



MID SASK. MUNICIPAL
ALLIANCE COMMUNITY
ACTION PLAN
2010



A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN:

The Rural Municipality of LeRoy #339;

Rural Municipality of Prairie Rose #309;

Rural Municipality of Usborne #310;

Town of Lanigan;

Town of LeRoy;

Town of Nokomis;

Town of Watrous;

Town of Watson;

Resort Village of Manitou Beach;

Village of Drake;

and the

Village of Jansen



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I. Introduction

Purpose of the Mid Sask. Municipal Alliance Community Action Plan

The Mid Sask. Municipal Alliance region is currently facing issues dealing with housing, infrastructure, health and educational services, major developments and the challenge of retaining people. Each municipality recognizes the need to work together to solve these issues and to gain strength from one another for the long term betterment of the region. By discussing their concerns and beliefs, the group was able to develop key goals and strategies that will shape their future and improve the quality of life in for residents in their region. This document was developed utilizing information obtained during planning sessions facilitated by the Municipal Capacity Development Program (MCDP) on November 18th 2009, February 25th, 2010, March 25th, 2010 and April 22nd, 2010.

Community Action Planning: The Purpose and Process

A number of changes are taking place across the province, the planning process involves taking into consideration the past, present and future trends in an area and using that information to plan out the development of a region. The planning process helps municipalities to uncover the human, financial and partnering resources in their area and provides a framework to use those assets efficiently. Planning as an area wide initiative results in: an optimum use of resources (human, financial, etc.); avoids duplication of services; increases the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery; allows for consistent regulations and policies; and creates an overall better quality of life for everyone.

Community Action Planning or Strategic Planning is not a response to short term fluctuations but is concerned with the long-term direction that a municipality is moving towards. It is the process by which the guiding members of an organization look to its future and develop the procedures and operations necessary to achieve that future.



The strategic planning process is a number of steps that are developed to include flexibility and creativity. These include:

1. Preparing
2. Vision, Mission and Values statements
3. Assessing the situation
4. Agreeing on priorities
5. Writing a plan
6. Implementing, Evaluating and Monitoring the plan



Background: Mid Sask. Municipal Alliance

The Mid Sask. Municipal Alliance initially began through a Land Use Planning and Development initiative proposed by the Carlton Trail Regional Economic Development Authority.

The purpose of this initiative was:

- (a) To provide municipal administrators and councilors with all the necessary ‘tools’ to plan and implement an effective land use planning and development strategy for sustainable community/regional development; and
- (b) To accelerate strategic municipal land use development and planning so that the new enterprise region is in a better position to develop a regional economic development strategy plan.

The Municipal Capacity Development Program and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities provided information on the benefits of intermunicipal cooperation and also information on the various planning arrangements, types of plans and the overall planning process. After much discussion a general consensus was reached, the group agreed that there was a need and a want to work together to build and sustain their area.

From these sessions, the group evolved into 11 municipalities and in 2010, the municipalities had formally signed a Memorandum of Understanding which indicated their intended common line of action. The MOU states that the Committee will prepare a regional plan that outlines the priorities of the region and provides consistent regulations for different types of land uses.



MSMA Housing Meeting May 20th 2010 (Left: Edwina Gourlay, Jansen, Ken Crowter – LeRoy, Hazel Eddy – Nokomis, John de Goijer – Watson, Tayah Hanson - MCDP)

Group Structure

**(Please see Memorandum of Understanding for further information on the group)*

The Committee believes that an internal structure will assist with the decision making and problem solving process which in turn will generate the long term success of the group. The Mid Sask. Municipal Alliance approved the following structure for their working arrangement:

- To have one (1) council representative from each municipality;
- 2 floating administrators when invited and/or available;
- Meetings will be held once a month for approximately 2 hours on a rotating location basis;
- The municipality that hosts the meeting will be responsible to cover the costs.

