

# Best Practice

## Planning for Growth Services Agreement

### CONTACT

RM of Mervin  
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Project Date: Ongoing — began October 27, 2010

### THE PRACTICE

A shared-services agreement giving 19 RMs, towns and villages in the area access to the services of a growth professional planner, enabling better planning for the future for subdivisions and servicing requirements for increased infrastructure needs.

Municipalities involved at the time of nomination: RMs of Mervin, Frenchman Butte, Parkdale, Turtle River and Turtleford, Town of Turtleford, and Villages of Paradise Hill, Glaslyn, Mervin and Edam.

### THE PROCESS

In 2010 the RM of Mervin and surrounding municipalities in northwest Saskatchewan identified that a professional planner would enable them to better plan for the future, both in terms of subdivisions as well as servicing requirements for increased infrastructure needs. A number of these municipalities were also looking for the expertise to assist them implementing an official community plan and zoning bylaw, or bring the existing ones in compliance with *The Planning and Development Act, 2007*. The RM of Mervin met with neighbouring municipalities and reached a consensus to apply for the Planning for Growth Grant. This enabled them to form a coalition and implement the Planner Shared Services Agreement. The grant was for a one-year program and started with a group of nine municipalities that has since grown to a self-funded program with 19 participating municipalities.

### THE RESULTS

The RM of Mervin handled hiring and provided office space and supplies, but this project gave all the councils access to professional advice that will help them make long-term decisions for the municipality. It built on work under the Municipal Capacity Development Program and helped municipalities with land-use planning and enhancing their growth strategies. By employing a professional planner, all participating communities have access to expertise which they can use to address growth issues for their specific municipality, including subdivision proposals submitted by developers.

This project identified the benefits of the services of a professional planner to municipalities that don't have the fiscal capacity to employ one on their own, but can retain the services with other participating municipalities. This shows that the pooling of municipalities resources to access needed services will benefit the region as a whole. A local planner is also more in touch with the needs of the rural and small urban communities that they live and work in versus employing a consultant from a larger centre. This allows municipalities to better manage growth which will benefit each municipality as a whole. Properly managed growth will ensure sustainability of the municipality as well as the region.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The planner provides a variety of services for different municipalities, such as being the development officer and approving development permit applications. Working with 19 municipalities also includes working with 19 different official community plans and zoning bylaws and the individual implementation tendencies in each municipality. The planner is charged with implementing the bylaws as council requests, and the diversity of the municipalities can be a challenge.

Other challenges include:

- having efficient time and project management to complete all tasks in a timely manner;
- providing sufficient description on billing for every 15 minutes of time spent on municipal tasks; and
- navigating potential conflicts that arise between different municipalities.



***Celebrating Municipal Excellence***

# Nomination Form

*Deadline: 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 9, 2015*

Nominee Contact Information	
<b>Name of municipality/ municipalities being nominated:</b> <i>(please include the names of all partner municipalities)</i>	R.M of Mervin No. 499, R.M. of Frenchman Butte No. 501, R.M. of Parkdale No. 498, R.M. of Turtle River No. 469, Town of Turtleford, Village of Paradise Hill, Village of Glaslyn, Village of Mervin, Village of Edam
<b>Contact Name:</b>	L. Ryan Domotor
<b>Telephone #:</b>	306-845-2045
<b>Mailing Address:</b>	Box 130 Turtleford, Sask. S0M 2Y0
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	rm499@rmofmervin.com
<b>Name of Nominated Practice or Project:</b>	Planning for Growth Services Agreement
<b>Date of Project or Practice Initiation:</b>	October 27 <sup>th</sup> , 2010
<b>Date of Project or Practice Completion:</b> <i>(If ongoing, please indicate)</i>	Ongoing: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Nominator Contact Information	
<b>Name:</b>	L. Ryan Domotor
<b>Organization:</b>	RM of Mervin No. 499
<b>Position:</b>	Administrator
<b>Mailing Address:</b>	Box 130 Turtleford, Sask. S0M 2Y0
<b>Telephone #:</b>	306-845-2045

E-mail Address:	rm499@rmofmervin.com
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*Please remember when filling out your nomination that winning practices are posted in the Best Practices Library, so be sure to include all information that may be helpful to others if it were to be used as a reference or resource.*

## The Practice

1. What was the issue that inspired the nominated project or practice?
2. What has this project or practice done to address the issue?

1. In 2010 the R.M. of Mervin and surrounding municipalities in North West Saskatchewan had seen unprecedented growth over the past several years and it was identified that a professional planner would enable them to better plan for the future both in terms of subdivisions as well as servicing requirements for increased infrastructure needs. A number of these municipalities were also looking for the expertise to assist them implementing an OCP and Zoning bylaw or bring the existing ones in compliance with the Planning and Development Act, 2007. The Provincial Government was offering a grant under the Planning for Growth and Gas Tax Program to enhance regional planning capacity and establish best practices facilitating sustainable growth and development across the province. The RM of Mervin met with neighbouring municipalities and reached a consensus to apply for the Planning for Growth Grant. This enabled them to form a coalition and implement the Planner Shared Services Agreement. The grant was for a one year program and started with a group of 9 municipalities that has since grown to a self-funded program with 19 participating municipalities.

2. The municipalities involved have strengthened their ability to effectively communicate with potential developers and better facilitate business opportunities from interested parties looking at their community. This has enabled Councils to make better informed decisions with respect to new development/subdivisions that occur as well as improved planning decisions for future growth. The planner is not only able to give first hand advice to Council, but enables them to physically review proposed subdivisions and identify any concerns in terms of servicing requirements as well as potential environmental impact or potential impact on existing developments. In the future, we anticipate that the planner will be able to identify services that the Municipalities can collaberately offer together including joint partnerships possibly leading to a broader plan for the area encompassed in the project.

