



# Findings Report

2023

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# INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2023, an economic development overview was completed to provide Kneehill County clarity on where the county is right now in terms of economic development and investment readiness. It was decided to proceed with a formal Economic Development Strategy to determine specific goals and action items to implement over the next 3-5 years.

A Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) survey was conducted in the fall specifically targeting businesses within the county. A Community Survey followed to engage residents on their thoughts and opinions on economic development initiatives. Data and information from these surveys will help to inform Council and provide valuable insight in the development of their Economic Development Strategic Plan.

# METHODOLOGY

A Business Retention and Expansion survey was completed in the fall of 2023 to understand how to best support local businesses. Deloitte was commissioned to complete a Triage BR&E to engage the broader business community, while also allowing for the identification of potential expansion or retention opportunities for follow-up on a business-by-business basis. A mixed methodology survey was completed via phone and email using Kneehill County's business directory. A total of 77 businesses were reached.

***A separate Triage BR&E Report is attached.***

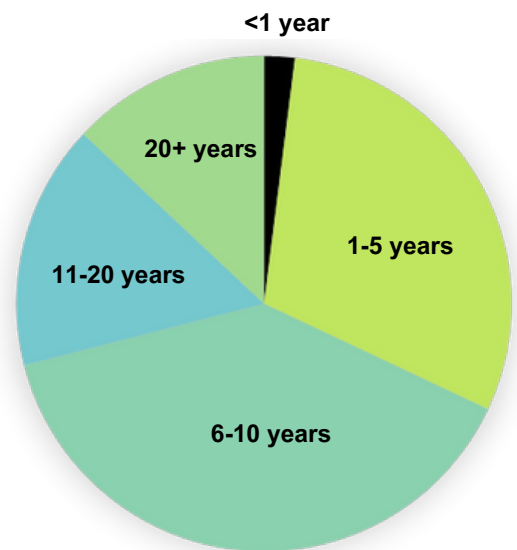
Further engagement followed through a Community Survey, which was available to complete either online or manually. A total of 693 surveys were received; 617 completed online and 22 manual surveys. Of these, 35 surveys were deemed duplicates for a total of 658 community surveys analyzed.

***The following are Key Findings from the community survey.***

### SURVEY REPRESENTATION

- 45%** residents working within the county
- 19%** residents working outside of the county
- 39%** do not live in the county, but either work, own a business, or own property in the county
- 11%** retired
- 8%** student
- 3%** unemployed

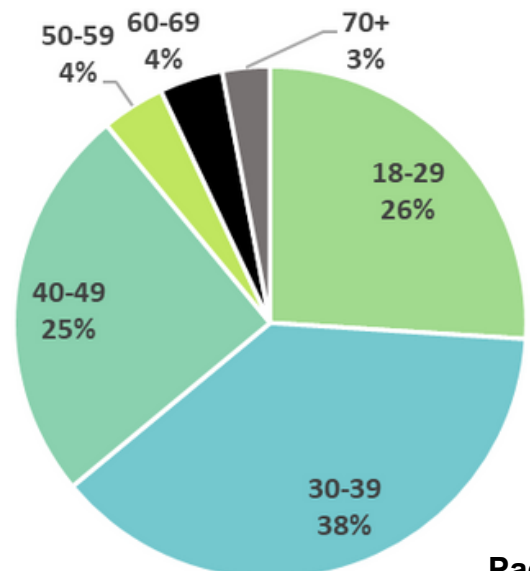
### HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED HERE?



