Building an Agricultural Community: Culinary and Agritourism

Presentation to:
AVICC Annual conference 2010
Powell River, BC

Overview: 2000-2010

- Agriculture Plan - Feb 2001
- Vancouver Island Economic Analysis - Sept 2003
- Ramp Up: Sustainable Economic Roadmap - Dec 2004
- Proprietary Economic Modeling and Impact Analysis - CSRD - April 2005
- Assessment of Economic Opportunities within the Framework of a Ten Stage Regional Economic Development Model
  - Measuring the 'Implementation Readiness' of Opportunities
- CV Economic Development Strategy Phase II - Aug 2005
- Implementation - Launch of the "plan"
  - Branding/website
  - Marketing/communications - profiles/direct farm marketing guide
  - Tradeshows
  - A-Channel
  - Business case/site visits/research
  - Site Criteria Matrix (opportunities) Dec 2006
- Inventory and Gap Analysis - March 2008
- Media Awareness - Canadian Farm Writers AGM
- Agritourism operators (International Fams - Rendezvous)
- Comox Valley Permanent Farm Market
- Taste Comox Valley Olympic Media Kit - Producer Profiles
- Olympic events - Federal Ag Ministry Buyers Tradeshow
- Canadian Trade Commission and Consular Support - ag immigration/succession

Community Agricultural Plan

Specific Actions and suggest Tactics:

- Establish an Ag. Dev Commission to promote opportunities
- Improve access to information, training etc for producers
- Expand food marketing opportunities/awareness of agriculture.
- Conduct market research into advantages, gaps, new potential product niches
- Conduct marketing campaigns/increase product recognition
- Support centre for innovations and small scale processing
- Integration of agriculture in regional economic development strategies/
  - Conduct local public relations campaign and increase farmers market awareness
- Support agritourism opportunities

Comox Valley Economic Development Strategy Phase I - 2004

- Trends analysis
- Economic base analysis, to highlight the sectors of the Comox Valley economy that are the drivers of growth
- Sector profiles update & analysis of employment growth (or decline)
- Target industry evaluation/targeting for source of external investment in the Valley
Planning – Comox Valley Economic Development Strategy Phase II - 2005

- Prioritization of target sector
- Ag working groups
- Formation of Advisory Committee
- 5 year targets set

Cluster Implementation

- Increase Ag production & food processing operations
- Strengthen production & market profile of higher value niche market products, such as fruits & vegetables (including berry production) & organics & associated processing
- Enhance aquaculture production on the Island
- Promote development of a Food Science Centre for Innovation working towards development of an appropriate food processing shared laboratory/kitchen, freezing & dehydration facility

The Opportunity

- Easy Access To Local Markets
- International Air Connections
- Available Land – 1/3 ALR in use
- Exceptionally Mild Climate and competitive growing conditions
- Strong consumer demand

Create the Brand

- Workshop sessions with business & community leaders to gain consensus around the need for branding & the key attributes of a potential brand
- Work with business & community stakeholders to develop the actual brand
- Launching the new Comox Valley brand in the marketplace
- Applying the Brand to key industry sectors
Producer Training Workshops

1. Agriculture in the Comox Valley, past, present, and future, together with an introduction to Choosing What to Produce - based on the resources at the disposal of the producer

2. Planning the Small Farm - basic elements of planning and managing a farm business

3. Marketing Small Lot Agricultural Products – factors critical to successful marketing

4. Production Planning for the Small Farm - finding the information and developing the farm enterprise

5. Financial Planning and Management Tools – an introduction to successful financial planning and management

6. Putting the Plan Together - tying all the information together into a cohesive and successful implementation strategy

Business & Investment Case Preparation

- Investment Presentations (Berries)
- Soil Reports
- Capability Mapping
- Vineyard Suitability Mapping
Comox Valley wants you, if you farm

Sat Apr 14, 2007

LAURA RANCE – RURAL REVIVAL

Spend a few days wandering around a trade show and you grow accustomed to seeing some oddball marketing premiums—a stack of waferfilled balloons on an antics string, top the gadgets that are supposed to mean being in the kitchen flux, to the gadget Según for householders and properties.

But there’s one booth at the recent Royal Manitoba Winter Fair in Brandon that gives new meaning to different—a colourful display promoting, yep, this, farming as a business opportunity. Not only this, but it was actively recruiting farming entrepreneurs to set up business on Vancouver Island, in the Comox Valley, to be exact.

If you’re a Prairie farmer who has grown a little tired of commodity agriculture’s trials and tribulations, the Comox Economic Development Commission wants you.

“We are looking for people to move in and set up operations, people that are looking for a change of pace or change a lifestyle,” looking to move out of the commodity farming industry and start up something in a specialty product of a value to what they do,” says John Rutledge, executive director and leader of the Comox Valley’s “Economically Unconventional, Wildly Sophisticated” ag-food initiative.

Comox is making a case that’s pretty much been drummed out of conversations about farming in Prairie culture—futurist. Imagine leaving both the opportunity and the means to enjoy what you do for a living.

Rutledge says the region has just completed a three-year process identifying and analyzing its opportunities for economic growth. It determined that value-added agriculture and ag-food processing aimed at providing food to the 2.4 million people living on the island is do last but, even beating out tourism.
Results

- Awareness – Media generation and enquiries
- Site visits, farm tours - testimonials
- Business case presentations
- Government & NGO interest
- Real Estate support to development
- Berry processing facility

Key Learning's

- Be relevant – enrich community
- Succession is critical
- Land base under production must increase
- Small lot ag - works!
- Food = $$ (National FM are estimated to provide over $3 Billion in economic impact)
- The future of local food consumption is not a guarantee
Next Steps

- Increased focus on ag real estate
- Tie between agriculture Ec dev and tourism marketing
- Earned media program
- Taste the Comox Valley – 2010
- Permanent Farm Market
- Wholesale Buyers

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