.
- Fast Gas Restaurant.
- Kim & Sing Family Restaurant.
- Lariat Restaurant.
- Mini Mart Kiosk.
- Pizza Napoli.
- Rochfort Bridge Trading Post.
- Shorty's Kitchen.

Campgrounds:

- Mayerthorpe Golf Country Club.
- Paddle River Dam.
- Rangeton Park.
- Sangudo Riverside Campground.

Activities:

- Water Activities (Fishing, River Tubing, Kayaking, Swimming, Boating, Seadooring, Canoeing, Sailing).
- Off Road Activities (Quading, Skidooing).
- Hunting (Wild Boar hunting all season).
- Agriculture (Mayerthorpe & Area Farmer's Market, berry picking, farm visits).
- Wildlife and Bird Watching.
- Bicycling.
- Photography.
- Hiking - Walking Trails – within town and near river.
- Camping and outdoor games at campground.
- Mayerthorpe Golf & Country Club – golfing, social events.
- Whispering Hills Boarding Stables – long term boarding.
- Wagon and Sleigh rides.
- Geo-caching.
- Off Leash Dog Park.
- Bar D6 Country Retreat & Kennels board's horses short term, and provides trails for riding and hiking.
- Lakeview Guest Ranch provides trail rides and you can bring your own horse to ride and stay.
- Where the Path Cross provides the bale and hay service and accepts cats.

Specialty Stores

- Connor Creek Collections.
- Rochfort Bridge Trading Post.
- The Family Tack Shop.

Events

- Christmas Lite Up.
- Country Cruisers Antique Car Show June.
- Hay Brothers Golf Tournament September.
- Heritage Days Rochfort Bridge August long weekend.
- Hockey Tournaments.
- Mayerthorpe & District Agricultural Fair August.
- Mayerthorpe Curling Bonspiels.
- Mayerthorpe Indoor Rodeo May.
- Mayerthorpe Mets Ball Tournaments.
- Pembina River Nights July.
- Pioneer Days Rochfort Bridge.
- Rangeton Farmers Festival 2nd Friday in June.
- Sangudo Rodeo August.

Services

- Airport.
- Banks / Cash Machines.
- Churches.
- Community Halls.
- Gas stations.
- Government Services, Federal, Provincial & Municipal.
- Health Spas / Gyms.
- Historical Society.
- Hospitals/medical services.
- Library.
- RCMP.
- Shopping.
- Visitor Information.

Mayerthorpe current customers (visitors):

Current visitors to our region are attracted for several reasons. These include, but are not limited to, individuals who are visiting friends and family, attending recreation/sporting events, making use of camping facilities, seasonal attractions, and ranch vacation, travelling the CanaMex corridor and touring the Fallen Four Memorial.

The Information that follows is from Fallen Four Memorial Society and participating operators. It is a future goal of the organization to engage in processes that facilitate the systematic accumulation of data describing current customers. Fallen Four Memorial Society reported 9,989 visits from May 1 – Sept 30 2010.

Visiting From for 2010	% of total guest book visitors
General Alberta	45.72%
Edmonton & Area (Sherwood Park, St. Albert, Spruce Grove)	18.59%
Whitecourt, Mayerthorpe, Grande Prairie	8.33%
British Columbia	8.36%
Saskatchewan	3.64%
Manitoba	2.42%
Ontario	4.49%
Quebec	0.26%
Maritimes	3.84%
Territories	1.65%
USA	1.31%
Other Countries	1.42%

- Other visitation is from - Switzerland, Australia, Germany, Austria, England, Great Britain, Netherlands and US.
- Travellers off Highway 43, 22 and 16.
- RCMP Members and Families.
- Alberta Senior Bus Tours.

Value Proposition

Authentic Rural Experience enriched in history and culture imbedded in beautiful natural setting with lakes, rivers, rolling hills, forest and pastures, offers a variety of activities, services, exciting events, within a safe, friendly, slower pace of life environment.

Main Competitors

Mayerthorpe is a unique experience as being the end of the Cowboy Trail, situated on the CanaMex Corridor and is surrounding by rich history and imbedded in beautiful natural setting.

In contrast, from an economic standpoint, Mayerthorpe is a smaller urban center that does not compete with municipalities such as Calgary and the Rocky Mountain Resorts.

Mayerthorpe in terms of geographic competitiveness in the sports arena, Whitecourt and Onoway are main competitor. The two primary advantages that Whitecourt holds are hotels and arena capacity.

