ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
ACTION PLAN

THE THOMPSON ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION WORKING GROUP
FINAL REPORT  March 2013
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Action Plan #5: Economic Development
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction 1
1.1 The Thompson Economic Diversification Working Group 1
1.2 Purpose of this Document 1
1.3 Area of Study and a Note on Jurisdiction 2

2.0 Regional Economic Profile 2
2.1 Regional Overview 2
2.2 Regional Labour Force 2

3.0 Re-Tooling Thompson Unlimited 4
3.1 The Re-Tooling Process 4
3.2 The Technical Implementation Committee (TIC) 4
3.3 Implementing TIC Recommendations 4

4.0 Thompson Unlimited Mandate 7
4.1 Preamble 7
4.2 Priority Areas 7
4.3 Priority Tools 7
4.4 Board Governance 7

4.5 Reporting 8
4.6 Links to Other Organizations 8
4.7 Financing 8

5.0 Five-Year Strategic Plan (2013-2017) 9
5.1 SWOT Analysis 9
5.2 Service Area: Regional Service Centre 10
5.3 Service Area: Winter Weather Testing 12
5.4 Service Area: Tourism 14
5.5 Key Functions 16

6.0 Annual Work Plan (2013) 17
Figure 1.1 - The Thompson Region
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Thompson Economic Diversification Working Group

The need to broaden and diversify the economic base in Thompson and surrounding region is a long-standing priority. Economic volatility in recent years, coupled with the November 2010 announcement that Vale will transition its operations in Thompson to mining and milling by 2015, have underlined the need for the City, the region and community partners to tackle this issue head on.

The Thompson Economic Diversification Working Group (TEDWG) was formed to spearhead this effort. Launched on May 18, 2011, the TEDWG has a simple mission: to accelerate Thompson’s development as a regional service centre in Northern Manitoba with a strong mining pillar. The TEDWG is chaired by the City of Thompson, and enjoys broad and diverse stakeholder participation with representatives from the Province of Manitoba, Vale, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO), Keewatin Tribal Council (KTC), Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF), the Northern Association of Community Councils (NACC), Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN), Thompson Unlimited, and the Thompson Chamber of Commerce. The Government of Canada and USW Local 6166 have also been invited to participate. TEDWG is being support by rePlan, a Canadian planning organization that works with resource-based communities in Canada and internationally.

This group is responsible for identifying and pursuing the most promising opportunities to help Thompson and the surrounding region diversify its economy and strengthen its position as an economic contributor in Northern Manitoba. Priority areas identified by TEDWG stakeholders include:

- Restorative Justice
- Education and Training
- Housing
- Fostering a Local and Regional Identity
- Economic Development

Sub-committees, including representatives of the above mentioned organizations as well as other regional stakeholders, have been established to address these priority areas and prepare plans that support immediate action.

In addition, the TEDWG stakeholders are committed to strengthening the City of Thompson’s governance framework through an updated District Development Plan and Zoning By-Law. The dynamic relationship between the City of Thompson and regional communities will be better defined through another initiative of the TEDWG, the Thompson and Region Infrastructure Plan (TRIP). When taken together, the District Development Plan, Zoning By-Law and Thompson and Region Infrastructure Plan provide a 20-year strategy to stimulate and manage both economic and population growth through targeted infrastructure development and sustainable land use planning in Thompson and region.

The TEDWG process will provide immediate direction on specific priorities, such as Economic Development. It will also provide a framework for continued collaboration between regional stakeholders and continued action to support economic diversification and development over the long-term.

1.2 Purpose of this Document

The Thompson Economic Diversification Working Group has identified Economic Development as a priority area for action. This Action Plan describes the “re-tooling” of Thompson Unlimited (TU), the City of Thompson’s economic development corporation (formally incorporated as the Thompson Community Development Corporation), to support the implementation of TEDWG outcomes.

The themes of job creation and investment attraction and retention are embedded in the TEDWG process. These themes are evident in all Action Plans developed by the TEDWG, specifically:

- The Restorative Justice Facility Action Plan, which implies substantial public and private sector investment and associated new jobs in the City and regional Corrections system;
- The Education and Training Action Plan and Industrial Skills and Trades Training Master Plan, which include a focus on training local people for local or regional jobs in sectors with high labour market demand;
The City of Thompson is a resource extraction economy with particular strength in mining and hydro-electric generation. Historically, other resource sectors such as forestry, fishing and fur trading have also been strong.

Commercial-scale mining has been part of the Northern Manitoba economy since the 1920s when Hudson’s Bay Minerals started mining in Flin Flon. Mining in Thompson dates back to the mid 1950s. There are approximately 50 exploration projects underway in Northern Manitoba and several new projects and expansions under construction.

There are six operating hydro-electric facilities in Northern Manitoba with a combined capacity of 4,000 MW. Manitoba Hydro recently completed the 200 MW, $1.3 billion Wuskwatim project and has three projects with a combined capacity of 3,000 MW under active consideration. Transmission lines to export much of this power are under development.

There are small commercial fisheries on a number of lakes in the Region, although the output and the employment of this sector has been declining since its peak in 2003-2004.

Forestry is centred in The Pas and harvesting operations extended to near Thompson when the sector was more active prior to the collapse of the US housing market in 2007-2008.

