

Baukultur, Culture and Recreation-led Economic Development: The value of developing Sundre, Alberta's qualities of living and place

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What are the most important factors related to economic development? This paper explores the essential variables necessary for destination development and inward direct investment. These variables include: quality of living, quality of infrastructure, and quality of workforce. Quality of living is considered the most important of these to spur on economic development. Many business operators would rather live where they invest making quality of place an equally important variable that is intrinsically linked to quality of living. Destination development through place-building techniques, informed by the concept of *baukultur*, is assessed using quality of living, economic development and economic diversification as markers. Quality of living and quality of place are inherently connected when attracting business and growing employment, therefore, these two terms will be referred to as QLP throughout this paper.. Intended to help program and policy planners understand these concepts, this paper will explore cases of successful exercises of destination development that involve recreation and culture-oriented place building. The paper will then look at how to apply learned QLP concepts toward a culture- and recreation-led economic development strategy for the small foothills community of Sundre, Alberta.

Keywords: place building, quality of place, quality of living, *baukultur*, QLP, development, economic development, destination development, inward direct investment, creative class

Introduction

Three of the most important factors relevant to garnering inward direct investment relate to a geographic area's a) quality of living, b) quality of workforce, and c) quality of infrastructure. This paper will present an area's quality of life as the most important factor, which, when combined with quality of place, will typically support community economic development above all else. Quality of living is essential to attracting new residents to an area who contribute to the local labour force and in turn, pay property taxes necessary to fund new infrastructure. Ultimately, the intent of economic development is to create an environment that is conducive to investment and diversification, to grow economic activity and revenue for the community and its government. This paper will look at the value of improving a geographic area's combined qualities of place and

living using culture and recreation to attract working age people, entrepreneurs, tourists and businesses; with a focus on the town of Sundre, Alberta.

Since quality of living and quality of place are intrinsically linked, they should not be regarded as mutually exclusive. Furthermore, during economic and destination development planning, this paper proposes that quality of life and place should both be considered together and holistically; this approach will be referred to through the term QLP (quality of life and place). This paper will explore how an area's QLP is essential to making a geographic area attractive to tourists, residents and, the all-important, high income-earning creative class workers (Florida, 2002). This paper does not explore the potential consequence of gentrification caused by improper place-building policy.

QLP-led efforts may be done in various ways, and can lead to the physical environment necessary to attract festivals, events and conferences. Additionally, the allocation of resources toward a region's cultural and recreational amenities can improve its potential as a destination for investment. Recreation and culture are essential components of an area's liveability, and can be used to improve desirability for, primarily, resident attraction and workforce development. Secondly, cultural and recreational assets can subsequently be capitalized on for different types of tourism development. For instance, communities that improve their built environment with elements of form and function are more appealing to business tourists, such as conference delegates. It is important to attract business travellers and conference delegates because conferences and their facilities can act as substantial economic drivers through what is referred to as the 'conference multiplier effect' (described further in this paper). That said, having conference facilities may not be enough to attract conference delegates, and so location plays a major part in the success of conferences and special events. Further enforcing the value of QLP-led economic development, according to a leading convention planning organization in Switzerland, "the location of [a] conference will directly reflect upon its professional appeal" (Congrex Switzerland, 2018).

Tourism-led economic drivers such as local events and festivals benefit communities; therefore, having a built environment that can accommodate events and festivals, and the associated increased number of visitors could generate substantial return on investment through the influx of tourism dollars.

Defining Quality of Life, Quality of Place, Economic Development and QLP

What does the concept of quality of life mean? How does quality of place affect economic development? And for that matter, what is economic development? Can these matters be intertwined into a unified concept? And if so, can such a concept be used to attract increased inward flows of capital, turn an area into a destination for tourism and new labour, and ultimately help

contribute to diversifying an economy? This paper will look at and contextualize the meaning of these various concepts.

Quality of Living

Quality of living is one of the most important factors related to economic development: it is the key element that draws visitors and residents, who in turn start businesses and contribute to the workforce and tax base. There is no one definition for quality of living. Generally, it refers to the well-being of a society and its individuals. According to *Forbes*, an American business magazine, quality of living “is subjective and multidimensional, encompassing positive and negative features of life” (IESE Business School, 2013). Another definition proposes quality of life to be “categorised within five dimensions: physical wellbeing, material wellbeing, social wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, and development and activity” (Felce and Perry, 1995). For this paper, the latter definition will be used with the added interpretation that quality of living also deals with health, happiness and the availability of opportunities for the local population (both abled and disabled) through cultural, religious, recreational, health care and educational assets. (Allan, 2017).

