DISTRICT OF KITIMAT

Economic Development Strategy
2023-2029

Revised July 2024

Kitimat Bound

Sea - The Opportunity

Executive **Summary**

HOME; it's a powerful and emotion-based word. Home is where we establish roots in work, relationships, and recreational passions…where we form deep connection to people, place, and pursuit of the meaning of life. Home is the place we are proud to live in and be from – with the extensive benefits to be derived from pride-building.

Kitimat is an industrial city. A deep-water port – one of only three on the west coast of Canada - converges with big power and water availability, competitively advantageous transportation access, big aluminum and LNG industries, and big block industrial land availability.

But Kitimat is also more. Nature's oceanside cathedral is special here. Kitimat is where the really wild things are – the everything bigger and taller in our bears, trees, water, and mountains. It's also an affordable community with great jobs…where one can get ahead with a dream of what can be and the work ethic to make it happen. Kitimat is a connected, friendly, and industrious community on the rise, with much progress in recent years and a number of plans in place that will witness continued, positive transformation. If life is like a see-saw, that we are **BIG BY NATURE** is the soul of us….the more balanced "Marvel of Nature-Industry" story we wish to tell, and will tell in our actions.

Kitimat's challenge for the immediate future isn't job creation, it's community-building to attract and retain workforce we need to sustain industry and contribute to a dynamism that is alive with energy. This Strategy is about accelerating the enablement of a community people **WANT TO LIVE IN**. A revitalized downtown. A Kitimat-beautiful movement. Housing choice and affordability. Quality education. Healthcare access. Nurturing our enterprising ways as small business. Attracting and retaining the workforce we need to grow our community.

These are our community development building blocks this five-year (2023-2028) Strategy steps into with ambition.

We commit to bold **ACTIONS** in this Strategy. We commit to building HOME.

Our **VISION**

Sea … of Opportunity

Our **Story**

Kitimat is an industrious and enterprising community in balance with, and motivated by, nature's inspirational heartbeat. We leverage our status as BC's deepest and most competitively advantageous deep-water port in enablement of future large industrial projects. We are the dynamic coastal community people want to live in with focus on housing choice and affordability, a revitalized downtown, small business entrepreneurship, workforce attraction and retention, and a Kitimat-beautiful movement. Kitimat is home.

Value **Proposition**

WHY DO WE MATTER? Answer this question and 80% of a community's economic development pathway is defined via connection to people and enterprise who best connect with value proposition. And the more unique or powerful the value proposition, the further the lengths people will go to pursue it.

Deepest and closest inland port on Canada's Northwest Transportation and Trade Corridor with inbound and outbound shipping cost competitive advantage.

Manufacturing and Energy Industry Cluster

Large block industrial lands for major projects with big power/water availability

High Income With Deeply Affordable Housing

Matter of Fact

The District of Kitimat has 121% of median household income of BC and Canada, with house prices that are 44% of the BC average, and 70% of the Canadian average (Src: Census Canada, median value of dwellings, 2021).

-Lifestyle Factors-

Community Survey Top 5: Natural environment, outdoor recreation opportunities, safe/low crime, small community feel, the job (work-life balance, income potential, professional opportunities). *Lifestyle factors deeply valued by local residents are a value proposition for resident attraction strategy (digital nomads, remote workers, creators, independent entrepreneurs).*

BIG Moves

BIG Moves define bold priorities that step into an elevated set of opportunities for Kitimat that offer greatest potential for the most transformative community progress.

Goal: Enable housing choice and affordability.

Goal: Implement a Kitimat-Beautiful movement.

Goal: Boldly revitalize downtown.

Goal: Grow business small to big.

Goal: Create and promote a desirable community workforce want to relocate to.

GOALS are the way we will achieve our Economic Development Strategy. These goals are interconnected, ambitious, and achievable in pursuit of the transformative.