The group also believed that is it important for everyone to be responsible for the following:

- Attend meetings and commit time (approximately 3 hours a month plus the monthly meetings) to the group;
- Representing their Council on issues related to inter-municipal cooperation;
- Reporting to their Council after each meeting and reporting to the group after each Council meeting;
- Completing the action items or designate someone to complete the action item for them;
- Addressing the regional plan as well as applicable items;
- Participating and providing input into shared opportunities and successes; and
- Keeping an open mind and participating in individual and group exercises.

Players

Mid Sask. Municipal Alliance:

The Rural Municipality of LeRoy #339;
Rural Municipality of Prairie Rose #309;
Rural Municipality of Usborne #310;
Town of Lanigan;
Town of LeRoy;
Town of Nokomis;
Town of Watrous;
Town of Watson;
Resort Village of Manitou Beach;
Village of Drake;
and
The Village of Jansen.



Municipal Capacity Development Program:

The Municipal Capacity Development Program (MCDP) developed as a partnership between SARM, SUMA, the New North and Municipal Affairs to promote growth, cooperation and community development through intermunicipal partnership. The partnering organizations recognized a need to assist municipalities in building local capacity for long-term planning; promote cooperation among municipalities to deliver more cost effective programs and services; and; foster long term working relationships amongst communities and encourage collaboration amongst municipalities, including First Nations and Métis communities.

MCDP was created with the primary objective to build sustainable communities across Saskatchewan. MCDP's role is to encourage and assist municipalities in developing long term capacity on an interjurisdictional basis. MCDP assists municipalities with identifying local priorities and carrying out strategies to achieve community goals.

Roles and Responsibilities

Group Role as Leader and Participant

During the Community Action Planning process, the Group provided input into shared opportunities and successes, kept an open mind and participated in various exercises. The Group understood their role and the importance of providing suggestions, direction for improvements and completing the working group's 'next steps'.

MCDP Role as Facilitator and Resource

In the development of the Community Action Plan, the Municipal Capacity Development Program prepared for the sessions by adapting the process to meet the needs of the participating municipalities and as more information became available. MCDP made sure that everyone had an equal opportunity to participate. MCDP also provided suggestions, research assistance, and models for inter municipal cooperation that was utilized as the communities continued to work together.



Left to Right: Ken Crowter - Town of LeRoy, Bruce Elke- R.M. of Prairie Rose, Hazel Eddy- Town of Nokomis, John deGooijer – Town of Watson, Wilf Snider – R.M. of Osborne, Elwyn Beeler – Town of Watrous, Peter Nicholson – Village of Drake, Bernie Bishop – Town of Lanigan.

II. The Plan

“Mission, vision and value statements are fundamental to strategic planning and good management. Thus, reviewing major decisions against these yardsticks is a powerful governance tool. Further... it allows [individuals] to truly understand the objectives of the [group in order] to make everyday [cooperative] decisions that are consistent, and to buy-in on new directions. The [group] is able to evolve without experiencing chaos because its overall direction and intent are clear.”

Reference: Plant, Thomas (2008). Strategic Planning for Municipalities: A Users Guide. Municipal World: Ontario. (p.32)

Our VISION

“We are a progressive group of small and large communities in a rural setting committed to working together as a regional collective for the long term betterment of the area. Our richness in agriculture, potash and manufacturing creates a strong economy for the region and the province. The area supports a variety and abundance of wildlife and numerous tourist sites and opportunities. Our region contains cooperative and ambitious community spirits that create a unique quality of life for everyone.”

Our MISSION

“Our group is working together to sustain, build and grow the communities in the region. By sharing information and resources, and identifying our strengths and opportunities we are finding solutions to common problems and improving the quality of life in the region. We believe that progress is important to enhance the communities and strengthen the region. Our co-operative efforts are intended to preserve the past while improving the lifestyle and quality of life for present and future generations.

Our VALUES

Honesty, Transparency, and Integrity:

Our group will move forward with transparent agendas and will portray ourselves honestly to residents, rate payers, newcomers to the area, to governing bodies and to each other as a group.

Dedication and Commitment:

Our group is dedicated to working with and fulfilling responsibilities to reach common goals. We are committed to promote the interests of our communities.