Quality of Place

As with ‘quality of living’, it can be difficult to define ‘quality of place’. Generally, quality of place refers to, “what’s there, who’s there and what’s going on in a place... [and] is an authentic experience that’s defined by the natural and built environment, a diverse community and the vibrancy of cultural activities” (Malone, 2017). The term ‘quality of place’ was originally introduced by the urban and economic development thinker, Richard Florida. He used the concept to help describe the unique characteristics of a community that can attract the creative class.

The creative class refers to those people with higher education and who work in creative or knowledge-based roles; often perceived to mean creative white-collared professionals, the term also encompasses artists, designers and entrepreneurs, among others. He believes attracting those in the creative class is important to a community because they are typically high wage earners who have more disposable income compared to those outside the creative class (Florida, 2005). According to *Area Development*, a US magazine dedicated to site and facility planning, 95.1% of executives surveyed by the publication rated availability of skilled labour as more important than labour costs. Not only does this reinforce the value of quality of workforce as being one of the most important factors relevant to investment – it also exemplifies the need to be host to a “compelling quality of place – [a] community’s attractiveness to existing and future residents and workers – [since it is] a competitive advantage” in the process of earning the interest of labour. (Tarleton and Robertson, 2014). Florida goes on to state in his seminal work, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, the most effective way to attract members of the creative class is through the

development of a region's quality of place. Florida's factors impacting quality of place include economic and spatial diversity, specific leisure and cultural amenities, a mixed population, social gathering spots referred to as 'third places', safety, vibrancy, and the intangible aspects of the urban environment like street life, tolerance, authenticity and urbanity (Trip, 2007). These factors essentially identify the importance of culture and quality of living to an urban environment (or, a 'place').

Focusing more on the built environment of a community, an industry publication from 2011 by Andreas Wesener quoted the UK government's definition of quality of place as "the physical characteristics of a community – the way it is planned, designed, developed and maintained – that affect the quality of life of people living and working in it, and those visiting it, both now and into the future" (Wesener, 2011). Quality of place can be interpreted as the subjective satisfaction of a population with its local culture and its physical and built environment – public buildings, architecture, parks, etc. – and how that built environment affects the quality of their lives. In Europe, the importance of place building has been recognized through the 2007 *Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities*. Although non-binding, among other recommendations the Charter encourages the creation of high-quality public spaces (Leipzig Charter, 2007). The following is taken directly from the Charter:

"The quality of public spaces, urban man-made landscapes and architectural and urban development play an important role in the living conditions of urban populations. As soft locational factors, they are important for attracting knowledge industry businesses, a qualified and creative workforce and for tourism. Therefore, the interaction of architecture, infrastructure planning and urban planning must be increased in order to create attractive, user-oriented public spaces and achieve a high standard in terms of the living environment, a *Baukultur*" (Leipzig Charter, 2007).

Baukultur is a German concept roughly translated into 'building culture', and according to the Leipzig Charter, encourages the adoption of the concept in all areas of the urban existence – including public buildings – and involves the protection of architectural landmarks – historical buildings of significant public value. Although the prevalence of non-indigenous historical landmarks in Alberta – and in North America in general – only date back a few centuries at best, the principles of *Baukultur* can nonetheless be incorporated into any municipal economic development strategy relying on culture and recreation-oriented place building.

According to Wesener's publication, there are four categories of physical elements contributing to quality of place that may be pursued by urban communities (and, therefore, municipal governments) (Wesener, 2011): These are:

1. The range and mix of homes, services and amenities
2. The design and upkeep of buildings and spaces
3. The provision of green space and green infrastructure
4. The treatment of historic buildings and places

The physical elements contributing to quality of place according to Wesener clearly mesh with the principles of *Baukultur*, and ultimately coalesce with Florida's social, cultural and indistinguishable elements, to create an example of how the built environment not only contributes to – but is essential to – the culture and quality of living of a place.

By combining our understanding of quality of life with our understanding of quality of place, we can accept that the two are typically never mutually exclusive. It is for this reason that the abbreviation 'QLP' will thenceforth be utilized whenever referencing quality of living and quality of place together throughout this paper.

