

Successful Municipal Practices: Responding to New Challenges



Tools for Change

SERVICE SHARING AGREEMENT: Demolition / Refurbishment / Renovation Project The Town of Lynn Lake

The Town of Lynn Lake is a northern Manitoba municipality, located approximately 1,066 kilometers from the City of Winnipeg. It has had a history as a gold mining town since 1951 and was incorporated first as a Local Government District to support mining operations. As the gold mine was the primary employer in the community, mine closures in recent years have led to rapid population decline – population decreased from 3,500 in 1989 to 699 in 2001.

During this period, many houses that were neglected and abandoned became the property of the Town of Lynn Lake through the municipal tax sale process. However, the Town did not have the necessary resources to manage these properties and undertake demolition and/or renovation of these buildings. An alternative solution had to be found.

Council decided to build on a successful small scale demolition project that was sponsored by Lynn Lake in the 1990s in which the Town hired a small demolition team to destruct derelict properties. Council thought that another project team could be established to undertake the required demolition in 2003 and enlisted the help of a number of other groups for their support, including the Province of Manitoba and the Thompson Employment and Training Office.

Council also wanted to use the opportunity to provide valuable work experience in demolition and renovation to area residents. The Town approached the Chief and Council of the Marcel Colomb First Nation as they thought the training provided through the project would allow Marcel Colomb Band members to learn skills that could be used for housing construction and maintenance.

The project has improved community livability and safety and has contributed to the Town's overall regeneration efforts.

The success of the project is visible to the entire community, most notably those living in proximity to where demolition and renovation took place.

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In 2003 – the first year of the demolition / refurbishment / renovation project – a small workforce was created, made up of six participants plus a supervisor, funded by Manitoba Advanced Education and Training. The Town of Lynn Lake provided the buildings and in-kind contributions such as the use of the Town's dump truck and other necessary materials. The project took place over a 38 week period, and consisted of the demolition of five uninhabitable homes and one twelve unit apartment, with any reusable material being used toward the renovation and refurbishment of potentially habitable homes. The project supervisor taught each participant the basics of carpentry, flooring, electrical and plumbing, as well as appropriate work, health and safety practices. The project was so successful in its first year that it operated again in 2004, and continues to operate in 2005. In 2003 and 2004, 28 buildings were demolished and two homes were redeveloped into low to moderate income housing that are available for purchase. One of the renovated homes was purchased in 2004, and another two homes are expected to be completed and ready for sale in 2005.

The benefits of the project are visible to the entire community, most notably those living in neighbourhoods where demolition and renovation took place. Project participants have also gained valuable work skills and a sense of pride in their accomplishments. This innovative approach has helped to beautify the Town of Lynn Lake, and represents an excellent example of how a partnership between the Town, the Marcel Colomb First Nation and the Province of Manitoba has helped to improve the safety and livability of the community and the well-being of citizens.

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For more information on service sharing, Successful Municipal Practices, and the Tools for Change program, see the Association of Manitoba Municipalities' website, at www.amm.mb.ca.