

## Approach

Background Economic and Demographic Research



Community Consultations



Prioritization of Opportunities



Development of Draft Strategy



Public Communication

Finalization of Strategy



Implementation of Findings and Recommendations

The purpose of this report is to develop a sustainable economic strategy for Delta. The approach is to understand the present status of the community today, understand the opportunities and barriers facing economic progress in the community today, develop a vision for where the community wants to be, and finally, provide a strategy to ‘close the gap’.

A good community strategy is developed by the community, and for the community. It is not done in isolation by consultants. Consultants can provide the background and the context for the economy, but the ideas and the issues come from the community. Consultants only facilitate the process.

This project began in early 2004. Background economic and demographic data was assembled and presented to the steering committee. Focus group meetings and individual stakeholder meetings were held in the early summer and fall with over 70 community leaders, including government, environmental groups, social groups, businesses, business associations and First Nations.

Only three things can happen to a local economy – it can grow, it can shrink or it can stagnate – and two of those three things are bad.

*M Foreman, Chief Economic Advisor.  
Washington State*

In these meetings, the consultants asked “What do you feel are the most significant issues and opportunities facing your (business, association,...) with respect to economic development in Delta.” Background information was provided, and answers were recorded and fed back to the participants for clarification. Meetings were kept small and dialogue was focused to get candid and meaningful responses.

The consultants compiled data and an outline of a draft strategy was presented to the steering committee for validation and prioritization into a One Year Action Plan and an overall Five Year Strategy. This plan represents the outcome of this process.

In early 2005, the Chamber of Commerce will take the strategy to the public for feedback and input. A communication plan has been written to identify channels of communication including web site, newspaper and community presentations. Feedback will be incorporated into the plan, which will then be implemented.

## **Sustainability**

It is important that this strategy incorporates the principles of sustainability. This means that the strategy must not only be built upon a strong economic foundation (job creation and investment attraction), but also consider the social and environmental impacts associated with economic advancement.

The strategy had a strong social and environmental component. Focus groups were held with social agencies and environmental groups to discuss proposed economic opportunities in the community.

Delta’s natural environment is the envy of most Lower Mainland municipalities. Delta must find a way to capitalize on this competitive advantage; protect the rural farming areas, yet build economic capacity for its citizens.

It must be recognized however that this is primarily an economic strategy, and not an environmental or social strategy for Delta. The economic strategy will recognize, assess and present solutions with social and environmental acceptability. This is an economic strategy with a social and environmental conscience.

## Background Analysis

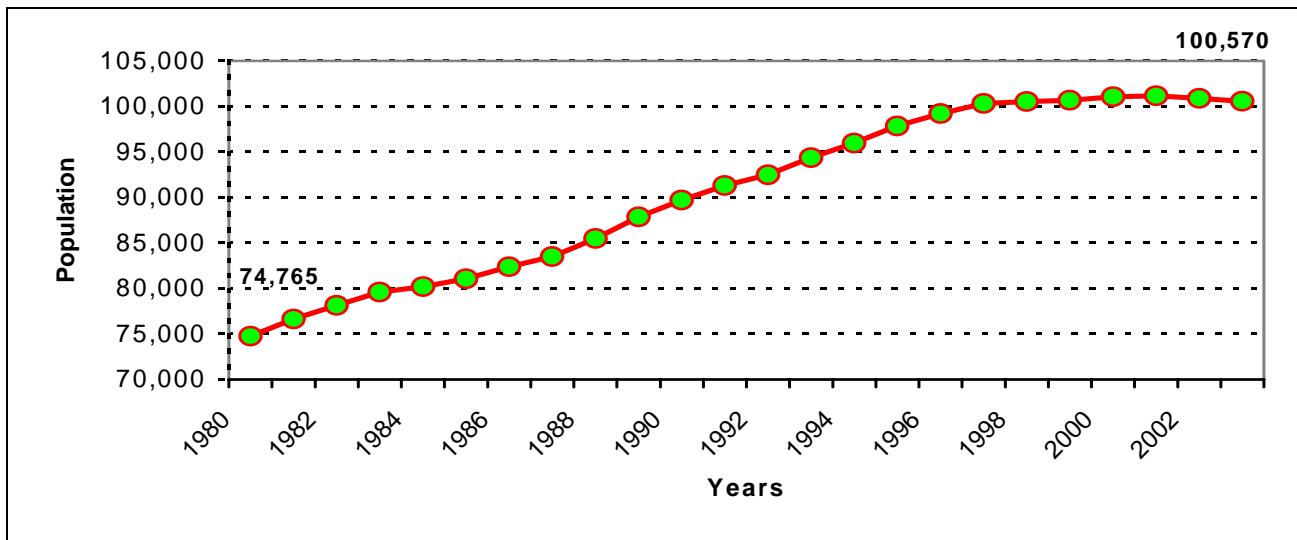
A full report on the economic and demographic analysis of Delta is provided as a separate report. The report was written to provide context and to highlight the key features of the Delta economy. This historical information is useful to identify issues and areas of community strength or weakness.