QLP & Economic Development

QLP represents the inseverable intersection of quality of living and quality of place. Although quality of place might be used to distinctly refer to intangible cultural attractiveness and the irresistible draw of a geographic area's physical environment, it is this distinctiveness that invariably affects quality of living. The subjective satisfaction that a resident or visitor gets by knowing they find themselves somewhere with an appealing quality of place – that certain *je ne sais quois* – contributes to happiness, which is tied to quality of living and thus, the two are inseparable. QLP is the synthesis of quality of place and living – the happiness and well-being of people living somewhere they want to be. The physical environment – including nature and beautiful architecture, trails and recreational amenities – combined with the cultural assets of an area all contribute to the joint concept of QLP.

But how do we apply the combined concept of QLP to economic development? This paper refers to economic development as the process of improving the collective well-being of people within a given geographic area. When applied to municipal governments, its root goal is to increase the amount of revenue generated for the government based on economic transactions. The quality of living (and standard of living) of individuals within a given geographic area is aligned with its economic development potential, since it lies in the ability of a region to attract workers and businesses, increase economic transactions, and to contribute further to quality of life. Increasing the economic development potential of an area is the goal of any economic development and place-making strategy. A key economic development strategy to maintain an area's economic potential is economic diversification. This paper argues that economic diversification is essential to maintain the continuation of economic transactions in a given geographic area, especially if a particularly important industrial or economic sector experiences recession. The World Bank has stated that

economic diversification is “inextricably linked with economic development and poverty reduction” (Fruman, 2017). Geographic regions that rely too heavily on one sector will often experience economic contraction if that sector experiences decline. Economic diversification provides a hedge against this type of situation. Alberta is a great example of relying too heavily on one industry. The province, until recently, was in a lengthy state of recession since late-2014 because of its heavy reliance on oil and gas as its chief economic driver (Gibson, 2016). As a result, successive provincial governments in Alberta, including both the typically right-wing free market-oriented Conservatives and the left-wing socially democratic-oriented New Democrats, have pursued policies of economic diversification.

Although all economic diversification strategies must be supported with other tactics, QLP-led economic development is unique in that regardless of the industrial diversification being cultivated, it contributes to resident attraction. It is important to recruiting working-age residents aged 25-45, particularly those in the creative class, as creative individuals make good entrepreneurs. As Florida puts it, to “generate entrepreneurship ... a region must create conditions that stimulate innovation, arts, and culture” (Florida, 2002).

QLP strategies will also promote tourism. (Malone, 2014). Tourism can act as an economic buffer as it generates revenue that contributes significantly to local gross domestic product (GDP); in fact, the value to Canada’s national economy derived from tourism was \$44.87 billion during the five quarters of Q2 2017 to Q2 2018. (Statistics Canada, 2018). Therefore, by both attracting new residents and increasing inflows of tourism-generated capital, a successful QLP-oriented economic development strategy has the potential to improve a municipal government’s ability to generate enough value that it may reinvest into itself and further contribute to diversification and tourism promotion efforts.

It is worth noting, any strategy undertaken by a community should reflect its own culture and identity. Since destination-oriented economic development is usually supported by advertising and marketing, a community must be able to deliver on what it is promoting to the public – that is, it must deliver on its brand promise. Therefore, any development of the local QLP should represent a community’s authentic local culture, otherwise the community may be at risk of developing a false brand identity, and, moreover, may not be accepted or embraced by the local population.

Application to Sundre, Alberta

Architecture, streetscape beautification, trails and recreation all play an integral role in place making. By pursuing a policy of *Baukultur* and expanding its cultural and recreational amenities (and subsequently developing the local QLP), the town of Sundre, Alberta would be better positioned to attract new residents, grow tourism and diversify its economy. One of the ways to encourage economic diversification is to provide support to small to medium-sized enterprises

