

# Heritage Agricultural Society Agricultural Business Plan 2013-2015



# Heritage Agricultural Society

## Agricultural Business Plan

### 2013-2015

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# Heritage Agricultural Society Board of Directors

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Wendy Woolsey



*Left to Right Back row: Ken Darby, Rich Gossen, Greg Hanna, Michael D. Thomas*

*Middle row: Judy Unterschultz, Dr. Locksley McGann, Sharon Cornelius, Debi Mills, Town of Stony Plain Councillor Pat Hansard,*

*Front row: Wendy Woolsey, and Parkland County Councillor Jo Szady*

*Missing: Mardy Kulak and Francis Mella.*

# Executive Summary

The Heritage Agricultural Society, incorporated in 1974, is a 7 day/week, year-round cultural programming/educational organization housed in three facilities, located on a total of approximately 6 acres:

- The Multicultural Heritage Centre – Built in 1925 as the region's first High School, the Centre underwent significant renovations prior to being re-purposed as the Multicultural Heritage Centre in 1974. The Centre has been designated as a Provincial Historic Resource.
- Oppertshauser House – A house built in 1910 by one of the first prominent Stony Plain residents, and moved to the Multicultural Heritage Centre location in 1987.
- Parkland Educational Resource Centre (PERC) – A former elementary school built in the 1950's and located immediately adjacent to the Multicultural Heritage Centre.

The Society also utilizes the Town of Stony Plain's Pavilion located at Heritage Park, and Horizon Stage in Spruce Grove. In addition, educational programs are presented in classrooms and spaces throughout the province. Taken as a whole, the Society's services and programs reach over 100,000 visitors and customers every year.

Similar to many not-for-profit organizations, the Society had been facing reduced funding and had begun a process of operating in a deficit financially, and started to reduce programs and educational services. Since 2005 the Board has systematically been looking at organizational sustainability, and in that creates a diverse cultural centre for all to enjoy. The Multicultural Village concept has evolved with the assistance of different consultants and dreamers over the past six years.

One of the first consultants approached was Dr. Avi Friedman, an internationally renowned architect, known for his award-winning work in home design, community development and sustainability. Dr. Friedman started the discussion on how to dream.

Initially hired by the Town of Stony Plain, Dr. Friedman came up with a community master plan that complemented the plan developed for the town and included many items such as expanding our current facility footprint and amalgamating services in one centralized location.

The Heritage Agricultural Society then approached the consulting firm Serecon Consulting Group and worked with Dr. Ralph Ashmead to come up with a viable business plan. Dr. Ashmead had been involved in economic, rural development, policy and financial consulting projects with international, federal and provincial governments.

It was through Dr. Ashmead's work that the vision for the Multi-Cultural Village began. The Multi-Cultural Village concept is an integration of cultural, agricultural, commercial, and residential housing, facilities, programs, and complimentary services clustered within a unique community village footprint. This will allow the interactions, synergies and potential of each individual component to be optimized.

The Heritage Agricultural Society is now in the implementation phase to get the Multi-Cultural Village to become a reality. To guide and prepare the Multicultural Heritage Centre, consultants Wylie Stafford and Tim Haak were hired.

# Executive Summary

In the first phase, the consultants completed a comprehensive Feasibility Study of the Multi-Cultural Village concept. The results showed a very positive reaction for the concept – the project was viewed as being visionary and “out of the box”.

The Society will become a more vertically integrated agricultural/cultural/educational organization. Within our facilities and programs people of all ages and interests will be able to learn where our food comes from, how it is grown, and how they can become involved in food production at whatever level they desire. In doing so, they will also learn about contemporary agricultural issues, and develop an appreciation for what has already been accomplished in our agricultural history as well as current and future developments.





# Vision and Mandate of the Heritage Agricultural Society

## **Vision**

To be the model of innovation and excellence in cultural heritage.