Mayerthorpe is currently an excellent day stop on Highway 43 however the main competition for visitors to stop and visit the attractions in the surrounding area are Lac St. Anne, Brazeau County, Yellowhead County, Barrhead, Westlock or continue their drive without stopping to Edmonton.

Mayerthorpe has identified the following as our main competitors however we have recognised that as we move forward in the tourism industry we need to regionalize with our communities and work with these communities in partnerships and also identify with the Growth Region.

Target Markets / Addressing Those Markets:

Market Position:

Mayerthorpe is perceived as a stop when travelling on Highway 43, the home of the Fallen Four Memorial Museum and the last stop on the Cowboy Trail and part of the Grande Alberta Trail, centrally located community that makes a great stop between Grande Prairie and Edmonton.

- Mayerthorpe partners with Whitecourt to host the Fallen Four Marathon.
- Excellent Agricultural region that has many Guest Ranches and hands on ranch learning programs.
- New in 2010 the Farmers Market, good potential to grow with more Agriculture events such as their August Fall Fair.

- From a different perspective, it will be an ideal location for provincial sporting competitions once the new arena is built. Hockey events can compete for ice time.

Current Marketing Tactics:

The following lists outline the avenues where and its partners currently have a presence through advertising or promotions:

Current Advertising

- Alberta Agricultural Website.
- Alberta Campground Guide (campground listing).
- Alberta First.com Website.
- Alberta Hotel & Lodging Guide.
- Alberta B& B Association.
- Alberta Municipal Affairs Website.
- The Cowboy Trail Magazine.
- The Cowboy Trail Website.
- Fallen Four Memorial Brochure,
- Grande Alberta Tour Operator Flat Sheet.
- Grande Alberta Tourism Map and itineraries which is distributed to all Travel Alberta and Grande Alberta Tourism Centres.
- Grande Alberta Website.
- Grande Alberta Bill Board Campaign.
- Grande Alberta Video Library.
- Mayerthorpe Agricultural Society.
- Mayerthorpe Chamber of Commerce Website.
- Mayerthorpe Municipality Website.
- Mayerthorpe Facebook Page.
- Mayerthorpe Community Information Booklet.
- Mayerthorpe New Employee Packages.
- Public Service Announcements.
- Travel Through the Trestles brochure.
- Travel Alberta Website.
- Virtual 360° Website.
- World's Largest Community/Icon Passport Website.
- World's Largest Community/Icon Brochure.

Sales promotion

- Membership in Alberta First.com Ltd.
- Membership in The Cowboy Trail Association.
- Member in Economic Development Alberta.
- Membership in Grande Alberta Economic Region.

Direct Sales

- Fallen Four Memorial Museum Sale of promotional items (mugs, shirts, vests, etc.).
- Town of Mayerthorpe promotional items (post cards, lapel pins, and bandanas).

Information Locations

- Tourist Information Booth located at Fallen Four Memorial Museum.
- Town of Mayerthorpe.

What are potential target markets of this area?

- Urban city and outskirts short term vacationers St. Albert, Spruce Grove, Stony Plain.
- US bus, fly and drive and FIT visitors on their way to and from Alaska.
- Truck/Tourism traffic on Highway 43, Highway 22, Highway 18.

Target Markets / Addressing Those Markets:

How can we address/reach those markets?

- Going forward Mayerthorpe and Area Tourism Committee need to establish broad internet presence, more Facebook / Twitter, Web marketing initiatives by professionals, Cell phone application.
- Consider where current initiatives and future can fall into Traditional Media i.e. Radio, TV and newsprint.
- Work with Travel Alberta re: Travel Media FAM Tours and Tour Operators.
- Work in partnership with surrounding area within 100km.
- Consider Regional Tourism exhibitions and shows (Grande Prairie – Edmonton).
- Combining forces – partnering, being good ambassadors, providing better product, better value than competition – by word of mouth.
- Good signage.
- Inventing new products and packages.
- Join Edmonton Tourism as an Association.
- Following trends or cater to new trends fast.

SWOT Analysis of Mayerthorpe

The following SWOT analysis captures the key strength and weaknesses within the Town of Mayerthorpe and Area and describes the opportunities and threats facing our community today.

