

Town of Gull Lake Needs Assessment Report: Process and Outcome Data Results

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Prepared For
The Town of Gull Lake



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Overview

Purpose

The Town of Gull Lake Council and Administration initiated a community engagement process through a needs assessment survey as a means of strengthening communication within the community, discovering what community citizens would like to see happen in the future, and to provide the first steps toward an action plan. Including the community at large and engaging the community in a needs assessment process enables Council and Administration to base decisions on what citizens say about various aspects of life in the community. The needs assessment survey tool offers a way for Council and Administration to identify and correct misinformation, and to provide a starting point for critical conversations. When Council must make decisions that affects the tax base, fundraising, and volunteer support, it has a base line of information to refer to for a development and action plan.

Process

Town Council and Administration met with Saskatchewan Economic Development Association (SEDA) Community Capacity Coach, Karyn Mossing, to draft a survey to distribute to Town residents. The survey was advertised on the Town of Gull Lake Facebook page and through posters. Residents were able to complete the survey online or on paper copy, which was available from the Town office and other community locations, from March 9th to March 23rd, 2015.

Specific questions within the survey focused on rating satisfaction of local services and facilities, access of support services, and development priorities for Council to address. Respondents were also asked to identify sports, recreation, and culture opportunities and interests, and other areas of need for economic development, such as housing and accommodations.

Methods

a. Data Collection

i. Survey

A survey featuring 37 questions was distributed to Town residents through an online survey tool called Poll Daddy (www.polldaddy.com), and in hard copy through the Town office. Out of a potential 730 adult Town residents aged 18 and older (Statistics Canada 2013), 91 residents responded to the survey, representing a 13% response rate.

ii. Secondary Data Sources

Secondary data was also collected from other sources, such as Statistics Canada, to compare labour force data (Statistics Canada, 2013), the Town's official website (Gull Lake, Saskatchewan, 2015), to gather more information on the Town's public service delivery.

b. Strengths and Limitations

i. Strengths

The main strengths of the research include the number of opportunities given to survey respondents for comments, which some respondents took advantage of, giving Town Council and Administration significant detailed input. Asking taxpaying citizens for their opinions fosters good relationships and communication, and helps citizens to understand the difficult decisions Town Council must make. The survey was also provided in hard copy for those citizens who either were unable to respond online or preferred to respond in hard copy.

ii. Limitations

Due to funding and time constraints, a self-completed survey was conducted, giving limited opportunity for the two-way communication and feedback that can be offered with face-to-face interviews or meetings.

Key Findings

a. Local Employer Needs and Growth Occupations

Workforce development supports are available in the area through agencies such as Great Plains College which expects drilling and exploration jobs in the oil and gas industry to continue to be in demand despite lower than average oil prices. Major utilities (SaskPower, SaskEnergy and SaskTel) also face a surge in retirements and need to build new infrastructure to satisfy the needs of a growing provincial economy. (Great Plains College, 2012).

Opportunities for workforce development may include developing and utilizing a framework for industry training and employment partnerships to draw support from operators in economic growth sectors of the economy, such as heavy equipment dealers and provincial utilities (as listed above). Thirty three per cent of survey respondents have achieved a college degree or higher and 35 percent have achieved some level of college or vocational accreditation, making a full 68% of respondents highly skilled and educated with 34% of all respondents working in either the resource or government sectors. (See Questions 42 and 43 respectively).

b. Potential Trading Area and Market Size

The Town of Gull Lake's estimated trading area exceeds 1,000 residents, which includes the R.M. of Gull Lake. A number of industry sectors presently operating within this market could be analyzed to establish the threshold at which new businesses would be supported within this trading area.

c. Competitor/Collaborator Information

Several organizations and agencies in the Town of Gull Lake provide various supports to citizens. (Exhibit A: Town of Gull Lake Support Organizations).

