



Annual Report

2010

Celebrating the Work We Do!

Message from the Director of Economic Development

What is the role of the 55 West Enterprise Region? This has been the big question we get asked over and over again as we spend time getting to know the communities in our new region. This is a very important question for communities to ask because it helps them define their relationship with the organization, and it assists them with measuring the success of the organization. Ultimately our role, with communities and businesses, is to assist in enhancing economic opportunities and overcoming challenges or barriers to economic development.

Over the past year we have completed asset mapping with the communities. Asset mapping is a project that enhances economic opportunity by providing the data necessary to build business plans, community grant applications, strategic plans, and other planning tools. We also worked with North Central Rail, the community owned railway company, to assist them with their endeavour to purchase and operate the Meadow Lake Speers shortline rail system. This is a project that addresses the current lack of affordable freight transportation in the region, a major barrier to economic development.

The 55 West Enterprise Region will continue to enhance opportunity and address challenges in our region in the coming years. In 2010 one of our focuses will be enhancing our tourism sector development opportunities. We will also work with the Big River & Area Forestry Committee to address the challenges to forestry sector economic development. Please contact myself with questions, opportunities and challenges.

Best regards,

Rae

Celebrating The Work We Do

2009-10 Projects

Asset Mapping

Strategic Direction:

Building on Competitive Advantages

17 community asset maps were completed in 2009-10 and throughout the year staff and Board members were asked: What is an asset map? And why are we doing them? To answer the first question, Asset mapping is the act of taking an inventory of the assets of a community. Many things can be considered assets, and can include:

- **The skills, potential and function of every individual and/or group of individuals**
- **Local Institutions**
- **Informal Organizations**
- **Physical Infrastructure**
- **Land assets**

Asset mapping is useful because communities that are aware of their assets understand their potential and are thus able to make good plans. Such communities are more capable of attracting investment. Asset mapping can also help communities make effective use of their resources. Communities often look outwards to gather sufficient funding for operations. By identifying internal assets, the need to look outwards is reduced. Over past year the community asset maps have been used in doctor recruitment material, grant application writing, by external stakeholders interested in our communities and in business planning. The 55 West ER will be updating the Community Asset Maps yearly so communities will have up to date community material available for themselves and for individuals or companies interested in their respective communities. As a result of this research we also developed a regional profile which combines the results for the entire region



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Short Line Railway

Strategic Direction
Building Regional Economies

Supporting North Central Rail is a priority for the 55 West Enterprise Region. This past year we provided administration and coordination support for this community lead initiative that reached far beyond the geographic boundaries of the 55 West ER. In fact, 29 communities are impacted by the loss of this infrastructure.

Background: *In the North West region forestry is the main user of rail. Forestry provides 356 full-time equivalent jobs through mill employment, and 291 full-time equivalent jobs through woodland employment. These jobs are primarily located in the Meadow Lake region, but woodlands work takes in a much bigger region. The agriculture industry also transports product on the line and stands to benefit from having a railway.*

Northwest Industrial Training Program (NITP)

Strategic Direction
Building Regional Economies

The 55 West ER inherited the NITP program from the Northwest REDA. It is a trades training program that focuses on trades required in the forestry industry. NITP is winding down in the coming year but over the past nine years it has been partnering with industry to help individuals receive their trade tickets.

www.55west.ca

Strategic Direction:
Building Regional Economies

The 55 West ER has developed an informative website that we update monthly with project updates and new programming. The website is our primary tool in providing information and resources to interested individuals.

Navigating the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure's Five Year Rolling Plan

Strategic Direction:
Building Regional Economies

The 55 West ER understands that transportation infrastructure is a challenge for all industries operating in our region. The document outlines the Five Year Rolling Plan's Rural Highways Strategy which has the biggest impact on the 55 West ER. It explains the point system and clearly identifies which points communities can influence. It includes contact information for the North Central Area Transportation Planning Committee. We will continue to work with communities to help them move their transportation concerns forward.

Big River and Area Forestry Committee

Strategic Direction:
Building on Competitive Advantages

The 55 West ER provided research, coordination, and organizational support to the Big River and Area Forestry Committee in efforts to rebuild the forestry industry in the Big River area.

Tourism

Strategic Direction:
Building Regional Economies

The 55 West ER is committed to partnering with the organizations who work within the tourism industry in the region. This past year we completed a sector analysis of this industry and with the results of this study we will endeavour to develop opportunities for partnerships to complete product development in the region. We would like to thank everybody who participated in the on line survey, one on one interview and the focus groups! Projects like this don't occur without input.

Services for Business

*Strategic Direction:
Building Regional
Economies*

Small Business Loans Association Program

The Small Business Loans Association Program encourages diversification of the Saskatchewan economy and supports community economic development by making funding available through community organizations to non-traditional entrepreneurs. The 55 West ER provided one new loan in the region over the past year, bringing our portfolio to nine current loans.

Saskatchewan Business Succession Pilot Program

The Saskatchewan Business Succession Initiative will seek to provide a pool of qualified prospective buyers to Saskatchewan business owners looking to transition out of their business. The 55 West ER connected two business owners with this program over the past year.

Financial and Business Planning Services Handbook

55 West ER has produced a handbook for individuals and businesses looking for information on financial and business development services available to them. This document is a useful first step when an individual is looking to develop their business idea. Over the past year staff at the 55 West ER provided this document to over 30 individuals in the region.

Retail Shopping Survey and Analysis

The survey was offered online and 34 people participated. We discussed the results with business owners and the results from both the survey and the feedback is available on our website. The data from this survey is useful to business owners because it provides feedback on what consumers are looking for. This project provided a snapshot of the current retail sector in the region and we will complete the survey again this year so we can compare year to year.

Thanks to our Board of Directors:

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|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Darren Osinchuk | 9. John Osborne |
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