



# Community Connector Project Report Parkland County

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*Provided by Green Hectares  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Project Summary

Parkland County and Green Hectares entered into a two-year partnership for Green Hectares to implement the Community Connector program. The program develops and taps into a network of existing educational programs, training and business services and brings them to people living in rural communities. Delivered online and in-person, Green Hectares provides timely and easy access to programs and services for entrepreneurs, farmers and producers, families and community members.

### Outcomes

The current Green Hectares facilitator for this project, Barb Scully, has provided significant outcomes over the course of her tenure. In her rural extension work, she has built upon previous facilitators work to create new partnerships and added significant value in various contributions throughout the county. In her action research role, she has begun to develop and record a deeper understanding of the issues in rural Parkland County. Overcoming the challenges to uncover hidden value and opportunities, she brings both of these roles together to create a strong future vision for rural Parkland County.

### Program Value for Parkland County

The following is a listing of the estimated values that Green Hectares has brought to Parkland County;

Rural Extension	\$70,000.00
Action Research	\$40,000.00
Entrepreneur Exchange Implementation	\$12,000.00
Rural Tech Lab Infrastructure	\$19,000.00
Rural Tech Support	\$48,750.00
Enterprise Facilitation	\$20,740.00
Parkland County Promotion	\$16,820.00
Online Resource Indexing	\$10,000.00
Rural Public Space Improved Utilization	\$13,008.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$250,318.00</b>

In addition to these calculated values there are additional value added contributions through partnerships and expertise. It is estimated that the indirect value from these created partnerships is estimated at approximately \$223,450.00. The combined total value of the direct and indirect value that Green Hectares has provided with this partnership is \$473,768.00.

### Key Learnings

From this initial pilot project, Green Hectares has identified a variety of key learnings that will benefit Parkland County with continued program implementation as well as other communities who choose to implement this project. While key learnings are written throughout this report some of the main points are highlighted below;

- Working across the rural-urban divide is important for the facilitator to understand the various issues affecting rural and potentially the decisions made regarding these issues.
- Building upon the success of past or current programs and adding value not only aligns with Green Hectares philosophy, but also creates the most momentum to move forward in small rural communities.
- Designating a set time for documentation of information received is important with the qualitative data and the information that is collected using one on one conversation.
- Understanding the need to compliment demographics with psychographics in an ongoing manner is important to gain a true understanding of the needs of a rural community.

## INTRODUCTION

The development of the Community Connector program began in July of 2011 with the announcement of funding received from the Rural Alberta Development Fund. After a six-month period of development, Green Hectares began implementation of the program in January of 2012.

Parkland County has been involved as a significant partner since the beginning of the project's implementation in January of 2012. Through this time, staff and council have generously given their time, connections and advice to the Green Hectares facilitator.

### The Green Hectares Context

Over several years, Green Hectares has implemented various programs. From these experiences, Green Hectares has learned a great deal through conversation and active surveying. When developing new programs, including the development of the Community Connector Program, Green Hectares ensures that these key ideas are part of each new development.

- Including the human element throughout programming seems to bring the greatest uptake and capacity building.
- By emphasizing that the resources remained in the community organizations become inventive and are able to leverage their skills and resources in unique and impressive ways. Their main motivator appears to be to fulfill their mandate to the best of their abilities.
- The flexibility in the program was a great asset in building trust between the organizations and Green Hectares. Giving flexibility to the rural organizations is essential to allow for the uptake of the programs according to their individual governing bodies and time commitments.
- Most communities do not always recognize the opportunities and resources already available to them or within their boundaries. With the injection of different ideas they often make connections not previously identified.
- The ability for rural organizations to give Green Hectares feedback at various points during a project enable better understanding of needs, increased options and uptake of the programs.

### Points of Distinction of the Community Connector Program

- *Combination of centralized and decentralized decision-making* – with the Rural Tech Program (Green Hectares' longest running program) having a combination of

centralized and decentralized decision-making has been an advantage to both the program and the communities where the training has taken place. Efficient resource use can be achieved by adaptable, decentralized decision-making using a centralized resource (ie cloud applications, administration, video development etc). Green Hectares can leverage its many partnerships with government, industry and not for profits to create choices to be decided upon within the local areas. The diversity of rural Alberta in their needs and visions for their local geographies is vast. Using a pull rather than a push type of programming, will allow for each community to enhance their services as they deem necessary given a set of parameters. By creating this unique distribution process of programs and resources where flexibility is inherently built in, each community can create a unique solution for their areas. In the same vein, solutions that have been realized in other communities can be shared and identified for other communities. The parameters themselves will be developed initially from the current feedback received through research and our current programming. Into the future, Green Hectares anticipates the users themselves (whether individuals or organizations) will define the parameters of the program through the development of a smaller feedback loop.

- ***Mobility*** - having the Community Connector components (facilitation, Rural Tech, Entrepreneur Exchange etc.) mobile allows for the greatest uptake within a given region. Where a small community may not have the demand to have a business-focused centre every day of the week, they may have the capacity to have this type of centre there for an afternoon every few weeks. Moving these resources into smaller communities will create a comfort and convenience level around learning and developing businesses to a greater capacity for the rural residents there. The municipality and the organizations generally are the groups that decide to the degree that these components will be moved around depending on their needs, facilities to house the resources, time and budgetary implications.
- ***Capacity to Build*** – having the components modular will allow for the community to assess the resources present and how they want to build into the future. This will allow for budget planning, local fundraising and a new understanding of the valuable resources present in each community. Each community that Green Hectares has worked with have made investments into their communities. However, no two communities have made these investments in exactly the same way. This is due to their individual needs and budgets. This capacity to build

into the future will allow them to build on the investments already made and not deviate from their individual strategic plans. For example one community may desire more of a focus on health and wellness whereas another community may wish to utilize the Community Connector to emphasize their economic development efforts in their community.

- *Enables local adaptation of programming* – Green Hectares has found that by seeding ideas and resources with these organizations that they return with better solutions than Green Hectares alone would be able to achieve. With their help, and a thorough evaluation process that captures both qualitative and quantitative data, we can use case studies and empirical evidence to refine, adapt and improve programs whether through our own channels or by working with other partners.
- *Resource Use* - Green Hectares utilizes and enhances learning from current programs offered and take the next logical step for program development. Green Hectares feels that there are many good programs and initiatives in existence that have created a great base for rural Alberta. Often they only need to be enhanced slightly or integrated with another program. Through this integration, Green Hectares sees the potential of creating more depth in programming as well as breadth.
- *Human connection and facilitation* - It is important to understand the cultural needs of rural Alberta and part of that is encouraging independence through online learning sources yet preserving the human element as a thread throughout all the programming. Green Hectares has noticed the success of their programs is strongly linked through effective use of facilitators who help to maintain relationships.
- *Linking urban and rural businesses* – there are methods to incorporate the many opportunities for business in rural Alberta to connect to urban areas. Through facilitating connections on the ways in which rural businesses operate, there is opportunity for rural business to provide goods and services to urban areas as well as the reverse.
- *User Defined Learning Experience* - Often issues of program utilization arise more out of the culture of rural Alberta rather than actual content. Green Hectares sees the solution in the way the information is delivered. The ways in which it is delivered may be fine for one demographic, however it is important to access other groups (i.e. youth, entrepreneurs etc.) using the appropriate channels for their lifestyle. Integrating information gathering and analysis techniques into all

programming, having an “open source” philosophy, and repurposing current information into multiple channels we anticipate that the program will allow for highly individualized learning that is suitable for rural Alberta culture. We would expect to see a unique blending of online and face-to-face learning resources for each participant of the program. At the same time as achieving this benefit, we would anticipate that we could refine the process to enhance the organization or individual’s experience. The adaptable nature of the program allows for additions to the program into the future, as well as scalability. The cyclical nature of programs and organizations that we have seen in rural Alberta theoretically tell us that it is not the visions of these organizations that are wrong; rather it may be an issue of connecting to each other to form the greater picture. These organizations may have a piece and just need to connect to the right partner or idea. Often times resources are devoted to “reinventing the wheel”, where in this case Green Hectares (and the Community Connector Facilitators) would hope to be the “grease” rather than the wheel itself.

- *Ability to work with every partner in some capacity given their ability to manage risk* - at the same time that organizations have mandates to fulfill; they also need to manage risk. The Community Connector Program has been developed to allow for many points of entry. This integration and partnership on programs will help to achieve sustainability through risk management. Often good programs are lost because various resources are lacking. However if more than one partner shoulders the risk and or costs, then the likelihood of the program surviving is greater due to the transfer of knowledge. Therefore, if the transfer of knowledge can happen between organizations, individuals, government and academia more fluidly, it can help to prevent resources consistently being directed to the start up of new programs and rather be redirected to the expansion and ongoing sustainability of these programs. Over time, we expect that through this program that more efficient resource use will be an outcome (through more accurate gap analysis, policy development, potential program partnerships etc).