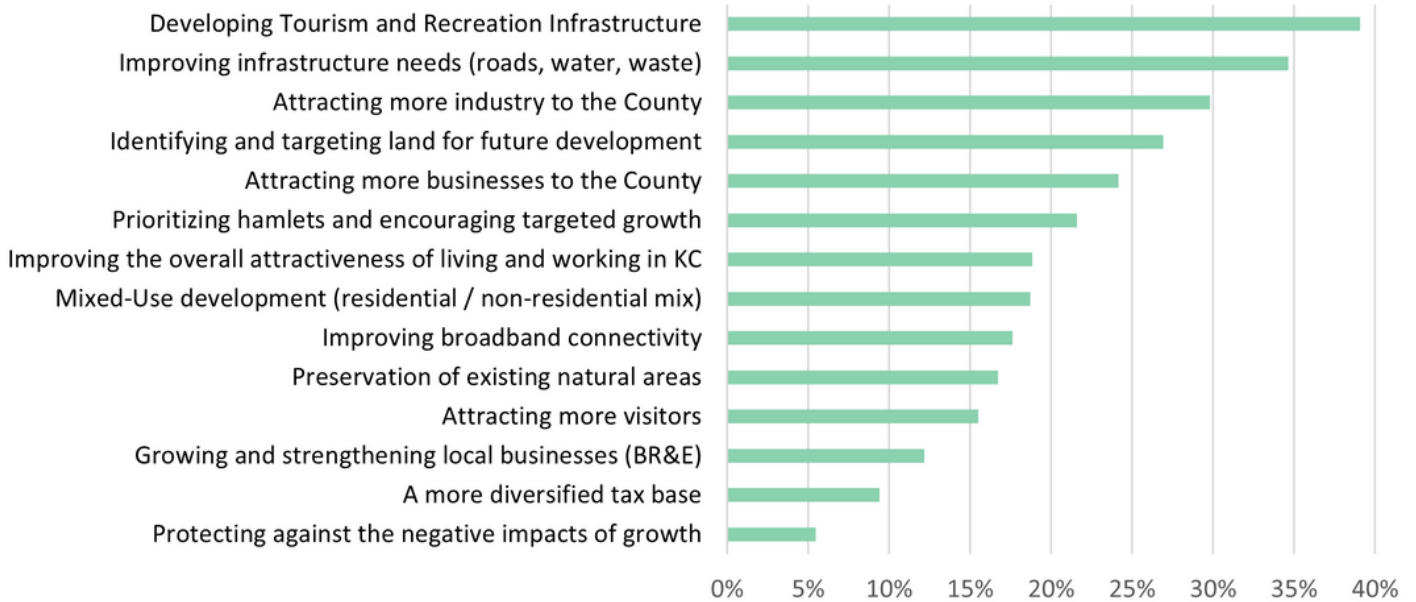
### TOP 3 REASONS WHY PEOPLE LIVE IN KNEEHILL COUNTY

- 1** Family ties
- 2** Jobs / employment opportunities
- 3** Rural character, lifestyle or scenic beauty

