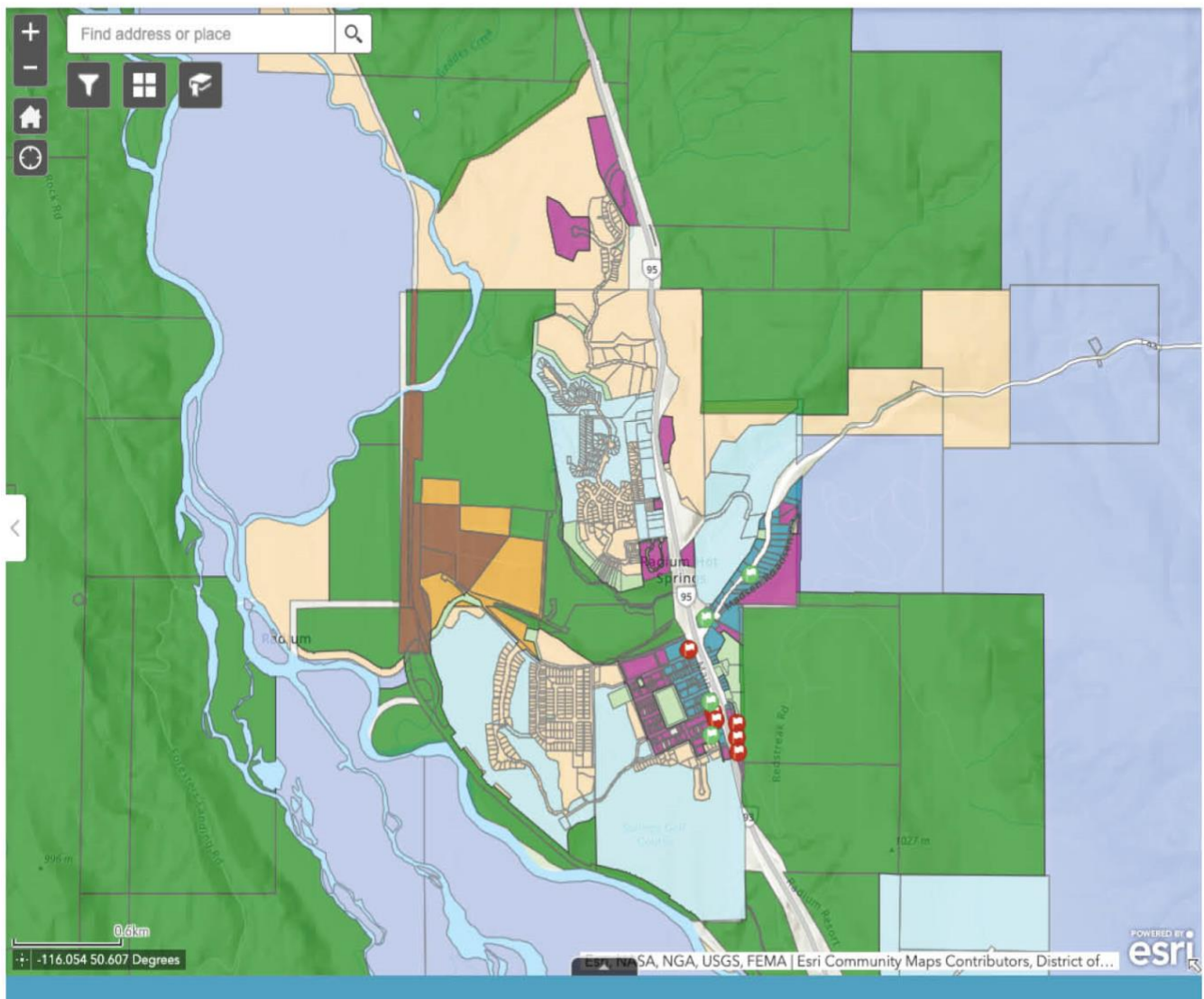


2020 EMPLOYMENT LANDS INVENTORY

Regional District of East Kootenay



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INTRODUCTION

Land parcels available for development are important community assets, providing you with a basis to attract a new business, help an existing business to grow, or execute an economic development strategy.¹

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The RDEK employment lands inventory was conducted as part of the Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute's *Local Government Economic Development Research and Capacity Building program*, a regional-scale economic development initiative focused on business attraction, land development, and economic resilience for the Kootenay and Boundary regions. Funded by the Province of BC's Rural Dividend Fund in 2019, a total of \$500,000 from the Province of BC was matched with \$250,000 from Columbia Basin Trust and the Regional Districts of East Kootenay (RDEK), Central Kootenay (RDCK), Kootenay Boundary (RDKB), and the Town of Golden.