Preservation:

The group will strive to preserve the quality of life in the region and to keep all of the communities healthy, vibrant and thriving. The group will also work to continue the strong partnership between the rural and urban communities in the region.

Unification:

The group is dedicated to working together as a whole towards common goals. The group believes that the pursuit for common interests will create a stronger voice and better opportunities for the area.

Tolerance and Open-mindedness:

The group is committed to be tolerant of one another's ideas, opinions and to be open to change. The group will work to promote acceptance of newcomers and diversity of culture and ethnicity. The group will ensure that everyone is heard around the table and will keep an open mind to all ideas.

Logical Thinking:

The group will work toward realistic and achievable goals.

Cooperative, Sharing and Equitability:

The group is dedicated to exhibit true cooperation, trusting each other, listening and working together in making equitable decisions.

Global Conversation

The group discussed issues that were going on in the world around the topic of rural development and linked back how those items at the worldly, national and provincial levels affect them. The group discussed the following:

Economics:

The Potash Industry- the area is dependent on it re: wages, labor, taxes and commodity prices.

Urbanization:

People are moving to the big centers making it difficult to retain people in the area. There is also a lack of newborns and families in the area and a need to encourage immigration.

Housing:

There is a shortage of low income housing in the region. There will be a big demand for housing when development begins so there is a need to work on this now.

Health Care:

The problem of attracting/retaining doctors, communities are competing with each other for doctors. Difficulty in maintaining old buildings, equipment, etc. School closures are a big concern: children will be riding the bus early hours in the morning.



Sign at West End of Watrous

Photo: G. Bergen

Envisioning Assets and Attributes

The following lists are the community assets and attributes that the Mid Sask. Municipal Alliance would like to see remain and be developed over the next 20 years:

-FARMS/RURAL COMMUNITIES

-RURAL POPULATION/FAMILIES

-HEALTH CARE/FACILITIES

-HOUSING

-SCHOOLS

-NIGHTLIFE/ ATTRACTIONS

-JOBS

-SMALL BUSINESSES

-CHIROPRACTOR (WATSON)

-SPA/SALT LAKE (MANITOU BEACH/WATROUS)

-ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE (DEVELOP AND BE MAINTAINED TO GET TO SERVICES)

-RECREATION FACILITIES

-VEHICLE DEALERSHIPS

-TOURISM/WILDLIFE

-WATER/SEWER



Identifying Priorities and Turning Challenges into Opportunities

The group identified the challenges and issues that are currently being faced in the region. The group categorized and prioritized their list of current issues accordingly:

1. Housing:

- lack of affordable housing
- need to determine housing strategy before development
- struggle to find contractors
- need for: Immigrants, low cost rentals, home ownership housing, new subdivisions etc.

2. Infrastructure:

- maintaining/improving sewer/water facilities
- maintaining/improving roads
- Road Maintenance and Servicing Agreements: Group wants some consistency with road agreements, etc. (Servicing' refers to Water taps, garbage, waste, and width of streets etc. – what is required of a developer for subdivision.)
- Transportation Agreement: (road haul agreements, route agreements, etc) (note: some members of the group are working on transportation agreements as a subcommittee project outside of the larger group.)

3. Services:

- School closures/quality of education may decrease, school children riding the bus early hours in the morning
- Health care:
 - the lack of and difficulty in maintaining
 - Doctor crisis is primary concern.
 - Health region is on board and will address the current situation – specifically, the Dr. in charge of approving others to come into the area has been stopping this from taking place.

4. Major Developments:

-Regional Plan- there is a need for standardization (this is an opportunity to share and have some consistency in regards to bylaws/policies, incentives).

The regional plan should address:

- What to look for when writing/updating the individual Zoning Bylaw and Official Community Plan.
- And outline the areas specifically important to the group and where there is agreement between the members.
- The group wants to set out a guide within the plan, “where there is a subdivision proposal here is what is involved and here are some examples of what participating municipalities currently do in x, y, and z situations”.