(SMEs) and the entrepreneurs who operate them. First, it must be understood the significance of SMEs to the Canadian economy and what attracts the entrepreneurs who operate them. More than half of Canada's GDP comes from SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises, n.d.), and in at least seven key industries over 90% of national employment is with those SMEs (Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, 2016). Furthermore, on average, 80% to 90% of private investment comes from existing local enterprises – this indicates business operators are investing where they live (Economic Developers Alberta, 2012). It is, therefore, imperative to create a place where entrepreneurs want to work, live, and invest. The goal is to not only make communities like Sundre a tourist destination, but a destination for residents – a place to call home. Sundre's largest employers are largely resource-based, due to the community's proximity to ample fossil fuel and forestry resources. This has been important for the development of well-paying industrial employment. However, Sundre's population is older than the provincial average at 43.7 years compared to Alberta's 37.8 years. (Statistics Canada, 2017c & 2017a). A culture and recreation-led strategy that improves a region's QLP must provide the environment and the backdrop necessary to recruit that all important 25-45 year old demographic, commonly known as Millennials (and Generation X, but for the purpose of this paper and simplicity, they will be referred to together as Millennials), to provide an active local workforce. Millennials are considered one of the most entrepreneurial demographic cohorts, who seek many of the quality of life indices mentioned earlier, as well as independence and work-life balance (Bentley University, 2014). As such, attracting young working families could lead to an increase in entrepreneurship and growth of the creative class, with the intent of creating richer economic diversification of Sundre's local economy.

Regional Context

Located in Central Alberta, Sundre is almost equidistant from both Red Deer and Calgary. It is well-known in the province as a 'cowboy' and 'western' town, featuring an annual professional rodeo, historic pioneer village museum, and an intangible adventure-oriented spirit. Due to the natural beauty related to its outdoor and ecological diversity, proximity to the mountains, central location, and potential to capitalize on its cultural heritage and recreational opportunities, Sundre could leverage its position to outperform all others as a provincial – and even national – destination for tourism, residential investment and economic activity.

Although its population is relatively small at approximately 3000, Sundre is a sub-regional trading, population and economic hub, whose trade area extends quite far into the west toward the eastern edge of Banff National Park. It is the last town in the south-central Alberta region before heading into the forested wilderness of the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. As a sort of 'frontier town,' Sundre's trade area extends west from Sundre-proper into an area known for its stunningly beautiful natural landscapes ideal for outdoor enthusiasts, and ends close to Ya-Ha Tinda Ranch at the eastern edge of Banff National Park, located in Clearwater County. Meanwhile, the Town

of Banff - a globally renowned outdoor-oriented destination with a superbly developed quality of place – is 175 kilometres and approximately two hours by vehicle from the Town of Sundre. Comparatively, the Town of Banff is about 90 minutes from Calgary, while the Town of Sundre is only about 75 minutes from that city. Therefore, Sundre is uniquely positioned to capitalize on cultural and recreational development due to its fortunate geographic position.

Culture-oriented Destination Development

The Creative City Network of Canada describes how “arts and creative activity has been bolstered recently in two ways: (1) rising attention to entrepreneurial, creative enterprises in the context of economic diversification, and (2) growing markets in cultural and rural tourism” (Duxbury & Campbell, 2009). This is to say creative enterprises contribute to economic diversification, while culture supplements tourism. It must be understood that a people’s culture is not limited to music and visual creativity, it also includes the built environment. Culture may also include a community’s walkability (pedestrian atmosphere or ‘street vibe’), its history and traditions, along with its food and venues for community social engagement; all of these contribute to the amount of enjoyment brought to a community and are therefore related to QLP.

Based on the above, developing all areas of arts and culture is imperative to attract knowledge workers, visitors, and residents. As this relates to Sundre, QLP-oriented development would be best supported with policies incorporating the concept of *Baukultur*. When applying Wesener’s four categories of physical elements in place building, Sundre’s built environment should include housing for all levels of household incomes while ensuring homes and apartments are constructed to feature architectural creativity through policy-driven standards, with the intent of improving the satisfaction of residents with where they live, and thus reinforcing quality of life. Upgrading and upkeep of existing buildings should also be encouraged

The built environment must also involve constructed green spaces and the preservation of historic buildings, both of which contribute to the sense of character and identity of a community, which are important QLP factors, as noted earlier. A 2006 study in Florida showed that there was a correlation between the preservation of historic buildings and monuments and a contribution to its residents’ quality of life, again proving the interconnectedness of quality of place and living. (University of Florida, 2006). Good policies can help ensure the protection of cultural values, the historic built environment, and ultimately quality of living.

It could be argued that North America’s history is comparatively less engrained within much of its people (especially to newcomers) versus Old World cultures like those in Europe, Africa or Asia. Undertaking culture-oriented and *Baukultur*-led practices will help to not only protect the built environment, but develop the character and identity of a community; and promoting the protection of architectural and historic landmarks will also help lead to a sense of belonging by its people,

thence further contributing to a community's quality and sense of place. Together, these practices could improve: a) the desirability of a place; and b) the opportunity for economic diversification – both of which form the basis of QLP-oriented development.

