

Practice Name:**Date Created:** 26-May-09**Author:****Last Updated:****Abstract:****GENERAL INFORMATION**

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| Name of Practice | Subdivision Development |
| Date | 30-June-08 |
| Name of Municipality | Village of Nobleford |
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THE ISSUE**Abstract:**

What is the practice you developed or are developing (brief abstract)?

Please briefly describe the final practice developed. (e.g. if you developed a new Council agenda, list the agenda items, or if a new communications plan was created, provide a summary of the plan's goals, objectives and highlights.)

The Village of Nobleford was incorporated in 1918 and had a population of 600 in 2004. In 2004 the Village of Nobleford prepared a plan for the future that included some very bold objectives that if realized would help sustain a prosperous future. A economic plan was implemented that would increase the population by 2010 to 1000 people, provide an abundance of new jobs, increase the quality of life in Nobleford while reducing property taxation for its residents.

The Village of Nobleford has developed practices that have created new jobs increased property assessment reduced real dollars property tax, established modern infrastructure all of which is unprecedented to Nobleford and possibly Alberta. Most importantly these practices have resulted in a prosperous sustainable rural municipality.

Need:

Please describe (just a couple of sentences or bullet points) why you needed to create this practice (policy or process).

What issue made it necessary? (e.g. “We needed a comprehensive plan to deal with...”, or “We needed an annual forecasting tool because...”)

In 2004, The Village Council of Nobleford recognized that the future sustainability of Nobleford was in question. Limited quality water, minimal population growth, a decrease in job opportunities, minimal new housing starts, and decreasing commercial and industrial property assessment were all realities that needed to be addressed immediately.

CREATING YOUR PRACTICE

Research:

How did you obtain information to help design your practice (including consultation with stakeholders, formal and informal research)?

Please include any research documentation you can share, or give us a source reference (e.g. Web site, literature, “We reviewed the bylaws from other municipalities in the area...”).

Council recognized that it needed a plan and that someone has to implement that plan in a diligent manner. The Village Municipal Development plan had not been updated since 1983 (20 years old). The Village owned residential, commercial as well as industrial land that had been sitting vacant for years and council recognized a major marketing strategy must be developed and implemented on their own due to no outside developer interest. Council realized that before any progress could be made in Nobleford the lack of quality water must be addressed and supporting infrastructure must be established. In recent years the Village had not been able to establish consistent Administration personnel.

Process:

How did you go about designing your practice? For instance, did you create a team, hire a consultant, borrow something ready-made from another jurisdiction?

Describe briefly who did the design work and what process they followed.

In 2004 Council hired a CAO with a business background to assist them in establishing a long term plan for the future and to make recommendations as to how to implement this plan. Council and Administration agreed on some strict descriptions of roles and responsibilities of Governance, Administration and Operation of the Municipality. Through a series of meetings, facilitated by Administration, a fundamental concept and Vision was established by Council. Administration then prepared draft plans and strategies for Council. A new 5 year Municipal Development plan in the form of a bylaw was needed. Administration hired engineers and planners to assist in technical content of the various parts of the plan.

The immediate priority was to establish an abundant quality water supply for the Village

GETTING APPROVAL FOR YOUR PRACTICE**Authority:**

Whose/what approval did you need to create and implement the practice?

Village Council established bylaws to support the Vision. The Alberta Provincial Government was needed as a partner on funding and approvals for various portions of the projects. A comprehensive multi-year infrastructure capital plan was needed to secure grant support. (see attachment)

Reporting:

How did you inform the decision-maker(s) about the practice and your need for their approval?

Please note the name of any documents provided to the decision-makers that you would be willing to share.

CAO and Mayor communicated daily. Council adopted a communication flow chart that allowed the CAO to manage the plan effectively. (See attachment) Council committees were formed to address specific portions of the plan. CAO made regular reports to council.

Consultation:

Did you consult with stakeholders as part of your approval process?

If so, how? If possible, attach a copy of templates, surveys or other documents you used as part of your consultation.

Council and CAO met and consulted with the Community via public meetings, surveys, committee meetings and informal discussions. It was important that the Vision and plan were consistently repeated to all stakeholders.

The Oldman River Regional Services Commission assisted in formalizing the new Municipal Development Plan. MPE Engineering assisted in the water related projects, UMA Engineering assisted in the infrastructure projects. Nobleford CAO managed all the projects.

IMPLEMENTING YOUR PRACTICE

Plan:

Describe the process you went through to implement the practice. If you used an implementation plan, please note it here.

- 1-Council hired a new CAO in 2004
- 2-Council and CAO discussed issues in the Village resulting in a concept and vision for the next 5 years (2004 through to 2009) and beyond.
- 3-Council authorized the CAO to draft action plans that would implement the Concept and Vision and most importantly a realistic financial plan that was affordable.
- 4-Council approved plans and actions related to
 - a) A multi-million dollar water treatment plant upgrade,
 - b) Multi-million dollar infrastructure upgrades and new construction,
 - c) 3 phases of a multi-million dollar residential subdivision development (120 lots),
 - d) Industrial and commercial land development,
 - e) A million dollar parks upgrade. (see attachment),
 - f) Implement a marketing strategy using good news as the foundation and a budget of under \$500.00 (yes five hundred dollars). (see attached samples),
 - g) Strategies to attract business operations to Nobleford,
 - h) Strategies to fund the self development of commercial and residential subdivisions (see attachment)

Policy:

What changes to bylaws, regulations or procedures were needed to implement this practice and how did you deal with them?