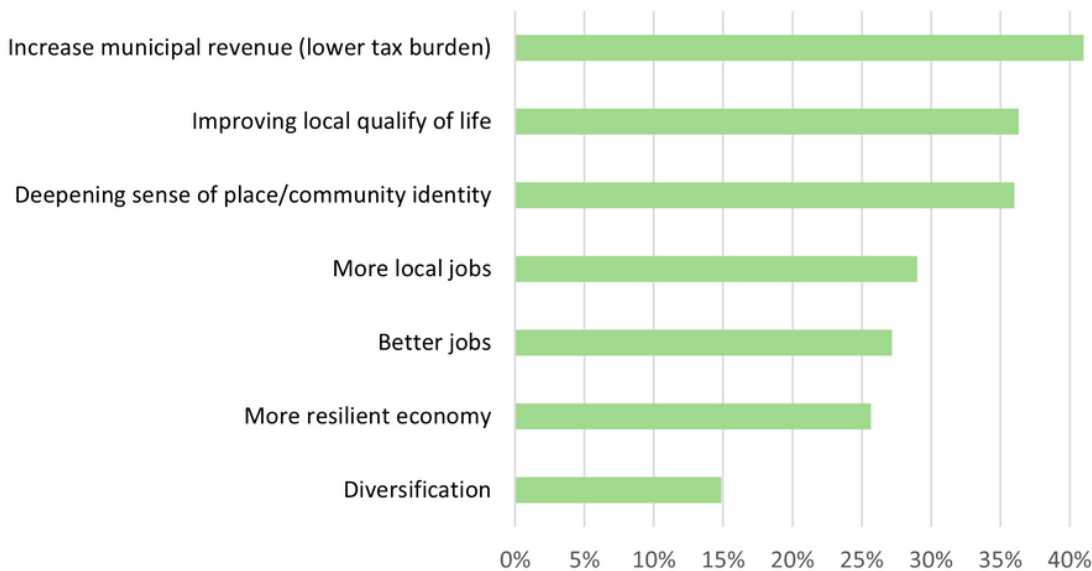
### AGE CATEGORY



## WHEN IT COMES TO SUPPORTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES, WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?



## WHY DO YOU WANT TO SEE GROWTH IN LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT?



### 3 BIGGEST CHALLENGES, ISSUES OR CONCERNS:

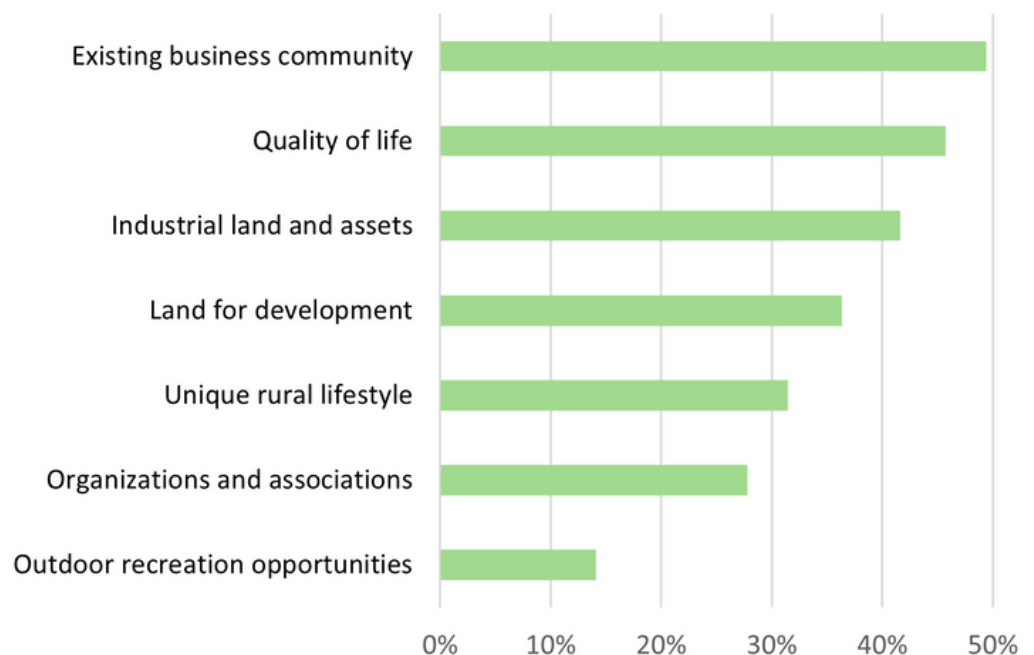
- 1 Finding enough land or space for new or growing businesses
- 2 Communication and cooperation with municipality
- 3 Availability of employment opportunities

## WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR KNEEHILL COUNTY 15 YEARS FROM NOW?

After reviewing the the responses provided in the survey results, the suggested vision for Kneehill County's future should involve a **balance between economic growth, environmental sustainability, and community well-being.**

Suggestions included attracting new businesses and industries, creating job opportunities, and increasing income levels. The importance of sustainable management of existing infrastructure and resources was also emphasized, including water management and waste management. Finally, there was a strong desire for community involvement in decision-making and planning processes, with a focus on enhancing community cohesion and sense of belonging.