Strengths:

- The Belvedere Trail, The Junkins Trail, The St Anne Trail, The Grande Alberta Trail, The Cowboy Trail and The Alaska Highway.
- Three main industries: Oil & Gas, Forestry and Agriculture.
- Accessibility Edmonton 1.2 million people within one hour drive via Hwy 43 other communities, Onoway, Whitecourt, Fox Creek, Grande Prairie, Woodlands County, Yellowhead County and Hwy 16, 22, 32, 18, 762, 761.
- Agriculture and Western Culture.
- Attractions and Events within Mayerthorpe and surrounding area.

Weaknesses:

- Hotel quality, Business décor, Entrance to Mayerthorpe not attractive.
- Downturn in the economy.
- Long reacting time to market changes, competitors, customers need – changes.
- Lack of understanding of visitors' needs, good hospitality and lack of interest in growth
- Lack of Franchises in Town.
- No public Reservation or central booking system.
- Lack of Inter-municipal Cooperation.
- Lack of awareness of product in the area, Marketing and Tourism websites.
- Lack of lease and rental space.

Opportunities:

- Create partnerships with Tourism operators within the region.
- Capitalize on current relationships with Grande Alberta Economic Region (Website and Tourism Directory) and Travel Alberta (TIS, Holiday Card and TDR programs).
- New hotel and other tourism related businesses.
- Education Programs for the area on Tourism and hospitality.
- Working with GAER to create a Regional Committee for Highway 43.
- Create new tourism products, new companies, and new jobs.
- Investigate partnering with "Wild Alberta" initiative.
- Create your own unique products rather than a franchise i.e. Bakery, coffee shop and ice cream stand.

Threats:

- Increase in the value of the Canadian dollar as compared to the US dollar. This may entice more Canadians to travel to the US rather than stay in Canada. This may entice more Americans to travel within the United States or elsewhere.
- 20-30% from United States in Grande Prairie is up.
- Passport regulation creating a negative effect on US market.
- Beef/mad cow, /pork scare in Alberta and Canada.

- Outdated product and outdated standards. Refresh stuff and modernize business.
- Lack of partnerships.
- More destinations always being created.
- Competition.

Critical Issues:

- Develop strong relationship within region.
- Develop strong relationship with Travel Alberta Canada.
- Hospitality training and awareness.
- Work with Grande Alberta Economic Region and Member Municipalities.
- Implement tourism branding, marketing tools, and workshops.

Keys to Success:

- Collaborative approach.
- Willingness to change current practices.
- Funding.
- Timely decision making.
- Access opportunities and trends in a timely and flexible manner.

Mayerthorpe Tourism Committee

The Mayerthorpe and Area Tourism Marketing Committee was created in March 2010 where a number of operators from Mayerthorpe and Area came together to create an informal alliance to coordinate the efforts of multiple organizations, each with different fundamental purposes, but all having the mandate to improve visibility of the Town of Mayerthorpe and surrounding area and region. Participation and input is provided by Municipality of Mayerthorpe, Tourism Operators from the County of Lac St. Anne, The Mayerthorpe Chamber of Commerce, The Fallen Four Memorial Society, Mayerthorpe Tourism Operators and Grande Alberta Economic Region.

This group could potentially lead or form the new group to lead tourism in the area. The hope is in the next six months to create a Mayerthorpe and Area Tourism Committee with its own identity that can be made up of Tourism Operators from Mayerthorpe and Area and representatives from current existing groups.

Situation Analysis

Alberta's tourism industry is not unique; the same consumer demands and behaviours affect Alberta tourism and its potential growth as affect other provinces in Canada. However, Alberta does have certain advantages in Canada over other destinations, with its diverse landscapes, strong economy, and unique outdoor experiences. The following discussion shows the overall strengths and weaknesses of Alberta's tourism industry and Mayerthorpe and surrounding area ability to capitalize on its marketing efforts to sustain and grow tourism revenue in the province.

Alberta is a world-class tourism destination. Tourism is a more than \$5 billion industry in our province, employing more than 109,000 people and attracting millions of visitors each year.

Information from Travel Alberta 2008 Visitor study

- The total number of person-visits to Alberta in 2008 was 22.69 million, an increase of 1.8% from 2007 (22.28 million person-visits).
- Of the 22.69 million person-visits to Alberta, residents of Alberta accounted for approximately 82% of the visitors. Residents of other Canadian provinces accounted for 11% of all visitors and international visitors accounted for 7%.
- Approximately 48% of all visits in the province included at least one overnight stop, yielding 10.9 million overnight person-visits in 2008.
- Across all markets in 2008, the overnight pleasure segment represented 43% of all overnight travel in the province. The visiting friends and relatives segment followed closely behind with 41% of all overnight travel in the province.

