

# Business Vitality Initiative (BVI)

## Phase One Summary Report

### Vulcan, Alberta

March, 2009



Vulcan &  
District  
Chamber of  
Commerce



The word "Alberta" in a large, blue, stylized font. To its right, the words "Agriculture and Rural Development" are written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font, stacked on two lines.





# Vulcan Assessment Summary

## The BVI

The **Business Vitality Initiative (BVI)** helps communities to assess their capacity to work with and support entrepreneurs, and to foster small business growth. The BVI measures the perceptions of community leaders, business people and citizens about the current business environment in their community and compares the results to an average of other communities to determine possible short and long term actions the community can undertake to improve its business friendliness.

The Vulcan BVI was sponsored by the Vulcan Business Development Society, and organized by the Economic Development Officer, Leslie Warren. She selected and invited the participants, who were to be 50% business people, 25% local leaders and 25% citizens, representing a diversity of interests, ages and perspectives in the community. On February 3, 2009, forty-five people attended the Phase 1 session of the BVI in Vulcan, and thirty-seven of those filled out the BVI survey.

Vulcan is one of four Alberta communities selected to participate in a pilot of the BVI funded by Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD). ARD has partnered with CIEL to deliver the BVI to assist with economic development in rural Alberta.

This report summarizes the Phase 1 or *assessment* phase of the BVI. The phase 1 session used a survey and a focus group to assess the community's small business resources and potential. The phase 2 or *focus and action* session will be open to the entire community with the purpose of setting priorities for improvement, and jump starting the community to action. The date of that session is Thursday, March 26, 2009.

## Key Findings

From highest to lowest, section scores out of 100 were as follows: Infrastructure & Business Services (69), Quality of Life (67), Communication & Connectivity (58), Government & Organizations (57), Leadership Teamwork & Networking (56), Innovation (55), Markets & Marketing (55), Opportunities and Attitudes (54), Capital & Funding (53), Education & Training (51). The total score for all sections was 57, a score 10% higher than the average for 19 Canadian communities which have undertaken the BVI.

Vulcan scored equal to or above the 19-community average in all 10 sections. Particular strengths for Vulcan are its score for the 'Quality of Life' section of 67 out of 100 (2% above the community average), and its score of 69 (24% above average) for Infrastructure and Business Services, which was the highest scoring section of the survey.

The lowest scoring section of the survey was 'Education and Training' which had a score of 51 (16% above the 19-community average).

Participants were asked to give three words to describe their community. The majority of responses were positive. According to respondents, Vulcan is an *safe, friendly, clean* community which has a unique image related to Star Trek. When participants were asked to identify key strengths, the top responses were *the hospital and health care, proximity to larger centres, and availability of basic services*.

When participants were asked why they live in Vulcan, a *small town lifestyle, work, and family ties* were mentioned most. When participants were asked to provide directions for improvement for their community, the need for *improvement in the general appearance of the town, increased business activity* and the need for a *multi-use recreational facility* were mentioned most often.

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### Sponsored by:

The Vulcan Business Development Society, Community Futures of Highwood, the Vulcan and District Chamber of Commerce, and the Alberta Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development

### Analysis and report by:

The Centre for Innovative & Entrepreneurial Leadership  
[www.theCIEL.com](http://www.theCIEL.com)

