

The logo for BDCA, consisting of the letters 'BDCA' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

| BD CARRUTHERS |
| AND ASSOCIATES |

District of Fort St. James

Draft: 2023-26 Strategic Plan

Prepared by: Brian Carruthers
BD Carruthers and Associates (BDCA)
Date: August 25, 2023
Revised: September 5, 2023

INTRODUCTION

This draft strategic plan was developed through a facilitated process in July of 2023, which involved the completion of a pre-workshop questionnaire, a half-day workshop with senior staff, followed by a one and a half-day, interactive workshop with members of Council.

The workshop with senior staff provided an opportunity for staff to provide their perspectives and input to the process, which were shared with Council during their workshop. It also identified any staff capacity or organizational deficiencies that may need to be considered in the strategic plan, or that could impact the advancement of the strategic plan.

The one and a half-day interactive Council workshop initially focused on establishing a common understanding of the future aspirations for the community (vision); the role and expectations of Council (mission); and the commitments by which the Council and the organization will serve the constituents and undertake the work of the District of Fort St. James (values). The balance of the workshop engaged the participants in identifying and prioritizing the important opportunities and critical challenges currently facing the District of Fort St. James. This provided the basis for developing practical, achievable goals and strategies for the term of office.

OUR COMMUNITY

Fort St. James, located on the south shore of Stuart Lake, is a municipality of 1400 residents and occupies lands that have been home of the Nak'azdli Whut'en people since time immemorial. The community is defined by the welcoming character and fun spirit of the people who live here as well as the beauty of the surrounding waters landscapes, and natural environments. Fort St. James is a true 'community' that is affordable, provides a range of services and offers a slower pace of life. There is an abundance of 4-season outdoor activities and a strong tradition of youth sports that contribute to a high quality of life for all who call the community home.

OUR FUTURE

As we look to the future, we envision a growing community that is culturally integrated, with a diverse and vibrant economy that provides employment opportunities for our citizens. The community has embraced a common theme, creating a strong 'sense of place' that is a catalyst for growth and new investment in the tourism and service sectors. The municipal infrastructure that serves our citizens is stable, resilient and sustainable and the community has access to robust and reliable internet connectivity that supports businesses and virtual work. The community is increasingly self-sufficient with access to locally grown food, adequate housing options for all citizens, and resilience and preparedness in response to a changing climate and resulting natural emergencies and events.

OUR ROLE

As an elected Council, we are responsible and accountable for making decisions that benefit of our citizens, today, and into the future. We are proactive and forward thinking as we establish policies that effectively plan for and manage growth, manage our infrastructure and deliver services that meet the needs of our citizens. We are ambassadors for our community, ensuring that information is communicated to, and from our citizens and we advocate to other levels of government and agencies in the interest of our community.

OUR COMMITMENTS

As we fulfill our roles and responsibilities as a municipal Council, we will strive to:

- Represent our residents and constituents in a fair and professional manner;
- Work closely with First Nation, community groups and senior government partners to achieve our goals;
- Consider and be respectful of other viewpoints when making decisions;
- Be fiscally responsible stewards of the taxpayer's money;
- Strive to function as an effective team;
- Communicate openly and with candor; and
- Act with integrity

PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The purpose of a strategic plan is to create a common understanding of the issues facing our community and establish strategic priority areas to address these challenges and opportunities. The strategic plan is used to guide financial and human resource allocation, provide direction to municipal staff on how to align decision making, and establish a clear vision for the future. The strategic plan is a tool to track and measure our progress as a local government while focusing the resources of the municipality to address key issues.

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

The following strategic focus areas address the most important opportunities and challenges facing the community, and were established with a recognition that the financial resources and capacity of the district have limits.

1. *Adapting to a Changing Climate*

Goal:

To understand the impacts of climate change on our community and take appropriate measures to protect our citizens and infrastructure.

Why:

Our community and many of our assets are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. We must be proactive and plan ahead in order to protect our citizens, prevent service disruptions and avoid future costs.

Objectives:

- 1.1 Complete a hazard vulnerability risk assessment to inform future emergency mitigation and response planning.
- 1.2 Undertake approved fuel management initiatives adjacent to the community to mitigate impacts from wildfires
- 1.3 Investigate water distribution line extensions to provide fire flows for un-serviced properties.
- 1.4 Undertake the development of a carbon action plan to guide the District's efforts to address climate change.

2. *Managing our Assets*

Goal:

To undertake a systematic and proactive approach to developing, maintaining and replacing our assets and infrastructure.

Why:

The District has a significant investment in assets and infrastructure that provide essential services to our community. We have a responsibility to plan and manage our assets effectively to ensure continuity of service and to mitigate future costs to our citizens.

Objectives:

- 2.1 Implement an asset management software platform to guide and support financial planning and asset management activities across the organization.

2.2 Develop sound financial policies and strategies for funding future asset repair and replacement.

3. *Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation*

Goal

To explore and advance opportunities to work together with Indigenous governments on mutual goals and priorities for the benefit of our respective communities.

Why is it important?

We are stronger as a community when we work together and building strong and respectful relationships through sharing, learning and understanding.

Objectives

- 3.1 Advance Council to Council engagement sessions to share and discuss respective goals and objectives and identify opportunities for cooperation and collaboration on areas of mutual interest.
- 3.2 Continue negotiations with Nak'azdli Whut'en Chief and Council regarding shared municipal water and wastewater systems.

4. *Organizational Effectiveness*

Goal:

To provide quality governance and service delivery for our community.

Why:

We want to be effective in our service to the community and our citizens to have confidence in their local government.

Objectives:

- 4.1 Undertake an organizational assessment to evaluate the performance of key functions within the municipal operations and identify and mitigate any risks associated with organizational performance.
- 4.2 Investigate and deliver ongoing training workshops for Council to develop and enhance governance competencies and processes.