Even the Region’s northern climate has become a renewable resource through the development of cold weather testing of jet engines and vehicles. Thompson hosts GLACIER, a modern dedicated jet testing facility and has some dedicated and general facilities that are used by automotive companies for cold weather testing of vehicles.

2.1 Regional Labour Force

Thompson’s regional labour force reflects the fact that Thompson is first and foremost a modern service economy:

- About 72% of the labour force in Thompson is engaged in government and a commercial services, compared to 76% across Manitoba (see Figure 2.1);
- Commercial and government services account for 86% of wage economy jobs in smaller regional communities, giving evidence of an especially high reliance on public sector employment;
- The labour force also reflects the relative importance of resource-based economic activity. An estimated 21% of the work force in Thompson is engaged in resource-based industries, as compared to 8% in Manitoba as a whole. Only in Gillam, the centre of Manitoba Hydro development, is the percentage of the labour force engaged in resource industry roughly equal to the government/commercial services sector workforce.

The economy of Thompson and its Region, as all economies, is influenced by its demographic profile. Overall, population levels are relatively stable, combining a marginal decline in the urban centres and growth in the smaller communities. Part of these divergent demographic paths is the fact that over 80% of the population of the Region is Aboriginal as compared to 37% of Thompson’s population (see Figure 2.2). The Aboriginal population in Northern Manitoba, as in other parts of Canada, tends to be younger and grow faster than Canada as a whole.
Figure 2.1 - Resource and Service Industries as a Percentage of Total Labour Force

Figure 2.2 - Selected Population Characteristics
The demographic profile of Thompson and other urban centres differs from that of smaller regional communities, particularly in the areas of educational attainment and engagement in the labour force. More people in Thompson and other urban centres have some post secondary education as compared to the rest of the Region.

These differences are reflected in employment rates (see Figures 2.3 and 2.4).

Thompson is the wholesale, retail, commercial and transportation service centre of its Region. Mapping and level of service analysis conducted as part of the Thompson and Region Infrastructure Plan (TRIP) identifies its Region and the communities that are most closely connected to Thompson (see Figure 1.1).

3. RE-TOOLING THOMPSON UNLIMITED

3.1 The Re-Tooling Process

Thompson Unlimited (TU) is a board-governed economic development agency that was formed in 2003. Its original funding arrangement expired in December 2012. In the fall of 2012, as a strategic direction of the Thompson Economic Diversification Working Group, the City of Thompson committed to ongoing financial support for economic development in general and TU specifically. The City and other TEDWG stakeholders saw the expiry of the old funding arrangements as an opportune time to review the organization’s mandate and activities. Resources for the re-tooling process were made available through the TEDWG under the Economic Development Action Plan.

3.2 The Technical Implementation Committee (TIC)

The re-tooling process was guided by an ad hoc Technical Implementation Committee (TIC). The TIC was created to provide advice to the City of Thompson Council with regards to its economic development function in general and TU in particular.

A precedent review of other economic development agencies operating in northern resource towns across Canada provided context for the TIC in areas such as typical levels of funding, number of staff, types of activities, and the overall objectives of similar organizations. TIC members provided feedback via an informal interview process led by Nichols Applied Management on these topics, as well as broader issues of TU governance, mandate and day-to-day operations.

Representatives from the following organizations participated in TIC interviews:

- City of Thompson (Council and Administrative Staff)
- Communities Economic Development Fund
- Community Futures North Central Development
- Keewatin Tribal Council
- Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak
- Metis Economic Development Organization/Manitoba Metis Federation
- Tataskweyak Cree First Nation
- Thompson Chamber of Commerce
- Thompson Unlimited (Board Members and Staff)

The results of the interview program, along with other insights gathered throughout the broader TEDWG process, were captured in an interim report, dated October 2012, that was distributed to interview participants. Feedback on the interim report was captured in a final TIC report entitled “Recommendations Regarding Re-Tooling Thompson Unlimited,” dated November 2012.

The final TIC report was presented to City Council, together with a draft Mandate Letter for TU that was informed by the findings of the TIC report.

The City of Thompson Council adopted the Mandate Letter at its December 10, 2012 meeting.

3.3 Implementing TIC Recommendations

The TIC’s recommendations were evaluated in the context of existing City of Thompson and TEDWG initiatives. In developing a Mandate Letter for TU, consideration was given to the following guiding documents:

- The Thompson Aboriginal Accord (2009);
- The Thompson and Planning District Sustainable Community Plan (2010); and
- The City of Thompson Strategic Plan (2010-2014).

The Thompson Aboriginal Accord sets the broadest context acknowledging that “all people in the north are served well by positive relationships between the City of Thompson and Aboriginal communities.” The Accord notes, among other things, the “mutual need for Aboriginal people to be involved in all aspects of the community.”

The Sustainable Community Plan builds on the Aboriginal Accord and acknowledges it as a foundational document. It goes on to identify and describe economic, social, cultural, environmental, and governance elements of sustainability. The Plan describes economic sustainability as:

- retaining jobs, particularly in the primary industrial sector, and developing new jobs;
- attracting new investment and supporting local entrepreneurship;
- providing sufficient land to support economic prosperity and creating change;
Figure 2.3 - Educational Attainment in Urban Centres and the Thompson Region

Figure 2.4 - Employment Rate in Urban Centres and the Thompson Region
• providing a range of post-secondary education and training opportunities;
• and enhancing Thompson’s position as the “Hub of the North.”