While the GVRD has experienced record growth, Delta's population has been stagnant and in recent years declined.

- a) While the GVRD is experiencing record growth, Delta is not growing.

Over the last 7 years, the population of Delta has remained steady at 100,000 residents with total growth of 2 percent, and negative growth in recent years. Over the same period, the province has grown 7 percent, the GVRD has seen growth of 12 percent and Richmond has grown by 13 percent. Delta is the slowest growing community in the Lower Mainland, at .25 percent per annum.

**Figure 1: Change in Population for Delta, 1980-2000**



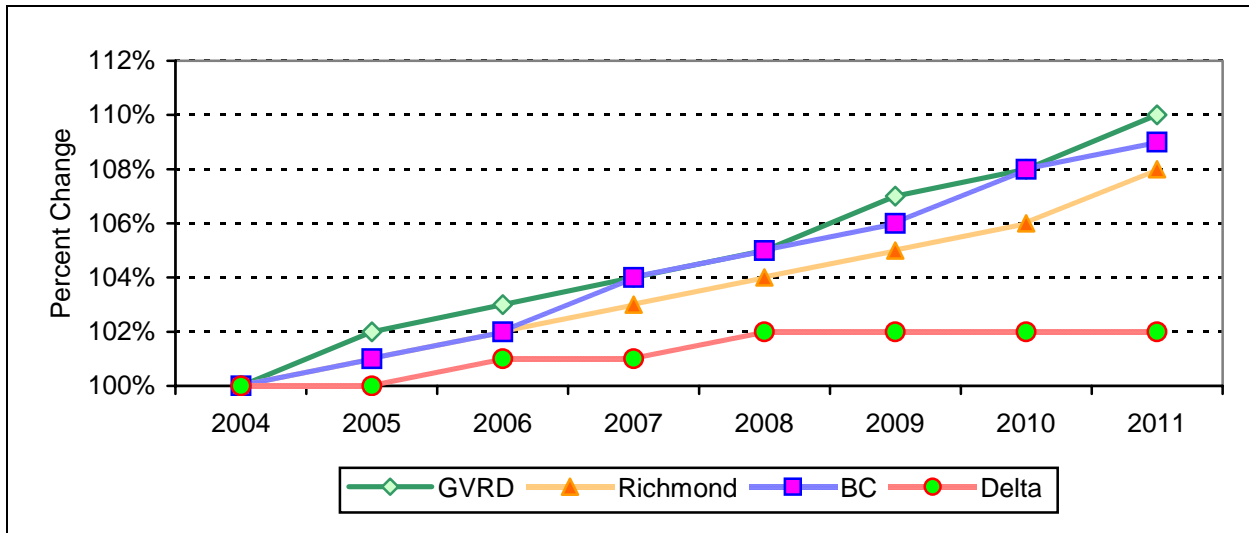
Source: BC Stats.

- b) Delta is not expected to grow in the future.

Population projections for Delta by BC Stats indicate that growth in Delta will lag anticipated growth by the rest of the GVRD over the next 10 years. The overall change in population for the GVRD will slow slightly to 1.25 percent per annum, while Richmond is anticipated to grow at 1.0 percent per annum between now and 2011. BC will see its growth rate accelerate to 1.12 percent per annum. BC Stats has estimated near term future growth rate in Delta to continue at 0.25 percent per annum. Growth will be concentrated in North Delta, while South Delta will experience no growth.