Goal 1 Enable Housing Choice and Affordability

#2 business, investment and community development enabler (48% of respondents, Community Survey 2023)

1.1 Hybrid Planning Code

Update Municipal Code Part 9 – Planning using Hybrid Code principles that better enable key objectives like housing mix via consolidation of zones. E.g. Towns of Okotoks and High River.

1.2 Accessory Dwelling Units

Add Accessory Dwelling Units as a permitted use in single-family residential zoning to expand rental housing supply. *Note: accessory dwelling unit enablement is a recommendation contained in the Housing Action Plan and Needs Assessment.*

1.3 Enterprise Opportunity

1.3.1 Promote home maintenance and renovation services as an enterprise opportunity.

1.3.2 Develop and maintain relationships with builders and developers to communicate District of Kitimat housing innovation (renovation, redevelopment, greenfield) vision and policy enablement that leads to greater choice and affordability, and rental supply.

1.4 Housing Choice & Affordability

Consider a set of planning policy amendments (e.g. three units per lot, more lot coverage, reduced setbacks, permission to subdivide, lower parking requirements, small or no minimum house/accessory dwelling unit sizes) for residential zoning to expand housing supply (rentals) and generate a housing–as-investment return business model for property owners. E.g. Village of Canal Flats.

1.5 Rental Affordability

Communicate typical rent on a biannual basis using social media to reduce inflationary pressure.

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1.6 Incentive

Create a Revitalization Tax Incentive program for per unit residential dwelling repairs in excess of $50,000. *Note: revitalization tax incentive is a recommendation contained in the Housing Action Plan and Needs Assessment.*

Matter of Fact

As of 2016, 12% of units (13.7% - 2021 – updated) are in need of major repair, which is twice (2.4x – 2021 – updated) the provincial rate. Given that 12% of housing is already in need of repair, it is important to define strategies to incentivize or facilitate renovation. Src: Housing Action Plan & Needs Assessment, 2020

In 2021, 39% of dwellings in Kitimat were constructed prior to 1960 and 39% between 1961 and 1980, which is significantly higher than the BC average of 12% and 27% respectively.

Goal 2 **Implement a Kitimat-Beautiful Movement**

2.1 Beautification Committee

2.1.1 Create a Beautification Committee to imagine and implement beautification projects.

2.1.2 Provide District funding for Committee;

2.1.3 Create an annual summer best yard/winter decoration competition.

2.1.4 Celebrate beautification wins (from small to big) on social media and expand beautification conversation (needs, ideas, ways to get involved)

2.2 Public Art

2.2.1 Create a public art program and policy.

2.2.2 Consider consistent funding for public art installation annually with focus on City Centre.

2.3 Legacy Giving Program

Establish a Legacy donation program to fund public enhancements and placemaking. E.g. City of Edmonton

2.4 Optimist Club

Establish an Optimist Club to nurture community pride. E.g. Okotoks

Kitimat's 52km of walkways and 49km of trails are major contributors to the quality and appeal of the community. #1 level of participation. #4 level of satisfaction of recreation amenity. Src: Leisure Services Master Plan Community Survey.

2.5 Code Enforcement

2.5.1 Enforce nuisance portion of Municipal Code to clean up derelict buildings/poorly maintained properties.

2.5.2 Create a derelict properties database and improvement/redevelopment strategy.

2.6 Nechako Centre

Fast track implementation of the Nechako Centre Concept Plan.

2.7 Haisla Nation

Engage Haisla Nation in placemaking, beautification and artist/creator initiatives.

2.8 Active Transportation Plan

Create a robust plan for active transportation within Kitimat that includes the Cycle Network Plan with a focus on connectivity to, and circulation within, the City Centre.

Goal 2 **Implement a Kitimat-Beautiful Movement**

2.9 Recreation Amenity

Better market existing recreation amenity to support perception shift (workforce attraction & retention). E.g. Pg. 11, 2022 District of Kitimat Annual Report.