Exhibit A: Town of Gull Lake Support Organizations

Gull Lake Seniors

Autumn House Independent Living Facility

Autumn House Ladies Auxiliary

Gull Lake and District Kinettes

Gull Lake and District Kinsmen

Gull Lake Elks #164

Gull Lake Housing Authority

Gull Lake Oilmen

Gull Lake & Area Recreation Board

Royal Canadian Legion Gull Lake Branch #119

Source: Gull Lake, Saskatchewan. (2015).

d. Market Interests

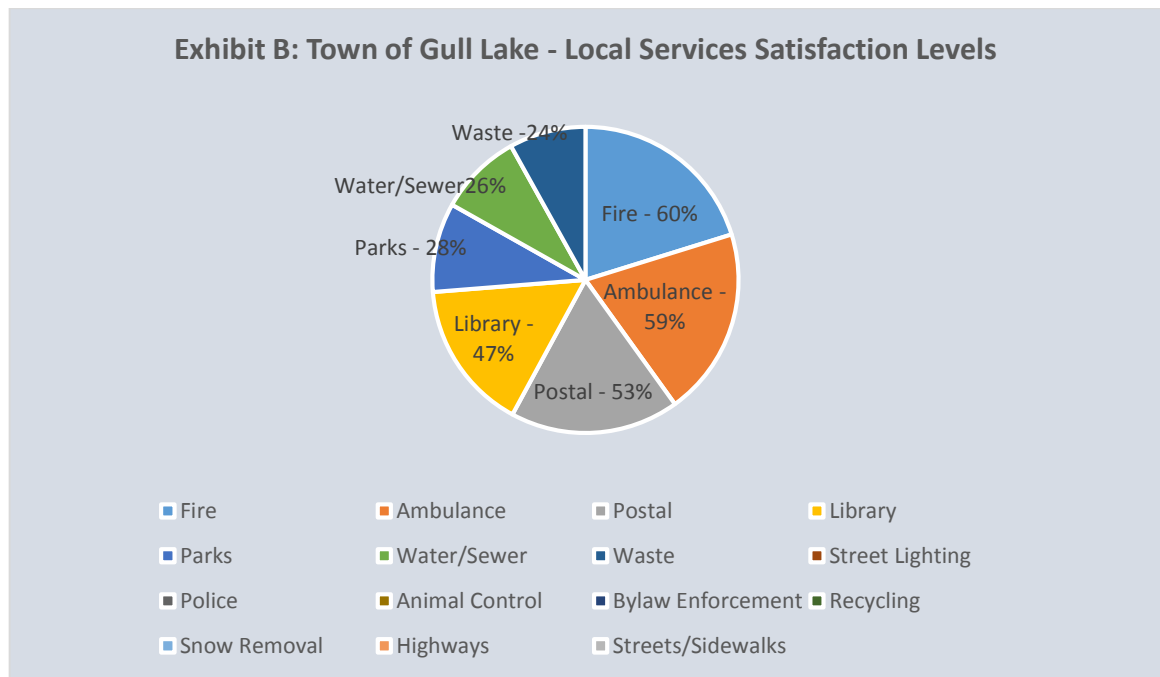
The interests of the market, citizens of the Town of Gull Lake in this context, were collected from the survey to gauge interest and adoption of local services, support services, sports, recreation, and culture facilities, and to identify priorities for Council to address.

i. Local Services

Local services are expected and essential services that are provided to citizens, such as emergency services and streets and sidewalks infrastructure. Responses to the survey's first question reveals the percentage of respondents who are highly satisfied with local services. The highest satisfaction levels are for Fire Services - 60%; Ambulance

Services -59%; Postal Services -53%; Library Services – 47%; Parks Services – 28%; Water/Sewer Services – 26%; and Waste Collection Services – 24%. (Exhibit B: Town of Gull Lake – Local Services Satisfaction Levels).

Satisfaction levels for other local services are: Street lighting – 16%; Police Services – 14%; Animal Control – 12%; Bylaw Enforcement – 10%; Recycling Services – 9%; Snow Removal – 8%; Highways – 5%; and, Streets/Sidewalks – 5%.