The City of Thompson Strategic Plan 2010-2014 details how the current Council will make the Sustainable Community Plan operational. It identifies Economic Development as a “core strategy” along with other strategies, including “community development and infrastructure renewal,” and “communication and public relations.”
4. THOMPSON UNLIMITED MANDATE

4.1 Preamble

Thompson Unlimited (TU) is the organization tasked by the City of Thompson with executing its economic development function:

- TU is the economic development arm of the City of Thompson.
- TU works within the context of the Sustainable Community Plan that defines economic development in terms of job creation; investment attraction and retention; the availability of land; and education and training opportunities within the City.
- TU is an economic development organization. Its mandate is job creation and investment attraction and retention.
- TU is not a land use planning or an education and training agency. It will cooperate with the City and education institutions to support them in their mandate and seek their support for its job creation and investment attraction and retention work.
- The Sustainable Community Plan places economic development in the context of Thompson’s position as the “Hub of the North.” The geographic focus of TU’s activities is Thompson, not as a stand-alone community, but as the hub of its Region.

4.2 Priority Areas

As noted in Section 2, Thompson and Region are home to natural resource industries, and a cold weather testing industry. Thompson, as the hub of its Region, is also a modern service economy.

There are opportunities in all sectors of the economy, including retail, maintenance contracting, transportation, residential construction, and others. TU is free to pursue economic development opportunities in any one of these sectors. There is, however, a hierarchy in the economic development opportunities that serves to guide TU’s allocation of its scarce resources.

1. Priority attention is given to what is needed in Thompson and Region in terms of goods and services. Local and regional demand for Thompson-based businesses is a more direct and relevant driver for economic development and TU activity than what Thompson and the Region has to offer to the rest of the world.

2. Investment retention and preserving and expanding the range of goods and services already in place in Thompson takes precedence over prospecting for investment in new industries from outside the Region.

3. Investment attraction and retention that strengthen the linkages between Thompson and its Region are of more immediate concern than investments that link Thompson with the rest of Manitoba and beyond.

These priority areas bring an automatic focus on business initiatives of Aboriginal entrepreneurs and investment/economic development activities by community-based organizations. Thompson is the hub of a Region with a mostly Aboriginal population, therefore:

- the goods and services needed in Thompson are influenced by both the non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal population of Thompson and the mostly Aboriginal population of the Region; and
- the linkages between Thompson and the Region are linkages between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal businesses and groups in Thompson with mostly Aboriginal businesses, persons and organizations in the Region.

4.3 Priority Tools

In the reality of a resource-constrained world, TU will need to be very strategic in its actions and initiatives. To this end, TU will focus on:

- Classic economic development activities, including information gathering and dissemination, responding to inquiries, and facilitation of business development initiatives of local, regional, and out-of-region investors; and
- Incubation of projects and initiatives rather than managing initiatives over the long term or direct investment in them.

Information is the key currency of economic development and of TU as an organization. Gathering and disseminating information are key tools for the organizations. Connectivity to other organizations will enhance TU’s ability to gather and disseminate information.

4.4 Board Governance

TU is a broadly representative Board-governed organization, ensuring that the organization captures inputs from different sectors and groups and that its day-to-day operations remain focused on the execution of its mandate.

After December 31, 2012, the Board structure will no longer include seats for the City of Thompson (1), The School District of Mystery Lake (1) and Vale (1). City of Thompson Administrative Staff (i.e. the City Manager, Director of Community Development and Planning and/or Chief Financial Officer) may attend regular meetings of the Board for information-sharing purposes. The structure will shift to a strictly volunteer Board of up to nine members that is representative of the range of economic sectors, within the following parameters:
• Board members should be selected for their knowledge and understanding of key sectors of Thompson’s economy (e.g. retail, hospitality, housing, industry, etc.);
• the Board should include representation by Aboriginal businesses; and
• Board members should have basic financial literacy and ideally experience with Board governance.

Board members are appointed by the City of Thompson via a resolution of Council, as follows:
• the term for Board membership is three years, with a limit of two terms;
• the first Board appointments under this new Mandate will be of varying length to institute a staggered Board renewal process that balances change and stability; and
• on an annual basis, Council appoints one of the Board members as Chair, based on a recommendation from the Board.

The TU Board provides oversight and guidance to staff through TU’s General Manager. The Board ensures the preparation of an Annual Work Plan within the guidelines of the City-approved Mandate Letter and Five Year Strategic Plan and is responsible for progress against its Strategic and Annual Plans. In addition to oversight and guidance, the TU Board also functions to enrich the information content and market intelligence of the organization.

4.5 Reporting
TU will report regularly to City Council. The Chair of the TU Board will provide quarterly reports to Council at regularly scheduled meetings open to the public. If required for confidentiality reasons, the public quarterly reporting can be augmented with additional information provided directly to the City Manager and distributed to Council. The quarterly report will focus on progress made against TU’s Annual Work Plan.

TU will also provide informal reports on a semi-annual basis to the Thompson and Area Round Table. Suggestions by the Round Table with regards to economic development may be incorporated in TU’s Annual Work Plan. Round Table discussions form an integral part of the TU’s initiatives in information gathering and building bridges to other organizations.