2.10 Parking Standards

Reduce off-street parking standard from 28 m2 to 12 m2 North American standard.

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2.11 Clean-Up

Conduct an annual community clean-up (garbage).

2.12 Placemaking Plan

Develop a Placemaking Plan (art typology, locations, themes, materials) and implement with an annual District of Kitimat budget, industry participation, and pursuit of grants/sponsorships.

2.13 Arts Visibility

Work with the Kitimat Public Art Alliance and Kitimat Museum and Archives to build capacity and support expansion of artist activity, including consideration of creation of a Makers Space/Studio/Gallery to support Kitimat creative expression. E.g. Okotoks Arts Council, Columbia Valley Makerspace.

2.14 Ocean Access

Enhance waterfront access and activities.

2.14.1 Build a new dock and associated services at Minette Bay.

- Action steps: Establish process to consult and engage stakeholders. Confirm budget for environmental, engineering permitting, design, and construction/maintenance. Create plan for Tourism /marketing. Incorporate a birding tower. Provide increased access for kayaks and stand-up paddleboard rentals. Provide space for guided tours/tour operators (hiking, fishing, eco tours). Offer affordable commercial water charters. Construct/expand a small boat launch. Expand and improve multipurpose, non-motorized trail access between City Centre and Minette Bay. Permit food trucks.

2.14.2 Improve surface finishing for public access road to Minette Bay West Park.

2.14.3 Work with Rio Tinto to improve public access and infrastructure at Hospital Beach.

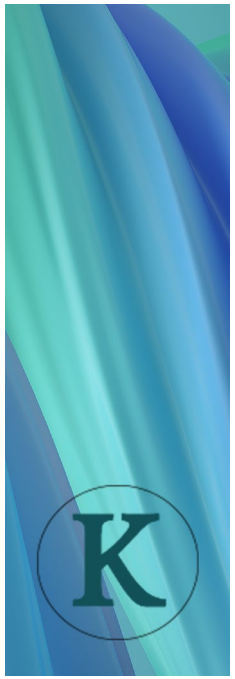
Goal 3 **Boldly Revitalize Downtown**

3.1 Downtown Brand

3.1.1 Create a City Centre name and visual identity as an extension of the Kitimat Bound/Kitimat now brand.

3.1.2 Create branded City Centre pageantry.

3.1.3 Hold a City Centre brand naming contest.



e.g. The Kore

3.2 Market Space

Create a District-owned market space (indoor/outdoor) that can be used for entrepreneurs/temporary uses like vendors and food trucks.
E.g. Commercial Street Night Market, City of Nanaimo

Why Market Space?

Market Space Indoor & Outdoor #2 supported "middle ground" spaces most felt to help businesses and entrepreneurship grow in Kitimat (32%) Src: Community Survey, 2023).

Smaller commercial spaces #3 supported "middle ground" spaces most felt to help businesses and entrepreneurship grow in Kitimat (31%) Src: Community Survey, 2023.

Enable temporary uses (e.g. food trucks) #4 supported "middle ground" spaces most felt to help businesses and entrepreneurship grow in Kitimat (28%). Src: Community Survey, 2023.

Why Downtown Revitalization?

Downtown Revitalization: #1 categorized Business Walks 2022 priority that would help business thrive.

#1 reason people leave Kitimat - lack of things to do (shop / entertainment / culture / recreation / sense of community "centre" / gathering spaces). Src: Community Survey, 2023.

#1 business, investment and community development enabler (55% of respondents, Community Survey 2023).

#2 identified desire (downtown beautification, established Mainstreet, walkable) re making Kitimat more business friendly/support business growth (13%) Src: Community Survey, 2023.

Tax Incentives #1 supported Business Retention & Expansion element (42%) Src: Community Survey, 2023.