The program included direct research to support local government economic development decision-making. The RDEK's identified priorities for direct research were the completion of corridor-level investment readiness assessments for the Elk Valley, Columbia Valley and Kimberley-Cranbrook corridors, and preparation of a GIS-based employment lands inventory for the region that provides data used for site selection.

This report provides a summary of the employment lands project, including an overview of employment lands in the region and associated data, as well as opportunities for communities, corridors and the region to build on this work.

PROJECT APPROACH

Employment lands refer to privately and publicly owned properties that support industrial, commercial, retail, agricultural and other land uses that employ people in a variety of jobs and a diversity of sectors (e.g. manufacturing, sales and service, food production, etc.).

The RDI's project team undertook the following core steps to compile the employment lands inventory:

1. Researched the current state of employment lands inventories and related initiatives with a focus on British Columbia, including site selection criteria commonly applied in major site selection processes.
2. Conducted an information workshop on employment lands and investment readiness in the Elk Valley and Columbia Valley in partnership with regional managers from the Province's regional economic operations branch. Primary invitees were members of the Elk Valley Economic Initiative and Columbia Valley Community Economic Development Advisory Cou. Economic development stakeholders from the Kimberley – Cranbrook corridor were invited to participate in person or via Zoom.
3. Identified and compiled provincial mapping layers relevant to RDEK employment lands.
4. Identified and compiled relevant zoning and servicing mapping layers from municipalities, ?aq'am, and the RDEK.
5. Classified municipal and regional zoning designations into five major categories of employment lands:
 - Heavy industrial
 - Light industrial
 - Commercial/retail
 - Agriculture
 - Mixed use

and four major categories of surrounding zones:

- Public
- Recreation/resort
- Residential
- Rural resource

6. Prepared a draft lands inventory for stakeholder review.
7. Revised and updated the draft inventory based on stakeholder feedback. This included adding a real-time data feed of investment opportunities from Imagine Kootenay and adding “featured investment lands” identified by municipalities.
8. Requested that municipalities indicate interest in an annual subscription service to update the RDEK employment lands inventory either quarterly or semi-annually.

NOTES TO READER

The RDEK employment lands inventory can be accessed via this link:

<https://selkirk.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=aa67d37e046c4723a8a64a5ef1ccde3d>

Readers are urged to take note of the following caveats in respect of the RDEK employment lands inventory and data:

- Classification of agricultural lands includes:
 - All parcels specifically zoned for agriculture by municipalities or the RDEK.
 - Parcels fully within the provincial Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Parcels that are only partially within the ALR are excluded.
 - Some agricultural operations in the RDEK are outside the ALR on lands with rural resource zoning. Several such parcels were identified manually and included in the agriculture zone of interest; however, there are likely to be additional parcels of this nature that have not been identified and included in the inventory as agriculture lands.
 - Based on the preceding, it is possible that the volume of agricultural land in the RDEK has been underestimated.
- BC Assessment data licensing requirements preclude identification of vacant parcels on the inventory; however, aggregate data on vacant lands is presented later in this report.
- Underutilized parcels were not identified as part of this project. Underutilized land is generally defined as locations that are chronically vacant and do not contribute services or amenities to the community while having potential for more productive uses. Categories of underutilized land may include brownfields, bluefields, vacant lots, surface parking lots and vacant buildings.²

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

Almost every region in the world that has been truly successful in inbound investment and business expansion and retention (BRE) has effectively developed working relationships at a regional level to promote, facilitate and service lands. Conversely, research on the regions / communities that are struggling to attract investment and grow / retain businesses shows they are usually working in silos and are often at odds with neighbouring communities.³

EMPLOYMENT LANDS IN PRACTICE

Employment lands are not an ends but a means to sustainable employment. Simply supplying serviced lands is not enough to generate investment interest to spur economic growth or sustain an economy, but rather needs to be a component of economic development and treated in this manner.⁴

This project addresses a key component of a larger continuum of activities associated with investment preparedness, planning for land development and investment attraction. In assembling employment lands information, the RDEK and its economic corridors and communities now have greater access to data and greater visibility of employment lands with which to inform economic development activities at multiple scales.