4.6 Links to Other Organizations
Creating links to and fostering relationships with other organizations is a key aspect of Thompson’s Unlimited mandate. TU needs to be aware of other organizations and their activities as they pertain to economic development. TU staff will maintain a schedule of semi-annual meetings (at a minimum) with senior staff of other economic development agencies operating in the region including Community Futures North Central Development (CFNCD) and Communities Economic Development Fund (CEDF).

TU will also coordinate with other regional organizations with business or economic development interests in Thompson, including Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO), Keewatin Tribal Council (KTC), Northern Association of Community Councils (NACC), Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF), Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN) and the Thompson Chamber of Commerce, to inform each other of ongoing or potential initiatives, and explore ways to provide coordinated assistance to prospective investors and others. Additional project-related interaction or partnership is encouraged.

TU may establish and facilitate an economic development working group that would meet to communicate, coordinate and collaborate on economic development activities for Thompson and Region.

4.7 Financing
The City of Thompson is Thompson Unlimited’s primary source of funding. The City’s five-year funding commitment is outlined in a Contribution Agreement between the City and TU.

The City’s core funding contribution is TU’s main source of revenue. Funding is contingent on TU’s ability to demonstrate a return on the City’s investment in the organization across the service areas outlined in the Five-Year Strategic Plan.

To defray the cost of specific tasks or activities, TU may enter into partnership or cost-sharing arrangements with complementary organizations, including the City of Thompson and other economic development agencies active in the region.

TU is encouraged to undertake initiatives on a cost-recovery basis, where appropriate. However, cost-recovery or, more generally, grant availability is not a key driver for tasks or activities undertaken by the organization. Cost recovery for TU tasks or activities is a marker on the way of graduating an economic development initiative from TU to a sustained delivery of a program or business by others.
5. FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

5.1 SWOT Analysis

In February 2013, members of the Thompson Unlimited Board and committees met to discuss TU’s long-term strategic goals. During a workshop session, Board and committee members completed a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis for the organization. The results of this analysis are illustrated in Figure 5.1, below.

The organization’s **STRENGTHS** include:

- Dedicated and experienced Board members, committee members, and staff
- Strong contacts with local and global businesses
- Established partnerships
- Record of producing high-quality, professional reports
- Ability to respond quickly to inquiries and requests

The organization’s **WEAKNESSES** include:

- Reduced staff after loss of General Manager
- Heavy staff work loads
- Limited information management systems (e.g. shared server or database)
- Lack of efficiency due to limited administrative/organizational capacity

**OPPORTUNITIES** available to the organization include:

- Strengthening relationships with diverse regional stakeholders
- Partnerships with regional economic development agencies
- Ability to set a new direction under a renewed Mandate
- Recent changes in the City of Thompson’s regulatory framework (e.g. Development Plan, Zoning By-Law, land inventory)
- Potential to secure a Winter Weather Testing Centre of Excellence
- Increasing tourism activity in the Thompson Region

**THREATS** to the organization include:

- Reduced management capacity after loss of General Manager
- Reduction in core funding from City of Thompson
- Weak/limited relationships with regional stakeholders
- Potential for announcements from Vale to disrupt ‘business as usual’

The results of the SWOT analysis provided direction in the development of Thompson Unlimited’s key Service Areas. Service Areas include: Regional Service Centre, Winter Weather Testing and Tourism. The Five-Year Strategic Plan identifies objectives and measures in each of the key Service Areas, as well as the Key Functions of the organization as a whole. The Key Functions and Services Area diagram on pages 10 and 11, below, illustrates the organization’s approach to the Five-Year Strategic Plan.
Thompson Unlimited
Key Functions and Service Areas Diagram

Thompson Unlimited (TU) is the organization tasked by the City of Thompson with executing its economic development function. It is the economic development arm of the City of Thompson. The geographic focus of TU’s activities is Thompson, not as a stand-alone community, but as the hub of its Region.

TU’s mandate is job creation and investment attraction and retention.

Key Functions

- Information Gathering + Dissemination
- Facilitation + Fostering Partnerships
- Marketing + Promotion

The Key Functions and Service Areas Diagram will guide the development of a 5-Year Strategic Plan and Annual Work Plans.

2013 is a TRANSITION YEAR. Key activities include:

- Aligning the organization to its new Mandate
- Strengthening existing relationships
- Gathering, streamlining and disseminating data (from the TEDWG process and other sources)
- Transition to a facilitation and partnership focus

The 5-Year Strategic Plan will include an overview of the following for each Service Area:

- Regional Partners
- Land Development
- Infrastructure Development
- Housing (Investment Attraction)
- Education (Investment Attraction)
Service Areas

**WWT**
- WWT Centre of Excellence (Investment Attraction)
- Administrative Services (Admin. Fees)

**TOURISM**
- Brand Stewardship
- Tourism Operators (Investment Attraction)
5.2 Service Area: Regional Service Centre

Context / Rationale

TU’s Mandate gives priority attention to growing Thompson as a regional service centre by addressing local and regional demand for developable land, infrastructure, housing, education, and goods and services. The City of Thompson, through a series of documents and agreements, has made significant changes to its land use and infrastructure planning practices in order to better support economic development. The long-term planning framework applies to both regional and municipal scales.

