NINETTE

COMMUNITY VISION + STRATEGIC PLAN

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The LUD of Ninette is located on Treaty 1 Territory, the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. We pay our respect to the diverse Indigenous Peoples whose ancestors' footsteps have marked this territory for centuries. Together, we call upon all our collective, honoured traditions and spirits to work toward building a great Ninette that welcomes everyone.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Community Vision + Strategic Plan involved valuable contributions from Ninette residents and other stakeholders who volunteered their time, ideas, and resources to this important project. The RM of Prairie Lakes and Scatliff + Miller + Murray would like to recognize and thank everyone who shared their invaluable insight and expertise, without which, this project would not have been possible.

A special thank you is extended to the RM of Prairie Lakes Council, members of the LUD of Ninette, and Administration for supporting the public communications and offering strategic guidance throughout the planning process.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

Background 2

About Ninette 2

The Community Vision + Strategic Plan Creation Process 3

What We Heard 4

VISION + GUIDING PRINCIPLES 7

Community Vision 8

Guiding Principles 9

CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR CHANGE 11

STRATEGIC ACTIONS 13

Municipally-Owned Lands 14

By-law Enforcement 19

Branding + Promotions 22

Regional Collaboration 24

Community Investment 26

Volunteer Resources 31

IMPLEMENTATION 33

APPENDIX A - ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY 38

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Rural Municipality of Prairie Lakes (the RM) has commissioned this Community Vision and Strategic Plan for the Local Urban District (LUD) of Ninette. While the impetus for this project was the immediate need for a strategy around Ninette's recreational lands and facilities, the community visioning and strategic planning process became an opportunity to take a broader look at community priorities around growth and development, and define strategic directions to guide the RM's actions and initiatives in the community. The result is a document which communicates the RM's intent to grow and develop Ninette for current and future residents, visitors, businesses and investors, and the wider public. This Plan lays the foundation for important decisions and bold moves needed to fulfill the community's potential.

ABOUT NINETTE

Located on the Northwestern tip of Pelican Lake, the LUD of Ninette is a popular seasonal destination for residents of Southwestern Manitoba. Part of the RM of Prairie Lakes, Ninette is home to approximately 249 residents (2021 Census) and functions as a regional service centre for the surrounding area, featuring amenities such as a grocery store, credit union, restaurants, and two gas stations. Surrounding land uses are primarily agricultural, with the settlements of Dunrea located approximately 6 km West, and Belmont 12 km East. Provincial Trunk Highways 18 and 23 intersect in the community.

Founded in the late 19th century on Treaty 1 land and once the site of a major sanatorium for the treatment of tuberculosis patients which closed in 1972, today Ninette is well-known for its sailing, fishing, camping, and lakeside cottages. Pelican Lake is a natural asset of immeasurable value to the community, and local residents are passionate about protecting it from the threats of pollution and zebra mussels.

Ninette is most active during the summer months as visitor and seasonal residents are drawn to the activities on the lake, weekly farmer's market, and the annual agricultural fair. However, Ninette has also seen its year-round population increase. Between 2016 and 2021, Ninette saw a 12.7% upswing in population, more than twice the provincial average. Consequently, the RM is experiencing increased demand for more services and amenities within the community, housing, and businesses. Demographics in Ninette are also changing, with more young families choosing to put down roots in the community.

THE COMMUNITY VISION + STRATEGIC PLAN CREATION PROCESS

A 3-phase approach was used to craft Ninette's Community Vision + Strategic Plan:

1

Background Review

The project team analyzed relevant background materials, plans, and policy. This included the Pelican-Rock Lake Planning District's Development Plan and Zoning By-law, and the RM of Prairie Lakes' municipal by-laws. Next, a visioning session was held with municipal council and administrative staff, along with members of the LUD Committee, to establish a baseline understanding of the community's needs and begin to define the aspirations for the plan. Based on the workshop, the project team then developed a plan to engage the wider public about their priorities for community development.