Please attach a copy of the change in bylaw, policy or procedure.

A new Municipal Development Plan bylaw was adopted in Fall 2004. A million dollar environmental recreation and parks plan was adopted in Fall 2004 accompanied by policy that would prohibit the Village from starting any projects until all funding was in place. Council responsibilities were clearly defined supporting administration effectiveness.
(See attached 2004 MDP bylaw)

When:

When did your municipality begin to use the practice?
Was it implemented all at once or in stages?

The implementation process started in Spring 2004 through to 2007 and has been a foundation for continued practices.

Who:

Who was responsible for implementing the practice?

Council governed.
CAO managed.

If someone else is responsible for ongoing management, who is it?

RESOURCES REQUIRED

Budget:

How much did it cost you to design and implement your practice (i.e. We saved/spent \$XX per year)?

What are your ongoing operational and capital costs, if any?

There has been significant increase in project expenditures and revenue. See attached budget archive. To date all projects have been completed successfully on time and under budget, with final results meeting or exceeding expectations. Efficiency of most municipal operations has been improved and costs reduced since 2004.

Staff:

What human resources did you need to design, implement and manage your practice? (e.g. "It took X staff member (s) X months on this" or "This is part of normal staff duties.")

CAO and support staff efficiency and effectiveness were realized. No new staff were hired. CAO hired consultants and part-time staff on a project basis, working hands on with planners, engineers, contractors, and consultants. The existing full-time staff of 3 people were educated in new processes to maximize their productivity. Technology played a key role in effectiveness. Activities such as Land development, legal work, real estate sales and marketing were all done in house.

Infrastructure:

What "capital costs" (such as information technology, other equipment or building assets) did you need to design, implement, manage, and/or evaluate your practice?

New water treatment plant, new sewer mains, new water mains, new roads, upgraded and new gas, electrical, phone cables were constructed.

EVALUATING YOUR PRACTICE

Formal:

If you did a formal evaluation (e.g. user satisfaction survey, analysis of annual expenditures or number of rate payers served) for your practice, please describe the evaluation tool and the process used.

Tell us who was involved.

Informal:

If you did an informal evaluation, describe what you did (such as discussing the practice with people in the office or on the street, or letters/comments received).

Performance measures:

Please list the performance measures for this practice (i.e. reduced number of complaints, money saved, or change in equipment life expectancy.)

Please list the process you used for measuring performance, (i.e. We do annual surveys on...) examples include:

- collecting data
- establishing a baseline
- applying the measures
- results
- follow up

Changes:

(a) Based on the evaluation (formal or informal), describe any changes you have made, or would like to make, to your practice as a result. (e.g. "After implementing this practice, we decided that it would be better if...")

-or-

(b) Has your practice met your expectations and if so, how?

-In 2008 a survey seeking input on the new 2008 MDP was circulated to village residents and public meetings have been held to review what has been done and where we will go in the future.

-Village auditors evaluated the village financial progress annually.

-Council formally reviews and updates the long term vision and plan each fall.

Continuous informal evaluation between CAO, staff, and consultants was done weekly and monthly with Council.

The fundamental measure is the increase in property value assessment combined with the reduction in mill rate resulting in real dollar reduction in property taxation (e.g. 2007 residential property that was taxed \$1400 was \$1000 in 2008).

121 new residential properties were sold in advance of property infrastructure being developed and in various stages of housing construction. All lots were sold on a cost recovery basis and 3500 sq ft lots sold for \$10,000. There are 70 new jobs in Nobleford since 2005 with 50 more projected in 2009. Abundant quality water is supplied at reduced operating costs. Retention of loyal staff is evident. There are increased revenues, reduced expenses, significant reserves, and minimal debt for the Village. Nobleford is now sustainable if we keep doing what we have been doing since 2004.....plan and work.

The challenges of managing any practice require all those involved to understand their role and responsibility. Due to changes in people involved resulting from such activities as civic elections, more effort will be made to educate those involved in governance and operations as to their do's and don'ts.

The practice of self-financing, self-developing residential, commercial and industrial lots as well as marketing itself to Alberta and beyond has met village expectations.

LESSONS LEARNED / BENEFITS RECEIVED

Benefits:

What are the benefits of this practice to your municipality? (eg. Preparation of Council agenda packages now requires less time, etc.)

Affordable fully serviced lots have resulted in 121 new buildings including single family homes, condos and townhouses. The new 2004/2005 PALL water treatment plant provides abundant quality water supply for 2000 people and is currently being doubled in size to provide water to neighboring municipalities. (see related Nobleford water practice). The new infrastructures provide a sound foundation for industrial and commercial growth. Most importantly Nobleford is now sustainable as a high quality, affordable place to live with some of the lowest property taxes in Alberta.