Regional Scale

The Thompson and Region Infrastructure Plan (TRIP): The Thompson and Region Infrastructure Plan identifies potential population growth and economic development opportunities in the Thompson Region and determines what infrastructure will be needed to support growth in the future. The TRIP also assists in defining Thompson’s role as the hub of its region. The TRIP assesses a wide range of infrastructure and focuses on the development of transportation, housing and education and training infrastructure over the next 30 years, within a long-term concept for regional infrastructure development. Capital projects identified in the TRIP for the City of Thompson are eligible for dedicated infrastructure funding, described below.

Municipal Scale

The Thompson and Planning District Development Plan: The updated Development Plan establishes a framework for land use decision-making within the Planning District. In recent years, increased pressure on existing residential, commercial, industrial and recreational inventories has limited the City’s ability to attract investors. With an updated Development Plan in place, day-to-day decisions will be based on the goals and objectives identified in the document. This will reduce uncertainty among both public and private investors with respect to the future development of land and will ensure that the timing of such development coincides with the progressive provision of public services.

City of Thompson Zoning By-law: The Zoning By-law is a companion document to the Development Plan. Both documents are critical to guiding the future growth and development of the City. The Zoning By-law implements the Development Plan. It ensures decisions made by City administration, Council and the public reflect and are in compliance with the objectives and overall vision of the Development Plan. The Zoning By-law contains enforceable regulations to provide predictability and support to both public and private sector investors.

City of Thompson Sustainable Asset Management Framework (SAM): The Sustainable Asset Management Framework is closely linked to the City’s other regulatory documents. Implementation of the Development Plan and Zoning By-law depends on the City’s ability to construct and operate necessary municipal assets, including water, wastewater, sanitary, roads, sidewalks, buildings, vehicles and other infrastructure. The SAM identifies the critical relationship between infrastructure spending, land development and economic development. It will be partially implemented through the dedicated infrastructure funding arrangement between the City of Thompson and Vale, described below.

Dedicated Infrastructure Funding: In the grant-in-lieu of taxes agreement covering the period from 2013 to 2017, Vale outlines the terms of direct infrastructure funding to the City of Thompson. This dedicated funding supports a range of capital projects including those identified as priorities in the SAM and TRIP plans, detailed above. The $3 million fund will be disbursed over a five-year period.

Municipal Boundary Expansion: The City has acquired three parcels of land, totalling 151.85 acres (Yale-Newman Area, Weir Road Mixed Use Area, Station Grounds Industrial Area), from Vale that are contiguous to the existing municipal boundary. In doing so, the City has significantly increased its long-term land supply for all land use types. New opportunities for investment and development on these lands will be supported by the City’s updated regulatory framework and, in some instances, Secondary Plans (e.g. for the Yale-Newman area). An independent appraisal of the lands indicated potential future municipal tax revenues of between $5 and $10 million for the City.

Yale-Newman Secondary Plan: This Secondary Plan applies to a recently annexed 86-acre parcel of land located in Thompson’s northeast corner. The Secondary Plan will provide a detailed framework to guide development of the area over a 20-year period. Residential, commercial, institutional and public open space uses will contribute to the area’s mixed-use character, which is much sought-after but previously unavailable in Thompson. The Yale-Newman lands present an important opportunity for public-private land development partnerships in Thompson.

Key Background Statistics / Data

Population

- Overall, the regional population is growing. Growth is located in smaller, mostly Aboriginal communities in the Region.
- The Thompson Region has experienced an annual average growth rate of 1.1% over the past 15 years, and experienced population change of 10.4% between 2006 and 2011.
- Considerable population mobility in the regional population is not always captured by the Census numbers.
- Thompson has experienced an average annual decline of -0.8% over the past 15 years. The most recent five year Census showed an overall population change of -4.6% between 2006 and 2011.
**Land and Infrastructure Development**

- The City of Thompson has recently brought 151.85 acres of developable land into its municipal boundary. A range of land uses, including residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and public recreation are planned for these lands. An independent appraisal of the lands indicated potential future municipal tax revenues of between $5 and $10 million for the City.

- The City of Thompson, through the grant-in-lieu of taxes agreement covering the period from 2013 to 2017 has access to $3 million in dedicated infrastructure funding for capital projects consistent with those outlined in the City’s key planning documents.

**Housing**

- Vacancy rates in the City’s rental housing market are notably low (0% in 2011) and the City’s rental market is relatively expensive compared to other Manitoba cities.

- The majority of the City’s housing stock was built in the 1960s and 1970s and few new builds are occurring. New housing construction in the City of Thompson has been limited in the past two decades. As of the 2006 Census, over 90% of dwelling units were over 20 years old, the majority of them over 40 years old.

- Across residential neighbourhoods in Thompson, up to 24% of housing units require major repair. In many communities in the region, the number is closer to 75%.

**Education + Training**

- Nearly 70% of people over the age of 15 in the Thompson Region do not have a high school diploma.

- Thompson is a post-secondary education hub in the region. Its role as an education hub will be enhanced by new industrial skills and trades-focused facilities at the new UCN Thompson Campus in the coming years.

- 21% of all jobs in Thompson are in the mining sector, yet only 6% of people over the age of 15 in the region have an apprenticeship or trades certificate.