The strategic development of employment lands within a region can serve as a catalyst for economic growth and increased regional prosperity. It provides an opportunity to step outside of community-focused economic development silos and work towards a more coordinated and strategic regional approach to land development that seeks optimization of investment and activities on available vacant and underutilized employment lands according to the unique strengths, attributes and zoning realities of each community in the region.

An employment lands inventory offers a jumping off point for the strategic identification of priority investment lands, zones or corridors for new industrial, commercial, agricultural or other growth. This can, in turn, inform both community and corridor-level land use and economic development priorities and planning, and further inquiry into current and future projections of land supply and demand. In this way a lands inventory provides key inputs for the development of a corridor-level employment lands strategy and/or action plan aimed at attracting investments that preserve a community’s vital qualities.

To design communities that work for both people and businesses and encourage economic growth, local governments need to carefully consider community planning, zoning and land use regulations and the business operating environment. Establishing the right mix of residential, commercial and industrial zones is key to creating a vibrant and sustainable community.⁵

When specific lands or zones have been clearly identified and targeted for development, municipalities are better positioned to take steps to make those lands investment ready, which includes appropriate zoning and servicing.

INVESTMENT READINESS ASSESSMENT FINDINGS RELEVANT TO EMPLOYMENT LANDS

Several lands-related questions were asked as part of the corridor-level investment readiness assessment, with a synopsis of responses provided below. Further details can be found in the investment readiness assessment reports for each corridor.

Table 1: Summary of lands-related responses from investment readiness assessment interviews

Question	Columbia Valley	Kimberley-Cranbrook	Elk Valley
Does your community / corridor have an inventory of available land that includes details of sites that meet site selector needs?	Communities: Canal Flats and Invermere Corridor: No	Communities: Kimberley and Cranbrook Corridor: No	Communities: Fernie and Elkford Corridor: No
Does your community / corridor stay up to date with what’s available in terms of lands and investment opportunities?	Communities: Radium Corridor: No formal process	Communities: Kimberley Corridor: No	Communities: Elkford Corridor: No
Does your community / corridor work with real estate companies and other organizations to promote land to prospective buyers outside the community?	Communities: Imagine Kootenay Corridor: Imagine Kootenay	Communities: No Corridor: No	Communities: No Corridor: No
Does your community have up to date plans for providing water and sewer servicing to commercial or industrial lands targeted for development?	Communities: Radium, Canal Flats	Communities: Kimberley and Cranbrook	Communities: Elkford, Fernie and Sparwood

The investment readiness assessments identified the following lands-related opportunities for all corridors:

- Utilize the RDEK Employment Lands Inventory (which includes investment opportunities listed with Imagine Kootenay) to highlight available investment lands in the East Kootenay.
- Develop corridor-level employment lands strategies to guide and facilitate development of vacant and underutilized lands. The Employment Lands Report prepared for the Regional District of North Okanagan in 2016 may be a useful resource if this opportunity is of interest.⁶
- Consider going through a mock site selector process to develop a better understanding of strengths and gaps in investment readiness.
- Explore interest and capacity to strengthen land identification and promotion to outside investors. This could include forging stronger connections with local realtors to work synergistically on promoting local investment opportunities to outside parties.

RDEK EMPLOYMENT LANDS DATA

The following tables provide summary-level insights on RDEK employment lands at various scales. Detailed community-level data is provided in Appendix 1.