Information from Travel Alberta Tourism Monitor Report August 2010

- For the first half of 2010, Alberta's overnight direct entries by international visitors (U.S. and overseas) decreased -4.1%, compared to the first half of 2009.
- For Canada as a whole, the decline was -0.3%.
- Overnight direct entries for the first half of 2010 from the U.S. to Alberta decreased -3.7%, compared to the first half of 2009. Nationally, the decline was -2.3%.
- For the first half of 2010, overnight direct entries by overseas visitors into Alberta decreased -4.7%, compared to the first half of 2009. Nationally, the increase was +5.2%.
- For the first half of 2010, overnight visitors from the United Kingdom to Canada decreased -1.2% compared to 2009.
- Overnight visitors from Germany increased +9.8%, visitors from Mexico decreased -42.1% and Japanese visitors increased +27.4%.
- For the first half of 2010, the occupancy rate for Alberta (excluding resorts) was 56.1%, down -2.9 points compared to the first half of 2009 (59.0%).
- The average daily room rate for Alberta (excluding resorts) for the first half of 2010 Was \$125.96, down -2.7% compared to the same time period in 2009 (\$129.42).
- Employment in the Accommodation, Food and Beverage sector in Alberta decreased -4.0% in July 2010, compared to July 2009.
- For the first seven months of 2010, employment in the Accommodation, Food and Beverage sector in Alberta was up +1.8%, compared to the first seven months of 2009.
- Independent visits to Banff National Park for May 2010 are down -1.8% to 240,131 visitors compared to May 2009.
- (244,514). Independent visits to Jasper National Park for May 2010 are up +0.6% to 145,560 visitors compared to May 2009 (144,686).
- Independent visits to Waterton Lakes National Park for June 2010 are up +2.6% to 54,821 visitors compared to June 2009 (53,400).

- According to results from Statistics Canada's Food Services and Drinking Places survey, Alberta's total receipts for the month of May were up +2.6% to \$569.2 million, compared to 2009 (\$555.0 million).

Information taken from Alberta Tourism Parks & Recreation Tourism Statistics, Travel Alberta Canada Business plan 2010-13, Statistic Canada and PKF Consulting Inc:

Marketing Trends

Geography

Mayerthorpe and surrounding area has a vast consumer range in markets or groups and some consumers are separated by the geographical boundaries of Alberta, BC and Saskatchewan. We can reasonably expect visitation from the Grande Alberta Region including Edmonton, Central and Southern Alberta and the area also has visitation from Europe and US.

Statistics from geographic trends for 2010 supplied by three Operators from the Mayerthorpe Area.

Where the Path Cross Bale B& B visitor stats 2010

States -13%, Alberta - central 17% and southern 13%, British Columbia – 23%, Saskatchewan, - 20%, New Brunswick. – 7%, and Ontario- 7%.

The % from the US is up over visitations in 2009 year.

Are they staying for vacation how many nights or passing through the region? Passing through.

Lakeview Guest Ranch

Their customers are from Switzerland, Germany, Paris, England, and Netherland, USA. Switzerland, Germany, Canada, Spain, Alberta

This year = 70 % Canada, 20 % Switzerland 10 % Germany

Reason: Country Get Aways = 70 %

Reunion, wedding, family reasons =20 %

Vacation long term = 10 %

The Family Tack Shop Mayerthorpe stats:

From Canada:

Calgary, Edmonton, Drayton Valley, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, Fort Nelson, Whitehorse, Peace River, Valley View, Grand Prairie, Edson, Peers, Whitecourt, Fort Assiniboine, Barrhead, Westlock, Sangudo, Entwistle, Evansburg, Mayerthorpe, Spruce Grove, Stony Plain.

Some of them are visiting the Park, some of them come because they figured we have neat stuff in our store or they compare prices and we are even cheaper than the same stores in Spruce Grove and Edmonton.

Demographics

The following basic demographic trends happening in all markets, especially within North America. These demographic shifts change our markets.

The general population in North America is aging. As the baby boomers age and prepare for retirement over the next 5-10 years, they will have the time and money to travel more often.