## **Community Connector Context**

The Green Hectares business case done in partnership with Parkland County, identified a need for the increased use of rural community meeting spaces (such as community halls, curling rinks, senior centres etc). Green Hectares envisions these



spaces re-imagined to carry out previously unidentified uses, yet keeping with the original intent of supporting the community. Green Hectares is developing a list of modular and mobile components for each space to accommodate resources as desired by the needs and capital available to that community. Any educational program, service or needed infrastructure provider (such as internet) would be able to participate in the program. Likewise, if the community had identified a need for certain educational, business or cultural services in the community, Green Hectares could work to identify those already in existence.

By partnering with other not for profits, government, business and academia, Green Hectares has started to develop a “menu” of options for the local community spaces to choose from to round out their programming. These options would be free programs (ie Creating Pathways Program – Alberta Family Business Institute), “for fee” programs (ie Farm Masters Program – FarmOn.com) and tools and resources (ie Mobile Computer Lab; Integrating internet – Green Hectares). Any financing needed for the “for fee” options would be done through their local organizations and community. It is expected that some community spaces may only choose several options initially to trial the programs. Once these community spaces see more people walking through their doors, Green Hectares expects to see a greater uptake of the various programs and enhanced partnership across community groups. Part of the support that Green Hectares would provide would be to help these organizations identify local resources and purposefully build upon these resources according to their community’s strategic plan.

The “building blocks” are mobile so that they could be transported throughout a particular county as needed. The “building blocks” will be modular so that each meeting space could build a rural public space that is appropriate for their particular needs over a given period of time. Each meeting place that participates will be included in Rural Spaces online reservation system and will have access to index their resources and events through

The Community Connector program allows for communities to identify resources already in the community, highlight the effective programs that they have developed and access a multitude of new programs. It allows for regional ideas to be spread across the province and tried in new areas. Each community will be able to choose from a wide selection of programs to implement how and when they see fit. They will have access to these programs that are new to them but have been already tested in other areas. In some instances, this will reduce the need to allocate additional resources towards new program development. Each public space that uses the Community Connector has the ability to create a centre that maintains the identity of the community yet introduces new and valuable services.

Green Hectares has designed the Community Connector program around two main principles.

- Rural Extension - Rural residents often do not expect the same services that their urban counterparts have, however they often have different needs and

would have an improved quality of life if they were able to be aware of and access all of the various programs that are now available to them. Green Hectares has built the Community Connector program around the idea that engaging and linking the resources to these rural residents and entrepreneurs will support them in ways that will improve community ties and engagement. As well, rural extension can also help bridge the urban-rural divide. Through the use of the Community Connector facilitator Parkland County can leverage the work being done as a benefit to the more urbanized population. The value of the rural extension provided to Parkland County is estimated at \$70,000 over the course of two years.

- Action Research – at the same time that the Community Connector facilitator is in the community linking people to the resources that will improve their quality of life, there are also many opportunities for that facilitator to listen to the needs of the community, organization or individual in question. 20% of the facilitator's time is spent in ongoing action research to document, find trends and anomalies that will help the community and Parkland County understand the rural context and decide on future services and activities. The current value of the research provided to Parkland County (based on both the collection and the documentation) is estimated at \$40,000.00.

### **Analysis of Rural Life**

Green Hectares values the idea that rural life anywhere can improve with the information age. Currently there is readily available information that lies dormant waiting for analysis that could spring a better tomorrow for those living in rural areas. The leadership that Green Hectares looks to provide through our programs in the following areas is;

- Collection of important data through all of our programs
- Partnering to aggregate and correlate data sets
- Developing relevant valuations from analysis
- Ensuring access to all of those organizations working towards the public good

## **METHODOLOGY**

Green Hectares will over a period of years utilize a variety of metrics to create a better understanding of rural life both its assets and its gaps. To do this the organization will use a variety of metrics and indices already used on a regional, national and international level. They are as follows;

### **Program Execution**

#### **Partnering**

Many organizations that work in rural areas see the benefit of having this type of information available for analysis and as an aide to help with decision-making. Currently much of the data is fragmented across many organizations. In some

instances the information may not be collected at all and with the help of organizations that are already collecting data, Green Hectares may be able to provide leadership in rounding out the indexes mentioned above. However with a variety of partnerships where it makes sense, Green Hectares can begin to consolidate, correlate and create valuations for the assets and needs of rural areas.

### **Valuations**

Once the data sets are collected, Green Hectares will develop models or assign valuations to some of the more relevant metrics. These valuations are important to this process as they clearly define assets (which may have been previously unidentified) in terms that the general public is familiar with using such as dollars or time. By using these two common reference points, the importance of rural communities and how they support all of society will be clearly identified. Currently Green Hectares is using a CRM to track the value of the partnerships. While this process is currently being refined, Green Hectares anticipates having preliminary numbers early in the year.

### **Measurements**

#### **Reporting**

Green Hectares will be moving to a report card format in 2014 that will on a monthly basis report consistently on the quantitative and qualitative measurements taken for the various communities. The community scans that are consistently being updated will be available semi annually or upon request. As the analysis becomes more refined, trends emerge and partnerships require, Green Hectares will provide reports as requested or needed based on the information collected. For example if there was a strong trend or issue, Green Hectares may provide a supplementary report covering that specific issue.

#### **Program Evolution**

Since the start of the program in Parkland County, great strides were taken to create a community awareness of the availability of a community facilitator and what their role was in the county. An initial introduction was made throughout the county in a small group format to key community halls and organizations as well as a community introduction at the county office at the start of the program. The first year saw the facilitator doing a lot of preliminary introductions, pastoral visits, and event attendance to build up relationships as well as identify what pieces of the program were needed in different areas of Parkland County. Face to face meetings with councilors from each division gave an opportunity to compile community scans for each area and further identify where the facilitator could serve the communities best.

Attending community hall meetings and events gave further insight and opportunity on offering the Green Hectares programs to a large number of citizens, organizations, and entrepreneurs. Several of the community halls have used the

programs in different capacities. The programs that have interested the community halls the most are Rural Tec, Rural Spaces and Rural Voices. At this time there is two confirmed halls to have office hours in the New Year with two more waiting confirmation. The facilitator having office hours in these public spaces would allow for a few positive outcomes. Drop in facilitation for entrepreneurs as well as access to computers on a usage or educational basis is a great for for what Parkland County's Intelligent Communities Project is trying to achieve. The County has given any community hall that would like it free wi fi and having the addition of the computer lab onsite would help generate the usage part of their vision on having the broad band expand rural residents capacity to have access to technology for personal, educational, or business use increasing their community and economic development.

Parkland Municipal Libraries has been a key partner in not only utilizing the programs that fit for them but also championing the facilitators role for residents; connecting her with additional organizations needing the programs as well as sharing resources and working on projects such as "The Little Libraries", creating small free standing take a book leave a book cabinets in communal areas. The project serves as a great community project as well as allows the libraries to create more numbers for literacy usage within the community by having them in places where not all people have access. The libraries have also seen great value in our Rural Tech Program and have been regular users of it since inception as well as connecting the facilitator to the local Adult Literacy program who is also using it as a tool for their students.

The partnership with Parkland County, Carvel Community Hall and Green Hectares led to the first annual "Tech Event", a two day event designed to give residents access to experts in a variety of technology related areas to enhance their business and personal lives. The event drew in a variety of vendors and "instructors" for the day ranging from local computer businesses, internet providers, adult learning businesses, and Kijiji.

Additional partnerships have been formed throughout the past year with organizations such as Stony Plain Multi Cultural Society, Spruce Grove Agricultural Society, Seed an Idea, Little Green Thumbs, West Central Forage Association. The commonality between all these organizations is platform of agricultural education for the community and they have seen value in both the facilitator participating in their events or utilizing her to connect with resources they may not know of or have regular access to.

Enterprise Facilitation has increased significantly from the beginning of the program to now. Although the client build up was slow at first it is increasing on a regular basis through word of mouth referrals and presently has 16 entrepreneurs she has facilitated as well as multiple organizations with Wabamun being an area that now has monthly facilitation with an average of 18 of its local groups and organizations present per meeting. Being the facilitator has been in place 20 months as of December 2013 there is a distinct shift from cold calling to being contacted by individuals and organizations.