Although the holistic concept of QLP (recognizing the inseverable connection between place-making and quality of living) might be new, the application of the individual concepts are not. These ideas are not revolutionary, they merely represent the amalgamated interpretation of the concept of *Baukultur* with Wesener's four principles and Florida's thoughts on creativity, culture and place; importantly, these ideas are highly applicable to small Alberta communities like Sundre, Alberta.

Case Studies: Sylvan Lake and Canmore

Arts and culture-led economic development has shown success in Alberta within the communities of Sylvan Lake and Canmore, communities that at one time were not too different from Sundre.

Sylvan Lake

Sylvan Lake's 2016 population of 14,816 (Statistics Canada, 2017d) marked a decade of rapid growth; since 2006, its population has grown by almost half (46%), from 10,250 (Statistics Canada, 2012). This rapid population growth over the last decade has resulted in the community becoming a small suburb of Red Deer and it has evolved into a day-trip destination for communities around central Alberta. It is located just 24 kilometres from the City of Red Deer and has undertaken an extensive effort to rejuvenate the waterfront and its downtown area through investments of more than \$102 million in new waterfront infrastructure, downtown streetscape developments, parks, a new multi-use recreation (and conference) centre, and residences. (Town of Sylvan Lake, 2014a). This has led to an increased number of trendy food and beverage venues and improved architectural guidelines; and these together have contributed substantially to the area's QLP. Beyond the substantial residential growth over the past decade that this has led to, tourism growth has accelerated too. In 2014, the economic impact of tourism was valued at more than \$75 million of the community's gross domestic product (GDP); that's over \$5,000/resident (Town of Sylvan Lake, 2014b). The substantial investments made by Sylvan Lake will undoubtedly support further tourism investment into the community. As part of the \$102 million downtown redevelopment and place-building spending, the community developed a new multi-use recreation centre called the NexSource Centre (opened in 2017), which serves family recreation and business tourism. (Note: according to sources at the municipality, Sylvan Lake will be following up on their 2014 study in 2019 to determine the updated value of tourism to local GDP, especially as investments continue to be made.)

Canmore

Canmore is another community that can be compared with Sundre. The mountain town maintains a population of about 11,764 permanent residents (Statistics Canada, 2017b). Nestled in a mountain valley just outside of Banff National Park, the community has become a major destination for residents of Calgary and visitors en route to Banff. It has developed festivals and a food and beverage culture that is difficult to rival. Canmore is now hosting world-class cultural events, like its Folk Music Festival and Canmore Uncorked, its food and drink festival. It was not always this way, however. A significant renaissance began following the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics, whence Canmore focused on its QLP and evolved from a backwater coal mining community to the destination it is today. Culture, the development of recreational opportunities in and around the community, significant streetscape appeal, and the town's events and festivals, have not only contributed to double-digit residential growth; as of 2015, they have helped pump nearly \$345 million per year in direct tourism spending into Canmore's economy (GrantThornton Consulting, 2016). This is equivalent to over \$29,000 put into the economy for each resident of the community; the economic impact of this cannot be understated.

Incorporating culture as an economic instigator and diversifier has been accomplished in communities across Canada and around the world. Culture-oriented destination development structured around QLP principles may help increase demand for housing and tourism, which will lead to higher assessed values of properties, improving tax yields. Maintaining a steady revenue stream to pay for public services is an important goal for municipalities. Regarding Sundre, creating the framework for culture-led QLP development will require effort, investment and a welcoming policy framework. Once a steady revenue stream is created by following this concept, surpluses can be allocated to recreation infrastructure – another important QLP tenet.