- Impact of more international travel on Alberta as they are going to be taking "dream vacations" to foreign countries.
- As families are more and more separated, as this segment grows older, what impact will "Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR)" have on potential growth of this demographic group in Alberta over the next 5-10 years?

Recent studies in the U.S. show that Gen Xers (25-40) are traveling more, but are looking for unique experiences when they travel.

- As the younger population travels more, are they as loyal to Alberta as older generations have been?
- What impact is growing up in a more globalized world going to have on both Gen X and Gen Y demographic groups for near-in travel over the next five years?
- Gen X and Gen Y demographic groups have different expectations, travel habits, and planning habits than Baby Boomers. They are less likely to have children, more likely to travel with friends and/or affinity groups. They are also open to international travel. The Internet has affected their view of the world.

Almost 75% of the province's population lives in the Calgary-Edmonton corridor. We have seen a steady decline of rural communities in Alberta and Canada.

- Impact of booming economy and job creation has shifted population to urban centres within the province.
- What might this do to rural communities? Is there a potential for shift in focus within these communities? For instance, shift in agriculture to agri-tourism businesses.
- Where is our tourism product? Will people living in the urban setting be looking for a "rural" tourism experience? Or will they want to go to another urban setting?

Currently Mayerthorpe visitors are a mixture of the above trends the area is visited from a mix of the described demographics please review stats that were provided by three operators.

Under 19 – 11%, 20 to 40 – 39%, 41 to 60 – 23%, and 61 and over –27%.

Age of clientele, are they travelling alone, couples, business or in families? Traveling alone – 54%, couples – 33%, and families – 13%.

Destination Decisions

Using Travel Alberta In-Province findings, we present the subdivision of the Albertan markets based on research to four key buying groups or segments:

- When consumers are deciding on a vacation, awareness, past experience, and word of mouth (among other factors) will get a destination on someone's short-list for consideration. It is more difficult to get on someone's short-list than it is to make him or her move from short-list to final decision.
- At the point of moving from the short-list to the final decision, it is the destination's responsibility to provide the consumer with enough information and "incentive" to come here.
- When consumers from consideration to choice, there are a multitude of factors that will ultimately affect that decision. They will consider how long of a trip they are going to take, what kind of experience they are looking for, and how much they are willing (or able) to spend.
- Consumers will look for information on their potential destinations, find out what they can do, check out prices and accessibility. At some point along this continuum a decision is made. There is potential to impact that choice at many stages prior to the final decision.

Demand and Demand Trends

- According to the Conference Board of Canada's recent report, domestic travel in Canada has fallen short of expectations with weak growth. It analyzed data from the last 25 years of domestic travel in Canada and noticed modest growth. There have been special circumstances affecting travel, such as security and health issues, high fuel prices, diverted spending and poor / changing weather conditions. But even without these special circumstances, domestic travel is not expected to exceed a 5% increase over the next few years.

Some of the challenges faced by domestic travel include:

1. Number of trips taken is decreasing, while spending-per-trip is increasing.

- Because people are not taking all of their vacation time available, people want to get the most out of the short vacation time available (Big bang / Instant gratification).
- The TPI (travel price index) is 1.5% on average per year.
- Growth (domestic market) is expected at a maximum of 5% per year over next 3 years.

2. Unique Travel Experiences

- Consumers are looking for unique experiences.
- A recent study in the U.S. showed this to be true especially for Gen Xers (25-40) who are looking (and willing to pay) for a unique experience.
- Gen Xers are willing to spend more on travel than even the Baby Boomers.

- Easy access to a wide variety of exotic locations and destinations and experiences makes domestic travel less appealing.

3. Perceived Value

- Value represents a mental estimate that customers make of hospitality or travel service's ability to satisfy their needs and wants. Some customers equate value closely with price; others do not. Price is not the only indicator of value. Suppliers of hospitality and travel services trade items of value with their customers. The industry provides services and experiences that customers find valuable when they are away from home. In return, customers make reservations and pay money, which satisfies the industry's financial objectives. (p.19, Morrison, Hospitality and Travel Marketing).
- People are not necessarily looking for the cheapest travel experience; they want to know they received good value for their money.
- There are different expectations based on the price paid and the experience itself.

4. Use of technology (Source: *Online News and Information Seeking: What the Future Holds*, spring 2005, Ipsos-Reid)

- Mayerthorpe operators use a combination of on-line with websites, reservations through email and 1800 numbers which are good in Canada and United States.
- Suggested also that Mayerthorpe and area operators consider using Flickr and other related websites.