2

Community Engagement

Over the summer of 2023, the project team coordinated several engagement activities, including attending the annual Ninette Fair to speak with attendees and administer a community survey, circulating a modified version of the survey accompanying property tax bills mailed to all RM residents, and interviewing key stakeholders to develop a more in-depth understanding of key issues. This process further identified matters of community interest and importance, providing the project team with specific direction for the Vision + Plan.

3

Strategic Action Plan Report

Based on the results of Phases 1 and 2, the project team drafted a series of proposed actions which were presented to the RM of Prairie Lakes for feedback and validation, ultimately culminating in the preparation of this report. This Community Vision + Strategic Plan summarizes the background review and outcomes from the engagement process, while also providing recommendations around key strategies and actions, including timelines and responsibilities for implementation.

WHAT WE HEARD

Community engagement was, and remains, a critical piece of Ninette's Community Vision + Strategic Plan project. Community members not only helped shape the strategic directions, but also have an ongoing role in helping Ninette work towards realizing its vision. This section highlights key takeaways from the engagement program. For a full summary of the engagement program, consult **Appendix A**.

Stakeholder Interviews

In total, 8 targeted interviews with officials, business owners, and community members were conducted. Key themes and takeaways included:

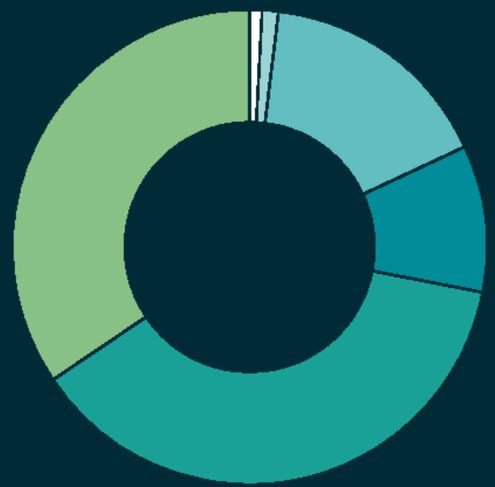
1. **Pelican Lake and its continued health, is a fundamental strength of Ninette, along with the tourism generated by this natural asset.**
2. **Volunteers, such as the fire department, the Healthy Lake Committee, the Yacht Club, and the Terry Fox Park Committee, perform critical roles in the community.**
3. **Ninette has great potential for development and growth.**
4. **Enhanced enforcement of municipal by-laws relating to derelict properties and outdoor storage, along with maintenance of municipal infrastructure, can help attract more investment to Ninette and improve quality of life.**
5. **Ninette needs more housing options.**
6. **With growing numbers of young people in Ninette, the need for diverse recreational opportunities has grown.**

Community Survey Results

88
Respondents

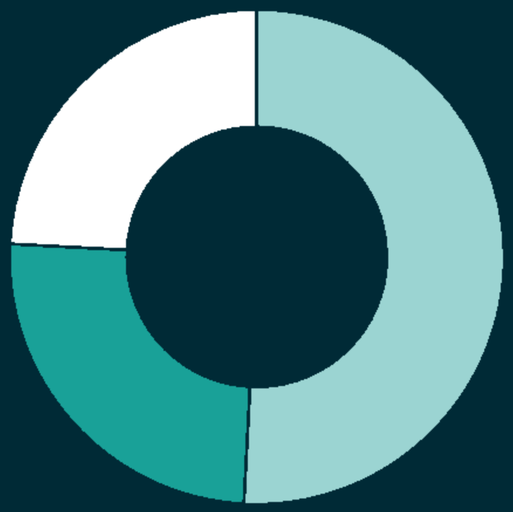


Respondents' Ages



Under 18	1%
18-30	1%
31-40	16%
41-50	10%
51-65	37%
66+	34%

Place of Residence



Visitors	51%
Permanent Residents	25%
Seasonal Residents	24%

Best Things About Ninette



1. The Lake
2. Services (Restaurant, Gas Station, Etc.)
3. Sense of Community + Small Town Atmosphere

Community Survey Results

What is Missing From Ninette? (Residents)