- In a survey of 14 industrial employers across the Thompson Region (see the TEDWG Education and Training Action Plan), the greatest challenge to finding and retaining skilled tradespeople in Thompson is the need to seek training outside of the region. Approximately half of the employers surveyed indicated an immediate need for skilled workers.

**Retail Service Centre**

- A recent retail customer survey undertaken by TU and UCN indicates that while most members of regional communities do not come into Thompson specifically to shop, 81% of respondents do most of their shopping while in the City for medical, educational, family, recreational or other purposes.

- The cost and mode of transportation to and from Thompson is the single largest barrier regional communities face in accessing retail and other services in the City.

- There is a demand among regional shoppers for big box stores, chain restaurants, and brand name clothing retailers in Thompson.

**Example of Past Success**

Thompson Unlimited assisted a site selector in identifying a preferred parcel of land and worked with the City and an investment group in facilitating a land transaction for Choice International hotels. With TU’s support, the Suburban Extended Stay Hotel, a 70-room hotel, opened in Spring 2011. This development represents a major investment in Thompson that has created approximately 20 direct jobs (both full- and part-time). The development has also increased Accommodations Tax and property tax revenues for the City of Thompson.

**Objectives (long-term)**

To support the City of Thompson in strengthening and growing Thompson as a Regional Service Centre, Thompson Unlimited will:

- Take a lead role in marketing and promoting the City of Thompson’s updated regulatory framework and expanded land supply.

- Actively facilitate the development of available lands within the municipal boundary.

- Provide up-to-date information on the Thompson Region by means of economic sector-specific information, and custom information packages.

- Ensure a broad range of information and data is available publicly through a periodically refreshed website.

- Support the City, investors and residential developers to expand the range of housing currently available in Thompson.

- Support investment attraction efforts in the development of an Industrial Skills and Trades Training Centre at the new UCN Thompson Campus.

- Monitor local and regional demand for Thompson-based businesses (retail businesses in particular) and facilitate development of businesses within the City to directly serve this demand For example:
  - Understand the main constraints for Thompson-based businesses and work with them to address these constraints.
  - Integrate regionally-focused goods and services in the retail offerings available in Thompson.
• Link with Tourism/Hospitality initiatives and develop tourism-focused retail opportunities.
• Develop an Internet shopping strategy aimed at integrating local “brick and mortar” merchants with Internet-based retail channels.
• Through increased regional partnerships, create a network of businesses in Thompson and the region to optimize the delivery of goods and services to the regional population.

Measures /Indicators (long-term)
• Accessibility of economic data in the form of investor/developer recruitment packages is increased.
• Web presence and traffic are increased through the maintenance of an up-to-date website advertising economic opportunities available in Thompson.
• Through partnership with local and regional developers, the range and type of affordable housing available in Thompson is increased.
• Partnerships to develop the UCN Industrial Skills and Trades Training Centre are in place.
• Key gaps in the local/regional goods and services market are filled through the expansion of local/regional entrepreneurship and new business.

5.3 Service Area: Winter Weather Testing

Context / Rationale
Over a ten-year period, Thompson Unlimited has developed and promoted Thompson internationally as a centre for winter weather testing. On an annual basis, the winter weather testing sector is estimated to inject $1 million into the local economy, resulting in positive economic impacts for local and regional businesses. TU is currently pursuing a plan to develop the physical infrastructure required to support a winter weather testing Centre of Excellence in Thompson.

The industry has grown in recent years in terms of the number of new testers attracted to Thompson, testers’ length of stay, and range of products tested. To continue diversifying Thompson’s economy, and to create new and sustain existing local employment and business activity, new partnerships (public-private partnerships) will be required.

Key Background Statistics / Data
Over the period 2007-2011, Thompson Unlimited’s Winter Weather Testing service area has:
• served over 12 international clients across a range of industries including automotive, diesel, heavy equipment, and aviation;
• injected approximately $4.4 million into Thompson’s goods and services economy; and
• generated approximately $60,000 in Accommodations Tax revenue for the City of Thompson.

The impact of a single international tester on Thompson’s local economy is illustrated below, for the 2007-2008 testing season:
• A total of $736,328.88 was spent at 65 different local businesses.
• Company representatives made 186 trips to Thompson.
• The tester booked a total of 4,035 hotel room nights. Local hotel expenditures represented the company’s largest expense, however the range and types of business impacts varied.
• The average length of stay for company representatives was 20 days.

Example of Past Success
TU led site-selection and facilitated partnerships between Rolls-Royce, Pratt & Whitney, MDS AeroTest, the Government of Canada, the Province of Manitoba and the City of Thompson toward the development of the Global Aerospace Centre for Icing and Environmental Research (GLACIER). The GLACIER facilities direct impacts on Thompson’s economy include:
• 13 permanent full-time positions and a variety of part-time positions.
• Total facility design and construction cost of $42 million, $14.5M of this cost was spent in Manitoba.
• Operating costs of over $600,000 for the 2012 winter season.
• Increased property taxes paid to the Local Government District of Mystery Lake.
• Increased Accommodations Tax revenue to City of Thompson.
• Supported training initiatives through UCN (e.g. qualified security guards).