5. Global Changes in Personal Security / Health

- Terrorism and threats of violence have created a heightened sense of awareness in all travelers - whether traveling abroad or within their own country.
- This could have a positive impact on in-province or near-in travel as people opt to stay closer to home.
- Changes to U.S. border crossing (passports) plus heightened security and time delays could make travel out of country less convenient.
- It was once widely held that terrorism devastated tourism. But as travelers grow accustomed to a new era in which suicide bombers can strike anywhere, tourists are proving increasingly resilient. Tourist-driven economies, once levelled for months or even years after tragedies, are bouncing back much more quickly than in the past. (Source: Conference Board of Canada).

6. Strong demand in disability travel

- More adults with physical disabilities are traveling.
- Demands on accommodation, attraction, etc. to be accessible.
- With an aging population, this demand may increase.

7. Learning

- In an era of self-improvement, people want to learn something new when traveling.
- With people not wanting/willing/able to take too much time off, they want to feel that they used their time off well. They want to feel that they took full advantage of the opportunity and go home not only relaxed, but with a new skill, attitude, or experience.

8. Experiential

1. No longer willing to simply passively enjoy a vacation, people are looking for unique experiences that affect all the senses.
2. The Alberta tourism industry over the past two years has been introduced to the work of Joseph Pine and James Gilmore in the Experience Economy. The book illustrates the growing trend of how consumers are looking for new, refreshing experiences when they travel. The new economy that the authors describe is where, "every business is a stage, and therefore work is theatre." How can we, as an industry, refrain from being commoditized? Consumers with the near-in markets are more price-sensitive when traveling closer to home and are looking at price as one of the top drivers in deciding where to travel. How can we create such unique and compelling experiences that price is no longer a main driver in this decision?

9. Economics

- Strong Canadian dollar makes outbound travel more appealing.
- Low interest rates create big ticket purchases (homes, cars, etc.) leaving less disposable income for travel.
- Increasing fuel prices make travel less appealing as well as reducing disposable income.

10. Environment

- Weather patterns (flooding), seasonal temperatures (rain, thunderstorms, etc.) are changing our traditional expectations. This may limit shoulder season potential; create milder winters with changing snow levels, etc.

Mayerthorpe Competitive Edge

Mayerthorpe competitive edge arises from its location on Highway 43 and is the end of The Cowboy Trail. The area has a huge agricultural culture base that includes guest ranches and opportunities for hands on learning experience in this field.

A second competitive for the Region is home to the Longest Wooden Train Trestle that is featured in the Guinness Book of Records. It has many attractions including River Paddle Dam and the Fallen Four Memorial. These assets are both competitively different and sustainable.

Going forward in October 12-14 2010 two members of the Mayerthorpe Tourism Committee will attend the Travel Alberta Boot Camp that will showcase how to drive your brand forward. This workshop may influence the committee upon their return to sharpen Mayerthorpe competitive edge. As a result of this

workshop the committee will be considering Mayerthorpe “the Peace Officers Memorial Centre for Alberta and in future Western Canada” (15 year plan)

Mayerthorpe Market Opportunity

Currently Mayerthorpe and Area market is varied. The visitors to the region come for many different products such as farm and ranch experiences, relaxation, visit the Fallen Four Memorial Museum, passing through the area and attending events.

Mayerthorpe Marketing committee needs to create a penetration strategy. This is the opportunity created by directing present products to our present market to achieve higher visibility, higher percent of the market potential, or more frequent visitation. Mayerthorpe and area can take advantage of this opportunity by increasing their understanding of each other products and cross promote each other to the current visitor. It is important for Mayerthorpe and Area moving forward to create a tourism operators committee with a legal identity and to work with each other to create good partnerships and create market and product development. The strategy should showcase the importance of product that is currently available matching the visitor’s needs for example are restaurants open on Sundays and late evenings to accommodate the visitor? What signage is available on the highway to showcase the current product?

The Mayerthorpe Diversification Plan can be a resource to be used when developing product and services.

What Customer, Market Segmentation will want to experience Mayerthorpe and Area?