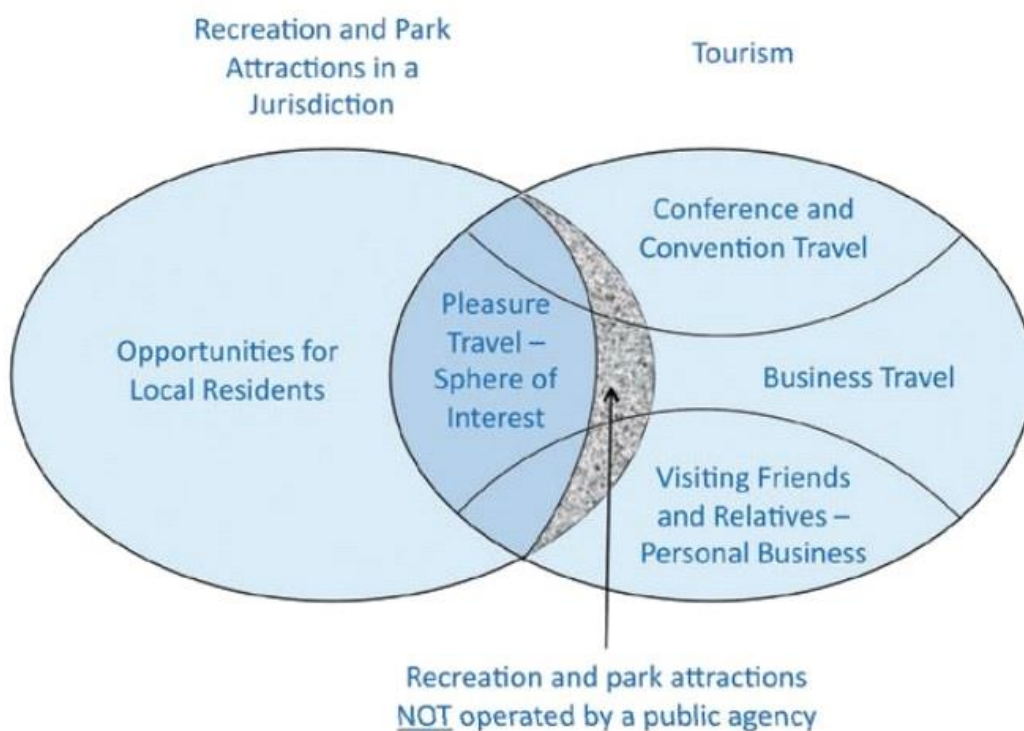
Recreation-led Destination Development

A strategy that promotes economic diversity using QLP-oriented principles should allocate expected tax yields derived from the improvement of its culture to fund the development of recreational amenities. Due to Sundre's proximity to the natural beauty of the foothills and the Town's association with the outdoors, recreational amenities within Sundre have the potential to be expanded. Not only does the existence of recreational infrastructure contribute to the general health of communities, it is also an appealing determinant for those considering calling Sundre home. Recreational amenities (including outdoor and indoor) also support different kinds of tourism, such as Health, Eco, Business and Sports Tourism. Open spaces, green spaces, trails and recreational infrastructure are essential QLP factors.

The Venn diagram below (Figure 1), copied from a 2010 document by the U.S. National Recreation and Park Association, shows how parks and recreational amenities contribute toward the attraction of both residents and different types of tourism. Recreational amenities not only help provide opportunities for population retention, they are also useful recruitment tools for all kinds of travellers, including business travellers (e.g. conference attendees).

Taken together, the development of cultural and recreational amenities will provide greater incentive for entrepreneurs, families, and travellers to not only visit Sundre, but invest in the community too. Increased investment will elevate demand for residences, raise property and assessment values, and finally increase tax revenues.

Figure 1. Segments of Travel and Their Inter-relationship with Parks and Recreation



Source: Crompton, John L. (2010). Exhibit 1-7 Segments of Travel and Their Inter-relationship with Parks and Recreation. Retrieved from http://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Publications_and_Research/Research/Papers/Crompton-Research-Paper.pdf

QLP and Festivals and Conferences

Improving Sundre's QLP by developing more cultural and recreational amenities will contribute to the physical environment necessary to host more events and festivals, and consequently attract more people to town as a destination. There are many benefits for a community to host events; a 2003 study in Ontario analyzed the economic impact of 39 small events with operating budgets of less than \$75,000 (Hill Strategies, 2003). If each event spent a full \$75,000, then the aggregate expenditures totaled \$2,925,000 – or just under \$3 million. It was calculated that the return on investment (ROI) of the nearly \$3 million was more than 400% based on GDP alone. The combined GDP impact on all 39 communities totalled \$12.9 million, or \$330,000 per community. Plus, there was a separate \$8.5 million earned through wages and salaries, and another \$5.2 million in tax revenue generation. The reason for this is simple – events and festivals draw visitors who, in turn, contribute financially to businesses throughout the community. When events and festivals are promoted widely to attract outside visitors, the events' value-added contributions include the potential to create greater public awareness of that community and association with those events, thus adding to the community's brand awareness. Events and festivals rely on the physical, cultural and recreational environments necessary for hosting; these built environments, if constructed with a community's authentic brand in mind using *Baukultur* and Wesener's quality of place principles, will further reinforce community identity and brand awareness. Events and festivals act as touchstones for economic diversity but are only possible with the development of cultural and recreational amenities, and are critical to improving local QLP