Kitimat has an excellent Downtown Plan and Downtown Design Guidelines. What's needed is: a) full commitment to the Plan; b) alignment with a developer; c) brand extension; d) deeper incentivization via elimination of minimum parking standard and revitalization tax incentive; and e) funded commitment to public infrastructure enhancements, particularly a new "Mainstreet" and a new central (sheltered) gathering space. Salesmanship is needed to translate a Downtown Plan into an investment attraction Prospectus, including a bold, differentiated vision that comes to life via infill and pedestrianization: the largest open-air mall in BC.

Goal 3 **Boldly Revitalize Downtown**

3.3

Help People Visualize The Future

Identify comparatives that help residents and developers “visualize vision” of the largest open-air mall in BC.

Ala Moana - Honolulu

San Tan Village, Gilbert, Arizona.

Poipu Shopping Village, Kauai

Goal 3 **Boldly Revitalize Downtown**

3.4

Incentive

Deepen Commercial Centre Revitalization Tax Exemption Program for City Centre and Nechako lands to incentivize mixed-use and downtown commercial projects. Create an even more enhanced tax incentive structure for large scale Master Plan redevelopment at >5 acres.

3.5

Mixed Use

3.5.1 Be open to, and promote, mixed-use project proposals in City Centre in order to generate productive business models.

3.5.2. Be open to, and promote, mixed-use revitalization of the City Centre Mall. E.g. HUB Mall, University of Alberta

Mixed use #1 supported "middle ground" spaces most felt to help businesses and entrepreneurship grow in Kitimat (49%) Src: Community Survey, 2023).

HUB Mall, U of A

3.6

The Small Things

Complete five small placemaking initiatives in downtown Kitimat in 2024, with focus on clean/paint/repair, modern public art on "blank canvas" walls, and landscaping.

3.7

Pop-Up Commerce

Enable a District-owned City Centre parking location for a pop-up garden shed initiative. E.g. Muskegon, Michigan and Berwyn, Illinois.

Muskegon, Michigan. Img Src: Strong Towns

Goal 3 **Boldly Revitalize Downtown**

3.8 City Centre Mall

Gain a commitment from the City Centre mall owner to revitalize the street-facing façade as the most visible gateway downtown impression.

3.9 Enterprise Market

Promote creation of a market enterprise business that offers small spaces to local home-based business, creators and micro-enterprise to sell products. E.g. Main Street Market, Okotoks.

3.10 Downtown Plan

Fully commit to the Downtown Plan and Downtown Design Guidelines.

3.11 Coffee Shop

Promote a home-grown experiential coffee shop enterprise opportunity.

3.12 City Centre Catalyst

3.12.1 Be more holistic and aggressive with City Centre revitalization with a catalytic initiative that recognizes that scale attracts the only scale of investment that can achieve the transformative. Develop a Prospectus from the Downtown Plan and seek to a major developer on an infill/redevelopment basis for the entire downtown.

3.12.2 Linked to seeking of a major developer for City Centre revitalization, step further than reduction of parking standards as per December 21, 2020 report to Council: Downtown Plan & Design Guidelines – Next Steps with elimination of minimum parking requirements in Downtown Kitimat to enable commercial development business model.

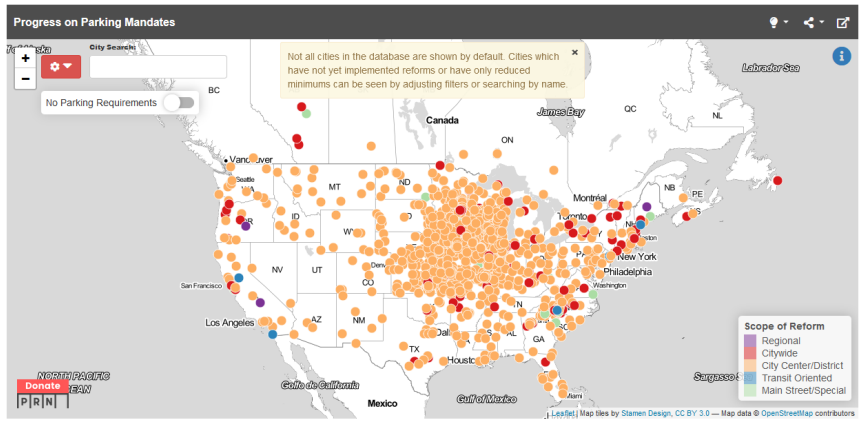
3.13 District as Catalyst: Parking

Enable infill/downtown redevelopment with District sale of its downtown parking lot lands.