The following market analysis identifies the major trends affecting the tourism industry today. The primary tourism segments for Alberta are reviewed, followed by the selection of the segments that Mayerthorpe Tourism Committee will pursue. In summary:

- We are targeting travellers on Highway 43, Edmonton, Grande Alberta Region and some operators target travellers on The Cowboy Trail.
- Mayerthorpe and Area must offer a high *perceived* value to visitors, especially given rising fuel costs and the trend to fewer and shorter vacations.
- Mayerthorpe Marketing committee needs to develop a market strategy to reach current visitors and to learn to partner and share visitors.
- Target Market Segments: After identifying four current target market segments, Mayerthorpe is focusing their efforts on the two most appropriate for our region's features:
 - **Comfort Seekers** (families with children seeking fun-for-all) ;
 - **Real Relaxers** (older married couples seeking quiet).

Detail Customer, Market Segmentation

(Research generated Travel Alberta)

Within the Alberta, BC and Saskatchewan markets, four consumer buying groups have been identified. These buying groups have different underlying motivations to travel and it is from these motivations that decisions on consideration and choice of vacation destinations are driven. As a result, understanding these four buying groups and their similarities and differences within each geographical market is essential to understanding where we are now and where the potential growth is. This will be blended with local data as the research component is implemented.

- Accomplishers: 28% of market; desire unfamiliar places to visit and new things to do.
- Comfort Seekers: 24% of market; strong preference for familiar and rural locations, desire relaxation and strengthening family bonds.
- Urban Explorers: 21% of market; seek to get away from daily routine and see new places (preferably exciting, city locations).
- Real Relaxers: 27% of market; desire tranquility and some peace and quiet prefer to do nothing.

Accomplishers - Your Adventure Awaits

Accomplishers are looking for new and unfamiliar places to visit and new things to do. They enjoy action and excitement. They are focused on their own enjoyment and accomplishments. Regardless of where they live, accomplishers typically spend more money on travel annually. They tend to be married and not to have children living at home (under 18), and have an average age of 44 years (across all three provinces). Accomplishers spend the most time planning their vacations and use the Internet as a primary source of information.

Accomplishers pose the biggest challenge, as they also enjoy going to BC and in the case of Alberta and BC Accomplishers actually consider Alberta and BC for future trips about the same. BC Accomplishers, although they consider Alberta, tend to stay in BC. There is an opportunity for SK accomplishers as they consider and take most trips within Alberta currently. Like other segments, Saskatchewan residents are very loyal to Alberta.

Comfort Seekers- Home away from home

Comfort Seekers are looking for something that Alberta provides bountifully: familiar and relaxing locations, away from the city. They want to reconnect with the family and friends and strengthen relational bonds.

Comfort Seekers want to ensure everyone in their group has a good time and therefore enjoy a variety of activities while traveling. They research their trip thoroughly, and in many cases as a family, and rely heavily on past experience and word of mouth. They also use the Internet to plan (around 78%) and spend on average 5 hours planning. They need lots of detailed information, as they want to make sure that everyone will have a good time and make the best use of their time.

Comfort Seekers are the "bread and butter" of the Alberta tourism industry. They are families with children under 18 that travel predominantly in the summer months and other school breaks. The average age is 44 years old (across all three provinces). As noted, with the exception of BC residents,

Alberta is currently and for future consideration the destination of choice for this segment. They are budget conscious and value for money is an important motivator in destination choice.

Real Relaxers - Peace and Tranquillity

Real Relaxers are also looking for destinations that Alberta provides in abundance: locations and opportunities to relax and to find peace, rest, and tranquility. They prefer to unplug and unwind during their holidays and are less focused on any specific activities. They of course do enjoy a variety of activities, but it is not the focus of their holiday.

Real Relaxers are the oldest segment with an average age of 46 years and the highest proportion of those over the age of 50 (37%). They typically do not have children under the age of 18 living in their household (most likely they are empty-nesters), but are married. They are the one segment most likely to travel to the US or sun destinations (snow-birds) and are also the most likely to own a private cabin/cottage. Because this group does not like to take the time to plan vacations, they are also the most likely to book quick, easy, and all inclusive packages to other destinations.

This is the segment with the least long-term potential growth because it spends the least amount of money annually on travel and because they tend to return to the same place they last visited. However, because they are loyal if you can convince them to go to the destination and have a great experience, then they are liable to return.

Again, with the exception of BC residents, this segment enjoys Alberta as a travel destination and considers it for future travel. BC residents, like in all other segments, are more loyal to their own province for travel.