Key Lessons:

What key lessons have you/your municipality learned through the process of:

- designing;
- obtaining approval;
- implementing; and
- evaluating your practice?

Include any problems, surprises, and unanticipated benefits. (e.g. "We realized that we needed to spend more time...")

- 1 - There is no such thing as a bad idea.
- 2 - There is a way to do everything affordably.
- 3 - Optimism fosters productive hard work.
- 4 - Work together with people who share a common goal.
- 5 - Let Council govern and Administration manage.
- 6 - If someone else can do it, you can do it.
- 7 - If you do not know how to do something, learn how to do it. Learn something new every day.
- 8 - Never be limited to your job description.
- 9 - Employ loyal people with business skills
- 10 - Getting big things done is more important than getting little things done. Always strive for a positive significant result.
- 11 - Do not let CAVERS (citizens against virtually everything) get you down.
- 12 - Get to know provincial government policy and key personnel as they are a valuable resource. They will not do the work for you but will help you in many ways.
- 13 - Stop complaining about the grant applications and accounting procedure and just go do it.

Advice to Municipal Peers:

What advice would you give to another municipality that is considering adopting your practice? Is there anything you might have done differently?

If you are going to adopt this practice be prepared to commit your time and energy and endure the bumps in the road. Diligence and perseverance are a must in order to succeed. If you as CAO or Councillor want less work...avoid this practice. If you as council want to please everyone.....avoid this practice. If you want to create affordable quality rural communities for families, please contact the Village of Nobleford and we will try to help you. This worked for us.

PRACTICE UPDATES

New Information:

There may be some new information to add since this practice was first posted. This is especially true if:

- a new process has been implemented in your municipality;

- there are new practice evaluation results; or
- there has been a change affecting organizational direction. For example, explain how new economic conditions or a new vision/strategy affect the practice.

Please indicate those changes here. Don't forget to list any new documents that may be useful to your peers. Then go to "Other Information" to attach the new documents.

OTHER INFORMATION**Suggestions:**

Please list relevant information sources that others might use or you would be willing to share (courses, Web sites, literature, experts).

See attachments

April 2008, Media sample

By many of today's yardsticks, Nobleford, population should be quietly settling into its sunset years as a prairie town well past its glory. Named for an agricultural implement decades ago, located off any well-beaten track, and dwarfed by other communities in the area, Nobleford had, at one point, had indeed slipped below the horizon as a location of choice for business or residential development.

But there were people who grew up here who were not prepared to watch the town die, and when the next great crisis arose, the need for an expensive new water supply, they understood Nobleford needed a plan for sustainability, And so Nobleford decided to play in the big leagues. It developed an economic development plan based, says village administrator Kirk Hofman, on the theory that "there's no bad ideas." From that belief sprang innovation, some key decisions, and, above all, a determination to become the community that could reinvent itself as a place attractive to families and businesses.

Today, Nobleford has its new water supply and state of the art Water Treatment Facilities, gained without draining taxpayers dry, it shares its water with the surrounding County of Lethbridge and Villages to the North and is offering water to other municipalities, its infrastructure is sound, residential lots are snapped up as soon as they become available, tax revenue has been increased while residential taxes have dropped. There are no hidden taxes in Nobleford, no utility franchise fees tacked on you gas or power bills. All of this CAO Hofman, a lifelong resident, attributes to the village council, led by Mayor Paul Goldade, adhering to the development plan without wavering.

All of the basic modern infrastructure and services exist in Nobleford. The streets and roads are clean and paved with curbs. Trees and green space are an important part of the environment. A variety of large public parks can be enjoyed by everyone. An energetic village staff ensures that these are all well-maintained.

Documents & Attachments:

Please attach (using the "Browse" button below) any documents you would be willing to share with others interested in your practice (e.g. a bylaw, a policy, approval documents, templates).

* Note: If you do not have an electronic copy of a document, please send Municipal Excellence a paper copy for scanning to:

Alberta Municipal Affairs
Municipal Excellence Network
17th Floor, Commerce Place
10155-102 Street
Edmonton, AB
T5J 4L4

Nominations:

Do you have any suggestions of other individuals or municipalities with municipal practices that we should add to the Municipal Excellence network? Please list their practice, municipality, and contact information.

Or, e-mail menet@gov.ab.ca and let us know about a municipal colleague that has a really good way of doing things.

Budget and taxation history - Nobleford
Evaluation MDP update Nobleford
Village of Nobleford MDP 589 September 2004 view
Nobleford Media release re Lower property taxes in 2008
SouthGrow Awards media to Nobleford Newsletter
Village of Nobleford Property Taxes Decreased Significantly for 2008
Lots sales terms April 18 2008
City TV interview June 08
mycip draft worksheet
Park rec 5yr plan
P2 Terms, discounts
Org, Com flow chart VON

COMMENTS

Have we missed something; anything you'd like to add to the areas we have touched on, or an area we have not mentioned?