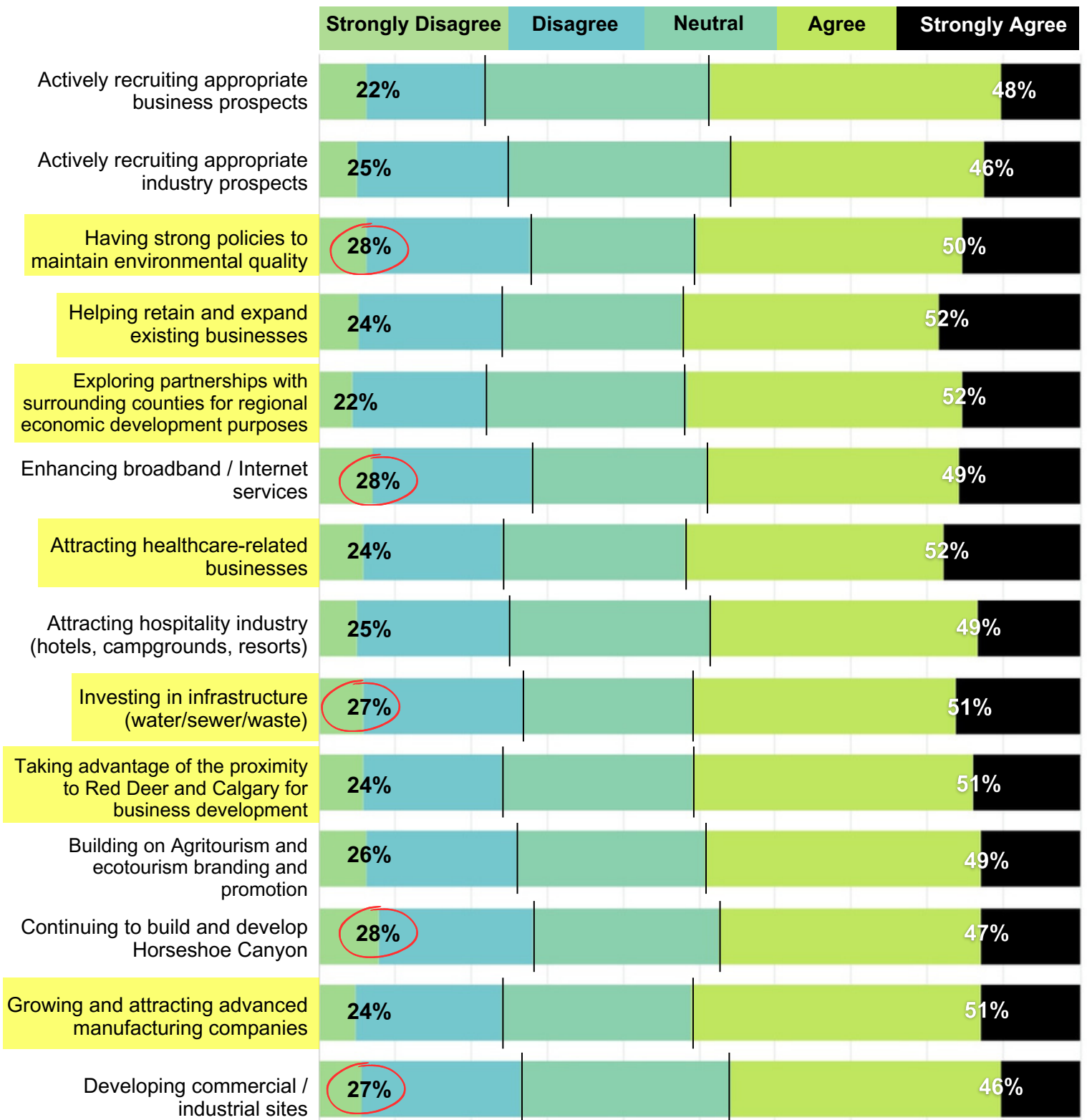
## WHAT SHOULD KNEEHILL COUNTY FOCUS ON WITHIN THE EC. DEV PLAN?



## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP IMPROVE THE LOCAL ECONOMY?

- The common theme among the responses was the importance of supporting local businesses, services, and products.
- Promoting the county to attract more customers and generating revenue for local businesses was also emphasized.
- Other ways to support the local economy included volunteering, participating in community activities, and promoting tourism.

## RATE THE FOLLOWING POTENTIAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES:



For the most part, people agree or strongly agree with all the listed priorities.

Although some people strongly disagree or disagree with them, all priorities have a higher percentage of support.

## ANSWERS TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

### Q9 - In Your own Words, what is your vision for Kneehill County 15 years from now?

- Attract new citizens and retain existing residents
- Be recognized as a leader in the provision of quality agricultural products
- Be recognized as a provincial leader in good municipal governance
- Continue respectful and collaborative relationships with regional partner municipalities and other orders of government
- Ensure that Kneehill County remains fiscally sustainable and resilient to external events
- Foster an economic environment where local business can grow while maintaining resilience to external market and environmental forces
- Grow economic activity in Kneehill County
- Increase our income level
- Prioritize hamlets and encourage targeted growth
- Sustainably manage existing infrastructure
- Understand current and future rural water requirements
- A county that is financially stable while continuing to maintain or improve existing infrastructure and develop or add additional infrastructure following engagement with landowners/residents.
- A deepening sense of place/community identity improves local quality of life
- A diversified county that suits all walks of life
- A life where everyone is happy
- A more diverse tax base
- A more resilient economy
- A nice place to build an acreage in a piece of land
- A rural, small community minded county who focuses on the development of proper infrastructure and sustainability of the individuals currently within the county.
- a strengthened farming community - a vision that already seems unattainable. Smaller farms are being sold and the number of farm families has already decreased alarmingly. Hutterite colonies are buying up the land, making it unaffordable for farmers. They do not support local communities or business - thus speeding up their demise.
- A thriving County with many job opportunities and increased essentials provided locally.
- Achieving major changes in sustainable transportation and accessibility in cities
- Actively recruit suitable industry prospects.
- Advanced, prosperous
- Affordable living
- After 15 years, it has efficient public services and modern medical facilities
- All families have access to high-quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive early learning and childcare
- Although farming is our bread basket in the province, the number of individuals actually doing the business is decreasing. Somehow we have to attract new business to open up shop within the municipality to keep funding the infrastructure that the area requires. As much as people hate change, we have to embrace new ideas to move forward with the future.
- Attract investment and enterprise development, create job opportunities, and improve the quality of life of residents.
- Attract new citizens and retain existing residents
- Attracting healthcare-related businesses.
- Authentically engage with and communicate to the County's residents
- Be recognized as a leader in the provision of quality agricultural products
- Be recognized as a provincial leader in good municipal governance
- Become a model of environmental protection and sustainable development
- Better and cleaner water
- Better community life and job opportunities
- Branding and promotion of agritourism and ecotourism.
- Build close partnerships with governments, businesses, non-profit organizations and community groups.
- Building environmentally friendly and sustainable cities, focusing on resource recovery and reuse, and reducing carbon emissions.
- Building resilience to environmental, economic and social disasters
- Can see better development in the future
- Continue to be responsive to the needs of youth within the County
- Continuing to be more rural than urban in our quality of life but maintaining our infrastructure for our residents. Massive urban growth is not wanted and the buying up of farmland by outside players is not wanted either. Protect our present businesses and allow for slight growth in our hamlets, villages and towns.