## **Mission Statement**

To celebrate the region's heritage, arts and agricultural base through the delivery of creative programs and services,

## **Core Purpose**

To provide opportunities to expand knowledge and understanding of the region's heritage and culture.

## **Principles We Value...**

- Integrity
- Excellence
- Cultural Diversity
- Innovation and Creativity
- Our Heritage
- Volunteers

**The purpose of this document is to provide a 3-Year Business Plan for the years 2013 through 2015 for the agricultural component of this vision.**



# Heritage Agricultural Society Agricultural Business Plan 2013-2015



This document will focus on the agricultural component of the Heritage Agricultural Society.

# Agricultural Products and Services

Agriculture is one of the Key Business Activities of the Heritage Agricultural Society, and has been since the inception of the Society in 1974. This is in keeping with the history of the Town of Stony Plain, which originally evolved and continues to serve as an agricultural services community located just 25 km West of Edmonton. With a current population of 14,200, Stony Plain is also just 5 km from Spruce Grove (with a population of 25,000) and is surrounded by Parkland County (population 30,000).

The Society currently fulfills its mandate to promote agriculture in the following ways:

## 1) Demonstration Farm

In obtaining the former Stony Plain Elementary School property in 1996 the Society was able to begin development of this project. While further development has been stalled by lack of funding, the site continues to offer an active and growing Community Gardens project, a resource for the Organic Master Gardener program, space for community fairs and events, and provides a significant amount of fresh fruit for use in the restaurant.

## 2) Agricultural and Environmental Field-trip Programs

The establishment of the Demonstration farm and the possession of the Parkland Educational Resource Centre on the same site allowed the Society to develop a number of Agricultural and Environmental school field-trip programs to go along with the Pioneer and Multicultural field-trip programs that the Society had offered in the past. Programs Developed include:

**a) City Slickers** – A one day event that brings over 1,000 children from the Edmonton area to Parkland County farms in order to learn about food production and the rural lifestyle. Offered since 1998, this event involves over 150 volunteers each year.

**b) Terra to Table** – Explores just how many jobs farmers create in our community. Students from Kindergarten through Grade 3 learn how to seed and harvest wheat, grind wheat into flour, and bake their own muffins. Also includes lessons on how humans, plants and animals depend on each other for food.

**c) Spring Thyme** – Recognizes and identifies the basic needs and interactions of animals, plants and insects and their role within the food chain.

**d) Turn Down the Volume** – Educates children about sound induced hearing loss and the importance of hearing and sound safety, particularly on the farm.

**e) ZAP! Electrical Safety Programming** – In partnership with FortisAlberta Inc., the Society offers an electrical safety on the farm program that is taken directly to classrooms in rural Alberta.

**f) Alberta Café!** – Utilizes the Canada Food Guide to recognize the importance of basic, healthy, nutritional food choices, and communicates the benefits of eating food that is locally grown in an environmentally sustainable manner and the joy of gardening.

**g) Go Green for the Holidays** – Students explore how to care for the environment and reduce waste by incorporating nature-friendly practices and decorations.



# Agricultural Products and Services

## 3) Heritage Farmers Market

The Society offers producers a Direct Market venue for their produce, crafts, and baked goods. Since its inception in 2002, this Approved Farmers Market has grown to attract approximately 1,500 customers each Saturday morning during peak Market season.

## 4) Organic Master Gardener Program

The Organic Master Gardener program is offered on site in partnership with Gaia College of Victoria, B.C. in order to create a unique curriculum. The Demonstration Farm is a certified organic site, and offers students the opportunity to experience and experiment with organic growing methods.

## 5) Seed an Idea

In partnership with Parkland County, Seed an Idea is being developed to help youth in our community research, plan and start agriculture and rural-related businesses of their own.