-Building Bylaws: the group wants some consistency with their building bylaws

-Dependency on the potash development (the municipalities are currently preparing for it and there could be the possibility of the development not following through)

-employees: need for and lack of

-If the municipality has anything more than a farm home, which is associated with traditional family farming operations, the municipality needs to have a building bylaw and building inspector. The municipality could be found liable if they do not have a building bylaw; the building bylaws and enforcement is for councilors and municipalities protection.

5. Urbanization:

- population is decreasing in the area (moving out)
- ageing population (need for an increase in senior housing, retaining immigrants)
- retaining young people/immigrants
- proximity to larger centers draws people out
- Agreed that group has to do something more than they are doing now.
- Discussion took place about budgeting for recreation as a priority so that the money is there when it's needed.
- Barrier: old competitive mindset between municipalities is still there for some. City mindset has to change as well.
- Important note: remember that you can ask developers to contribute funds for recreation through the Servicing Agreement, if and only if you have a pot set aside specifically for that. The fees collected need to be justified through a report or study and can be based on charge and population



Goal Development & Strategizing

The group turned each need and challenge into a goal that they wanted to accomplish. The group also determined what activities, actions and steps they would need to take to be successful in achieving their overall goals, what resources (human, existing and financial) could be involved, the timelines and leads for each activity. The group's top five goals and actions are as follows:

Housing

“To provide affordable housing alternatives for all stages of life and to increase the availability of land to encourage further development.”

Objectives:

The Group will organize a meeting to discuss a Housing Strategy for the future development in their Region.

Activities and Actions:

The Municipalities will compile information and statistics to determine what the needs are and what is available in the region. The group/committee will assess and make recommendations based on: the availability of land (in the Towns/Villages and RM's), individual zoning and building bylaws (consistency of building codes), which community needs what, and statistics. The group will then coordinate the needs and activities between communities. The group will also identify developers in the region and organize/coordinate the development of projects in the region.

Resources: (Human, Existing and Financial)

Prairie Innovation Enterprise Region

The Administrators of each member municipality

Sask. Housing

Investors/Developers

WaterWolf

Watrous EDO (to post the information and create a Mid Sask. Municipal Alliance website)

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Timeline & Indicators:

Actions taken by Fall of 2010

Initial Housing Meeting – May 20th, 2010

Indicators: Will be determined once information is compiled.

Lead:

**Each community will be responsible to bring forward and compile their own statistics/information (building bylaws, zoning, etc
Chairperson/Vice Chairperson is responsible for overseeing all actions are complete and on time**

Infrastructure

“To provide safe and adequate supply and infrastructure to meet the present and future needs of the community.”

Objectives:

The municipalities will set up a meeting/committee to discuss in detail, a strategy to upgrade/maintain/create regional sewer/water facilities.

note: The Rural Municipalities are currently working together to develop strategy for the roads in the region

Activities and Actions:

The communities will conduct a needs assessment of the infrastructure in the region and of each community i.e. usage of roads; possibility of regional water line (some communities have/will look into how they can benefit from the proposed mine development; Sask. Water has been in contact with the group); assess results from individual municipality budgets; assess the regional perspective for roads; assess the 1-2-5 year needs of each communities sewer/water/ landfill; scheduled maintenance for each communities.

Resources: (Human, Existing and Financial)

Sask. Water

-Area Transportation Committee (CATCP)

-Sask. Environment

Timeline & Indicators:

Urban/Rural Municipalities: September 2010

Rural Municipalities– Currently In Progress (Roads)

Indicators: actions that are being taken i.e. discussion with Sask. Water, RM’s working together on the road issues, etc.

Lead:

**Each community will be responsible to bring forward and compile their own statistics/information.
Chairperson/Vice Chairperson is responsible for overseeing all actions are complete and on time.**

Services

“To retain and maintain quality education and health care services in the community.”

Objectives:

To retain and maintain the population in the region and attract service/industry development, look at upgrades to current facilities, pool resources for clustered health/education services and look at alternatives (different school options for those without).