- Continuing to evolve and grow while retaining the quality of life that attracted the current resident base. Encourage generational growth.
- Decent jobs for everyone
- Develop an advanced education system to nurture a young generation with innovative thinking and leadership.
- Develop and strengthen local businesses (business retention and expansion)
- Develop tourism to attract tourists and increase economic development.
- Encourage residents to participate in community decision-making and planning to enhance community cohesion and sense of belonging
- Enhance County Innovation Capabilities Enhance County Innovation Capabilities
- Ensure the County is prepared for future waste management needs
- Everyone can be happy
- Everyone can live a better life
- Help to sustain current business that has been the backbone of the community. Strengthen and focus on agriculture based business and make the County a place where young people want to stay.
- Helping retain and expand existing businesses
- High quality medical services and health benefits are provided to ensure the physical and mental health of residents.
- I imagine an enhanced infrastructure network in Kneehill County that supports efficient transportation systems and connectivity. Improved roads and public transportation options would not only facilitate commuting but also encourage tourism by making it easier for visitors to explore the area's attractions.
- I would like to see a diverse and resilient economy that retains and is proud of its rural character.
- In my own words, envisioning Kneehill County 15 years from now involves a thriving and sustainable community that embraces innovation, preserves its natural beauty, and fosters a high quality of life for its residents.
- Invest in infrastructure (water/sewer/waste)
- It is hoped that Kneehill County can make greater progress in environmental protection, culture and education, and social equity
- More horses and cattle - less people. Let the grass grow for hay - no pavement
- More infrastructure
- More senior opportunities
- More tourism
- More low cost housing, more employment, a new grocery store
- more population, more businesses, improved healthcare facilities. Different kinds of business - something new
- My vision is to develop new industries, businesses and jobs to support the prosperity of the community
- My vision is to encourage active public participation and participation in the decision-making process
- Outdoor recreation opportunities
- Overall improvement and promotion
- People with better economic conditions lead happier lives
- People's life is better
- Planning for tourism and leisure in recent years.
- Prioritize hamlets and encourage targeted growth
- Promote agricultural and food security and support sustainable agricultural practices and local industry development.
- Provide good medical and health services, create a comfortable and safe living environment, and pay attention to the physical and mental health of residents.
- Strengthen cooperation between community safety and law enforcement agencies to improve security.
- Support the development of arts and culture, and build cultural centers and art Spaces.
- Sustain the farming way of life and allow our youth to stay in the county allowing them to be farmers and still have employment opportunities
- Sustainably manage existing infrastructure
- That Kneehill County will be a safe, peaceful, quiet place to live and that the landscape will not be polluted with towers and windmills that cause noise pollution and have negative affects on the health and well-being of its local residents and tax payers.
- The application of advanced technology and Internet of Things technology to achieve the intelligent management of urban infrastructure and improve the efficiency of urban operation.
- The businesses in the community would be thriving, the "rural" lifestyle we enjoy would be in tact with strong community spirit. Our environment would also be thriving (i.e. clean air and water)



- The construction of housing diversification, providing housing options to adapt to different needs.
- Thriving county that maintains affordable rural properties and increases business and employment options. A county that is forward thinking and open to ideas such as tiny home villages and other unique infrastructure.
- To be a financially sound county who are able to maintain the county infrastructure, but also to provide great support to its Villages, towns and cities with respect to tourism and perhaps some services. I would love for Kneehill County to be a leader in an environmentally sound county who offers great resources for both its residents and for tourists who will want to spend time in this county.
- To not allow solar panels or usable farmland
- To not be like Rockyview or Red Deer county. Too busy, full and bureaucratic. Keeping places for mom and pop shops. Small business and ambitious startups not related to tech.
- To promote scientific and technological innovation and become a center of research and development and innovation.
- To return to where it was 30 years ago. No growing is necessary. This is an established rural area that simply needs to maintain what it has.
- Understand current and future rural water requirements
- We can have clean energy that everyone can afford
- Wealth distribution is more equitable
- Work hard and join hands to create a better life!