### **Further Program Development for Parkland County**

Going forward there are numerous opportunities for Green Hectares to assist in the County. There are several more little libraries slated for creation involving the classes at one of the rural schools using it as an opportunity to get their students more community involved. The Little Green Thumbs program has had the facilitator speak in one classroom with nine more scheduled before the end of the school year. With the success of Tech Fest several halls have expressed interest in continuing the educational component of technology and the facilitator will be working with them to connect them to the resources they need to make those workshops happen over the course of the next year. A strong usage of both Rural Tech and Rural Voices should come from these events. As well as another major event like that one to take place in the late spring. West Central Forage Association will also be using that event as a Launchpad and model to create an agricultural based version of educating to use the technology that is available to producers. The increase in entrepreneurs using the facilitation has the resource board resuming regular meetings in February as well as another Entrepreneur Exchange slated in the New Year most likely in Division 6 to help with the economic development in that area. Facilitation with groups and organizations will continue and grow with an emphasis being put on collaboration with other groups and organizations to share resources and take pressure off their finances and volunteers. Connections have also been made with local food groups to help connect them with local producers and businesses. The relationship with the Ag societies will continue to grow with an event planned with Multi Centre to bring Heifer in Your Tank to Parkland in March 2014, giving another agricultural education experience to the area. The facilitator will continue to explore more ways to participate and assist in community and economic development as well agricultural education.

### **Additional metrics**

*The Intelligent Community Indicators* – one of the Green Hectares’ pilots, a leading Alberta community, is undergoing a process to become an “Intelligent Community”. These indicators will be included in the measurement of all the facilitated communities, as new technology is fast becoming an important part of the rural landscape. Green Hectares will integrate these measurements into the community assessments and elsewhere it makes sense.

*The Canadian Index of Wellbeing* – collected by a national organization of the same name, the organization has developed a comprehensive list of indicators based on a model of the genuine progress indicator. The indicators are grouped in the following categories;

### **Democratic Engagement**

- Voter turnout
- Volunteer rate for political activities
- Policy impact perceptions

- Representation of women
- Net Official development assistance as a percentage of community income
- Ratio of Registered to Eligible Voters
- Satisfaction with Democracy
- Interest in Politics

### **Community Vitality**

- Volunteering
- Number of close relatives
- Providing assistance to others
- Poverty crime
- Violent crime
- Walking alone after dark
- Trust
- Experience of discrimination
- Caring for others
- Belonging to community
- Participation in group activities

### **Education**

- Early childhood education and care
- Developmental health in kindergarten
- Student-educator ratio in public schools
- Social and emotional competence in middle childhood
- Basic educational knowledge and skills of youth
- Socio economic gradient
- High school completion
- Post secondary participation and attainment

### **Environment**

- Timber sustainability index
- Ground Level Ozone
- Criteria Air Containment Emissions Index
- GHG Emissions
- Primary Energy Production
- Final Demand Energy Use
- Water quality index
- Water Yield

- Residential water use
- Non renewable energy reserve index
- Non renewable metal reserve index
- Waste disposal and diversion rate
- Canadian living planet index
- Marine trophic level index

### **Healthy Populations**

- Self-rated health
- Health-adjusted life expectancy
- Diabetes
- Depression
- Life expectancy at birth
- Infant mortality
- Smoking
- Patient satisfaction with health services
- Population with a regular family doctor
- Influenza immunization among age 65+
- Leisure and Culture
- Living Standards
- Time Use

### **Leisure and Culture**

- Social leisure activities
- Arts and culture activities
- Volunteering for culture and recreation organizations
- Physical activity
- Attending performing arts
- Visits to National Parks and National historic sites
- Nights on vacation
- Spending on culture and recreation

### **Living Standards**

- After-tax median income
- Income distribution
- Incidence of low income
- Wealth distribution
- CSLS economic security index

- Long term unemployment
- Employment rate
- CIBC employment quality index
- Housing suitability and affordability

## **Time Use**

- Adults working non standard hours
- Adults working long hours
- Adults reporting high levels of time pressure
- Adults providing unpaid care to seniors
- Retired seniors engaged in active leisure
- Retired seniors volunteering
- Adolescents exceeding recommended screen time
- Children/adolescents participating in organized activities
- Parent-pre schooler reading activities
- Adolescents eating meals with parents at home

While it is not within the mandate of Green Hectares to collect all of the indicators, as an organization, it is possible to stage the comprehensive collection of the data sets, partner with other organizations that are interested and to use these indicators at local and regional levels. Overall, it will be quite useful at many levels to see how communities are relevant compared to the country as a whole. Green Hectares will integrate these measurements into the community assessments and elsewhere it makes sense.

*Human Development Index* – developed by the United Nations, each year this index helps to be a reference statistic that takes into account both economic and social development. It has relatively few indicators, most which are covered off in the Canadian Index of Wellbeing. However it will be interesting to calculate this indicator for rural communities and see how they relate on a global scale. Green Hectares will integrate these measurements into the community assessments and elsewhere it makes sense.

*Community Assessment Tool – Phase II* – Once significantly relevant data sets have been collected in a given study area with the community assessment tool, correlations can be made for policy makers to understand the type of impacts the dollars that they spend might have based upon outcomes of other communities. While the outcomes of their decisions will not be guaranteed, they will have an understanding of what has happened when other communities have had the same decisions from a data perspective.

*Citizen Science* - could be an important asset to a variety of the data sets. To have individuals in rural areas collect data of natural occurrences such as weather,



migration patterns, geological data among many others types of data could help society and rural areas immensely. In addition if it could be added to or correlated with other databases such as crop insurance, weather tables, Green Hectares metrics, etc, the depth of information could become quite sophisticated. This future project will be developed as partnerships arise and clear paths for a project such as this.

*Continued Hopper Indexing* – As the facilitator updates each community scan any new information such as events, key experts or organizations will be indexed by the Hopper. This indexing will allow the community to have an up to date, online community bulletin board that serves a rural extension purpose in bringing awareness to the community. Yet it also allows the community in question and Parkland County to see how people are searching, learning about and using their services.

## Staging

It would be overwhelming to begin collecting all of the indicators above. In particular to collect all of the Human Development Index indicators could take a significant amount of time and may fall outside of Green Hectares current capacity. However over a period of 5 years, Green Hectares will begin building baseline data sets and correlating this information to a variety of other databases to increase the value that this information has.

## FACILITATOR ROLES

### Facilitator Profiles

- Barb Scully has been a resident of the Tri Region for the past 14 years. The first eight in Parkland County and the last 6 in Spruce Grove. She is an entrepreneur who previously owned a retail store in Spruce Grove. Currently owns and operates a small media business with two other partners, and is responsible for the layout, sales, marketing and distribution of the “Business Focus” newspaper for the Spruce Grove Chamber of Commerce for the past two years. She is an avid volunteer who runs the Spruce Grove Community Art Studio at the Spruce Grove Library as well as an organizer of the Tri Area Cash Mob. She was raised in both Sturgeon County and the Lac La Biche area with a farming background.

Barb started as the Community Facilitator in April 2012 and found that her previous experience as a business owner, chamber member, and active community member gave her the connections she needed in the county to begin her role. Over the past year and a half she has seen that her past

experience has been an asset in filling her role as the Parkland Community Facilitator and opened up the doors to create new connections to assist local residents, organizations and businesses. She has a love for the community and a willingness to make sure they are connected with the resources they need.

## RURAL EXTENSION

### Groups Engaged

Green Hectares has been utilizing an online CRM tool to ensure that consistency and follow up are integral to the work being done. To date, the current facilitator in Parkland County has connected with over 273 contacts. This is an average of approximately 15 connections with individuals each month. The following is a list of groups that the various facilitators have connected with from 2012-2013;

- Brighbank Community Hall
- Carvel Community Hall
- Duffield Community Hall
- Entwistle Community League
- Clymont Community League
- Fallis Community Association
- Garden Valley Community Centre
- Golden Spike Community League
- Graminia Hall
- Hansens Corner Community Society
- Holburn Hall
- Jackpine Corner Hall
- Keephills Community Association
- Magnolia Community Club
- Manly Hall
- Moon Lake Hall
- Muir Lake Community League
- Parkland Village Community Hall
- Rosenthal Community Association
- Sand Hills Community League
- Smithfield Community Hall
- Tomahawk ad District Ag Society
- Woodbend Community Association
- Tomahawk Library
- Seba Beach Library
- Duffield Library
- Wabamun Library
- Entwistle Library
- Parkland Adult literacy
- Seba Beach School

- Keephills School
- Entwistle School
- Parkland Village School
- Graminia School
- COKE
- West Central Forage Association
- Village of Wabamun
- Village of Spring Lake
- Tri Cala
- Community Futures
- Wabamun Chamber of Commerce
- Spruce Grove Chamber of Commerce
- Stony Plain Chamber of Commerce
- Acheson Business Association
- Stony Plain FCSS
- Wabamun FCSS
- Stony Plain Multi Cultural Association
- Pioneer Museum
- Greater Edmonton Alliance
- Edmonton Land Trust
- ACCA
- Ag For Life
- Seed an Idea
- Wabamun Seniors Association
- WEE
- Parkland Food Bank
- ALUS
- Alberta Culture
- Parkland Women In Business
- CYFB
- Volunteer Alberta
- Ted X
- Concious Community
- Wabamun Rate Payers
- Ag and Food Council
- Edmonton Area Land Trust
- Cows and Fish
- North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance

### **Events attended**

Events are a great way for a facilitator to understand the community fabric, connect with organizations and individuals and increase awareness for the programs. The Parkland Facilitator has attended a wide variety of events to engage the public as per the list below:

- Spring Presidents Forum 2012

- Solar Tour 2012
- Ag Society Luncheon 2012
- Aboriginal Day 2012
- Multi Cultural Centre Canada Day2012
- Spruce Grove Canada Day 2012
- Chamber of Commerce Picnic in the Park 2012
- Pioneer Museum Show and dine 2012
- Multi Cultural Healing Arts Day 2012
- Spruce Grove Ag Society Corn Roast 2012
- Farming in the City Tour 2012
- Agricultural Land Conservation Workshop 2012
- City Slickers 2012
- Back to Basics, Organic Harvest Day 2012
- Farm Fair 2012
- Chamber of Commerce Gala 2012
- Fall Presidents Forum 2012
- WEE Fundraiser 2012
- Jamboree 2013
- Farm and Ranch 2013
- Acreage Days 2013
- RADF Spring Showcase 2013
- Entwistle Earth Day 2013
- GEA Food Mapping Workshop 2013
- Mc Happy Days 2013
- Parkland Foodbank Tour 2013
- Chamber Launch Party, Life and Leisure 2013
- Concious Community Speaker series 2013
- Spring Presidents Forum 2013
- Down on the Farm Exihbit 2013
- Stony Plain Horticultural Spring launch 2013
- Art Walk 2013
- Acheson Ground Breaking Event 2013
- Multi Centre Canada Day 2013
- Ag Society Pancake Breakfast 2013
- Ag Society Childrens Festival
- Moonlight in the Meadow 2013
- Entwistle School Playground Fundraiser and County Presentation 2013
- Ag Society Harvest Fair2013
- Local Food and Producer Tour 2013
- Sturgeon County Bounty 2013
- Local Faire Dinner 2013
- GMCC Rethink Sustainability 2013
- Chamber Gala 2013
- Festival of Trees 2013
- Baba Claus 2013
- ATCO Agm 2013

- Tech Fest 2013
- Parkland Women in Business Breakfast 2013

## **Partnerships Created**

***Community Leagues*** – The facilitator has been building community relationships through attendance of monthly meetings and volunteerism at community events. This effort has led to a greater understanding of each group's identity, mission and needs. The upcoming Office Hours initiative seeks to further this work by engaging community members outside of the current community executives. With the opportunities that free wi fi gives the community halls several are expressing more interest in hosting workshops and events using the broad band technology. This would give an increase in community and economic development.

***Parkland Municipal Libraries-*** The facilitator has built a relationship both through the use of the Rural Tech lab on a regular basis as well as the Little Libraries project. The libraries found great use in having access to the lab. The Little Libraries Project allows them to expand their literacy objectives further into the community to residents that may not have access regularly to the library given their rural location. The value of the Rural Tech contribution to this program is \$45,000.00.

***Stony Plain Multi Cultural Society-*** The Multi Centre is also an Ag Society and has a mandate for agricultural education. By partnering with the facilitator on a variety of projects they have been connected to a variety of resources as well as had enterprise facilitation for some of the producers they are connected with. Most producers live within the county. City Slickers is a major event that teaches urban students where the food comes from and facilitator has been a volunteer the past 2 sessions working with a class of children and taking them on the farm tours. The facilitator also participated in the Canada Day Celebration coordinating the market/vendors portion of the event so she was able to work with a variety of rural entrepreneurs and producers. The facilitator will also be working with the multi centre to bring There's a Heifer In Your Tank program to Parkland in March.

***Parkland Adult Literacy-*** The facilitator has been supplying the computer lab for their students on a variety of workshops. The partnership and access to the labs has allowed for them to explore not only written and read literacy but address the issues that computer literacy presents in today's world. PAL and the facilitator will be exploring on how to utilize Green Hectares programs to fill that gap even further in the New Year. The value of Rural Tech contribution to this program is \$2,700.00.

***Spruce Grove Agricultural Society-***The facilitator has been working with the Spruce Grove Agriculture Society in a marketing and collaborative capacity. Their grounds are open seasonally and offer a great educational facility to residents with events throughout the year as well as a market with local rural producers.

***Little Green Thumbs-*** Rural Tech was used for the teacher orientation day as well as facilitator was invited to teach and speak at all 10 classrooms participating in the program to teach children where their food comes from and how to grow it. The value of Rural Tech contribution to this program is \$150.00.

***Carvel Hall-*** Facilitator was one of the primary organizers for the Tech event to introduce using the technology that was available for residents in their personal, educational and business lives. Event was a great success creating a platform for interest in ongoing information sessions and workshops rotating throughout the County. The value of the Rural Tech contribution to this program is \$900.00

***West Central Forage Association-*** Facilitator will be going forward with West Central Forage organization to create an agriculture themed tech event for local producers using the Carvel event as a model, and will have the ability to reach another demographic within the County on a completely new platform that has been done here before. With the Intelligent Community in place it has a whole new set of applications for current agriculture producers and the event has the ability to showcase this.

### **Economic Development**

Entrepreneur Exchange – In both June and October of 2013, Entrepreneur Exchanges were held in Parkland County to benefit local individuals grow and develop their business ideas. These events provided a unique opportunity for various local business people to gain access to Short Term Mentorship opportunities, not currently offered by other services/organizations within the community. The cumulative impact from both events was;

*“8 participants presented 12 project ideas and 12 panelists shared their advice, counsel and networks resulting in 133 business connections and a total of 125 business ideas shared during this event. The total value of businesses was \$207,500\* and the total value of business ideas shared was \$219,750\*”.*

These numbers are calculated based on estimations from the facilitator. Information is researched on current commodity prices, applicable funding as suggested by panelists, and projected income from business ideas as suggested by panelists. Additional information can be found under Appendix A in each event report.

***Think Tank/Resource Board*** – Currently, there are 14 individuals who serve as resources for the Community facilitator conducting Enterprise Facilitation throughout the community. These individuals serve as connections, idea generation and problem solving resources for the community’s local businesses to be successful and profitable. In addition, these volunteers generate introductions for the facilitator within the community to initiate new contacts and expand the programs reach and

presence within the municipality. There was 2 resource board meetings in 2013 and starting in February are slated to run monthly.

***Enterprise Facilitation*** – Through the course of the project, local entrepreneurs have had access to individual and confidential business facilitation. Sustainable Economic Futures provided the initial training to the facilitators. In the Green Hectares model, groups, as well as individuals were provided with open access to the facilitator. Over 14 different local businesses consulted the facilitator for one on one meetings, as well as over 20 organizations looking for facilitation. The estimated value of the enterprise facilitation is \$20,740.00.

## **Parkland County Promotion**

Event, service, and department promotion of Parkland County resources is done regularly through social media platforms, word of mouth and written referral when applicable both within and outside the municipality.

- Approximately 5 hours per week is dedicated to actively promoting events, organizations and programs developed by Parkland County. It is estimated that over the life of the program within the County that the time spent on this is 500 hours of active promotion. At a value of \$25.00/hour, this would translate into \$12,500.00 of value for Parkland County.
- Approximately 4 hours per month is actively spent promoting Parkland County externally. While most of this promotion happens at a provincial level, some of this has been promotion at a national level and with potential corporate partnerships. It is estimated that over the life of the program within the County that the time spent on this is 96 hours of active promotion. At a value of \$45.00/hour, this would translate into \$4,320.00 of value for Parkland County.

## **Online Indexing**

As part of the partnership between Parkland County and Green Hectares, full access of the various features of the online learning platform the Hopper that Green Hectares has been developing and refining for the past several years is given to the County. Currently, all information gathered on the community scans is indexed into the Hopper so that individuals can use the system as a community bulletin board that is continually updated and refined as more community resources are identified or created. The added value for the small rural communities is estimated at \$10,000.00.

## **Success Stories**

There have been multiple successes for Green Hectares within Parkland County. Though the learning and progress is gradual, there are many events that highlight the overall impact of the program in the communities it serves.