Table 2: Regional District of East Kootenay (Total)

	Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels	total parcels
Agriculture	52062.4	1.5	0.5	42	2832
Commercial	2477.3	8.5	2.8	175	2049
Heavy	9783.0	34.4	0.0	99	288
Light	2407.0	12.8	3.0	78	609
Mixed Use	497.1	1.5	50.6	11	712

Table 3: RDEK Municipalities Only (Total)

	Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels	total parcels
Agriculture	3944.9	0.5	7.3	1	206
Commercial	321.0	9.2	3.0	163	1774
Heavy	9246.9	38.4	0.0	99	258
Light	1212.6	13.9	1.6	77	552
Mixed Use	476.5	1.6	51.3	11	702

Table 4: Elk Valley (Elkford, Sparwood, Fernie, Area A)*

	Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels	total parcels
Agriculture	3304.8	0.0	0.6	0	363
Commercial	1985.7	10.8	19.7	29	269
Heavy	8915.1	5.0	0.0	1	20
Light	434.0	10.3	5.5	15	146
Mixed Use	195.1	0.0	100.0	0	319

* The large volume of commercial land in the Elk Valley is a result of Fernie Alpine Resort (just under 2000 ha) being classified as commercial lands.

Table 5: Southeast Kootenay (Kimberley, Cranbrook, Areas C and E)**

	Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels	total parcels
Agriculture	3960.8	1.5	0.0	17	1082.0

Commercial	302.7	7.2	0.0	98	1349.0
Heavy	123.9	10.7	0.0	3	28.0
Light	1362.4	17.1	0.6	54	360.0
Mixed Use	163.1	1.6	0.0	2	124.0

** This table does not include 5177.2 ha of ?aq'am lands earmarked for light industrial, solar energy, agriculture, and/or small scale retail activities.

Table 6: Columbia Valley (Canal Flats, Invermere, Radium, Areas F and G)

	Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels	total parcels
Agriculture	44316.6	2.1	1.1	25	1185
Commercial	143.8	13.3	0.3	48	406
Heavy	744.0	21.7	0.0	95	240
Light	264.7	10.1	0.0	9	89
Mixed Use	118.3	4.3	19.6	9	259

NEXT STEPS FOR CONSIDERATION

The following items indicate potential next steps that can be taken by municipalities or corridor-level economic development groups to build on the current inventory:

1. Link or embed the employment lands inventory to municipal or corridor-level economic development webpages

- Link:
<https://selkirk.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=aa67d37e046c4723a8a64a5ef1ccde3d>
- Embed code (HTML):

```
<style>.embed-container {position: relative; padding-bottom: 80%; height: 0; max-width: 100%;} .embed-container iframe, .embed-container object, .embed-container iframe{position: absolute; top: 0; left: 0; width: 100%; height: 100%;} small{position: absolute; z-index: 40; bottom: 0; margin-bottom: -15px;}</style><div class="embed-container"><iframe width="500" height="400" frameborder="0" scrolling="no" marginheight="0" marginwidth="0" title="Employment Lands" src="//selkirk.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Embed/index.html?webmap=bd05e4c0c7c1401280cdd0c7f4134228&extent=-121.1088,49.0613,-109.6172,52.6314&zoom=true&previewImage=false&scale=true&disable_scroll=true&theme=light"></iframe></div>
```

2. Maintain the employment lands inventory

Maintaining the currency of the employment lands inventory is necessary if East Kootenay local governments intend to use the web map to support future investment attraction or planning. Selkirk College has provided all East Kootenay local governments with details of a subscription service for regular updates to data layers related to zoning, servicing, development permit areas, and featured investment lands.

3. Develop corridor-level employment lands strategies and action plans

Develop corridor-level employment lands strategies informed by land supply and demand and use this to identify priority investment zones, target specific sectors of interest, and guide and facilitate development and investment readiness of key vacant and underutilized lands in alignment with community and corridor aspirations.

RESOURCES FOR LAND DEVELOPMENT

The Province of British Columbia offers an online Land Development Toolkit and supporting resources for communities and regions wishing to strengthen land development efforts.

- [Land Development Toolkit](#)
- [Land Development and Marketing Readiness Checklist](#)
- [Business Friendly Environment for Land Development](#)
- [Site Selection](#)
- [Marketing for Land Development](#)

Other resources of potential interest include:

- [Ontario investment ready site certification program](#)
- [Employment Lands Report for the Regional District of North Okanagan](#)
- [Employment and Industrial Lands-based FDI Strategy for the Comox Valley](#)
- [Kamloops Site Selector Guide](#)

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² V3 Companies of Canada Ltd. (2018). *City of Regina Underutilized Land Study*. Retrieved from <https://www.regina.ca/export/sites/Regina.ca/business-development/land-property-development/.galleries/pdfs/Planning/Underutilized-Land-Study.pdf>