**Q 11 – What’s the one thing you feel that YOU can do to help improve the local economy?**

- By consciously choosing to shop at locally owned stores, dine at local restaurants, and utilize services provided by local professionals, we can help stimulate economic growth within our community.
- By encouraging residents and visitors alike to explore what Kneehill County has to offer, we can attract more customers and generate revenue for our local businesses.
- Continue to build and develop Horseshoe Canyon
- Be a local steward and promote the county to others.
- Be more aware of what is going on; vote or do surveys when asked
- Be more involved
- Build an acreage in my land
- Buy local
- Buy local
- Buy local produce to support farmers and agriculture.
- Buy local products and services to support local business growth and job creation
- Directly hire local people
- Encourage farming
- Go shopping at a local grocery store.
- I am 81 years old and I think I will leave that up to the younger people to look after.
- I could do volunteering to support the residents in worthwhile ways.
- I don't know.
- I don't think I can do anything, you know
- I support local services
- I will consciously help clean up the community
- I will create more job opportunities
- I will participate in community activities
- I will try to start a business
- I'm an old dog in the twilight of my career. But I would be willing to give my time to assist where I could.
- Keep my land from being developed outside of farming
- Nothing - I'm too old
- Participate in volunteer activities in the community to provide additional help and services to the town.
- Planning for tourism and leisure in recent years.
- Promote local culture and handicrafts
- Promote tourism
- Shop local and support small business.
- Shop local.
- shop locally
- Shop locally when prices are good
- Shopping for small businesses

- Spend extra time shopping for what I need from local vendors
- Support local
- Support local business where available
- Support local businesses
- Support local businesses – buy local
- Support our local businesses
- Support small town business
- Understand and pay attention to the municipal affairs of the town, participate in the citizens' deliberations and decision-making process, and put forward constructive opinions and suggestions
- Visit the local grocery store
- Volunteer
- volunteering my time and skills can make a positive impact on the local economy. Whether it's offering free workshops or mentoring aspiring entrepreneurs, sharing knowledge and expertise can empower individuals to start their own businesses or enhance existing ones. This ultimately leads to job creation and economic development
- We can vigorously develop tourism and attract foreign investment

### **Q13 – Anything else you'd like to share:**

- County needs to be more involved in local business, promote what we have and County needs to shop local as much as possible.
- I am totally against windmills coming into Kneehill County! Please take all measures to stop them!
- I think Horseshoe Canyon is a ready made tourist destination and should be developed. However, generally speaking, I don't think tourism is our strong point. Each access to Red Deer and Calgary are stronger assets. Having a well developed infrastructure will make the county more attractive to businesses that need some access to Red Deer and Calgary.
- I think we can upgrade the infrastructure to attract businesses and improve efficiency
- Is there any way to limit multiple housing - beyond 2 or 3 homes on a farm?
- It is hoped that while upgrading the facilities, the care for the elderly can be increased
- Make use of the natural landscape and cultural heritage of Kneehill County to develop tourism, attract more tourists to travel and spend money, and promote economic growth.
- More consideration for the sustainable development of the community
- No special preference for oil companies and taxation
- Strongly disagree with installing solar panels on farmable land
- We do not want too much high density acreage areas or "estate living" It has a severe negative impact on agricultural and is costly to operate.
- I feel that the area I live is negatively impacted by the number of feed lots. They are noisy, dirty, create tons of big truck traffic, attract many unwanted insects, the smells make it impossible to enjoy the yard or to open a window at certain times. The bright lights are on 7/24 and although we are given an opportunity to object to feedlot growth through a govt board, that is a complete waste of time and tax payer dollar as they have said none of our concerns are valid, including our issues around underground water and our property values. The fact that I see these overcrowded, force feeding operations as both cruel and inhumane, I understand that the Majority do not, but i do wish they were not allowed to be so close to regular family acreages. I don't see how these large operations are good for the environment