## The Process

*This section should be the longest and most detailed part of your nomination. Include enough information so that a municipality interested in applying the same project or practice can follow your steps.*

3. Indicate who had a direct role in this project or practice:

- Municipal Council
- Municipal Administration
- Other

4. What was the role of the municipal council and/or municipal staff in this project or practice?

5. Were other groups were involved in developing this project or practice? If so, who were they and what role did they play?

6. What resources were involved?

7. How was the project or practice developed?

4. The Municipal Councils' role was to meet collectively to agree on a plan that was mutually beneficial to all parties and implement the Planning for Growth Services Agreement. Neighboring Municipalities were contacted and meetings were held to identify what each municipality's needs were regarding a Planning Service. The Municipal Councils then provided their approval to implement the Planning Services Agreement. The Municipalities involved in the implementation of the Planning for Growth Services Agreement were the R.M. of Mervin, R.M. of Frenchman Butte, R.M. of Turtle River, R.M. of Parkdale, Town of Turtleford, Village of Edam, Village of Mervin, Village of Paradise Hill, and Village of Glaslyn. The municipalities collectively developed criteria for the Planning Department and funding expectations.

The R.M of Mervin municipal staff's role was to provide the background information to the councils, the administration work to implement the agreement, finalizing the grant application as sponsoring municipality for the project, and all associated paperwork.

5. The Grants Administration and Financial Management Department of the Saskatchewan Provincial Government was also involved with developing this project. They provided guidance and funding through the Planning for Growth Program. The Community Planning Department of the Saskatchewan Provincial Government and SARM provided planning consultation to the Professional Planner that was hired by the RM of Mervin.

6. Initial funding was provided by each Municipality to the Planning Department based on a \$10.00 per capita fee as well as a guarantee of funding on a per capita basis for any short fall of expenses for use of the planner. The per capita levy would be applied as a credit which was deducted monthly based on the amount of hours the Municipality used and charged out at a specific hourly rate. Any excess use over the per capita contribution would be charged out to the municipality at an hourly rate. Initial resources was also supplied by the Provincial Government and SUMA through the Planning for Growth Grant. The Planning Department is now fully funded by the municipalities and each municipality pays an hourly rate based on the amount of work the Planner provides them.

7. An agreement was formalized between the initial 9 municipalities to fund and share the services of a Planner. The RM of Mervin hired and provided the office space, computer, supplies, etc., for the Regional Planner. The Planner provides services to all municipalities depending on each municipalities needs. Initially the planner assisted municipalities that did not have an Official Community Plan (OCP) or Zoning Bylaw to develop or amend their existing one to comply with the Planning and Development Act, 2007, including strategies for services for new developments and Zoning Districts. The planner also is able to assist municipalities with drafting servicing agreements and offer advice on development permit applications. The Planner provides advice on subdivision applications, development permits, sustainability planning etc. Since inception the Planning group has grown from 9 municipalities to 19 solidifying the success of the project.

## The Results

8. What effect did this project or practice have on the community?
9. Was a formal evaluation done after the project or practice was completed?
10. Describe any challenges faced.

8. This project enhanced the capacity for council to access professional advice to assist them in making decisions that would affect the Municipality in the long term. The project not only built on work initiated under the Municipal Capacity Development Program for some Communities but also assisted others in land use planning which enhanced their growth strategies for their respective Communities. By employing a professional planner, all participating communities have access to expertise which they can use to address growth issues for their specific Municipality, including current and future subdivision proposals submitted by developers.

9. The RM of Mervin holds an annual meeting each year with all participating municipalities to evaluate the services, problem solve and initiate new ideas for the group. The RM of Mervin also has an open door policy for communication and feedback year round.

10. Challenges for the Planning Group: The role of the Planner provides a variety of services for different municipalities, such as being the Development Officer and approving development permit applications. Working with 19 municipalities also includes working with 19 different Official Community Plan's and Zoning Bylaws and the individual implementation tendencies within each municipality. The Planner is charged with implementing the bylaws as Council requests, and the diversity of the municipalities can be a challenge. Other challenges include, having efficient time and project management to complete all tasks requested of the Planner from 19 municipalities within a timely manner, providing sufficient description on billing for every 15 minutes of time spent on municipal tasks, and navigating potential conflict of interests that arise between different municipalities.

## Lessons Learned

11. What lessons were learned and what would you recommend doing differently?  
Remember, all nominations will become part of the Best Practices Library, so be sure to include specific information.

11. This project identified the benefits of the services of a professional planner to municipalities that don't have the fiscal capacity to employ one individually but can retain the services collectively with other participating municipalities. This shows that the pooling of municipalities resources to access needed services will benefit the region as a whole. A local planner is also more in touch with the needs of the rural and small urban communities that they live and work in versus employing a consultant from a larger centre. This allows municipalities to better manage growth which will benefit each municipality as a whole. Properly managed growth will ensure sustainability of the municipality as well as the region.

Please submit your completed nomination package to:

E-mail: [awards@municipalawards.ca](mailto:awards@municipalawards.ca) or

Fax: Attn: Saskatchewan Municipal Awards Program, 306-798-2568; or

Mail: Saskatchewan Municipal Awards, Room 1010 – 1855 Victoria Avenue, Regina, SK S4P 3T2

Contact: Phone No. 306-525-4398

*Thank you for submitting a nomination for the 2015 Saskatchewan Municipal Awards.*