Matter of Fact

More than 50% of available parking spaces are not occupied on a typical winter weekday. Src: Downtown Kitimat Parking Study, 2019

Parking Resource: Strong Towns



Goal 3 **Boldly Revitalize Downtown**

3.14 New Mainstreet

Support downtown revitalization with budgeted commitment to streetscaping infrastructure enhancements to a new Mainstreet for City Centre. Rename “Mainstreet” as a single name street to cement Mainstreet status.

3.15 Gathering Space

Support downtown revitalization with budgeted commitment to creation of a City Centre sheltered gathering space.

3.16 District of Kitimat Building

Create a stand-alone District of Kitimat building including public plaza, art, specialty lighting, and seating. E.g. City of Castlegar.

3.17 Wayfinding Signage

Expand wayfinding program to include pedestrian-scale City Centre signage.

3.18 Lighting

3.18.1 Establish a City Centre lighting program for trees, boulevards, pedestrian corridors, and gathering spaces.

3.18.2 Establish interactive lighting, storytelling, and entertainment to better animate the City Centre: Downtown gaming centre; Outdoor escape room experiences; Outdoor projection mapping example 1 and example 2; Indoor active gaming centre, Indigenous

Goal 4 Grow Business Small to Big

758 registered businesses in Kitimat, 2022

Focus: Tourism, retail, entertainment, entrepreneurship

Tourism and retail only 2 industry sectors with >40% community support re economic diversification. Src: Community Survey, 2023.

Tourism #1 supported economic development program element (47%). Src: Community Survey, 2023.

Business Retention & Expansion #2 supported economic development program element (43%). Src: Community Survey, 2023.

Objective 1: Grow Small Business

4.1 Business Retention & Expansion Program

4.1.1 Continue current BRE foundations: Business Walk Program, Business Façade Improvement Program, Commercial Centre Revitalization Tax Exemption Program.

4.1.2 Continue to support shop local initiatives like the Love Kitimat Program.

4.1.3 Purchase data (e.g. Lightcast) and do a procurement opportunity analysis for key local industries.

4.1.4 Create Business Success Stories to inspire business formation and expansion.

4.2 Education Opportunity

4.2.1 Enable social media training for enterprise to drive business success.

4.2.2 Advocate for creation of and business participation in online ecommerce courses for local business to support omnichannel enterprise presence, thus blunting the negative impact of online spending on bricks and mortar operations/space demand/vacancy.

4.2.3 Support local business with education resources/links that enable per square foot sales growth. E.g Shopify.

4.3 Tourism

4.3.1 Explore further opportunity to develop campground infrastructure.

4.3.2 Preserve remaining old growth forests and attract tourists for rainforest hiking/biking/kayaking adventures.

4.3.3 Work with Haisla Nation to develop ecotourism experiences on the coast and in particular Douglas Channel and Garden Channel.

4.3.4 Promote an enterprise opportunity for rentals: e.g. boats, cabins, bikes, scooters.

4.3.5 Sharpen tourism feature product focus (2-3 products/experiences) to drive visitor interest and generate additional tourism growth opportunities. *Why Kitimat vs other near north or coastal BC communities?*

4.3.6 Attract another modern hotel to nurture multiplier benefit from tourism growth/support LNG Canada, Rio Tinto, and other future industrial operations.