## 6) Agriculture for Life

As our society increasingly looks to our cities for their livelihood, it becomes ever more paramount that agriculture is seen as a safe and secure industry for present and future employment, and as a contributing and viable business. Agriculture for Life is a new Not For Profit Corporation whose business model envisions a sustainable mechanism whereby the corporate and private sectors can contribute back through a reliable and coordinated funding source to initiate and/or expand agricultural programs across the province, closing the knowledge gap between rural and urban populations.

## 7) Homesteader's Kitchen

Our popular on site restaurant, featuring “made from scratch” menu items. Also features produce grown on site. This function provides a venue for promoting the “Eat Local” movement.



# Three Year Plan - 2013 Overview

## Plans for 2013 include:

- Plan, design and renovate restaurant and food storage areas to increase efficiency and allow for greater variety of menu items, utilizing more locally produced foods.
- Our “Seed an Idea” youth agricultural entrepreneurship program will complete Phase 1 and will begin developing partnerships with local agricultural businesses and organizations, receiving proposals from youth interested in taking part, etc.
- We will continue to be represented on the Board of Directors of Ag for Life, and take an active role in determining the direction of future growth. Additional involvement includes participation on several working Committees providing Ag Society perspective to decision making.
- Demonstration Farm property will continue to be used as a Community Garden, and special events will be held on site.
- Organic Master Gardener (OMG) graduate will be hired to oversee ongoing OMG projects and coordinate volunteers and summer staff regarding ongoing development and maintenance of grounds.
- A template for organizing “City Slickers” was produced and will be offered to organizations interested in providing their own version of this popular event in communities throughout Alberta. We are seeking 6 Alberta communities/organizations that would like to offer City Slickers in their region.
- City Slickers was filmed for CTV2, “Let’s Go Outdoors” and Discovery World HD and will be aired nationally in 2013.
- Licensing the “City Slickers” program for distribution will occur in 2013.

- The Heritage Farmers Market will continue to be held Saturday mornings, with a focus on building the vendor and customer base.
- Examine the feasibility of developing, marketing, and piloting, a one week Inquiring Site Minds Site School: Heritage Agricultural Society Farm School. Requires partner and local farm partnerships.
- The Heritage Farmers Market will continue to be held Saturday mornings, with a focus on building the vendor and customer base.

## New Initiatives

The Board decided to have agriculture link all programs and services of the Heritage Agricultural Society. Agriculture will be the underpinning to everything proposed and/or built.

- Expansion project continues - agriculture focus
- Farm School - Inquiring Minds Site School
- Organic Master Gardener - On Site composting project
- Grounds - edible landscape - in partnership with Stony Plain Rotary Club
- The Multicultural Heritage Centre’s 40th Anniversary agriculture will be prominent in historical perspective, display, events, etc.
- “Pride in Agriculture” was commissioned to be restored/re-painted. The mural recognizes prominent residents that had a significant influence on the growth of agriculture in this region.



# Three Year Plan - 2014 Overview

- Renovated restaurant space will be offering a greater variety of menu items with a stronger focus on local foods. Increased efficiencies will allow the restaurant to make a stronger contribution to the Society's financial sustainability.
- With the Heritage Farmers Market re-established in a year-round facility, the focus will be on marketing and promotions, including the addition of more entertainment and working with other organizations/event organizers to achieve synergies.
- "Seed an Idea", the first phase of this youth agricultural entrepreneurship program will be concluded. If funding support has been found, Phase 2 would include the recruitment of youth, partnerships formed with many agricultural organizations, guest speakers brought in to speak to the youth, and business plan development by youth.
- Working with Agriculture for Life, we will continue to promote and develop agriculture education programs throughout Alberta.
- Work on the Demonstration Farm will continue to focus on weed control and soil improvement. Individual projects planned and carried out by Organic Master Gardener students will also take place on site.
- Consider the possibility of offering a second OMG program, with classes offset so as to allow students to make up for classes missed.
- We will work with other organizations/communities around Alberta in order to allow them to offer their own City Slickers events.
- We will continue, and possibly expand our Inquiring Minds Farm School.





