



Community Profile

IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT #4
WATERTON LAKES NATIONAL PARK

Municipal/County Name	ID #4, Waterton Lakes National Park	Contact Name	Scott Barton
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Date	December 2023	Phone Number	403-308-0034
Give an overview of your region (150-200 words)			
<p>Nestled in the far SW corner of Alberta, Waterton is one of the most distinctive mountain parks on the planet. Shaped over centuries by wind, fire, glacial ice, and floods, the park's ecosystem is so distinctive that it was designated a Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations. It boasts the title of International Peace Park too, thanks to the unguarded border it shares with Glacier National Park in Montana. Annually Waterton hosts around 500,000 visitors, most coming in June, July, and August. In the summer its population can reach around 600 while during the winter, it is closer to 100.</p>			
Sectors			
What sectors are you most competitive for and why?			
<p>Tourism is the only sector that operates in Waterton, and it runs year-round with some business in the winter, but the majority of the sector operates from May through October. It is successful as this is one of the places on earth that defies description, it is so unique and beautiful that you can't find the words to express what your senses are taking in when you are there. The park offers traditional tourism services of accommodations, restaurants, shopping, equipment rental, plus guided tours, and scenic boat tours. There is an opportunity to expand the tourism offerings in the shoulder and winter seasons.</p>			
What is your value proposition?			
<p>Waterton is a mountain park that is unspoiled, so it provides a rare opportunity for businesses to connect with mountain park enthusiasts in an environment that is uncrowded, and beautiful. It provides a stable and growing customer base for strong sales results and high customer satisfaction.</p>			
Costs of Doing Business			
Tax rates			
Residential: 3.6146 Non-Residential: 9.1996			
Land Costs per acre (average)			
Land is only available for lease, not for sale. Average lease Transfers are between \$900,000 - \$3.2 million and all lots are under an acre.			
Real estate costs per sq. ft (average)			
\$350/square foot			
Incentives or cost advantages (if any)			
There are no formal tax incentives or cost advantages for investment currently.			
Other	Due to the nature of the park, expansion through new lot development is not permitted by Parks Canada. Business investment must occur utilizing existing lots.		
Ease of Doing Business			
What supports do you bring for new businesses (try to be specific)?			
<p>Waterton is a small center, so businesses have high visibility. This is further enhanced through the Waterton Chamber which drives significant traffic to their website and social media. New businesses can be part of this and promoted to help them succeed.</p>			
Are there major transport access (road, rail, air)			
<p>Highways 5 & 6 are the key transport access areas to Southern Alberta as well as to the Chief Mountain (open seasonally) border crossing to access the United States. The closest rail is in Lethbridge as well as the airport.</p>			
Describe the business culture in the community			
<p>Multi-generational family lease holders are the typical operators in the park, which has grown into a close-knit and supportive business environment. This can make new investment challenging as opportunities do not arise very often for individuals not already operating a business in the park.</p>			
How do you make new businesses feel welcomed? Feel supported?			

While there are no official programs, the community is close and supportive of one another. This along with the support of the Waterton Chamber provides an opportunity for operators to get connected.
Who is the point of contact for inquiries?
Parks Canada (Townsite Management)
Speed of Doing Business
What are the permitting & zoning timelines?
2-3 years due to Federal jurisdiction
Is the point of contact for inquiries familiar with land use planning, development approvals and the building process?
Yes
Talent
What does your talent pipeline look like? How do you attract talent? What is the affordability look like (e.g., Average housing costs)
Waterton draws its talent from the surrounding area for year-round employment opportunities. For seasonal work, individuals (mostly post-secondary and high-school students) are recruited from across Canada as well as the surrounding geographical area of SW Alberta. The opportunity to work in such a beautiful space is the biggest draw and due to it being tourism focused, the ability to make additional money in the form of tips is attractive to the job seekers. Staff housing is provided and is limited so this can be a challenge for some of the operators. Many operators will rely on housing in neighboring smaller communities like Mountain View, Twin Butte, Cardston, and Pincher Creek. The operators work with the staff to help them find housing.
Is there access to post-secondary or training programs offered?
The closest post-secondary institutions are in Lethbridge, which is 1.5 hours away. However, this isn't as relevant because most workers are seasonal in nature and are attending post-secondary elsewhere.
What are the stats about the local workforce?
The year-round local workforce is comprised of individuals with an average age of 42 (Stats Can 2020 Census). The seasonal workers are typically 18-25 and are post-secondary students. For some of the businesses, they are owner operated, so they rely on family members and themselves. An emerging trend is hiring retired seniors to work part time in the summer.
How do you retain talent? What is the quality of life like in your community? (schools, recreation etc.) How do you ensure new residents feel welcome?
People work in Waterton because they want to be able to have an outdoor lifestyle. Whether it is hiking, fishing, cross-country skiing, or horseback riding, the amount of outdoor recreational opportunities within the community is almost unlimited. The seasonal workers build their community quite quickly with their co-workers as the closest center that is larger with all amenities is 30 minutes away. Many businesses hold staff nights so that the workers can connect and meet other people during their time in the park.
ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) + DEI (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion) ESG compliance and disclosure are top drivers of investor trust as there is a growing awareness that communities, companies, government etc. have the responsibility and resources to accomplish positive climate action and build a more sustainable and resilient future.
What are the environmental, sustainability or emission reduction initiatives in your community?
Being a national park, the Federal government's initiatives are taken as a priority. Currently there is a solar project and EV chargers in the community. The Park also undertakes multiple projects to remove invasive species and encourages wildlife habitat management. Education to the public is a key initiative that is undertaken in Waterton.
What are the DEI initiatives in your community?
Visitors to the park come from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, so signage in those languages has been implemented. There is also a strong tie with the indigenous community and information is shared in Blackfoot. Displays and cultural presentations are also hosted to encourage learning about diversity.
Other
Are there any other aspects that make your community unique?
Waterton is a model national park community that has struck the right balance between the preservation of natural areas with business development.
Include any relevant maps or photos of investment ready sites- not available at this time.