Objectives (long-term)
To build on the past success in the winter weather testing sector, Thompson Unlimited will:
• Capitalize on years of marketing, promotion and networking to facilitate a public-private partnership (P3) between government, industry and other potential investors for the purpose of developing a winter weather testing Centre of Excellence in Thompson.
• Provide information and support to existing testers seeking to expand the range of current testing activities.
• Market and promote the infrastructure, incentives and other opportunities Thompson provides in an effort to
attract new testers.

**Measures / Indicators (long-term)**

- A public-private partnership (P3) is in place and Phase 1 development of the Centre of Excellence (test track, fencing and lighting) has been completed.
- The length of current tester stays is increased.
- The types of tests conducted by current testers are expanded.
- The total number of companies testing in Thompson is increased.

**5.4 Service Area: Tourism**

**Context / Rationale**

As a regional service centre, Thompson attracts travellers and regional stakeholders traveling for leisure, business, goods and services, medical, and other personal reasons. The tourism industry is represented by seasonal and year-round operators including, bed and breakfasts, cultural events, festivals, heritage sites, hotels, museums, outfitters, outdoor adventures, recreation amenities, and restaurants.

TU’s Tourism Advisory Committee is focused on promoting events, activities, programs and facilities that build on Thompson’s current role as the business, sports, education, culture/arts, and recreational centre of northern Manitoba.

Thompson’s ability to attract regional and other visitors will be strengthened by a key outcome of the Thompson Economic Diversification Working Group – a Place Branding Strategy for the City. The strategy aims to understand the strengths of the community and to promote those messages to residents of Thompson, the region and further afield. The strategy includes an updated visual identity and recommendations for future marketing campaigns that will require TU’s support for implementation.

**Key Background Statistics / Data**

- Travel Manitoba estimates that 8.1% ($82.7 million) of total visitor spending in Manitoba occurs north of the 53rd parallel.
- Thompson Airport is the second busiest airport in Manitoba. Thompson Regional Airport Authority reports 120,000 passengers passed through the airport during 2010. This number represents commercial flights only (private flights are not included).
- Heritage North Museum reports a total 2,426 visitors during 2011 and 2,790 visitors in 2012 (as of November).
- McCreedy Campground reports 659 camp night stays by a total of 1,977 visitors in 2011.

- In 2010, VIA Rail reported total on/offs of 13,363 passengers. This number represents advanced purchases only. Regional stakeholders are likely underrepresented in this count.

**Example of Past Success**

Thompson Unlimited supported Thompson’s first Wolf and Carnivore Conference in October 2012. Of the 90 conference registrants 80% were from out of town, with 20% attending from Thompson and the region. The economic impact of conference travel from out-of-town registrants includes airfare, taxi to and from the airport, hotel accommodation, and incidental spending (e.g. pay-as-you-go tours, shopping, etc.). Other conference requirements, including venue rental and catering generate local economic activity.

**Objectives (long-term)**

Thompson Unlimited will lead the coordination and distribution of information related to tourism in the Thompson Region in order to raise awareness of tourism opportunities. In addition, TU will:

- Partner with the City to implement the City of Thompson Place Branding Strategy. TU will also act as a brand ambassador/brand steward for the City’s visual identity and marketing material.
- Establish a dedicated marketing and promotion revenue stream for the purpose of implementing the City of Thompson Place Branding Strategy. The budget would be administered by the City with TU’s support for implementation, potentially directed from the City’s 5% Accommodations Tax.
- Facilitate partnerships between operators in Thompson, Churchill, and other communities in the region to provide additional integration of opportunities for Thompson and regionally-based operators to tap into the captive Churchill tourism market.
- Enhance connections to and information sharing between Thompson and regional communities.

**Measures / Indicators (long-term)**

- Internal and external perception of Thompson is improved through ongoing place branding initiatives.
- Thompson is fully integrated with the established Churchill wildlife-focused tourism market.
- Thompson- and regional-based enterprises develop or support products for the tourism market, particularly those that can be integrated into the existing Churchill market, and that may develop Thompson as a destination market in its own right (e.g. winter tourism).
- The number of conferences held in Thompson is increased.
5.5 Key Functions

Across all of the Service Areas described in detail above, Thompson Unlimited provides a number of Key Functions. These Key Functions are fundamental to the organization and are indicated in TU’s Mandate Letter (see Section 5.0). While the Service Areas describe what the organization does, the Key Functions speak to the organization’s approach to job creation and investment attraction and retention. Thompson Unlimited has three Key Functions.

Information Gathering and Dissemination: TU’s focus is on classic economic development activities, including information gathering and dissemination to ensure up-to-date data related to each Service Area is available and easily accessible to potential investors. Recognizing the importance of good and timely information to decision-making by partners and investors, TU’s 2013 Annual Work Plan focuses on reviewing existing information, identifying data gaps, filling data gaps, building information management infrastructure for the organization, and re-establishing a strong web-presence.

Facilitation and Fostering Partnerships: The Mandate Letter emphasizes the importance of Thompson’s local and regional service centre dynamic, noting that local and regional demand for Thompson-based businesses is a more direct and relevant driver for economic development and TU activity than what Thompson and the region has to offer to the rest of the world. The linkages between Thompson and the region are primarily linkages between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal businesses and groups with mostly Aboriginal businesses, persons and organizations in the Region. These links require ongoing facilitation to establish and maintain. Fostering local and regional partnerships is critical to achieving the organization’s Mandate as investment attraction and retention that strengthen the linkages between Thompson and its region are of more immediate concern than investments that link Thompson with the rest of Manitoba and beyond.

