

Southland Coop Centre

CONTACT

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- Town of Assiniboia

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Year awarded: 2023

Project video: September 2022, ongoing.

Project video: <https://youtu.be/nqofsMxVkzI?si=LdcprkBMEBkT6Dia>

THE PRACTICE

What was the issue?

The Town of Assiniboia, with a population of 2,500 and a catchment of 6,000 people is the hub of our area, Heart of the Golden South.

The “old rink” was built in 1956 and was a gathering place for many years. There were many people who bundled up to brave the cold and come out to cheer their favorite teams on. Due to the state of disrepair over the past several years, this rink was no longer fulfilling the needs of the Community. The Civic Centre had accessibility issues, energy efficiency issues, and inefficient electrical systems. This building had reached the end of its life.

Thankfully, the Assiniboia Civic Improvement Association (ACIA) recognized this need and planned ahead. The ACIA is an organization of volunteers who fundraise for sport, recreation and cultural capital projects with the Town of Assiniboia. In 2021, the ACIA received federal and provincial funding, this combined with all the fundraising efforts meant that the facility of our dreams could finally come to fruition.

The new rink, the Southland Co-op Centre was completed in September 2022. This is a multi-purpose facility that accommodates the needs of all ages and abilities.

What was the project?

This facility, named the Southland Co-op Centre (SCC) has become so much more than anyone ever expected. The SCC has become the hub of our community and has provided opportunities that have never been offered before. This multi-use facility has empowered our community with a fully accessible centre for everyone regardless of age and ability through improved ground level entry and wheelchair and elevator access.

This facility is home to a walking track, Lakota First National Cultural exhibit, Teen Centre, NHL sized ice surface, Multi-Purpose Gym, Climbing Walls, Mini Stick Rink, Children's Room, Simulator room, grassy area with large screen and full Commercial Kitchen.

This facility has supported the importance of health and wellness in the lives of our residents and is an essential function that the existing Civic Centre could not achieve given its restraints.

The SCC has encouraged and allowed all members of our community from children, teens, adults, seniors, veterans, and the physically and mentally challenged to focus on and improve their health and well-being.

We have offered many programs and initiatives including free skating, climbing walls, teen centre play with all the latest technology, children's room activities, walking track programs, Halloween party, concerts, high caliber hockey games, 11 hockey tournaments, Saskatchewan Country Music Awards, and we're only in our second year. We have big plans for this facility and this Community.

This multi-use facility has increased the tourism numbers in Assiniboia and has provided ample opportunities to bring in residents of other communities to stay in our hotels, eat in our restaurants, and shop from our local businesses.

THE PROCESS

The project was developed through the leadership of the Assiniboia Civic Improvement Association. This group toured Saskatchewan and researched numerous Arenas. They took the best parts of each facility and started working on a design concept. The team wanted more than just an ice surface but to incorporate a design that included activities for all ages and abilities- a real multipurpose facility. The ACIA had purchased the land years before, therefore determining the size of the building.

The work on the building began in Spring of 2021, with the Grand Opening taking place in September 2022.

The role of the Municipal Council was through a financial contribution of \$1,210,000. Council also provided the ACIA any resources and assistance they required during the planning, design and building of the facility. Municipal staff contributed in various ways- Administration staff administering the project bank account, attending meetings, public works and utilities staff to help with site preparation, event set up and clean up, fire

department and other volunteer groups who have helped with the events that we have offered. The Town of Assiniboia Recreation Manager is the manager of this facility, this includes programming, activities, scheduling, facility management, and day to day operations. The Town of Assiniboia has taken ownership of this building now that the project is complete, all the hiring, administration and management is done by municipal staff.

Numerous partnerships have been formed, and this facility has provided opportunities for community members that previously could only be found in the city.

Financial resources for the building of the Southland Co-op Centre:

- Assiniboia Civic Improvement Association, \$4,935,257
- Town of Assiniboia, \$1,210,000
- Federal Government (ICIP Grant) \$6,293,010
- Provincial Government (ICIP Grant) \$5,191,733
- Rural Municipality of Excel No. 71, \$62,500
- Rural Municipality of Lake of the Rivers No. 72, \$150,000
- Rural Municipality of Willow Bunch No. 42, \$75,000
- Rural Municipality of Stonehenge No. 73, \$75,000
- Rural Municipality of Terrell No. 101, \$7,500

Financial resources for operating:

- Facility Rental
- Advertising sales
- CIF Grant
- Sask Lotteries Grant
- SPRA Rink Affordability Grant
- Town of Assiniboia

Human Resources for building the facility:

- Thousands of man hours put in from volunteers throughout the community including but not limited to:
 - ACIA
 - Assiniboia Minor Hockey
 - The Sportsman Dinner and Auction Committee.
- Numerous Community organizations and individuals volunteered by helping with the fundraising over the past 12 years.

Minor Hockey and skating club continue to play a key role in fundraising. We have had several Volunteers this past year to help with large events including the Saskatchewan Country Music Awards, WHL game, and Community events.

THE RESULTS

The effects this building has had on our community is difficult to put into words. This has become a hub, a gathering place, a friendship centre, a safe hangout, a place where many people spend much of their week.

Whether it's skating, climbing, video gaming, walking, golfing in the simulator, attending exercise classes, or enjoying the other amenities we have to offer, the Southland Co-op Centre is the place everyone wants to be.

At a Friday night hockey game, we're seeing an average attendance of 500-1000 people, in the old rink it was 100 or less. These individuals are coming out to enjoy a delicious supper provided by our state-of-the-art concession, they aren't necessarily there to watch hockey, they are there to enjoy the company of so many others doing the same thing.

We have played football and baseball games outdoors on the big screen, we have community members gathering on the grass for tailgate parties, another reason to gather and enjoy one another.

The walking track and skating programs have been very beneficial to our Seniors, they are able to get exercise in a safe, monitored, temperature-controlled environment. We strive for inclusion, and we work hard to provide opportunities for all ages and abilities to enjoy.

A formal evaluation was done by the project manager once the project was completed. The contractor worked with the ACIA, architects and Colliers project management to ensure a schedule was put together to fix any building deficiencies. Wright Construction also had progress reports completed regularly as the project moved along.

Colliers Managed the project to ensure it was kept on time and on budget. Colliers also managed the ICIP Grant funds with the ACIA and the Town of Assiniboia.

We have received verbal feedback from our community members and visitors to our facility, we strive to improve based on the feedback we receive.

LESSONS LEARNED

There were small challenges faced during the building of this facility, many issues were related to manpower and supplies.

We have had very few challenges in our first year of operation. There has been a lot to learn both for management and staff, state-of-the-art technology is one of the big ones! We are proud of how well we are doing, and proud of the opportunities we have been able to offer but for our community members, and the Town of Assiniboia businesses.

We learned the importance of dreaming big to achieve world class results. The design team never once looked at cost as an obstacle when designing the facility. The plan was to build a world class facility and not sacrifice the product. When choices had to be

made on budgetary items the choice was always to build it to the best of our ability and work harder to raise the needed funds to achieve our dream.

We are proud of how well we have operated in our first year, we are so thankful to the generous organizations who have purchased sponsorship, and to all the groups who rent ice. The Town of Assiniboia Council has been extremely supportive of the efforts made, and we are excited to see what other opportunities lie ahead for our community.