# Three Year Plan - 2015 Overview

- Continue to increase focus on local food in our restaurant by purchasing directly from local growers through our Farmers Market.
- Develop plans for a permanent, year-round facility dedicated first and foremost to our Farmers Market. Such facility to also include provision for other agricultural programs, such as Organic Master Gardener Program and Farm School.
- Youth taking part in the “Seed an Idea” program will begin launching their own agriculture related businesses. We will continue to work with them on an ongoing basis as well as recruit additional youth entrepreneurs.
- In addition to the ongoing projects taking place on the Demonstration Farm, the site may also be utilized by youth involved in the Farm School. program.
- Continue to promote agriculture education programs through involvement with Agriculture For Life
- Continue to expand City Slickers programs throughout Alberta communities.





# Demonstration Farm (No Longer Running)

## Demonstration Farm (No longer running)

In obtaining the former Stony Plain Elementary School property in 1996 the Society was able to begin development of this project. While further development has been stalled by lack of funding, the site continues to offer an active and growing Community Gardens project, a resource for the Organic Master Gardener program, and provides a significant amount of fresh fruit for use in the restaurant.

It is also a large, inviting space available for a variety of community events and festivals.





# Additional Field-trip Programs

**2) Education Field-trip Programs.** We intend to develop a field-trip program around the topic of local agricultural history as well as an “Environmental Challenge” program. All education programs will be adapted to include an agricultural component.

**City Slickers** - license the name/concept to allow the program to be offered throughout the province.

**Farm School** - develop and pilot one-week-long Inquiring Minds Farm School, in partnership with local farms.





# Heritage Farmers Market

### 3) Heritage Farmers Market

The Heritage Agricultural Society offers producers a Direct Market venue for their produce, crafts, and baked goods. Started in 2002, the Heritage Farmers Market currently operates every Saturday morning from May to October at a rented, seasonal site. From initial attendance of approximately 200 customers, the Market had grown to attract approximately 1,500 customers each Market day. Over the last three years the Market has faced facility problems and This had a significant impact on the number of vendors and customers throughout the market season. 2013 will see consistency in location, marketing, and vendors, providing a predictable service for customers.



# Organic Master Gardener Program

The Organic Master Gardener program is offered through the Stony Plain Heritage Agricultural Society at the Stony Plain Multicultural Heritage Centre and its Demonstration Farm. The Heritage Agricultural Society has partnered with Gaia College of Victoria B.C. to create the unique curriculum for the program.

Organic agriculture generally means gardening without the use of chemicals, pesticides, and other substances that could contribute to soil, plant, and human health and / or environmental concerns. Organic gardening embraces a more ecological paradigm in all its practices. The Demonstration Farm, operated by the Multicultural Heritage Centre, Stony Plain, is certified 'organic' and offers Organic Master Gardener program students a perfect opportunity to experience and experiment with organic growing methods.

We are anticipating 20 students to register for the 2013 Organic Master Gardener program.






In partnership with Parkland County, the Society is trying to foster a youth agriculture entrepreneurship program within the County.

Seed an Idea is being developed to help youth in our community research, plan and start agriculture and rural-related businesses of their own.

If not actual participants...the program, speakers and tour information will provide agriculture awareness, opening the discussion to include careers in agriculture.




**SEED AN IDEA**

**ARE YOU THE NEXT DONALD TRUMP?**

IF YOU HAVE AN IDEA FOR A BUSINESS\* THEN YOU COULD:

- RECEIVE UP TO **\$4000** IN LOANS TO LAUNCH IT
- RECEIVE FREE MENTORING AND COACHING FROM BUSINESS EXPERTS

Contact the Multicultural Heritage Centre if you would like to be ONE OF JUST 20 YOUTH ACCEPTED INTO THIS FREE PROGRAM.