1. Recreational Facilities + Opportunities for Young People
2. More Businesses
3. New Firehall

What is Missing From Ninette? (Visitors)



1. Businesses
2. Better Signage
3. Permanent Structures at Fairgrounds

Top 3 Priorities for Residents of Ninette



1. Protect the Health of Pelican Lake



2. Attract More Businesses



3. Develop More Year-Round Recreational Opportunities

VISION + GUIDING PRINCIPLES

COMMUNITY VISION

The following vision forms the foundation of all strategic actions proposed through the Plan and will guide municipal actions in the community over the coming decades.

Ninette is a beautiful, clean, and friendly community that offers a variety of services, amenities, and opportunities for residents and visitors alike.

Ninette is a responsible steward of Pelican Lake, protecting its health and well-being while providing opportunities to enjoy its use for all.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles link the aspirational vision to the individual strategic actions. Each proposed action has been inspired by one or more of these principles. Any municipal action taken to improve and/or grow Ninette should be in alignment with these principles, to coordinate efforts efficiently and consistently work towards achieving the Community Vision.



Encouraging Investment + Development

Given that municipal resources are limited, and that the RM includes other important communities such as Belmont, Dunrea, and Margaret, creating a supportive climate for private investment that reinforces the Community Vision is vital to the success of the Strategic Plan. Beyond enhancing the local tax base, stimulating growth and expanding the local economy will help to retain current residents and attract new people to Ninette. Attracting appropriate development is also necessary to renew and diversify Ninette's housing stock, and provides possibilities for innovative projects and initiatives with the potential to redefine the Ninette experience.



Providing Recreational Opportunities For All

Seasonal recreation is a key part of Ninette's appeal, with Pelican Lake offering opportunities for activities such as sailing, boating, and fishing. The surrounding areas feature campgrounds, a former railbed now used as an active transportation trail, and areas for using ATVs. During the winter months, ice fishing and snowmobiling are popular activities. However, since the loss of the community's arena, the LUD has lacked formal recreation infrastructure/facilities. As demographics in Ninette shift and the population expands, the RM should take steps to ensure that diverse recreational opportunities are available year-round for all ages.



Protecting + Enjoying Pelican Lake

Fundamentally, Pelican Lake is Ninette's greatest asset and strength, which sets it apart from other communities in the region. The Lake is the primary reason why people choose to both live in and visit Ninette. Accordingly, the Lake should be leveraged to attract more residents and visitors to the community, through the strategic support of new and expanded lake-based recreational uses and attractions. However, the RM also bears significant responsibility to protect the lake from the threats of pollution from surrounding agricultural uses and recreational activities, in addition to invasive species. The health of the Lake is intrinsically linked to the health of the community.



Growing Ninette's Population

The people of Ninette and the surrounding areas have a strong desire for a greater variety of businesses and services within the community, building on its status as a regional centre. To achieve this priority, Ninette must have an adequate year-round population base to be able to financially support more diverse and niche businesses that go beyond the essentials. The availability of a range of housing types and tenures to support residents at every stage of life and the regular maintenance of municipal infrastructure are examples of factors which have direct impacts on quality of life, and can help attract new residents to the community.



Supporting Community + Volunteers

Volunteer groups perform critical functions in Ninette which contribute to the quality of life in the LUD. The Healthy Lake Committee has contributed to the stewardship of Pelican Lake by installing and maintaining two aeration fields and promoting awareness of invasive species. The Pelican Lake Agricultural Society organizes the Ninette Fair, an annual tradition dating back to the 1950s, while the local fire department and Community Hall are both volunteer-run. Given the variety and importance of the roles filled by volunteers in the community, the RM should focus its efforts to attract, retain, and support volunteers to avoid burnout and promote long-term sustainability amongst community groups.

CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR CHANGE

While the context of Ninette – its location, climate, culture, and its opportunities and challenges – is unique, the reality is that rural settlements and jurisdictions of all types and sizes are grappling with the same core question, which is:

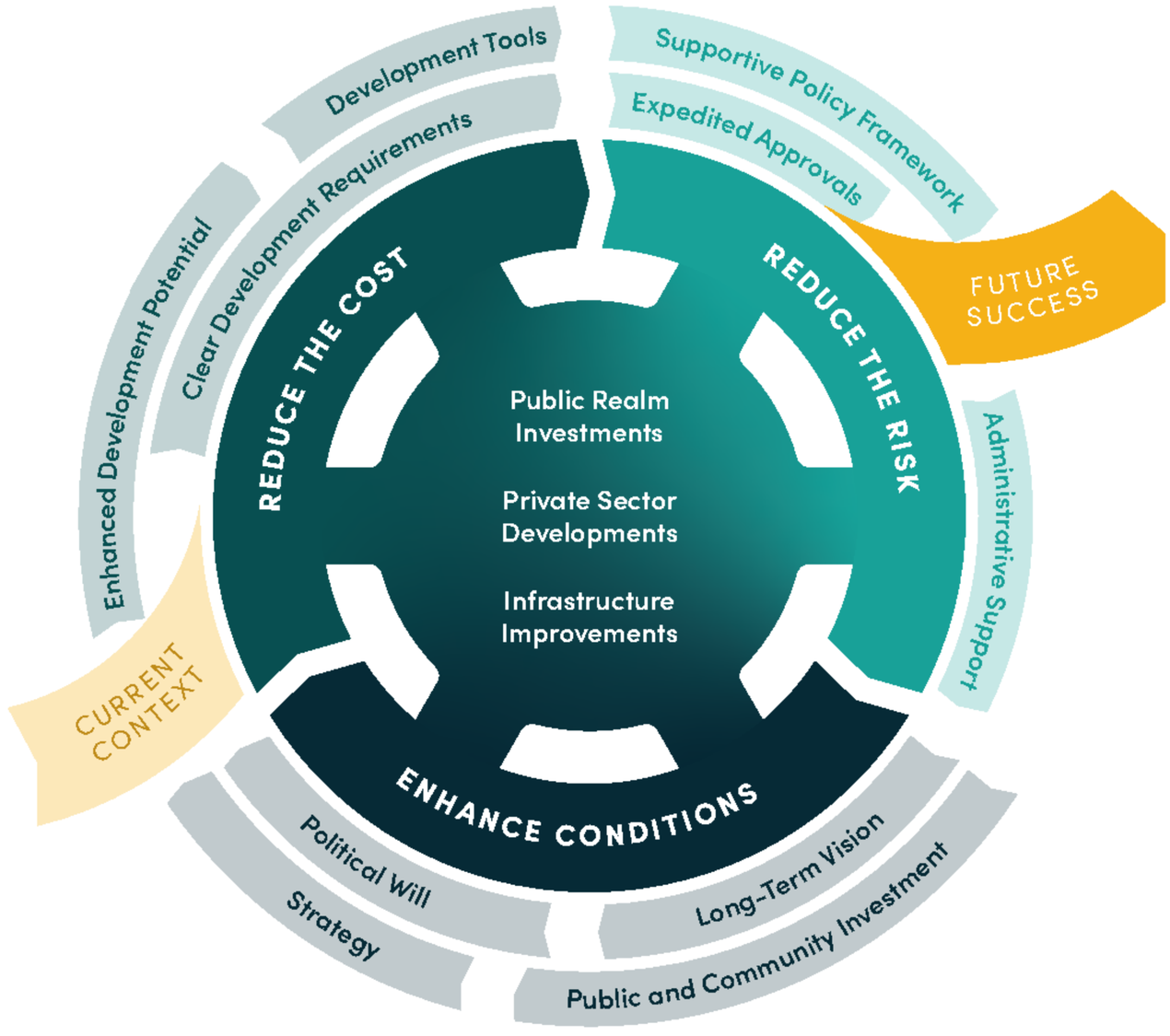
How do we position ourselves as an attractive destination that appeals to residents and visitors throughout the year?