4.3.7 Encourage B&B/Airbnb operations to better leverage multiplier effect from tourism visits.

4.4 Retail / Entertainment Opportunities

4.4.1 Encourage and promote private sector entertainment offerings converged with "Open Streets"/private sector use of public spaces. E.g. Hub Town Okotoks pop-up theatre events and summer cornhole league.

4.4.2 Identify and socialize specific retail and entertainment opportunities.

4.5 Development Approvals

Clarify development approvals process to streamline the planning approvals process.

Matter of Fact

Kitimat has 188 hotel rooms (Microtel - 87, MStar - 42, Chalet Inn - 42, Kitimat River Motel - 16), and 8 Airbnb operations.

Goal 4 Grow Business Small to Big

Objective 2: Nurture Large Project Investment

4.6 Home Occupations

Investigate permitting home occupations in R1-A zoning.

4.7 Commercial Space

Encourage creation of and investment in industrial and commercial spaces.

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4.8 Retail Gap Analysis

Conduct retail (and services) leakage survey of Kitimat residents. Purchase retail sales per square foot by spending category data via ICSC membership (QuickStats Industry Reports) to match high leakage with high sales/sq. ft. to generate opportunity spaces for Kitimat. Complete a retail gap analysis for comparable-size/type communities.

OR

Hire a consultant to perform a commercial lands study, retail/entertainment/experiential gap analysis to identify opportunities that enhance local spending and reduce spending leakage to Terrace. E.g. extend Nechako retail analysis to City Centre. E.g. Town of Sylvan Lake.

4.9 LNG & Related Cluster Development

Support and advocate for continued and deepening talks on global expansion of Canadian natural gas, establishment of industries along the LNG value-chain, and development of the Canadian Northern Corridor (article 1, article 2, article 3).

4.10 Power Supply

Support and advocate for significant power supply enhancement in Kitimat to serve current industry needs (electrification of LNG) while also building capacity to serve future industry projects that the nexus of transportation linkage, deep sea port, industry-friendly community and power/water supply would create deep competitive, global value proposition (article 1, article 2, article 3, article 4)

4.11 Designated Industrial Zone

Advocate for creation of a Designated Industrial Zone initiative to mirror Alberta and advocate for designation of Kitimat as one such zone. A designated industrial zone is intended to stimulate new investment and job creation. Criteria are intended to fast track/remove obstacles related to new investments: Formal Agreement; Coordinated Municipal Zoning; Minimum Threshold Requirements; Infrastructure Capacity; Harmonized Permitting and Bylaws; Environmental Management Commitments.

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Goal 4 **Grow Business Small to Big**

Objective 3: Enable land-base site selection.

4.12

Port Strategy

Update the Kitimat Port Strategy in collaboration with industry and other relevant agencies to refine and sharpen Kitimat's value proposition and position for future investment attraction. Last strategy completed in 2006.

4.13

Land Enablement

Digitize non-residential land availability on district of Kitimat website – e.g. City of Sarnia

Goal 5 **Create and Promote a Desirable Community Workforce Wants to Relocate to**

5.1

Marketing Campaign

5.1.1 Add a “BIG by Nature” element to the Kitimat Bound/Kitimat Now brand focused on “a face of Kitimat” photos series that personalizes and softens the Kitimat brand using nature as a canvas for human experience. Focus on tight-crop bodies/faces that share the stoic, rugged, all-weather spirit of Kitimat as nature’s cathedral – where everything so big is so adventurous…and humbling. Develop new photography and video work to support the campaign, with activity-focused value proposition, with call to action to Kitimat bound website.

5.1.2 Sustain Kitimat Bound/Kitimat Now Resident & Workforce Attraction program in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce beyond 2025 by building funding partnerships with major Kitimat employers.

5.2

Pride Swag

Create rugged on-brand Kitimat swag to build community pride.