***Tech Event*** - With the partnership between Green Hectares, Carvel Hall, and Parkland County it clearly identified an area that residents, businesses, and organizations would like to explore more. It will utilize all of Green Hectares programs to ensure success within the community. It is estimated that the value of the support is approximately \$1,900.00

***Stony Plain Multi Cultural Centre*** - Barb has been a resource on a variety of committees for the centre since assuming the role as Parkland Facilitator. This gives opportunity to work with more rural and agriculturally related entrepreneurs that she may not have had as quick of an introduction to. It also allows Green Hectares to work in the agricultural education aspect more deeply.

***Little Green Thumbs*** - although a recent partnership, the Green Hectares Facilitator was referred by Judy Undersholtz from the multi for this program as a resource which will allow Barb to teach in 10 rural classrooms about knowing where your food comes from and the importance of agriculture.

***Parkland Municipal Libraries*** - The Little Libraries project has brought a way to bring literacy to every area of a rural community. With the continued building of the libraries it will become an incredible asset to the rural residents and the libraries. The in kind value to the community is approximately \$1,800.00.

***Community Halls*** - Many of the halls are beginning to use the facilitator in a variety of ways. For programming, office hours, and connecting to resources. It was a slow uptake with halls given the demographics of an aging volunteer population but with the few progressive thinkers setting an example it makes other halls more receptive and look at new ways to think about their community space and what services Green Hectares has to help them.

The greatest success is the ***community engagement*** in after the past year and a half. As expected, when Green Hectares first entered into the community awareness of their programs was relatively low. However over the past two years of implementation of the program local residents, organizations and entrepreneurs are now regularly contacting the facilitator to either use or help find the resources they need to be successful. With the increase of use of the facilitator it shows community members are valuing the services and programs that are offered and want to move forward with community and economic development within the county.

***Office Hours*** – In the fall of 2013, the facilitator has planned a schedule of “Office Hours” to serve the various communities across Parkland County. Monthly, she will set up the Rural Tech mobile computer lab up in a community facility for the use of community residents. At this time, she will also have the opportunity to connect with community members, facilitate local entrepreneurs, fulfill reporting requirements and provide general support. At this time, two communities have



confirmed their participation (Brightbank and Carvel Halls). It is estimated the value of this program is approximately \$13,008.00. Currently Moon Lake Hoot Owl Community League is also considering this program for their community.

## Future Opportunities for Rural Extension in Parkland County

Green Hectares sees an ongoing need for a facilitator in Parkland to work towards other areas of Community and Economic Development.

- **Telecommuting** - Given the advantages that broadband presents in the rural setting growth is inevitable and rural population retention has revitalized opportunities with residents having the ability to live, work and learn from their present location.
- Key areas that could use continued and increased support are *entrepreneurship support for local artists and artisans*. There is a large volume of local artisans that expand past the traditional “painters and sculptors”. Parkland County has a vast amount of home-based artisans building their businesses as jewelry makers, crafts persons, niche market, etc. By supporting this style of entrepreneur in its efforts to stay within its rural community it also supports the arts and culture of the region as well as the economic development of the area. Many successful artisan entrepreneurs are learning new ways to market themselves given the online presence that is available to them and selling their goods as well as offering educational opportunities for other residents to learn a new skill. By supporting this segment of entrepreneur the Community Connector Program could support success within Parkland County.
- **Lifestyle** - Lifestyle within Parkland has a large focus on eating local, living local, knowing where your food comes from, environmental, and a potential for agri tourism. With amazing programs like Alternative Land Use Services in Parkland County and the attention paid to watersheds and environmental concerns there is an opportunity for increased community development with increase support from residents. As well as the amount of residents that belong to groups like the slow food movement out of Edmonton are becoming more active within the county as they source local for food and other purchases.

## RESEARCH AND REPORTING

### Community Scans

Currently, nine different community scans have been initiated and are in various stages of completion. These resources serve to provide information for community individuals, both internally and externally, to serve as an identifiable snapshot of the circumstances, services and potential for each area. Elected officials, community

members and personal research have yielded a comprehensive collection of distinct communities within Parkland County. These documents are in constant evolution and require new additions, modifications and deletions on a regular basis as the various communities adapt and change. The following are the results of SWOT analysis of some of the key community reports. More comprehensive reports are in production and will be completed by June 2014. *It should be noted that the views and perceptions expressed in the community scans are a compilation of views from residents of the community and not of Green Hectares. We encourage any individuals wanting to give their input to contact the Barb Scully.*

*Division 1 SWOT*

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Internal</b>	<p><b><u>Strengths</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Located in proximity to Edmonton which makes an easy commute for residents</li> <li>-An abundance of home based businesses including Bed and Breakfast establishments encouraging tourism</li> <li>-Strong farming communities that advertise, and promote buy local.</li> <li>-Devonian Botanical Gardens, which also has a planned expansion starting soon</li> <li>-Clifford E. Lee Nature Sanctuary</li> <li>- River access for residents and a partnership with River Valley Alliance</li> <li>-Approx. 1/3 agriculture in the area, the rest is subdivisions. The agriculture that remains is a lot of 3<sup>rd</sup> generation farming.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Weaknesses</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-No accommodations in the immediate area</li> <li>-West Ridge Golf Course has shut down</li> <li>- Not on municipal water at this time even though close proximity to urban centre</li> <li>-road systems on the east side of the division are less than favourable.</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	<p><b><u>Opportunities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Diversity of demographics within the division allow for growth</li> <li>-There is space and ability for a conference and retreat centre</li> <li>- Small farming is flourishing</li> <li>-Proximity to the city is wonderful for small business</li> <li>-The Devonian expansion will attract tourism</li> <li>-Attraction to Parkland for younger families given the easy commute</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Threats</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Loss of agriculture due to subdivision growth</li> <li>-Fear of annexing from the City of Edmonton</li> </ul>

*Division 2 SWOT*

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Internal</b>	<p><b><u>Strengths</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 43 subdivisions with high density taxes,</li> <li>- Putting horse ranch,</li> <li>- Acheson industrial area,</li> <li>- High tax base the residential taxes are lower,</li> <li>- Council very open to growth,</li> <li>- High density Big Lake Area very appealing,</li> <li>- Nine developers,</li> <li>- Wagner Natural Bog with Provincial Designation,</li> <li>- Quality Agricultural Operations: Lewis, Wild, West Edmonton Seed Potatoes,</li> <li>- Strong Community Centers,</li> <li>- Berry Farms</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Weaknesses</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Always trying to balance and find harmony between industry and agriculture,</li> <li>- No restaurants in Acheson,</li> <li>- Infrastructure leads to more service needs and wants,</li> <li>- Urban moving to rural want more urban road systems strained at certain times of day,</li> <li>- HWY 16 and railway track junction is a bottleneck, need public transit,</li> <li>- not enough labour for the jobs especially skilled trades,</li> <li>- not enough housing for the labour needed</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	<p><b><u>Opportunities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High Density Growth,</li> <li>- Lots of serviced land to still utilize,</li> <li>- Proximity to City,</li> <li>- Progressive minded residents, open to opportunity,</li> <li>- Proximity to transportation corridor,</li> <li>- Proximity to airport,</li> <li>- Have Villaneuve Aripport and it has ability to expand</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Threats</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Proximity to the City,</li> <li>- City of Edmonton aggressive annexing activities,</li> <li>- road systems required eats up rich agricultural land</li> <li>- CRB voted against the Acheson ASP.</li> <li>- Long-term effects will be a huge challenge for growth in that sector of the County.</li> </ul>

### Division 3 SWOT

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Internal</b>	<p><b><u>Strengths</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Proximity to Edmonton, easy commute to all major centers using Yellowhead or Hwy 633</li> <li>-Close to Villeneuve Airport</li> <li>-Township road 540 is open and improved</li> <li>-Vibrant school and community league. Muir Lake is a highly recognized school.</li> <li>-Chickakoo is slated for a huge improvement this year, extremely popular spot for a variety of visitors. Locals, tourists, Boy Scouts, Junior Forest Wardens, Equine enthusiasts, Cross Country Skiers.</li> <li>-Muir Lake, another popular destination.</li> <li>-Municipal Art Program</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Weaknesses</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Decline in volunteers at the Muir Lake Community League, feelings are that it is too much of the existing volunteers holding ownership of the group. There is a need to tap into the volunteer resources of the new young parents that have come to the area.</li> <li>-No services (i.e. Youth Emergency Shelter) so when issues arise in the community there is nowhere to address them.</li> <li>- As well as no transit to get people to the appropriate services.</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	<p><b><u>Opportunities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A chance for more Aboriginal involvement in the community</li> <li>-Capturing of new ideas from the residents</li> <li>-An influx of new “moms” from the playschool and Muir Lake School</li> <li>-Developments of the County</li> <li>-An abundance of home based businesses surfacing to heighten economic development</li> <li>-New towers for internet coming in will make growth in home based business easier as well as improvement for residents</li> <li>-Population growth</li> <li>-Environmental opportunities with a partnership with Edmonton Land trust project</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Threats</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Community boards have become a niche group over time which could slow growth of new members</li> <li>-Highway expansion has increased traffic volume and the number of accidents in the area</li> <li>-Numerous complaints of recreational vehicles causing destruction to the area</li> <li>-Local gun club is not popular with residents due to the noise (they have a permit until next year)</li> <li>-Regarding the gravel deposits, the community hasn’t felt they could trust the gravel companies with harmony between the extraction and the communities.</li> </ul>