Source: Town of Gull Lake Needs Assessment Survey 2015

ii. Support Services

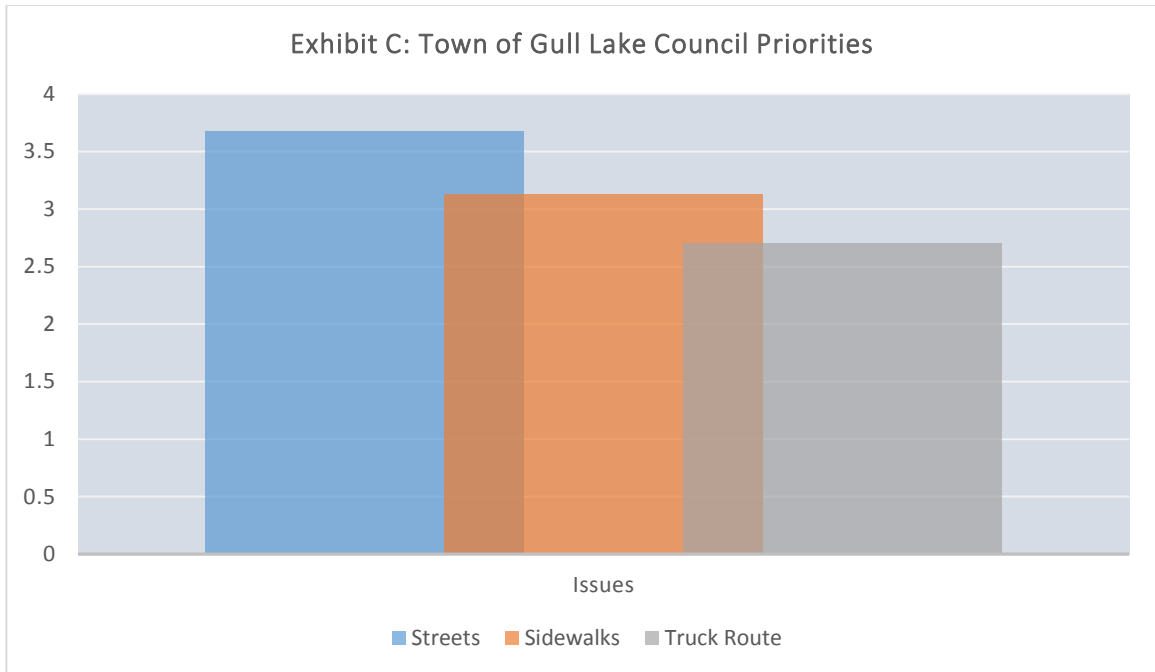
Support services relate to delivering goods and services such as food, supplies, and programming in facilities. Respondents felt current support services which could be improved are competitive pricing at the grocery store (with one additional grocery store), expanded recycling facilities, auto parts supply, variety and sundry items supply. The types of new businesses respondents feel would be supported by residents are a plumber, hardware supply, lumber supply, variety store, and a restaurant/lounge. (See Questions 31 and 30 respectively).

In terms of programming, respondents feel the museum is a community centrepiece and needs to have regular hours of operation. Citizens also want to see the tennis courts made to be more accessible, exercise programs offered for older adults, and swimming lessons scheduled in the evenings. (See Question 10).

iii. Council Priorities

Question 5 of the survey asked respondents to choose the top three issues Council should address in the next months. The top three issues (in order of priority) are to Repair Streets, Install/Repair Sidewalks, and Establish a Dangerous Goods/Heavy Truck Route. Those respondents who chose “Other” cited establishing a Walking Trail, improving Water Quality/Supply, Seniors Housing, and Recycling, as top priorities for Council to address. (Exhibit C: Town of Gull Lake Council Priorities).

Many respondents felt funding for facility improvements should come from corporate sponsorships, commercial space rental and advertising, and user fees, rather than from property taxes. (See Question 20).