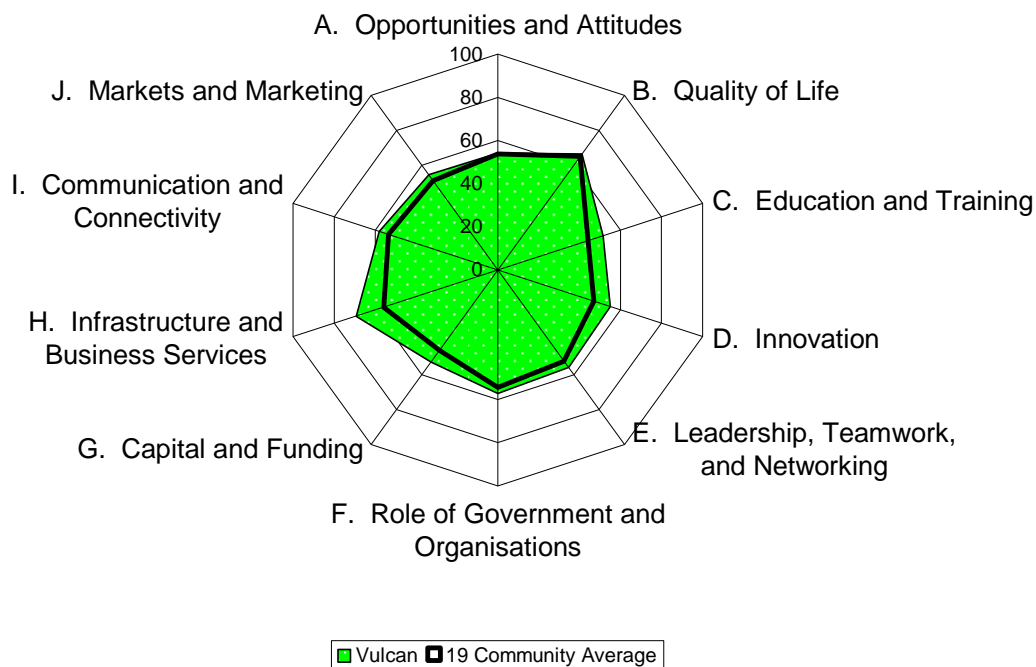
## The Assessment

The quantitative section of the two-part questionnaire asked the participants to rate their community by agreeing or disagreeing with a series of statements related to entrepreneurial capacity. Each statement was framed in a positive context (e.g. *marketing services in my community are affordable and accessible*). Participants were asked to rate the statement with one of the following: *completely agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, completely disagree, don't know*.

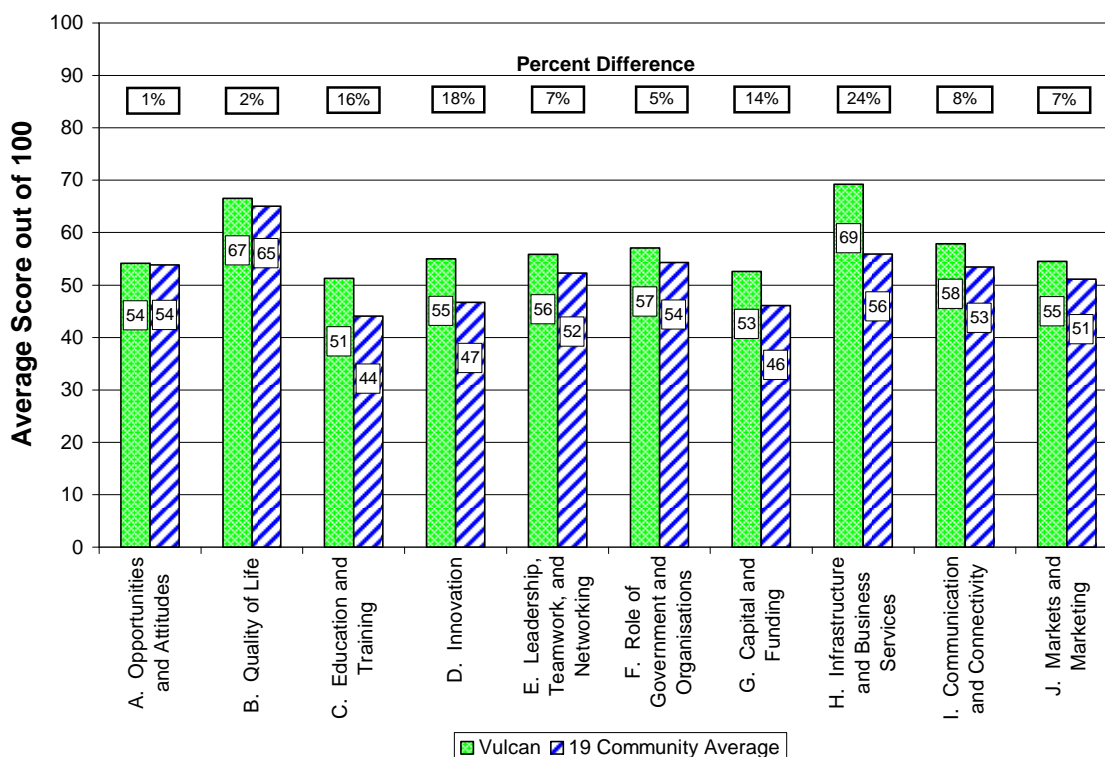
If all respondents *completely agreed* to a positively worded statement, the question score would be 100. If all respondents *completely disagreed* with the statement, the question score would be 0. A neutral response (*neither agree nor disagree*) would be scored as 50. A score over 50 would indicate that there is a perceived good capacity, while a score less than 50 would indicate a perceived lower capacity.