5.3

“Welcome”

Support welcome programming such as the Welcome to Kitimat Club to nurture “shadow resident” conversion to full-time residency.

a) Establish a Welcome Wagon (example 1, example 2).

b) Hold an annual Newcomer Event (e.g. Minto, ON).

Pathways to Permanency: *Quality Education, Healthcare Access, Housing Choice and Affordability, Recreation Amenity, Downtown Enhancement (retail/services/entertainment).*

5.4

Daycare

Continue to support the recruitment and retention of Early Childhood Educators to ensure more daycare spaces are available within the community.

5.5

Education

Consider adding Nechako and Kildala Elementary Schools to Fraser Institute rankings, and strike a committee to collaborate with Coast Mountain School District 82 to evaluate and improve perception of scoring.

Matter of Fact - School Rankings

St. Anthony’s K-9 Private – 114/870

Mount Elizabeth 7-12 – 248/252

For more than 20 years, the Fraser Institute's school rankings website has been the go-to source for parents and educators to measure school performance. The Fraser Institute's rankings are based primarily on how students fared on standardized tests (BC - Foundation Skills Assessment).

Goal 5 **Create and Promote a Desirable Community Workforce Wants to Relocate to**

5.6 Healthcare

5.6.1 Generate a strategy for physician/medical staff recruitment including branding, content, and campaigns and incentivization program – such as municipal housing options - if and when required.

5.6.2 Direct newcomers to Health Connect Registry to find a doctor or nurse practitioner.

5.6.3 Continue to support efforts of the Kitimat Health Advocacy group, the Kitimat General Hospital Foundation and the Kitimat Valley Housing Society project for dementia residents to completion.

5.7 Shadow Population

Address community development elements of this Strategy to nurture resident/workforce attraction and shadow population conversion to permanent residency.

Matter of Fact

Kitimat population: 9,978. 8,595 (86%) permanent residents. 1,383 (14%) shadow residents. Kitimat has a higher shadow population as a proportion of the total population than its neighbouring communities of Terrace (4%), the Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine (6%), and Prince Rupert (4%).

Matter of Fact

Kitimat household income 114% Terrace, 121% BC, 122% Canada while median value of dwellings 44% of BC, 83% of Terrace, and 70% of Canada. Src: Census Canada 2021

5.8 Industry Partnerships

Form funded industry legacy partnerships (e.g. building sponsorship, amenity contributions) to support amenity enhancements.

5.9 Marketing

Marketing #3 supported economic development program element (42%) (Src: Community Survey, 2023).

5.9.1 Promote the Live Northwest BC digital presence as supporting marketing

5.9.2 Retool Community Profile as an Investment Guide that includes comparative value proposition - E.g. Village of Canal Flats

5.9.3 Deepen resident/workforce attraction digital presence beyond Kitimat Bound landing page. E.g. Village of Canal Flats

Kitimat's Solid Marketing Foundations:

Community Profile

Newcomer Guide ("Relocation")

Starting a Business Guide

Visitor Guide/Web

Invest

5.10 Value Proposition

Promote the quantitative income to housing cost comparative value proposition..

Key Performance Indicators

1 Positive Net Promoter Score

Current: -45

Net Promoter score is a well-used measure of loyalty to products and place. A positive-trending score, surveyed every three years, has a number of positive community and economic development benefits.

2 Lower Mobility. More Seniors

Current 5 Year Mobility (2016-2021): 39.6%

Lower mobility and more seniors means people appreciate the community, and stay for more than the job. Positive movement indicates the community has been successful at motivating longer-term residency.

Metrics: 30% 5-year mobility by 2026. Proportionate increase of 1% age 65+ 2021-2026.

3 Business Licenses Per Capita

With a baseline established in 2023, a positive trending number indicates a key diversification strategy (entrepreneurship) is generating success.


BIG
by
nature
"If your love was the rain I'd lie on the roof."[1] There's a lot to fall in love with in Kitimat's adventure playground. Find your soul here.
[1] Nothing to Lose (song) – Hunter Metts.