Marketing and Promotion: In support of its job creation and investment attraction and retention work, Thompson Unlimited actively promotes the investment opportunities available in Thompson and the surrounding region across all Service Areas. TU will also take a lead role in implementing the Thompson Place Branding Strategy to create awareness about Thompson’s evolving identity and promote Thompson and the region more generally.
6. **ANNUAL WORK PLAN**

The Five-Year Strategic Plan identifies Thompson Unlimited's objectives across all Service Areas for the 2013-2017 period. To facilitate measuring the organization’s progress in achieving these long-term objectives, TU staff will develop an Annual Work Plan. The Annual Work Plan includes specific tasks, an estimate of the staff and other resources required to complete the task, and a schedule for completion.

The Annual Work Plan will be developed by TU staff and approved by the Board by the end of Q4 each year.

TU’s 2013 Annual Work Plan is shown on the following pages.
## KEY TASKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.0 ONGOING OFFICE ADMINISTRATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Payroll, banking, mail, payables and receivables</td>
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<td>1.2 Community Works Loan Program</td>
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<td>1.3 Inquiries (phone and email)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4 Board/Staff Communications (email updates &amp; phone calls)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.5 TU Planning (Workplan, Strategic Plan, Proposal writing, quarterly meeting, work log)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.0 DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS + DISSEMINATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Inventory and review all existing data sources, including the TU Community Profile, TEDWG Baseline Studies, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Identify any data gaps related to priority Service Area (Regional Service Centre) and identify data sources to fill gaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Identify any data gaps related to other Service Areas (WWT, Tourism) and identify data sources to fill gaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Ongoing data collection and analysis to fill any identified gaps in Tasks 2.2 and 2.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.5 Packaging data by topic for dissemination</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.6 Contact inventory of past investors</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.0 DATA ORGANIZATION + STORAGE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Meet with City of Thompson to define partnership for IT Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Work with City of Thompson IT Support to determine data organization and storage requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Work with City of Thompson IT Support to design and implement data organization and storage system</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4 Ongoing coordination with City of Thompson IT Support</td>
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<tr>
<th>4.0 WEBSITE REFRESH / AMALGAMATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Determine status of agreement with TU’s web service provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Review existing TU and City of Thompson website content to determine gaps in information</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.3 TU Board and City of Thompson approval to amalgamate websites</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.4 TU Staff meeting with City of Thompson staff to determine working relationship, timelines, protocols, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.5 Ongoing maintenance and updates</td>
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<tr>
<th>5.0 REGIONAL SERVICE CENTRE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Establish/strengthen relationships with regional partners: KTC, MMF, MKO, NCN, NACC</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.2 Establish/strengthen working relationship with CoT staff &amp; at political level</td>
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<td>5.3 Facilitate Land Development through investment attraction</td>
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<td>5.4 Facilitate Infrastructure Development through Investment attraction</td>
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<td>5.5 Establish/strengthen communications with business</td>
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<td>5.6 Action Plan and implementation for BR&amp;E</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.7 Inquiries/Cold Calls/Emails</td>
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<th>6.0 WINTER WEATHER TESTING</th>
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<tr>
<td>6.1 Centre of Excellence (private/public partnerships)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.2 MOU document writing</td>
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<td>6.3 WWT information gathering, updating and dissemination</td>
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<td>6.4 Administration for Tester flowthrough (1 tester)</td>
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<td>6.5 Committee Communications</td>
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<td>6.6 Support for Events</td>
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<td>6.7 Inquiries/Cold Calls/Emails</td>
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<th>7.0 TOURISM</th>
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<tr>
<td>7.1 Brand Stewardship</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.2 Work with existing and new entrepreneurs (Investment attraction) and followup</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.3 Regional Partnerships to expand tourism</td>
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<td>7.4 Committee Communications</td>
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<td>7.5 Support for Events</td>
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<td>7.6 Inquiries/Cold Calls/Emails</td>
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<tr>
<th>8.0 MEETINGS + PREPARATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1 TU Board (3 hrs. prep) (7 board members)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.2 WWT (1 hr per meeting prep.) (6 committee members)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.3 Tourism (TTC &amp; TN) (preparation included) (11 committee members)</td>
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<td>8.4 Thompson Housing Agency</td>
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<td>8.5 City of Thompson Development Review Committee</td>
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<td>8.6 TEDWG Local + Regional Identity Advisory Committee (Branding committee) to June 2013</td>
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<td>8.7 Thompson Chamber of Commerce</td>
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<td>8.8 Business Development Committee (preparation included)</td>
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<td>8.9 Thompson Newcomer Settlement Services (preparation included)</td>
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<td>8.10 Thompson and Area Round Table (2 meetings per year)</td>
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<td>8.11 Regional Partnership Committee (new)</td>
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<td>8.12 Ad Hoc</td>
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## ACTION PLAN #5: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Province of Manitoba | Northern Association of Community Councils | Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation | Thompson Chamber of Commerce | Vale**

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**KEY TASK**

**SUB-TASK**

**AS-NEEDED COORDINATION / MONITORING / SUPPORT**

**MEETINGS**

**CITY OF THOMPSON SUPPORT**