*Division 4 SWOT*

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Internal</b>	<p><b><u>Strengths</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Primarily agriculture, considered the best farming soil in the county</li> <li>-Mixed farming, primarily grain</li> <li>-Close proximity to Spruce Grove and Stony Plain making transportation easy</li> <li>-North Saskatchewan River runs along the edge of the division</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Weaknesses</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Internet is weak in the area so doesn't provide the benefits it could for agriculture and rural businesses</li> <li>-North Saskatchewan River has become a "party" area which upsets the locals</li> <li>-Village of Spring Lake uses up infrastructure services and enforcement services.</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	<p><b><u>Opportunities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Tourism is increasing to shop rural</li> <li>-Increased agricultural opportunities</li> <li>-Variety of Lakes offers tourism opportunities</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Threats</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Enforcement issues especially in regards to ATVs</li> <li>-Subdivisions are encroaching with family farms and inheritance farms being sold due to lack of agricultural enthusiasm in this generation</li> <li>-Fear of "death of agriculture" which means loss of prime farm land</li> </ul>

### *Division 5 SWOT*

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Internal</b>	<p><b><u>Strengths</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Farmland that is being utilized for agriculture is prime, one of the best farmland in the region.</li> <li>-Primarily an agricultural area with some subdivisions and country residential mixed in.</li> <li>-Aesthetically pleasing region</li> <li>-Great highway access making it simple for residents to commute as well as great opportunities for business in this area.</li> <li>-Being a member of intelligent Communities gives great grant and sponsorship opportunities.</li> <li>-Strong community associations within the division.</li> <li>-Community associations are receiving free Wi-Fi as it becomes available to them and are utilizing it to initiate more progressive programs.</li> <li>-Transalta has a facility within the division offering employment and business opportunities. The largest employer within Parkland County with over 700 employees and a strong supporter of local small businesses and organizations.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Weaknesses</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Being a primarily agricultural area population in the division is significantly aging with not all farmers finding their children wanting to come back to the farms as adults, giving a loss of private and family based agriculture.</li> <li>-Division 5 does not have a strong recreation base. There are a variety of programs that are run out of the community halls such as; karate, soccer, ball, yoga; but nothing in the way of a recreation facility.</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	<p><b><u>Opportunities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Whitewood Mine owned by Transalta has a strong reclamation policy that if the Division could find a variety of ways to tap into there may be different uses for the reclaimed areas.</li> <li>-Fall of 2012-13 brings municipal water to areas of Parkland County, one being parts of Division 5. This will help with the persuasion to bring new people into the area.</li> <li>-With highway access and great transportation options there is great opportunity for intense development north of the Yellowhead highway.</li> <li>-Division 5 is situated within easy access to both Stony Plain and Wabamun giving more opportunities to tap into those communities' resources.</li> <li>-For small rural businesses Division 5 is an ideal location.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Threats</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of interest in the next generation of farm families has lead a lot of current aging farmers to subdivide their farmland. This can be perceived as both a threat and an opportunity with the option to bring more residents in the county vs. loss of agriculture.</li> <li>-Transalta is also seen in the threat category as it forces more displacement of families and agriculture. Loss of residents increases loss of local business, tax bases, and infrastructure monies.</li> <li>- Loss of residents through decline in agriculture combined with Transalta's presence has brought enrolment down in the rural schools threatening the closure of some. Loss of a school causes a variety of community issues, long transportation times for students forces families to move closer to town, decline in community and organization members. Less of a connection to their community.</li> </ul>

*Division 6 SWOT*

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Internal</b>	<p><b><u>Strengths</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Open minded people,</li> <li>- Significant oil &amp; gas operations and job opportunities,</li> <li>- Younger population has entrepreneurial spirit,</li> <li>- Adjacent to excellent transportation corridor,</li> <li>- Proximity to Provincial Park that draws significant tourism to area.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Weaknesses</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commuter distance from employment- reside in Drayton, shorter commute</li> <li>- Perception that oil &amp; gas operations not giving back to the community,</li> <li>- Residents don't have confidence to illicit change,</li> <li>- Distance from Spruce Grove- residents go to Drayton not Parkland County for services and purchases,</li> <li>- Weak internet access,</li> <li>- Various cultural/religious groups have larger populations; the community as a whole finds it difficult to tap knowledge and expertise of this somewhat segregated group.</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	<p><b><u>Opportunities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Room to grow and lots of land for economic development,</li> <li>- Provincial Park tourists</li> <li>- Transalta's reclaimed land: possibility to showcase a community effort/centre,</li> <li>- Project partnering school with economic facilitation and support,</li> <li>- Grid and transfer station close by for potential green energy producers and operations,</li> <li>- O &amp; G resources close to pipelines and transportation corridor,</li> <li>- Gravel pits – site for outdoor adventure activities,</li> <li>- Cultural diversity and new mindsets brought by immigrant labour force</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Threats</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Without tri-area messaging there is a disconnect about accessing support/opportunities,</li> <li>- Drug traffic related to proximity to transportation corridor,</li> <li>- Community inactivity- inability to step up and take initiative to be a catalyst for change,</li> <li>- Declining youth population,</li> <li>- Benefits of a large senior population not being realized</li> <li>- Need for change (school closures imminent),</li> </ul>



*Brightbank Community SWOT*

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Internal</b>	<u><b>Strengths</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Close to town</li> <li>-Close to highway</li> <li>-Good mix of ages</li> <li>-Large acreage community</li> <li>-Multigenerational farms in the area</li> <li>There is a strong agricultural presence</li> </ul>	<u><b>Weaknesses</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-4H is not what it once was due to community dynamics</li> <li>-No volunteers to clear hall rink that brings families in</li> <li>New acreage people still go to the city for most things, they don't have that rural community mind set</li> <li>-There is a variety of rural businesses but they lack signage</li> <li>-Hall needs more programming</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	<u><b>Opportunities</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The ice rink is an attraction and has brought more people in</li> <li>-4H may come in and start using the hall</li> <li>-Consistent small business start ups in the area</li> <li>-Population has increased</li> <li>-Current hall members are more open minded about new ideas</li> <li>-Lots of youth in the area to be tapped into</li> <li>-More programming is out there to bring into the hall</li> </ul>	<u><b>Threats</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Hall almost shut down in 2012</li> <li>-Gravel trucks on the roads in the area are a constant safety concern for residents which finds people detouring to avoid them which also means they're avoiding the road the hall is on</li> <li>-Hall needs new members</li> <li>-Hall needs volunteers</li> </ul>

*Village of Fallis Community SWOT*

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Internal</b>	<p><u><b>Strengths</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Primarily a summer village dating back to the turn of the century but has recently seen more year round residents as people retire or look for affordable country living still within a hour commute to urban centres.</li> <li>-New development is slated to be coming in in the form of acreage subdivisions</li> <li>-Hall has seen a resurgence in the last few years, it is still not as busy as it would like to be but a younger board has created opportunities and more progressive thinking</li> <li>-Directly off Highway 16, pavement access and heavy traffic for marketing</li> <li>-Strong agricultural area</li> </ul>	<p><u><b>Weaknesses</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Local businesses within the village closed decades ago leaving only a small store and community hall up the road from the village on highway 16.</li> <li>-Population of full time residents in the village is a high volume of seniors/retirees and the strengths of this demographic have not been realized.</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	<p><u><b>Opportunities</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Hall board is passionate and wants to keep the community hall alive</li> <li>-Developer has recently bought 3 quarter sections to turn the area into acreage subdivisions which should attract a younger demographic</li> <li>-Area has several home based businesses comprised mostly of contractors and trucking industry but there is a great opportunity for some cottage industry</li> <li>-Close enough to the industrial jobs in the County to attract a younger resident</li> </ul>	<p><u><b>Threats</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Rural depopulation</li> <li>-Aging agriculture population and succession plans uncertain for a lot of families</li> <li>-No real industry or business in the village for employment or growth</li> <li>-Some see it as to far of a commute (one hour to Edmonton)</li> <li>-Less people wanting cottages there, not as many seasonal families as modern families lives get busier</li> </ul>