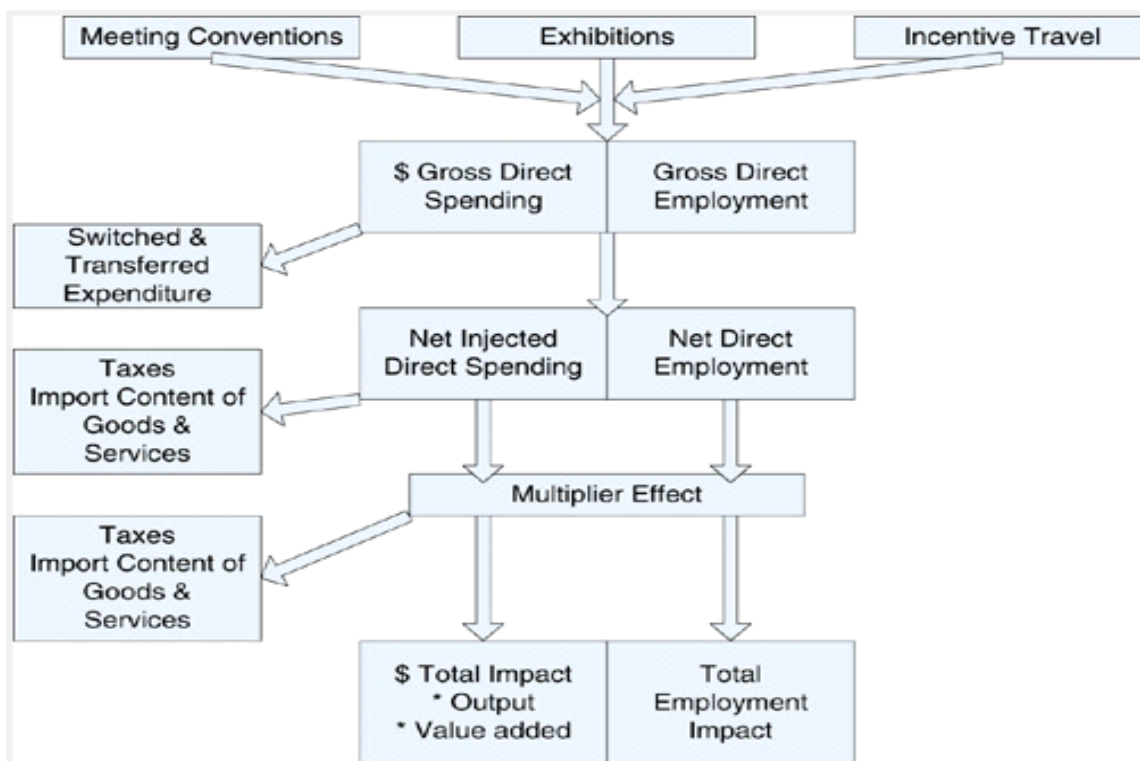
Beyond the residential growth and recreation-oriented tourism stemming from events and festivals, conference facilities are also tested economic development drivers that have proven to help generate economic activity in communities where they are developed. In small communities, conference facilities are generally developed once the surrounding culture and environment can meet the expectations of conference organizers and delegates (the new NexSource Centre in Sylvan Lake is a good example of this). Economic activity generated through business tourism, of which conference attendance is a factor, is considerable. One statistic has shown that in the United Kingdom more than half of all business tourism expenditures are generated by conference activity (£11.7 billion of £20 billion) (Whitfield, 2007). Therefore, conference facilities act as economic drivers drawing money right into the local real economy and contributing to area renewal.

A future multi-purpose conference facility (and the conference delegates it attracts) would be well served once Sundre's cultural environment, recreational amenities, and ongoing events in town – basically its QLP – reach a certain level of development. The level of development required will take a lot of courage and proactive policies on the part of decision makers. New policy standards might involve the imposition of architectural standards for new developments (*Baukultur*), trails and pathway connectivity, streetscape redevelopments, and an actively supported food and social scene; certainly, these are not the only actions that might be taken, but would likely be invaluable toward the development of Sundre as a conference destination.