Population projections for the next 10 years show little or no growth for Delta, while the province and the GVRD continue to grow.

**Figure 2: Projected Change in Population for Delta and Benchmark Areas, 2004-2011**



Source: BC Stats.

c) Delta is 4 very different communities.

The demographics of the 4 communities that comprise Delta are very different. North Delta has a lower average income, larger families and is culturally diverse. Ladner is closer to the average income and demographics of the GVRD. Tsawwassen is an aging, slower growing, and more affluent community. The TFN is younger with lower incomes and higher unemployment. Delta behaves more like a regional district than a single community. There is no single town center. Each community requires different strategies to deal with differing issues.

d) Delta has a large, diversified manufacturing base.

Annacis Island is the largest industrial area in the GVRD and has a diversity of large manufacturers with clusters in high technology and forestry. More than 10,000 people work on the Island. Tilbury Industrial Park is the second major industrial zone in Delta and the fourth largest industrial park in the GVRD. It is home to 300 manufacturing, industrial, high technology and distribution companies. Delta is a net provider of jobs to residents in neighbouring communities. Only 5,400 Deltans work in manufacturing, which is 10% of the labour force.

e) The agricultural industry in Delta is strong and important.

The change in the gross farm receipts for Delta farms over the 10 years ending 2001 was a remarkable 500 percent. The average farm brought in \$177,000 in 1991 but \$820,000 in 2001. The real growth engine of Delta agriculture, and that responsible for the sizeable increases in farm receipts noted above and new employment, is the greenhouse sector. Fully one quarter of provincial greenhouse area, and close to 50

percent of vegetable greenhouse production, is in Delta. There are 300 acres of greenhouses in Delta, which is 1.5% of the current Agricultural Land Reserve in Delta.

Approximately one quarter of Delta's farms are smaller, mixed-use operations that engage in crop, and in some cases livestock, production. However, there are also many larger operations that specialize in field crops and vegetable production. The average farm size in Delta is among the largest in the Lower Mainland. Almost one quarter (22.4%) of the total provincial acreage in vegetables is in Delta. In order of acreage planted, potatoes, green beans, sweet corn and peas are the major commodities grown. Delta produces approximately 80 percent of the Lower Mainland potato crop. The industry is constantly impacted by fluctuations in the Canadian dollar, U.S. tariff challenges and global competition.

- f) The wetlands of Delta offer a key eco-tourism opportunity.

Delta is a wetlands and wildlife ecosystem hub. Key features of Delta include Reifel Bird Sanctuary, Burns Bog, Deas Island Regional Park, the Fraser River estuary and Boundary Bay tidal flats. These important environments are a key feature of Delta and are important ecosystems to the entire province. From an economic development perspective, they represent an important educational and tourism opportunity.

- g) Delta is a transportation hub for the region and the country.

The 2001 Census showed an experienced transportation labour force of 4,990 in Delta. This is a 241 per cent increase over the 1991 Census estimate of 2,065. This puts transportation just behind manufacturing as a source of jobs in Delta, with 9.5 percent of the total labour force. Transportation as a percentage of the total labour force in the GVRD was 6.1 per cent.

There is a substantial business base built around the transportation sector in Delta. In addition to major facilities such as BC Ferries, Deltaport and Westshore Terminals, there are trucking companies, warehouses and other transportation and storage services that serve not only residents and industry in Delta, but other Lower Mainland communities as well. Many of these companies depend on a reliable, quality port, rail and highway system to move people and goods. The Boundary Bay Airport is a growing urban commuter hub with expansion capability.

- h) 75% of Deltans commute to work in another community.

Statistics Canada census data shows that 75% of the people who live in Delta and work, commute to work in another community. This figure is significantly higher than the commuting workforce in any other Lower Mainland community, which on average have only 50% of their workforce as commuters. Commuting has impacts on the environment, roadways, stress on citizens, impacts on families and viability of the community in the long term.

- i) Delta is the only municipality in the Lower Mainland without post secondary education.

While efforts have been made to attract post secondary education to Delta, such efforts have not as yet been successful. Delta residents must travel to other communities for

post secondary education. Opportunities exist in Delta to lever industrial excellence in agriculture, manufacturing, tourism or transportation into training and educational partnerships.

- j) The Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) limits land availability for development.