 JUDYB@MULTICENTRE.ORG 780-920-0683 [WWW.SEEDANIDEA.CA](http://WWW.SEEDANIDEA.CA)

\*SOME CONDITIONS APPLY



## Agriculture For Life

As our society increasingly looks to our cities for their livelihood, it becomes ever more paramount that agriculture is seen as a safe and secure industry for present and future employment, and as a contributing and viable business. Agriculture for Life is a new Not For Profit Corporation whose business model envisions a sustainable mechanism whereby the corporate and private sectors can contribute back through a reliable and coordinated funding source to initiate and/or expand agricultural programs across the province, closing the knowledge gap between rural and urban populations. The Heritage Agricultural Society will make City Slickers available to communities throughout Alberta.

A planning template and informational video are available and mentoring from experiences Heritage Agricultural Society staff can be negotiated with individual community organizations.





# Homesteader's Kitchen

Our popular on site restaurant, featuring “made from scratch” menu items. Also features produce grown on site. This function provides a venue for promoting the “Eat Local” movement.





The Heritage Agricultural Society is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors drawn from the Town of Stony Plain, City of Spruce Grove, Parkland County, and the City of Edmonton. As a charitable organization, the Society undergoes a full independent financial audit each year, and must also report to the Canada Revenue Agency. Audited statements are provided to any interested parties, including grant providers, donors, and municipal Councils. Financial and operating reports are presented to the Board of Directors at monthly meetings, and the Board is elected at the Annual General Meeting held each January. In 2012, Parkland County, and the Town of Stony Plain assigned a representative from Council to the Society's Board of Directors. This has helped to increase the flow of communication between the Society and respective Councils.

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the Executive Director is ultimately responsible for all programs, facilities and activities of the Heritage Agricultural Society. The Executive Director also sits on the Board of Directors in an ex-officio capacity.





## Sales and Marketing

With an extremely limited budget, the Society will continue to pursue marketing and sales with that limitation in mind. Paid advertising is mainly focused on the local market through the newspaper and through a few tourist related publications. The Society submits a minimum of one article each week to the newspaper, and often has more than one printed each week. Events and programs also generate free media coverage throughout the year, both locally and regionally.

The Society produces in-house a wide variety of posters, pamphlets, brochures and flyers that are distributed both on site and throughout the community.

Our website ([www.multicentre.org](http://www.multicentre.org)) is updated on a regular basis, and marketing is becoming increasingly “e-focussed”. We now have both a Facebook and Twitter account where we post upcoming events, restaurant specials, etc. We also produce a monthly e-Newsletter that is distributed to an ever-growing list.



A number of Department Heads or Coordinators are involved in our agricultural aspect. These include:

**School Program Coordinator**

The School Program Coordinator, together with 3 part time staff, design and deliver all fieldtrip programming.

**Events Coordinator**

The Events Coordinator oversees the planning and organizing of various events and fundraisers.

**IT and Communications Coordinator**

Carries out marketing activities, website development, and internal communications for all Society initiatives.

**Food Services Manager**

Together with a number of full time and part time staff, the Food Services Manager is responsible for incorporating local foods within the restaurant.

**Organic Master Gardener(OMG) Coordinator**

This part time position oversees ongoing OMG projects, supervises and coordinates volunteers and summer staff regarding the development and maintenance of grounds. The OMG coordinator is developing an organic composting project for the organization.

**Electrical Safety Coordinator**

A two person team is responsible for all aspects of the ZAP! Electrical Safety program, including scheduling programs throughout the Province, setting up and delivering the programs, and reporting to our Corporate partner, FortisAlberta Inc.

**Farmers Market Manager**

On a Contract basis, the Farmers Market Manager is now retained on a year-round basis in order to ensure continuity in communications with vendors and customers, and to encourage year-to-year retention of a trained Market Manager.



Plans are always contingent upon funding availability, which is never assured. Where possible, programs are designed to cover their direct expenses. These include the Organic Master Gardener Program and Fieldtrip Programs. Others are successful in attracting a Corporate Sponsor, in which case they are able to generate a contribution to overall organizational costs in addition to their direct program costs.