*Seba Beach Community SWOT*

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Internal</b>	<p><u><b>Strengths</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Significant community services such as peace officers, library and school to support year round residents</li> <li>-Tight knit community</li> <li>-Edmonton yacht club brings an influx of seasonal visitors and opportunities to the community</li> <li>-Independent council</li> <li>-Sundance plant provides employment in the area</li> <li>-Pavement and good roads all the way to the village</li> <li>-Broadband</li> <li>-New pathways</li> <li>-Close proximity to urban centres</li> <li>-Market is well known</li> </ul>	<p><u><b>Weaknesses</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Large fluctuation seasonally of residents</li> <li>-Year round population is declining</li> <li>-Not everyone likes the plant in the area due to agriculture impact</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	<p><u><b>Opportunities</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Opportunity for businesses in the area especially seasonal, tourism or cottage industry using broadband</li> <li>-Increasing market</li> </ul>	<p><u><b>Threats</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Transalta is threat to agriculture</li> <li>-Population is steadily declining</li> </ul>

*Village of Spring Lake Community SWOT*

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
	<b><u>Strengths</u></b>	<b><u>Weaknesses</u></b>
<b>Internal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The lake</li> <li>-Nature, wildlife, quiet country living</li> <li>-Sense of community</li> <li>-Good services ie. Garbage pick up, snow clearing</li> <li>-Recreation space; trails, playgrounds, meadow</li> <li>-No infrastructure deficit</li> <li>-Art club</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Water and sewer</li> <li>-Enhanced recycling/composting services</li> <li>-Water table is very low</li> <li>-Lack of volunteers/community participant</li> <li>-easy access to resources</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	<b><u>Opportunities</u></b>	<b><u>Threats</u></b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Growth</li> <li>-home-based business opportunities with internet access</li> <li>-Community participation with new families</li> <li>-Could be more commercial businesses i.e.: restaurant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Being annexed</li> <li>-Lake disappearing</li> <li>-Environmental concerns</li> </ul>

### *Wabamun Village SWOT*

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Internal</b>	<u><b>Strengths</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Tourism, summer traffic</li> <li>-Boat launch and variety of summer facilities</li> <li>-User friendly for businesses, there is no licensing</li> <li>-Basic amenities are available within the community</li> <li>-Great k-9 school and bussing to Stony Plain for high school</li> <li>-There is a strong sense of community</li> <li>-There is a large number of active local organizations</li> </ul>	<u><b>Weaknesses</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Not enough commercial spaces available to start new business</li> <li>-There is a need to change the local mentality on where did the money go, Transalta dollars are no longer available to the community</li> <li>-There is a need for more local jobs</li> <li>-There is a need for more industry</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	<u><b>Opportunities</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-There is space slowly developing which will bring in businesses as well as spending dollars from both the community and surrounding areas</li> <li>-There is a chance if organized to have some amazing collaboration between groups, businesses, and residents</li> <li>-Huge opportunity in the community for new and unique businesses</li> </ul>	<u><b>Threats</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Worried about the village losing its identity if it has to go back to county</li> <li>-Budgets have been cut, village is losing money even though taxes are up</li> <li>-Need for everyone active on a governance level, business, organizations and residents to think more progressively about the future of the village</li> <li>-There are rifts between local organizations due to lack of communication that need to be fixed so they can collaborate and share resources</li> </ul>

### **The Hopper**

In addition to using the Hopper as an extension tool, in the spring of 2014 it is anticipated that Green Hectares will have the added function of creating reports with information on engagement with individuals, organizations and resources indexed on the site. Since most of the information provided on the community scans will be indexed into the Hopper, Parkland County will have an added benefit of identifying resources that are of significant interest to the community, how various demographic groups are using information in their community, community residents who are experts in their field and potential gaps for information sharing.

## Major Themes Across Rural Parkland County

The major theme across Parkland seems to be a *lack of volunteers* given the aging population. Community spaces are struggling with the established volunteers still in place running the halls as they always have and yet that is no longer a successful model. The younger generations, in many of the communities, are struggling with what they would like to see in their halls. On the other side, the older generation finds the younger ones to not be engaged in the community halls and say they are prone to commuting to urban centres with their families for the programming they attend. They are short on volunteers and have fears of their community halls not being sustainable as this generation of volunteers phases out.

Another ongoing theme is the *lack of collaboration* between halls and organizations throughout the county. Everyone is struggling with less funding and volunteers and instead of creating a pool of resources and ideas that can be shared amongst them they are holding onto it tighter for fear of losing the little bit they have. There have been some strides made, especially in the areas of community halls when it comes to the sharing of ideas. When they see something is working at one hall they are starting to model it in their own and teaching them how to use social media has started them to cross promote one another and their programs.

When looking at entrepreneurship, the westerly regions of the county have concerns over the *lack of amenities* to them as business owners. They see Acheson Industrial Park as receiving county attention being its close proximity to Edmonton and feel they are seen as holding less value being sole businesses in a much more rural setting. They understand from an economic standpoint the value that Acheson holds to the county but feel that the majority of job creation within that area is also urban people whose earnings are going back into urban centres where as being more rural businesses their money and job creation stays more within Parkland County and their economic out put is more beneficial both in spending dollars as well as investing in social and community within the county. The rural entrepreneurs feel convey feelings of being forgotten. Agricultural producers in areas such as Keephills are frustrated at the loss of agricultural land and lifestyle.

*Increased leadership at the community halls* – over half of the community halls have started looking at rejuvenating their programs and volunteer base. In some areas like Brightbank with the threat of closure a group of locals rallied to make the hall started to work rather than lose it. Events such as Carvel Tech Fest brought forward significant interest on technology opportunities that could take place in other halls.

Broadband has given a resurgence of independent businesses within the county being they have greater opportunity on every level of their businesses. The *Intelligent Communities program* has all seen increase desire for education, whether it is an online post secondary degree or as simple as seniors learning computer basics to keep in closer contact with family therefore keeping people who may have left the rural areas connected in a new way.

By being part of the *Tri Municipal region* there is always increased opportunity for collaboration with Stony Plain and Spruce grove to create infrastructure like they have with the Tri Leisure Centre and a variety of other projects that increase the quality of life for residents by having these spaces attainable geographically.

There is great opportunity for tourism being explored from all stakeholders to utilize the *natural resources* and areas within the county. The Devonian Botanic Gardens, The Clifford E. Lee Nature Sanctuary, the Wagner Natural Area, Provincial Parks, and amazing day use areas such as Chikakoo and Prospectors Point.

Parkland has a *strong agricultural presence* with small to large producers successfully within the county. When looking at the live local presence that's beginning to thrive and a variety of markets available throughout the county that should increase the visibility of that industry to locals as well as urbanites that travel to see what the county has to offer.

### **Uniqueness in Rural Parkland County**

Division 1 is closest to Edmonton. It is a vibrant community with young families in subdivisions. There is a large portion of home based businesses given the proximity to an urban centre as well as easy commute for people who work in Edmonton. The area has some real assets like the Devonian Botanical Gardens that provide some tourism influx. Some concerns over loss of agricultural land due to subdivision development as well as a real fear of being annexed in the long term by Edmonton.

Division 2 has Acheson, and positive economic impact on the county. Household incomes appear to be higher in this area. Community halls and groups in this area are not flourishing due to the easy commute to urban centers such as Edmonton and Spruce Grove for activities. Entrepreneurship is high in this area due to proximity of urban centres and the amount of professionals living in subdivisions.

Division 3 has some wonderful tourism assets with Chikakoo Lake. It is extremely popular spot for youth programs, families and equine enthusiasts. The area has been receiving some restructuring in the past year to utilize the space and make improvements. Muir Lake school is in this area and has a very active parent participation and the community hall is very active and regularly booked for events.

Division 4 is primarily agriculture and considered to be prime land within the county. The area has an active progressive school in Blueberry that is k-9. Individuals in the area have fears of development encroaching on the agricultural land.

Division 5 is a blend of active and inactive community halls. Some halls such as Carvel, Keephills and Brightbank are taking great strides to keep their communities

alive. Carvel has recently introduced a wide range of technology into their hall (smart boards, audio visual equipment, movie screens) seeing the value in being able to increase their daytime usage for less traditional hall bookings. Brightbank was threatened with closure last year but a new influx of board members who are willing to try a variety of programming has seen a slow but steady resurgence in hall usage. Keephills is struggling with Transalta developing on agricultural land and displacing families. Community members despite the threat to their homes are still collaborating with each other to make their community strong. Smithfield Hall is also the home of the only gymkhana in the area. This area also sees a loss in the next generation of farm families as children leave and are not returning to the area.

Division 6 has challenges with the opportunity for a tourism economy but there is the perception that the community itself is resistant to that. There has been some tourism businesses developed in the region but are not always welcomed by year round residents who find it an inconvenience. The other side is tourism allows for some economic stability and job creation that is not always available in the area. Sentiments from this area that are often expressed are those of being forgotten the most by the county. This is based on the assumption that they are not given as much business assistance, community services, as well as tax dollars going to facilities such as the tri centre which is under utilized by them given their distance from it.