## Vulcan and 19-Community Section Scores

The full report on the Vulcan BVI consists of 92 pages of analysis of the ten BVI sections, illustrated by charts and graphs such as the one on the next page and the one below which shows the score out of 100 for each of the ten BVI sections. The area circumscribed by Vulcan's scores is shaded. The darker black line connects the 19-community average scores.



## Vulcan and 19-Community Average Section Scores



## Recurring Themes

The qualitative (written answer) section of the questionnaire collects information about the issues, strengths and weaknesses within the community. (e.g. What are 3 words or phrases that describe your community? What is your community's greatest strength in terms of its markets?), as well as additional comments in each of 10 sections. The following themes were particularly prominent throughout those sections of the Vulcan BVI.

### Strengths

- Star Trek theme
- Hospital and health care
- Good basic services
- Small town lifestyle
- New promising council
- Safe place to raise family

### Improvements needed

- Appearance of buildings, streets, houses
- Increase business activity
- Hotel/ motel accommodations
- Long term goals
- Local shopping
- Something other than Trek to attract tourists

## Recommended Short-term Actions

The following are some possible courses of action that the community could undertake to improve business friendliness, derived from feedback and results.

Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth &amp; young adult opportunity identification session &amp; strategy identifying recreational, educational, business, etc. opportunities (session could start with several specific opportunities identified in BVI or with brainstorming evening &amp; weekend events/activities for young families)</li> <li>• Strategy and initiative to increase local volunteering</li> <li>• Apprenticeship initiative</li> </ul>
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main Street revitalization beginning with targeting dilapidated and filling empty buildings</li> <li>• Review external marketing with view to improve, especially with young adults – review newspaper’s role in this</li> <li>• Business mentoring (&amp; possibly internship) initiative, possibly focusing on youth/young adult businesses tapping into retired and established businesses</li> </ul>
Network- ing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business communication/ networking sessions perhaps starting with aim to enhance communication, skills (e.g. using technology effectively, effective marketing, HR best practice, financing, business planning, etc.), publicizing what is available in the community</li> <li>• Regular communication forum between business community and council, possibly organized around themes of maintaining and enhancing infrastructure, energy, commercial land and building availability, high speed internet/satellite improvements, etc.</li> <li>• Positive ‘buy local’ program</li> </ul>
Admin., Research, Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate incentives and identify strategy for attracting ‘needed’ businesses</li> <li>• Attract visitors downtown from tourism sites (e.g. Trek Centre) possibly using events</li> <li>• Strategy to investigate and develop (or attract entrepreneurs for) top untapped opportunities (e.g. motel/hotel, high level restaurant, local history [including Palliser, mines, native history], linking many talented artists, auto dealership, multi-sport weekend, movie theatre, retirement opportunities)</li> </ul>

**On March 26, 2009  
residents will be asked to select priorities and form working groups  
around specific actions.**

## **Recommended Long-term Actions**

The following are some possible courses of action that the community could undertake to improve business friendliness, derived from feedback and results.

Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-term strategy to develop locations/facilities that attract a variety of people and provide social opportunities for local residents of all ages</li> <li>• Investigate co-operative partnerships with colleges and universities</li> <li>• Strategy to increase Vulcan's post-secondary training opportunities especially in technology &amp; apprenticeships and better publicize, co-ordinate what already exists</li> </ul>
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-term main street/downtown beautification initiative</li> <li>• Use brand to strategically market to young adults &amp; new residents</li> </ul>
Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community leadership program that builds skills/knowledge but also links between youth, young adults, groups in community, new energetic people, business leaders and elected leadership</li> <li>• Business succession planning – identify those business who aim to sell/retire in next 5-10 years with aim of recruiting/developing possible new owners</li> </ul>
Research, Admin. and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate multi-use recreational complex (pool, rink, fitness, bowling, etc.)</li> <li>• Long-term strategy to maintain &amp; enhance health care facilities</li> <li>• Investigate best practices from communities that have been successful with teenagers and young adults – jobs, keeping them happy, integrating into community</li> </ul>