Activities and Actions:

The proposed potash mine will attract new families, immigrants, good teachers and improve the overall curriculum. The group also discussed that by addressing the housing issue, the population will increase which in turn will provide the communities with better support to retain and maintain the health/education services. The communities will undertake a needs assessment for the facilities (nursing homes, etc.) and determine whether an upgrade or newly built development would be feasible and to research potential funding options. The group will also look at alternatives for children i.e. capacity of Watrous and Lanigan schools for children from Nokomis. Each community will conduct a needs assessment: how to maintain current services and determine the development of new ones.

Resources: (Human, Existing and Financial)

Horizon School Board/Divisions (capacities of facilities, statistical information, etc.)

Health Districts

Timeline & Indicators:

Ongoing – In progress (some communities are looking into the needs assessments already)

BHP has been in contact with health and school districts

Indicator: Steps in achieving alternative school options and sufficient health care facilities/services

Lead:

Each community will be responsible to bring forward and compile their own statistics/information.

Chairperson/Vice Chairperson is responsible for overseeing all actions are complete and on time.

Major Developments

“To build a common and consistent regulatory structure to facilitate development and reduce conflict.”

Objectives:

The group is currently in the process of developing new OCP’s for their communities and will then develop a regional plan and update zoning bylaws

Activities and Actions:

Develop a Regional Plan; update/develop individual Official Community Plans and zoning bylaws.

Resources: (Human, Existing and Financial)

**Some municipalities are currently working with PIER to develop their individual Official Community Plans.
Private Consultants**

Timeline & Indicators:

Completed by: Spring 2011

Indicators: Having newly developed individual OCP’s, zoning bylaws and a Regional Plan

Lead:

**Each community will be responsible to bring forward and compile their own statistics/information.
Chairperson/Vice Chairperson is responsible for overseeing all actions are complete and on time.**

Urbanization

“To maintain and grow a viable urbanized/rural community that provides a unique quality of life appealing to all ages.”

Objectives:

- 1. To assess: housing and business/services, health and education and attract younger population by looking into daycares, schools, etc.;**
- 2. Focus on social, recreational and cultural activities;**
- 3. Develop specific attractions and incentives.**

Activities and Actions:

The group will address the housing and service issues to assist with maintaining and possibly increasing the population in the area. The group will also develop a Mid Sask. Municipal Alliance Regional Website to connect each community with a common website which will showcase what each community has to offer, include available affordable living, plans and policies, recreational opportunities, available jobs in the vicinity and have links to each individual community/municipality.

Resources: (Human, Existing and Financial)

Economic Development Officer – Watrous

Timeline & Indicators:

Spring 2011

Indicators: Increase in population

Lead:

Each community will be responsible to bring forward and compile their own statistics/information. Chairperson/Vice Chairperson is responsible for overseeing all actions are complete and on time. Economic Development Officer will be responsible to develop and maintain the website.

note: OCP's, bylaws and Regional Plan are needed to be completed first as well as the housing and service initiatives

Next Steps: Achieving their Goals and Implementing the Plan

Adoption by Council

Each member has put hard work and effort into the development of the Community Action Plan. Adoption by each municipality's council will ensure the group can continue to use and work on the actions set out in the plan during changes in municipal government.

Reporting, Monitoring and Revision

The group will report to each other on actions/initiatives that they've been working on and discuss issues that need a full group assessment. Monitoring is important for accountability to the process and each municipality. Goals and objectives change as they have been reached and as new information becomes available, they should be reviewed and revised on a regular basis. The frequency depends on emerging trends and changes in the operational environment. The entire plan is a living document and should remain relevant to the group in the present and the future.

Applying the Information

The information and objectives that have been identified in the Community Action Plan (Strategic Plan) will be used as a setting for the Mid Sask. Municipal Alliance Regional Plan. The information can be used to create policies for municipalities to make decisions about managing long-term growth or long term stagnation with respect to infrastructure, housing, municipally delivered services and the overall quality of life in the area.

The Future

The Mid Sask. Municipal Alliance will look to its future with confidence and pride and will continue to work with each other for the long term betterment of their region. The members will continue to work towards each goal building a stronger partnership and opening the doors to new opportunities along the way. MCDP will continue to provide efficient and relevant services to the Mid Sask. Municipal Alliance for the group to successfully accomplish their objectives.