

People, Place, and Paths to Prosperity

Economic futures for mountain communities

The richness of the mountains has long sustained our communities. The health of our livelihoods and the health of our environment are one and the same. Loving and caring for the land is a deep part of our identities.

While communities are now challenged with changes to their climates and economies, there are many opportunities for prosperity ahead — and people have a choice of what their future should look like.

By integrating nature into their decision-making, communities can build diverse and sustainable economies that give future generations a chance to thrive as well.

WATER

The headwaters of our mountain regions provide our freshwater. These headwaters also support communities, agriculture, wildlife, resource extraction, and recreation.

RANCHING

Sustains multi-generation families while working with nature. Nature-aligned approaches include co-existing with predators, restoring native grassland, rotational grazing, and conserving sensitive riparian areas.

EDUCATION

Use local landscape and infrastructure to diversify learning opportunities and offer place-based education.

This keeps young people close to home for schooling and brings students and academics into the community, feeding money into local businesses and the housing market.

HOUSING & LAND USE PLANNING

Plan for a community-driven future by ensuring affordability and the environment are considered with land planning and zoning.

NEW, LIKE-MINDED RESIDENTS

Retirees and young families are attracted to these areas due to a shared love of nature. They can bring money to businesses, support the real estate industry, fuel jobs for essential services like healthcare and education, and add volunteer capacity to community initiatives.

PARKS & OUTDOOR RECREATION AREAS

Invite people to explore natural heritage, bring tourist dollars to local businesses, attract new residents, retain youth and young families, and provide wildlife habitat.

TOURISM

For many mountain towns, the "secret is out" and even more visitors are expected in the coming years. Managed with forethought, increased tourism can feed the local economy without leading to overcrowding or the loss of cultural heritage.

Some towns may wish to become premiere tourist destinations, while others might want to carefully manage a smaller influx of visitors.

INDIGENOUS TOURISM

Celebrates heritage, promotes cultural awareness, and creates sustainable economic development for communities. Contributes to the vibrancy of the regional economy in tandem with the wider tourism ecosystem.

WETLANDS

Provide critical ecosystem services vital to the well-being of our communities: water purification, flood control, and carbon storage.

ADDING VALUE LOCALLY

Natural resources can contribute more to the local economy. For example, whisky and beer can be made with locally-sourced ingredients.

LAND RECLAMATION & RESTORATION

Provide short-term local jobs and supports growth in businesses like construction and greenhouses. Over the long term, regenerating our resources plants the seed for future economic diversification.

AGRICULTURE

Regenerative agriculture nourishes people, supports thriving ecosystems. Sustainable practices, tailored to each farm, prioritize soil and water health as well as biodiversity.

RENEWABLES

Provide jobs that can be incorporated in a community-driven way through co-operatives, ensuring developments are appropriate and benefits are shared with the community.

EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES

Will continue to be a part of our livelihoods and can be integrated sustainably with careful land-use planning and responsible stewardship practices.

CREATIVE TRANSFORMATIONS

Like converting old wellpads to geothermal stations or re-imagining a forestry town as a tech hub with a server farm (these are real examples) can give communities sustained prosperity for the long haul.

COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

Co-ops for broadband internet, housing, agriculture and renewables support and encourage new businesses — keeping money and decision-making power within the community.

THE Y2Y REGION

The Rocky Mountain region from Yellowstone to the Yukon is one of the world's remaining intact mountain regions. It encompasses diverse alpine, forest, parkland, and grassland areas, and provides the best remaining habitat for some of North America's most threatened species including grizzly bears, wolverines, caribou, and native fish.

It is vital to manage this ecosystem responsibly to ensure the health and connectivity of its inhabitants, both wild and human, for centuries to come.

PLANNING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

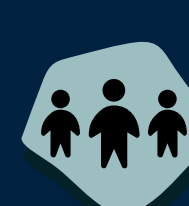
Tips for municipal planners and leaders



There is no one-size-fits-all solution for developing sustainable economies. Solutions unique to each community must be driven by the voices of residents and business owners and supported by decision-makers.



Sustainable economic development must have a holistic approach, including housing, agriculture, and renewable energy, and must not rely solely on one industry or sector.



Decentralized efforts like co-operatives can create an equitable distribution of wealth and allow for control over development. By putting more power in the hands of locals, these efforts help create more empowered and resilient communities.



Investments in natural areas can create a ripple effect of economic benefits including creating jobs, putting money into local businesses, retaining youth and young families, attracting new investors, and growing the local tax base.

Learn more: Read our nature-positive economies report for ideas and solutions gathered from residents in Southwestern Alberta at y2y.net/NaturePositiveAB



Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