Source: Town of Gull Lake Needs Assessment Survey 2015

iv. Sports, Recreation, and Culture Facilities

Satisfaction levels for sports, recreation, and culture facilities revealed 61% of respondents were most satisfied with the movie theatre, followed by community halls – 40%; library – 38%; hockey rink – 33%; baseball diamonds – 30%; parks – 28%; swimming pool – 26%; bowling alley – 23%; museum – 22%; curling rink – 22%; soccer/football facilities – 16%; exercise gym – 14%; golf course – 12%; and, tennis court – 11%. (See Question 8). Those answering “Other” to Question 8 thought improvements and regular maintenance need to be made to the miniature golf course, tennis court (upgrade and change orientation), track and football field, curling rink, swimming pool deck, and the Elks Hall.

Related to Town facilities, Question 14 of the Survey asks respondents to list facilities which should be invested in and improved within the next ten years. Respondents suggested the old drug store, shoe shop, hotel, parks and RV parks, swimming pool,

curling rink, community recreation centre, skating rink, and the Elks Hall be improved in the next ten years.

For new facilities that should be developed in the community within the next ten years, respondents felt the swimming pool should become an indoor facility, and facilities such as a skate park, youth centre, recycling centre, and walking paths, could be developed. (See Question 15).

Cultural facilities are very important to Town citizens. Many believe the Wong Guy shoe shop needs to be preserved, along with the Ranch House. Also, besides the annual Winterfest event, there could be other annual community events to celebrate Gull Lake's history and culture, and a Farmer's Market to showcase local food and crafts. (See Question 16).

Recommendations for Program Planning

Many respondents believe what sets the community apart is its gull sculpture, theatre, museum, swimming pool, and its friendly citizens. They say Gull Lake features many amenities and advantages that contribute to the quality of life for residents.



Various theme areas are represented in the survey results, which Council and Administration may consider in the future: community information, support services, housing and accommodations, facilities, events, and services.

Community information

Many respondents want to be able to receive current information about basic services and facilities, such as the types of services available and facility hours of operation.

Support services

Survey respondents believe a variety of support services should be offered especially targeting children, youth, and seniors, such as nursery/playschool programs, youth programs, and home care, meal delivery, and transportation services.

Housing and accommodations

Many respondents say their housing needs are met, or anticipate little change in their future housing needs. However, 37% of respondents say they are 65 years or older, and transitional types of housing accommodations may be required for them in the future. There may be a need

for affordable housing for all age groups. When asked if there is a need for additional overnight accommodations if it results in increased capacity to host events, 89% of respondents agreed there is a need. (See Question 28).

Facilities

Respondents are very concerned with having sidewalks that are safe to walk on and easier to clear snow from. They also want to see regular repair and maintenance done to streets. Residents are also highly concerned about heavy and dangerous goods being transported through residential areas, and therefore want to see a Dangerous Goods/Heavy Truck Route created.

Respondents are least satisfied with the condition and accessibility of the tennis court and the museum, and they want a new walking trail created. Residents would also like to see recycling bins emptied more often and able to store more designated recycled items such as metal and plastics. To serve the demand for cremation burial, the cemetery could feature columbarium niches.

Some respondents say youth require a place they can gather and participate in programs and activities, and some suggest upgrading the skate park with ramps and skater steps so youth can fully utilize the facility. A formal daycare is also being asked for that would include a fenced yard and playground equipment. Other suggestions are to expand upon the use of the hockey arena throughout the whole year.

Events

Some respondents suggest the community host a signature annual event to celebrate the culture and history of the area. When asked to rate interests they would like to pursue, more respondents say they are interested in a farmer's market. (See Question 19).

Services

Respondents would like to see the Town hire a bylaw officer to facilitate consistent bylaw enforcement, such as animal control. Others also say they'd like to see local businesses provide better service to residents and visitors with expanded hours of operation, especially on weekends. Many comment on their need for timely snow removal services before the snow compacts into

ice. Others comment that more police presence is required, and that RCMP should reside in the community. For water and wastewater services, some requests include a water pressure booster facility.

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