## Appendix A: Entrepreneur Exchange Reports

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Parkland County

## THE ENTREPRENEUR EXCHANGE CASE STUDY: PARKLAND COUNTY REGIONAL ENTREPRENEUR EXCHANGE (HELD IN WABAMUN)

*This case study will look at the outcomes of the Entrepreneur Exchange held in Wabamun, Alberta on October 23, 2013. Drawing on various sources of feedback, it will determine if the objectives of the event were reached.*

The objectives of The Exchange are to:

1. initiate **conversation** and knowledge exchange
2. stimulate **ideas** and business development
3. develop mentorship and **collaboration** opportunities
4. provide an event to **add value** to current rural & agricultural events in Alberta

### About the Event

Through efforts to revitalize and recharge the Village of Wabamun, the Green Hectares Parkland County Community Facilitator partnered with the Village office to offer an Entrepreneur Exchange during Small Business Week.

The partnership was not clearly defined for roles between the Entrepreneur Exchange Program Coordinator, the Parkland County Community Facilitator, and the representative from the Village of Wabamun office, which led to confusion and scattered correspondence. Unfortunately, the Entrepreneur Exchange Program Coordinator was unsuccessful in attempting to set up weekly meetings with the Village of Wabamun office. Even though weekly meetings occurred with the Entrepreneur Exchange Program Coordinator and the Parkland County Community Facilitator, there was a downside to not having regular correspondence with the Village Office. It was difficult receiving registration forms and making sure the schedule was finalized and good to go. However, it was clear that support at higher levels from the Village office and from the community of Wabamun was a factor in the success of coordinating the event through the Village of Wabamun office.

### Event Outcomes

**5** participants presented **7** project ideas and **7** panelists shared their advice, counsel and networks resulting in **79** business connections and a total of **84** business ideas shared during this event. The total value of businesses was **\$157,500\*** and the total value of business ideas shared was **\$208,500\***.

\*These numbers are calculated based on estimations from the facilitator.

Information is researched on current commodity prices, applicable funding as suggested by panelists, and projected income from business ideas as suggested by panelists.

**Panelists:**

Brent Bushell – Executive Director of The Business Link  
Don Dobing – Store Owner  
Tema Frank – Founder/President of Frank Online Marketing  
Dan Houcher – Exempt Market Representative from WealthTerra Capital  
Evelyna Jambrosic – Project Coordinator / Community Economic Development with Community Futures Capital Region  
Darrell Petras – Technology Transfer Manager and Entrepreneur-in-Residence with TEC Edmonton  
Rod Shaigec – Mayor of Parkland County

**Participants:**

Bo Houcher – Bo's Bees  
Steve Cote – For What it's Worth  
Fran Peters - Entrepreneur  
Vicki Specht – Shoreside Inn  
Joanne Hay – Realtor and Entrepreneur

**Participant and Panel Feedback**

Participants provided feedback both at the event in discussions with Green Hectare's staff and further feedback was collected through online surveys.

*"I'm very glad to be invited to attend. It was very eye opening."*

-Steve Cote, Entrepreneur Exchange Participant

*"It gave me back my dream"*

-Fran Peters, Entrepreneur Exchange Participant

*"Having been in a 'tunnel vision' [the panel] opened me up to possibilities on the same endeavors but with a different perspective"*

- Vicki Specht, Entrepreneur Exchange Participant

*"I was encouraged to keep going"*

- Entrepreneur Exchange Participant

- The local location was a huge benefit
- One participant shared tears with the panel simply due to their mentorship and support that gave back confidence and the ability to pursue a dream that had been squandered multiple times. This participant was unbelievably appreciative of the experience they had and was thrilled with their participation.
- The variance in expertise around the table was appreciated by several entrepreneurs

- A partnership was created with one of the participants and the Mayor!

### **Panelist Feedback**

Information on how the event was going was collected through verbal feedback during the event.

- The synergies with the panelists were amazing and together, they created a very friendly, fun atmosphere
- All the panelists really enjoyed their time on the panel
- One panelist followed up with the Entrepreneur Exchange Program Coordinator following the event with an amazing opportunity for the Village of Wabamun and surrounding area to be connected with expertise free of charge during a consultation/first meeting with 4-6 businesses

### **Facilitator and Staff Feedback**

#### **Strengths**

- Amazing panel – great experience and expertise. All panelists complimented each other and fed off each other.
- Great location!

#### **Weaknesses**

- Communication with hosting organization was unclear and disjointed due to scheduling conflicts (the event was held only two days after the municipal elections).
- Format and scheduling was not clearly communicated to participants – thankfully they were understanding and flexible

#### **Opportunities**

- Huge potential in hosting further Entrepreneur Exchanges in this community to boost economic development
- With such strong and influential panelists, there is a huge opportunity to connect with the panelists individually and gauge the potential interest of their organizations hosting the Entrepreneur Exchange

### **Suggested Best Practices from the event**

- Although it is not a new Best Practice, this Entrepreneur Exchange really drove home the importance of having weekly meetings with the hosting organization to make sure everyone is on the same page and tasks are being completed to the quality that both the hosting organization and Green Hectares expects

## THE ENTREPRENEUR EXCHANGE

### CASE STUDY: CARVEL TECH FEST, PARKLAND COUNTY REGIONAL ENTREPRENEUR EXCHANGE

*This case study will look at the outcomes of the Entrepreneur Exchange held in Carvel, Alberta on December 6, 2013 as part of a larger “Tech Fest”. Drawing on various sources of feedback, it will determine if the objectives of the event were reached.*

The objectives of The Exchange are to:

5. initiate **conversation** and knowledge exchange
6. stimulate **ideas** and business development
7. develop mentorship and **collaboration** opportunities
8. provide an event to **add value** to current rural & agricultural events in Alberta

### About the Event

Through Green Hectares’ partnership with Parkland County, the Parkland County Community Connector Facilitator hosted an Entrepreneur Exchange during a larger educational festival on technological tools and resources. This partnership was well laid out, and the Entrepreneur Exchange Program Coordinator treated the Parkland County Community Connector Facilitator as the hosting organization.

Weekly meetings were hosted with the Entrepreneur Exchange Program Coordinator, a Special Projects Contractor, and the Parkland County Community Connected Facilitator, and communication and correspondence was clear, coherent, and very well managed. Due to the community dynamics, it was difficult to find entrepreneurs in the weeks leading up to the event, however three entrepreneurs were able to participate on the day of the Entrepreneur Exchange.

The event was held at the Carvel Hall, which was a great location. The Entrepreneur Exchange was held on the stage while the main hall area had several tables and workshops set up. This layout did not provide a quiet atmosphere for the Entrepreneur Exchange, however the buzz that went on throughout the day was contagious in all aspects of the event.

Unfortunately, the Special Projects contractor involved was unable to attend the event due to road conditions, however they were included via Skype to experience an Entrepreneur Exchange session.

### Event Outcomes

**3** participants and **5** panelists shared their advice, counsel and networks resulting in **54** business connections and a total of **41** business ideas shared during this event.

The total value of businesses was **\$50,000\*** and the total value of business ideas shared was **\$11,250\***.

\*These numbers are calculated based on estimations from the facilitator.

Information is researched on current commodity prices, applicable funding as suggested by panelists, and projected income from business ideas as suggested by panelists.

### **Panelists:**

Carla Amonson – Manager of West Central Forage Association

Robert Bell – Co-founder of Intelligent Community Forum

Brent Coutu – Senior Marketing Director with World Financial Group

Garry MacDougall – Owner of GLM Consulting

Tina Pollock – Marketing Director with World Financial Group

### **Participants:**

Sherri Donohue – SherriD Lampwork Glass

Denise Kitlar – Photography by Denise

Catherine David - Entrepreneur

### **Participant Feedback**

- Surveys, which were sent out to participants post event, were not completed at the time of this report. Therefore no feedback was collected at the time of reporting.

### **Panelist Feedback**

Information on how the event was going was collected through verbal feedback during the event.

- All panelists enjoyed their experience with the Entrepreneur Exchange and were interested in sitting on future panels.

### **Facilitator and Staff Feedback**

#### **Strengths**

- Great panel
- Dynamic and exciting atmosphere

#### **Weaknesses**

- Lots going on – some organization was sacrificed due to this (a panelist was stolen away for most of a session for a workshop, timing couldn't be honoured)

### Opportunities

- Great place and environment to market upcoming Entrepreneur Exchanges!
- Amazing community – very receptive to events like this! Parkland County is an amazing champion.

### **Suggested Best Practices from the event**

-none were noted