Further in keeping with the concept of QLP, *Baukultur* and Wesener's quality of place principles, a facility could be developed using architectural standards and best practices to support Sundre's built environment. If developed, there is the potential for many spin-off benefits.

Conference facilities can contribute to the economic and social rejuvenation of entire neighbourhoods and communities. An increase in business/conference tourism has secondary economic benefits for local hotels, restaurants, and other local tourism-based businesses. Conference facilities are also important tax generators; through what is referred to as conferences' economic multiplier effect (see figure 2), "meetings, conventions, exhibitions and incentive travel generate an increase in gross direct spending and employment" (Whitfield, 2007).

Figure 2. Conference Multiplier Effect



Source: Whitfield, J. E. (2007). *Conference Multiplier Effect*. Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/palgrave.rlp.5100045>

Developing multi-use destination centres that include conference facilities requires support from many stakeholders. Buy-in and collaboration between private investors, non-profits, learning institutions, private operators, government, and the public is essential. In a community like Sundre, the strategic planning and political will (at all levels) necessary to support the finance and development of a multi-use destination centre should be established years in advance, while the local cultural and recreational (and QLP) environment develops. Fortunately, conference,

convention and exhibition facilities are already found within the community's land use bylaw, providing the policy and legal framework needed in the future.

Implementation Strategy for Sundre

The most important factors relevant to inward direct investment and economic development are an area's quality of living, quality of workforce, and quality of infrastructure. Since, on average, 80% of all investment comes from local investors and most businesses are SMEs, it is important to ensure investors want to live where they work, making quality of living a leading factor contributing to investment. The quality of place – namely its built environment – contributes to an area's quality of living; therefore, it's important to institute policies that together support quality of living and place-based building initiatives to contribute to a community's emergence as a destination for tourism, residential growth, and commercial development. A *Baukultur*-focused QLP strategy that includes culture, recreation and the environment will help achieve this end.

Sundre, Alberta represents an ideal community to implement a QLP-oriented strategy capitalizing on the local area's historical and cultural identity. Its proximity to the wilderness and resources of the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains, the history of the nearby Stony First Nations, along with its population of modern cowboys, makes Sundre an ideal candidate to capitalize on these authentic cultural assets. In doing so, it should also incorporate controlled architectural standards into development, while promoting the natural elements that tap into the essence of the community's 'western' culture. Furthermore, the recreational opportunities are immense, and projects that develop trail systems, public open spaces, support outdoor tourism initiatives, and promote outdoor activities will provide the amenities needed to generate greater interest from tourists and new residents. Increasing external awareness and investment into these areas of the community will help Sundre to attract more events, festivals and business tourism; leading to an increase of the community's appeal and growth of the town's population of workers, artists and entrepreneurs – and ultimately leading to further diversification of its economy.

Conclusion

Creating the framework for QLP-supported cultural and recreational development in Sundre will require effort, investment and a welcoming bureaucratic process. Policies adopting QLP and *Baukultur* as concepts within its strategic plans may be required; it may also involve special incentive programs to encourage a range of culture-oriented businesses, storefront improvements and upgraded green spaces that support well-being and recreation. By focusing on an area's history and culture, a QLP-oriented strategy will create the framework for built-environments that are supported by beautiful examples of architecture, walking spaces, recreational spaces, social gathering spots, and public displays of art. Together, this type of community development will improve public satisfaction and increase quality of life, help promote the community's identity,

grow tourism, and will assist labour force recruitment, which includes entrepreneurs and the creative class necessary for economic development and diversification. Finally, any move toward developing an identity (or brand) that relies on a QLP-based strategy must be accepted by and reflect its population. Using this brand to inform improvements to its built environment, Sundre can take advantage of all the economic benefits that come with a development strategy that focuses on quality of life and place together.

Author biography

Jonathan Allan is the economic development officer for the Town of Sundre, Alberta, a community located in the foothills of the eastern Rocky Mountains. With international experience in business development and economic development, he holds a Bilingual Specialized Honours Bachelor of Arts Degree in International Studies from York University, a Certificate in Economic Development from the University of Waterloo, and an Advanced Diploma in Business Administration from Niagara College Canada.

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