Water, environmentally sensitive areas and valuable agricultural farmland surround Delta. A limited amount of land is available for development in Delta. Industrial land is available near Tilbury and Boundary Bay Airport, and large parcels outside the ALR include Delsom Estates in North Delta and the Southlands in Tsawwassen. (The Southlands is zoned agricultural by the municipality, but it is provincially outside the ALR.)

- k) Delta is an affluent community.

Personal income levels in Delta have consistently been significantly higher than those observed for Richmond, the GVRD average or the BC average. On average, Delta incomes are 30% higher than the Canadian average. South Delta is more affluent than North Delta.

- l) Delta is an aging community, particularly Tsawwassen.

Delta, and indeed all of Canada, is experiencing an aging of the population as the baby boomers get older and fewer young people fill the gap. Within Delta, there is a marked difference in local demographics. Tsawwassen has by far the oldest demographic with double the percentage of population in the 65+ age category as North Delta and 50% more than Ladner.

**Table 1: Delta Neighbourhood Demographics, 1996 and 2001**

	Tsawwassen	Ladner	North Delta	Rural	Delta Total
Population					
2001	21,337	21,367	52,108	2,396	97,208
1996	21,170	21,085	51,230	2,430	95,915
Percent change	0.8	1.3	1.7	-1.3	1.3
Population Age 2001					
0-19	24.6%	27.9%	30.1%	22.5%	28.2%
20-34	12.8%	15.6%	19.2%	14.4%	16.9%
35-64	45.4%	44.1%	42.8%	46.7%	43.7%
65-85+	17.2%	12.0%	7.9%	16.9%	11.1%

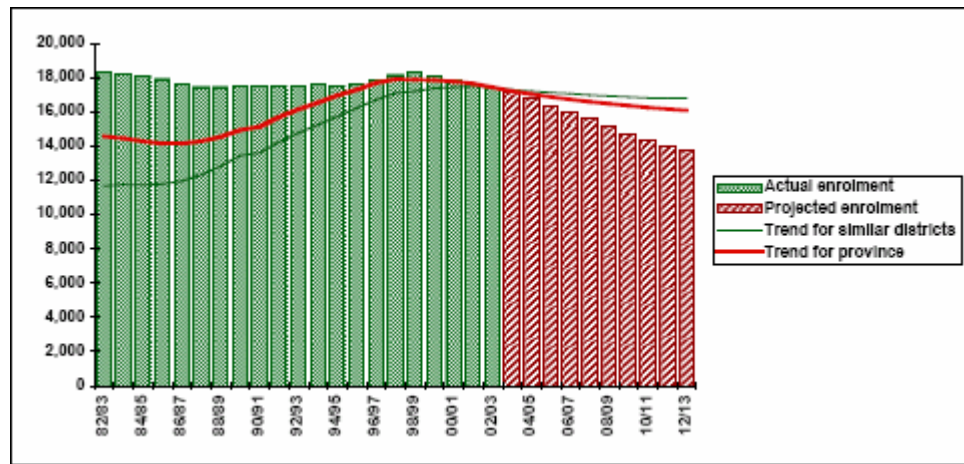
*Source: Corporation of Delta, 2004*

- m) School enrolments are dropping in Delta and are projected to drop faster than the regional or provincial average.

Student enrolment in the Delta School District has been relatively stable until 2000 at around 18,000 students. Since then enrolment has been dropping at around 250 students per year, and the 2004 enrolment is projected at 17,000 students. By 2012, the Delta School District projects enrolment to be 14,000 students and the rate of depopulation of Delta schools to increase.

Delta school enrolments will decrease faster than the provincial average and faster than other districts in the GVRD.

**Figure 3, Delta School District – Student Enrolment, Historical and Projected 1983-2013**



Source: Delta School Board, Operating Trends, 2004

- n) Delta experiences retail spending leakages to other communities.

In 2004, Delta’s retail spending is estimated at \$721.8 million , 1.7 per cent of the BC total. Delta’s estimated population in 2003 is approximately 2.4 per cent of the BC total. Since per capita and household spending in Delta is roughly similar to the BC average, Delta has a net retail spending leakage to other neighbouring communities. Delta does not have a regional shopping centre as does Richmond, Surrey, Burnaby and Vancouver.