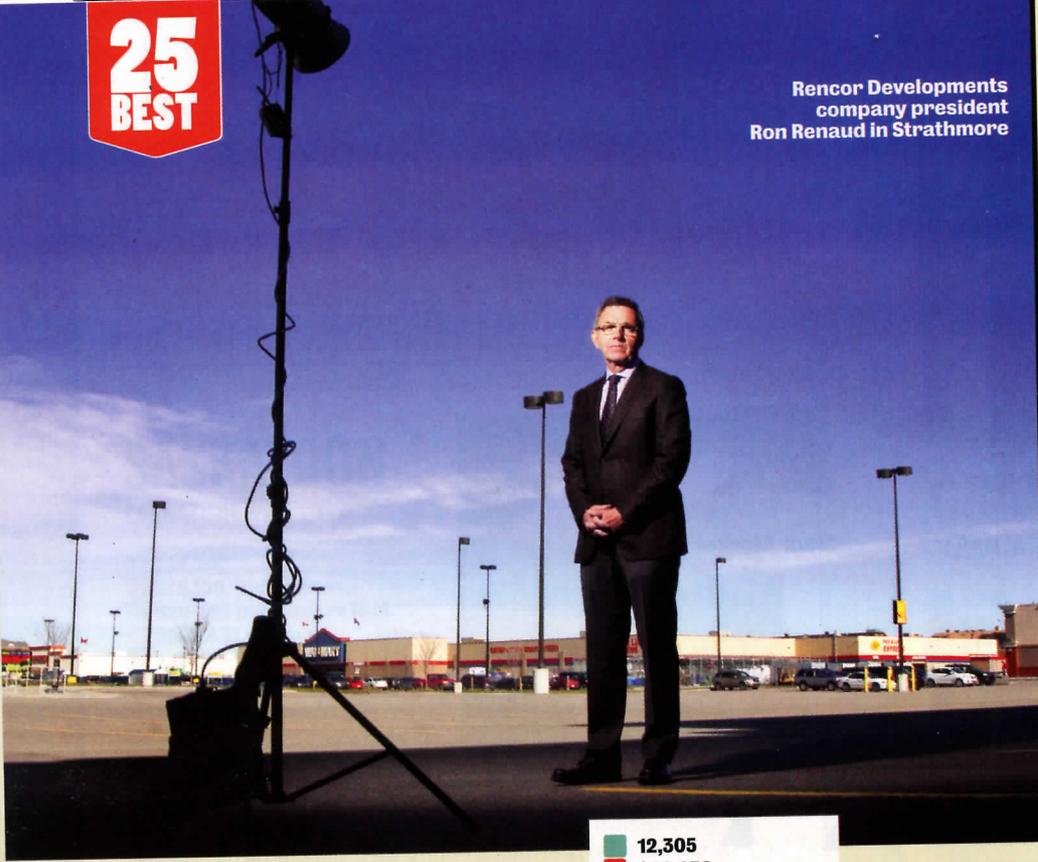


25
BEST

Rencor Developments
company president
Ron Renaud in Strathmore



WINNER

STRATHMORE

BEST SMALL COMMUNITY FOR BUSINESS

- 12,305
- \$60,830
- \$15 per square foot
- \$180,000 per acre
- 0.63%

STRATHMORE HAS A POPULATION of just over 12,000, but it might not stay small for much longer. Western Canada's best small community for business is getting a lot of attention from outside investors and businesses alike. And why wouldn't it? Strathmore has one of the lowest business property tax rates in the province, plus industrial land available for \$180,000 per acre.

No less an expert than W. Brett Wilson thinks Strathmore represents a good investment – his Prairie Merchant Corp. is spending millions developing 160 acres of the town's residential land. But the community isn't waiting around for angel investors to make the necessary investments in its future. The town itself is investing in infrastructure that will allow it grow to almost five times its current population. It spent \$9 million recently to build a potable underground water reservoir. It has also built a new wastewater treatment plant and a regional water line from Calgary, which is about 50 kilometres west along the Trans-Canada Highway.

These sorts of public investments were a big draw for Rencor Developments, a shopping centre developer that recently moved into the region. Company president Ron Renaud says the town is a great place to do business and credits Strathmore's administration with encouraging development. "The best example is the approval

process," Renaud says. "The entitlement process is streamlined, they're very accommodating and work with you, and the costs are reasonable. Timing is critical in our business, and the faster you can get things done, the better."

Dwight Stanford, Strathmore's chief administration officer, says the town prides itself on being business-friendly. That's why it puts a 10-day maximum wait time on development permits, which rose 47 per cent in total value last year. "Businesses always want to know about [water infrastructure] and what land is available," Stanford says. And Strathmore has made a lot of land available. It designated 583 acres of town land for industrial use, selling the first portion to a developer in March.

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Strathmore's business-friendly approach is equally evident to the town's small business owners, who listed the town's "opportunities and attitudes" as one of its strengths in a recent government survey, beating the average for similar communities by six per cent. That impressed Renaud, who sees a bright future for the community and the businesses that set up shop there. "It's a very pro-business community," he says. "We hope to be here for a long time."

PHOTOGRAPH BOOKSTRUCKER

MANUFACTURING & LOGISTICS

LEDUC

ALBERTA

Largest industrial park in Canada

- 59,000
- \$88,325
- \$10-\$15 per square foot
- \$450,000 per acre
- 1.04%

IF LOGISTICS IS ALL ABOUT LOCATION, then it's hard to be better situated than Leduc. A major transportation hub, it is home to the Edmonton International Airport (EIA) and sits directly on Queen Elizabeth II Highway. Nisku Business Park is serviced by both Canadian Pacific and Canadian National Railway Lines, which connect it to every major city in North America. It's no wonder the surrounding area has been dubbed Alberta's International Region.

The Leduc and Nisku business parks are both major industrial centres, with over 8,000 acres of space. In fact, Nisku is the largest such park in Canada and the second largest in North America. The business parks house many of the region's manufacturing companies, including Fiberex, which recently built a \$30-million facility in Nisku. Meanwhile, EIA is undergoing a \$1-billion expansion that's scheduled for completion in January 2013 and the airport is also home to the Air-LINKS business park, part of Port Alberta, which is ideal for air-cargo businesses.

Leduc and Nisku are making investments to press their advantage even further. The region is investing \$30 million in road improvement projects in the City of Leduc and Leduc County, and the town of Warburg recently annexed nearly 100 acres of land for new industrial and commercial developments.

HOTSPOT

THE LOWER MAINLAND

Vancouver and area is Western Canada's gateway to the East. Port Metro Vancouver handles over 110 million tonnes of cargo annually through its 28 major marine terminals. As Canada's largest