

The Junction

CONTACT

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- RM of Prince Albert No. 461

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Project video: <https://youtu.be/EtzpqXnf2Js?si=SjBTjAwJv1wm60sY>

THE PRACTICE

What was the issue?

The Rural Municipality of Prince Albert No. 461 and The Rural Municipality of Buckland No. 491 had shared a building space since 1965. In the mid 1990's both RM's welcomed the addition of the Prince Albert Rural Water Utility. With the growing needs of both municipalities, the existing facility was outgrown. In 2011, the council of the day made the decision to begin saving funds with the intention of one day building a new shop and/or a new office.

What was the project?

In 2019 an opportunity to collaborate with a local developer arose in which "The Junction" was created and council made the decision to initiate the building of the RM of Prince Albert No. 461 Municipal Centre. This building, located at the junction of Highway 2 and Highway 11, encompasses the RM shop and office into one building for the first time since its incorporation in 1912. The Municipal Centre was the first development of "The Junction" which has now expanded with multiple enterprises emerging in their design phases. The Centre was also built and equipped to be the RM Emergency Response Center offering meeting space and amenities available for community groups to utilize.

With this initiative the RM has introduced a new highway commercial corridor, with plans for residential subdivisions, commercial properties and with the feasibility of recreational facilities in the future. Nestled upon the foundation of the new industrial subdivision, named “The Junction”, this Municipal Centre symbolizes not only a physical structure but a symbol of progress and opportunity. The development, upon which this center proudly stands, has been meticulously planned and executed to pave the way for economic advancement. It has been designed as a hub of innovation, a breeding ground for commerce, and a platform for job creation.

THE PROCESS

The RM was approached by the developer, Signature Development, with their vision of a fully developed highway commercial corridor using Highway 2 and Highway 11, future commercial development and future residential subdivisions in partnership with the RM. The RM applied for and was granted provincial MEEP funding in 2019. This kickstarted the project to begin the planning and construction of the RM of Prince Albert No. 461 Municipal Centre. Once planning was approved and all the legalities settled, a tender was issued for an engineer, once awarded it was continuous meetings drafting and designing. These meetings continued throughout the build and included a hands-on approach by council and staff, at every stage. We worked alongside many contractors, subcontractors, provincial agencies, specialists, local trades and business, local community and ratepayers.

The RM worked with several local contractors and subcontractors, we pulled resources from the local business community and for the most part utilized our local trades. We partnered with provincial crown corporations to install new services, we acquired provincial funding (MEEP) and collaborated with the local developer. We pulled resources from surveyors, engineers, environmental studies, procurement specialists, energy efficiency specialists, and the local emergency response groups.

Council is aware that Saskatchewan is evolving at an unprecedented pace, they have the foresight to embrace industrial and commercial development and realize that is not just a choice – that it's a necessity. Their decision to invest in this industrial subdivision speaks volumes about their aspirations. It signifies the determination to carve a future where our community doesn't just thrive, but soars. This subdivision will attract new businesses, offer opportunities for local entrepreneurs to flourish, and provide a space for industries to innovate and expand. This project was not built in a day, and it was not built by one person. It was years of preparation by firstly, saving the funds, then staff working on writing grants and tenders, the planning and approvals involved, including hiring the engineers. Many meetings were held, and staff spent many hours completing the work necessary to turn the idea into a reality. Throughout the entire process from paperwork, to contractors, to wall color and all the special touches - the ENTIRE council and staff had a hand in its completion, it took absolutely everyone. This endeavor was not accomplished only by the present-day council and staff, this undertaking began back in 2010-2011, by the council and staff that came before us. This project is ongoing and continually expanding.

THE RESULTS

One of the most vital outcomes of the Municipal Centre and surrounding development is the potential for job creation. As new businesses establish their roots here, they will bring with them a wave of employment opportunities for our residents. Jobs aren't just a means to earn a livelihood; they're a source of pride, purpose, and community growth. Each job created is a family's future secured, a life transformed, and a building block for a stronger, more vibrant community. Furthermore, the influx of commercial investment will have a resounding impact on our local and regional economy. It will infuse vitality, spur innovation, and attract further investment. As businesses grow, they bring with them a network of suppliers, customers, and collaborators, setting in motion a cycle of prosperity that reverberates throughout the community.

We officially opened August 24th, 2023, and like moving into any new building there will be growing pains. We are currently completing a final evaluation.

LESSONS LEARNED

There have been many challenges, but they have been minor. They range from subdivision approval lining up with our grant deadlines, agreements being met with our developer and their timelines. As well as services being installed on time to our appliances not fitting correctly or not accounting for a larger storage space. It has not been easy, but it has been so worth it.

The biggest lessons learned were:

1. Communication is KEY.
 - a. Compromise.
 - b. Get it in writing.
 - c. Follow up on everything.
 - d. Don't make decisions without a consensus.
 - e. Keep everyone to and on tasks.
2. Expertise in specific areas should be taken as such - hire those specialists and use professionals.
 - a. Have the right people sitting at the table and value those opinions
 - b. Hire a procurement specialist
3. Get quotes on everything.
4. Give credit to yourself and others for the hard work.
5. Enjoy the finished result.