Examples of this include our Electrical Safety and Seed An Idea programs. The Farmers Market and Food Services functions are operated with the goal of earning a profit to help offset other organizational expenses. Projects like “Seed an Idea”, “Agriculture for Life” educational programming, “City Slickers”, and further development of the Demonstration Farm only take place if they are able to secure outside funding. Needless to say, sourcing and obtaining funding for all these programs takes up a great deal of management’s time.



On the Agricultural side of our operation, some of the important funders/programs we are planning to utilize over the next 3 years are:

- **Agricultural Society Operating Grant**

Our largest single source of funding, and one that we hope will increase along with increased activities in this area.

- **Agricultural Initiatives Program**

We hope to be able to make use of this funding program as we proceed with developing our plans for an increased agriculture focus in all programs.

- **FortisAlberta Inc.**

Our funding partner in the ZAP! Electrical Safety Program, FortisAlberta Inc. has proposed another one year extension to this agreement. While long term agreements are not possible due to the source of the funds used for this agreement, FortisAlberta Inc. has expressed a strong desire to continue this program.

- **Agriculture for Life**

Our Executive Director continues to work with this organization toward establishing a province-wide mechanism through which the corporate and private sectors can seamlessly support the long term future of rural organizations. The proposed funding model would provide operating funds for organizations engaged in delivering agricultural education and farm safety. In 2012 we signed a three year funding agreement with Ag For Life for our City Slickers Program.

- **Parkland County**

In 2012 Parkland County funded phase 1 of a four phase Seed An Idea project. Based on the results achieved in 2012, we will approach Parkland County for ongoing funding.

- **CFEP**

Having secured funding support for capital renovations from the Stony Plain Rotary Club, Farm Credit Canada and the Town of Stony Plain, we plan to make application for a CFEP grant to allow us to make substantial improvements to our grounds and facilities over the next couple years. Some of these improvements directly affect our plans outlined in this Business Plan, such as renovations to the Food Services component.

- **Young Canada Works & Canada Summer Jobs**

These two federal job creation programs allow us to obtain summer staff for assistance with special events, grounds maintenance, and other programs.

- **Summer Temporary Employment Program**

In addition to these sources of funds, we also acknowledge the need to increase our internally generated revenues. Chief among these sources is our Food Services function, which will be a focus of our efforts in 2013.



# Report on Performance Measures for 2012

- Increase capacity for community garden plots and local food production programming. Feedback from this project has indicated an interest in workshops for canning, preserving, etc., which we have built into our 3-Year Plan.
- Monitor success of training and menu changes on restaurant performance and make adjustments – The changes made in the restaurant have not produced the financial results required. We will therefore be developing a new plan for the Food Services component that will include renovations to the existing operation designed to increase efficiency and menu options.
- Increase use of fresh herbs and fruit trees in restaurant – 2012 did see an increase in the use of herbs picked fresh from our on site garden plots and in the use of berries harvested from our fruit shrubs and trees.
- Train staff and implement composting program for kitchen waste – A composting program was initiated on site in 2012.
- Seek out new opportunities for third parties to operate farm space or lease garden space on the Demonstration Farm.
- Harvest and sell mature Rhodiola Rosea crop.
- **Seed An Idea** - Submit final proposal to Parkland County after finalizing program objectives, outcomes, partners, staffing requirements and budget numbers. Continue to make presentations to youth groups and school entrepreneurial courses to recruit youth to the program.
- Develop or adapt one new field-trip program in the agricultural education section – Farm School - Inquiring Minds school fieldtrip is in the development phase.
- Research into agricultural programs that can be expanded or developed as full-day field trips, rather than 90-minute programs – School Program staff is evaluating potential.
- Sign a 3-year contractual agreement for sustainable funding for City Slickers through Agriculture for Life.