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# Highest Scoring Questions

Question	Score out of 100		
	Vulcan	19-Community Average	% Difference
B2. There are quality elementary and secondary schools in the community.	93	80	16%
H4a. Banking services are easily accessible and affordable.	93	84	10%
H4b. Insurance services are easily accessible and affordable.	93	83	12%
B10. The community is a safe place to live.	93	90	3%
H5. Existing infrastructure (i.e.. Power, water) is good quality, well maintained, serviced, and modern.	88	72	23%
I1e. Mobile phone services are accessible and utilized.	87	67	30%
G3b. Credit Unions are utilized for business needs.	86	77	11%
I1f. Basic Internet Services are accessible and utilized.	85	84	2%
B11. Successful businesses want to remain in the community.	85	83	3%
I1a. Word of Mouth is utilized.	85	90	-5%
I5. Main transportation and shipping routes between communities are safe, well-maintained and well-serviced.	85	69	23%
H4f. Accounting services are easily accessible and affordable.	83	73	13%
I1g. High speed Internet services are accessible and utilized.	82	60	38%
B6. The community is physically beautiful, and environmentally safe (i.e. pollution, water quality).	82	86	-5%
B1. A quality health care facility is accessible, well serviced and within a reasonable distance.	81	70	16%
G3a. Banks are utilized for business needs.	81	79	3%
I6. Regular & frequent shipping to major centres is accessible and utilized.	81	71	14%
H2. Parking near core business areas is accessible and affordable.	80	81	-1%
I4c. Bus services are available between communities.	77	68	12%
I2. Quality communication services (phone, fax, high speed internet) are affordable to business.	76	73	4%

# Lowest Scoring Questions

Question	Score out of 100		% Difference
	Vulcan	19-Community Average	
I4d. Train services are available between communities.	8	21	-64%
I4a. Air (commercial) services are available between communities.	8	26	-69%
C1i. University programs are utilized.	19	33	-44%
I3d. Carpooling system is accessible and utilized within the community.	21	25	-16%
C1h. College programs are utilized.	23	29	-23%
J9. Businesses in the community /region jointly market their products and services	26	31	-16%
I3a. Public Transportation services are accessible and utilized within the community.	26	33	-21%
C8. A pool of skilled and trained labour is available to local businesses.	28	34	-18%
I1c. Local radio is accessible and utilized.	29	54	-47%
I3b. Taxi Services are accessible and utilized within the community.	30	40	-25%
B8. There are locations/facilities (i.e. Nightclubs, pubs, bingo, camps) that attract a variety of people, and provide social interaction for citizens of all ages.	32	44	-27%
G4. Business capital is available to anyone committed to a venture, regardless of credit history or any other factors	35	22	58%
F8c. Mentoring programs and services assisting business people are utilized.	35	42	-18%
B7. Young adults (25-34) consider the community a desirable place to live.	36	48	-26%
I4b. Air (private) services are available between communities.	36	46	-22%
G7. Costs (i.e. Interest, application fees) of capital are manageable for entrepreneurs.	39	47	-17%
G5. People who are interested in expanding or starting a business are skilled in raising funds	39	29	35%
A1. There is an up-to-date community vision or plan which reflects the community's values and attitudes and represents all groups within the community.	40	45	-13%
A9. A pool of motivated employees is available to meet business needs.	40	47	-14%
D6. Businesses that do research or research facilities are geographically concentrated (clustered) and interact with each other.	41	33	23%

# The “Gut Check 12”

The following 12 questions provide a snap-shot of a community’s business vitality. These key questions can be used to inform future efforts aimed at improving business friendliness. They are taken from the 100 BVI questions.

Question	Score out of 100		
	Vulcan	19-Community Average	% Diff.
A2. The community is facing an economic crisis.	55	59	-7%
B7. Young adults (25-34) consider the community a desirable place to live.	36	48	-26%
B11. Successful businesses want to remain in the community.	85	83	3%
C7. The education and business communities work together to provide convenient training	51	42	22%
C11. Citizens are motivated to learn new skills and to develop existing ones.	41	51	-18%
F2. The governing body is committed to recruiting or attracting businesses to the community, and may use strategies or incentives to do so.	55	58	-5%
F3. The governing body is committed to help existing businesses or creating new businesses through policy and action.	46	50	-9%
G5. People who are interested in expanding or starting a business are skilled in raising funds	39	29	35%
H1. There is a vibrant, active downtown area or community core.	58	51	14%
J5. The community has a distinctive or unique brand or marketing image	69	44	56%
J6. People from outside the community see it as a desirable place to live.	60	66	-9%
J8. People prefer to purchase local products and services before those from out-of-area.	43	43	2%