Urban Explorers - Savour the City

Urban Explorers are seeking to get away from the daily routine and see new places, preferably exciting, city locations. They enjoy a variety of activities as well, especially cultural activities and events, indoor leisure activities such as dining, casinos, and shopping, and just exploring different things that cities offer.

This segment tends to be younger with almost half (48%) under the age of 40. They are typically married but do not have children under 18. They spend a significant amount of money annually on travel and enjoy travel destinations to the USA.

Although, this is not the typical segment that is suspected to travel in Alberta, it does provide long-term growth potential. This segment should be the focus for any activity related to the Gateway Strategy created by Edmonton and Calgary. For both cities, its festivals and other events, shopping and nightlife are a strong attraction to this segment in Alberta and Saskatchewan especially.

And when examining Urban Explorers in Saskatchewan specifically, we see that Saskatchewan Urban Explorers are the highest proportion of the province (29%) and have a strong propensity to travel to Alberta.

Mayerthorpe Marketing Strategy

The current Mayerthorpe Tourism Committee has established the following goals and Objectives

- **Determine goals**
 1. To form a Mayerthorpe & Area Tourism Committee as a legal entity. Travel Alberta, GAER and Town of Mayerthorpe will sit on the committee as a resource and have the Tourism Operators drive the committee.
 2. Provide hospitality workshops for the businesses to participate in.
 3. Work with the Mayerthorpe School System to educate students to take pride in their community and to teach them how to be Mayerthorpe Ambassadors.
 4. The Tourism Committee will develop a good working relationship with Municipalities of Mayerthorpe, Lac Ste. Anne County and Woodlands County.
 5. To form a Regional Tourism Committee along Highway 43.
 6. To create good partnerships and link business to business.

- **Resources/tools for local businesses and residents**
 - i. Create a video tool for all business in Mayerthorpe to use when training employees.
 - ii. Advise residents of the Tourism Committee goals and objectives and create a newsletter to update the community.
 - iii. To create a tourism information guide to provide to all Municipal, tourism businesses and businesses for reference
 - iv. To create a strong expanded inventory of tour operators, business and services to be used in the binder. (Sub Committee: 2 Operators, Councillor and either CAO or Assistant EDO).
 - v. Educate the businesses and residents of the area on the Tourism products available in their Region.
 - vi. Encourage businesses to cross promote each other's product.
 - vii. Examples Bar D6 Country Ranch and Kennels currently show case dog product from The Family Tack Shop.
 - viii. Lakeview Guest Ranch works with Family Tack Shop, Pembina River Tubing and other partners to provide experience for her guests.

Mayerthorpe Marketing objectives:

How do we get there?

- Develop a relationship with GROWTH.
- Consider joining Edmonton Tourism and creating partnerships.
- Currently Grande Alberta has created itineraries on Highway 43 that has been provided to Edmonton Tourism for day drives from Edmonton.
- Review current tourism products and make a detail list of what you would like to see developed in the region.
- Create self drive itineraries link tourism operators to area and outside area.
- Work with Alberta Tourism Parks and Recreation research department and develop a survey that can be given to visitors, tourism operators business and residents for their input on what type of product Mayerthorpe and Areas needs.
- From the results of this survey in Fall of 2011 create 3-5 year vision plan.
- Develop a plan to create a booking agency for all tourism activities and information.
- Create a strong Tourism website.
- Create Fam trips twice a year for operators and business to review the product
- Invite Media to the area.
- Create Media stories and supply for writes and Travel Alberta.
- To ask the Municipality of Mayerthorpe to provide a resource staff one day a week to assist the Tourism Committee.
- Provide a workshop on Partnership and packaging provided by Travel Alberta to the Tourism partners.
- To research funding through RADF for tourism development.
- To work together to mutually create a unified image of Mayerthorpe and Area.

Budget and Forecasts

- To develop a budget and marketing forecast for the region.
- The current committee discussed introduction a destination marketing tax similar to other areas.
- The committee suggested partnering by approaching the Municipality of Mayerthorpe and Lac St. Anne County to consider partnering on marketing project by matching the project with (25%) of the funds and Operators match with (25%) of the funds and use these dollars to match 50% with Travel Alberta Tourism Destination Marketing Dollars through the Central TDR.
- Once the committee has developed the partnering relationships they will create a marketing strategy that suits their current markets and potential markets.
- To build on your current visiting stats and set goals for increases to your current visitation.