³ Urban Systems Ltd. (2016). *Employment Lands Report for the Regional District of North Okanagan*. Retrieved from http://www.rdno.ca/docs/160426_RELAP_Final_Print_reduced.pdf

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Province of British Columbia. (2020). *Community Readiness for Land Development*. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/market-and-attract/land-development-toolkit/community-readiness-for-land-development>

⁶ Urban Systems Ltd. (2016). *Employment Lands Report for the Regional District of North Okanagan*. Retrieved from http://www.rdno.ca/docs/160426_RELAP_Final_Print_reduced.pdf

APPENDIX 1: DETAILED DATA BY MUNICIPAL AND ELECTORAL AREA

Fernie	Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels
Agriculture	8.1		100	0
Commercial	29.2		100	0
Heavy	0.0		100	0
Light	11.6		100	0
Mixed Use	195.1		100	0
Elkford				
Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels	
Agriculture	0	0	0	0
Commercial	19.4	38.3	0	23
Heavy	0	0	0	0
Light	21.4	30.6	0	11
Mixed Use	0	0	0	0
Sparwood				
Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels	
Agriculture	2681.6	0	0	0
Commercial	53.4	5.2	0	6
Heavy	8787.6	11.1	0	1
Light	273.4	4.3	0	4
Mixed Use	0.0	0	0	0
Invermere				
Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels	
Agriculture	0	0	0	0
Commercial	16.6	25.0	0	39
Heavy	20.9	45.2	0	95
Light	41.8	13.4	0	9
Mixed Use	3.6	0	0	0
Canal Flats				
Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels	
Agriculture	953.3	0.0	37.1	0
Commercial	12.2	14.3	14.3	1
Heavy	333.1	0.0	0	0
Light	180.4	0.0	0	0
Mixed Use	43.3	11.8	53.9	9
Radium				
Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels	
Agriculture	151.4	0	0	0
Commercial	18.4	0	0	0
Heavy	29.1	0	0	0
Light	24.0	0	0	0

Mixed Use	71.4	0	0	0
Cranbrook	Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels
Agriculture	150.5	5.9	0	1
Commercial	153.1	6.8	0	61
Heavy	76.2	13.0	0	3
Light	487.7	13.3	0	38
Mixed Use	163.1	1.6	0	2
Kimberley	Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels
Agriculture	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
Commercial	18.7	8.4	0.0	33
Heavy	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
Light	172.2	31.3	2.1	15
Mixed Use	0.0	0.0	0.0	0
RDEK Area A	Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels
Agriculture	615.2	0	0	0
Commercial	2142.6	0	0	0
Heavy	127.5	0	0	0
Light	127.6	0	0	0
Mixed Use	0.0	0	0	0
RDEK Area B	Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels
Agriculture	480.1	0	0	0
Commercial	45.0	0	12	0
Heavy	0.0	0	0	0
Light	345.9	0	64.3	0
Mixed Use	20.6	0	0	0
RDEK Area C	Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels
Agriculture	2818.0	1.7	0	14
Commercial	70.5	4.0	0	1
Heavy	47.7	0.0	0	0
Light	331.8	10.0	0	1
Mixed Use	0.0	0.0	0	0
RDEK Area E	Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels
Agriculture	992.3	0.9	0	2
Commercial	60.4	8.3	0	3
Heavy	0.0	0.0	0	0
Light	370.6	0.0	0	0
Mixed Use	0.0	0.0	0	0

RDEK Area F	Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels
Agriculture	22370.6	2.8	0	17
Commercial	77.7	7.6	0	8
Heavy	9.7	0.0	0	0
Light	16.4	0.0	0	0
Mixed Use	0.0	0.0	0	0
RDEK Area G	Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels
Agriculture	20841.4	1.5	0	8
Commercial	18.8	0.0	0	0
Heavy	351.2	0.0	0	0
Light	2.0	0.0	0	0
Mixed Use	0.0	0.0	0	0
?aq'am	Area (ha)	% Vacant	% Unknown	# vacant parcels
Agriculture	0.0	0	0	0
Commercial	0.0	0	0	0
Heavy	0.0	0	0	0
Light	0.0	0	0	0
Mixed Use	5177.2	0	100	0