To facilitate this shift that will help achieve the type of place envisioned by the Strategic Plan, there will need to be a focus on three areas to "**Create the Environment for Change**":

Enhancing Conditions for Investment through a holistic lens that includes sustainability and social inclusion, and goes beyond pure economics. This is achieved by putting in place a clear long-term vision for community growth, demonstrating strong political will, and signaling overall development readiness by way of investment in the public realm, civic infrastructure and amenities, and community health and well-being.

Reducing the Cost of Development by implementing creative fiscal tools and incentive programs and/or pursuing and leveraging funding from other levels of government to offset development costs, and in turn, attract new development activity.

Reducing the Risks of Development by providing certainty that the RM will follow through on the strategic actions outlined in this Plan. This is achieved by codifying the strategies in official municipal policies and regulations. The RM can also publicly track the progress of strategic initiatives, demonstrating continued commitment to implementation and holding itself to account.



STRATEGIC ACTIONS

The strategic actions in this section are crafted to provide actionable and quantifiable steps to achieving the Community Vision. Each is aligned with one or more of the Plan's guiding principles, and fits into the framework for "Creating the Environment for Change". Many of the strategies include milestones to guide the RM in taking the correct steps towards completion. The Implementation section establishes implementation timelines, relationship to guiding principles, and potential partners where applicable for the strategic actions.

MUNICIPALLY-OWNED LANDS

Municipal land-banking is the practice of municipal governments acquiring property in a strategic manner to help advance community goals by either developing them or selling/leasing them to a third party. Land banking is an effective tool used by municipalities of all sizes to exercise control over the type of growth occurring in a community and incentivize certain forms of development. Particularly where the resources to offer other types of incentives are limited, the strategic sale or lease of municipally-owned assets provides an alternative to grants and/or tax incentives. The RM can also include a wider set of conditions as part of the sale or lease, beyond typical controls provided through planning approvals, ensuring that the sale or lease of municipal lands results in benefits for the entire community. Currently, the RM of Prairie Lakes owns the following properties in Ninette:

- The Pelican Lake Yacht Club
- Terry Fox Park (Playground and Beach)
- The Ninette Cemetery
- Centennial Hall and Memorial Park
- The Ninette Fire Hall
- The Agricultural Fair Grounds and Boat Launch
- Happyland Campground
- Large portions of the former C.N. Railbed

STRATEGIC ACTION 01

Develop a Surplus Lands Policy

Before the RM engages in the purchase or sale of any lands as part of a land banking program, it must adopt a Surplus Lands Policy which sets clear parameters for how land banking should be undertaken. This policy will communicate to the public intent of the program and the parameters which shall shape its implementation. Enacting an official policy promotes transparency and accountability, ensures consistency in the face of turnover in municipal administration or council, and helps developers to clearly understand how they can benefit from the program.

It is not feasible for the RM of Prairie Lakes to develop municipally-owned lands itself, when considering both resources and capacity at its disposal. Therefore, the RM's Surplus Lands Policy should be focused on the sale/lease of land to third parties. At a minimum, the policy should include the following components:

- A Statement of Intent that clearly describes the goals, objectives, and purpose of the land banking program;
- A Land Acquisition Policy to define the circumstances, controls, and processes which must be followed by the RM when acquiring land for the purposes of land banking;
- An Interim Activation Policy describing how the RM will use the land while it is the property owner. Ideally, interim land activations shall enhance the quality of life in the community and contribute to the public realm; and
- A Land Disposition Policy which outlines the process through which surplus municipal lands should be sold and/or leased to private sector or non-profit actors (issuance of an RFP, etc.), eligibility requirements (based on land use, building form, etc.), the types of parameters and controls to be placed on any transactions, and other matters to ensure the sale and/or lease of surplus lands serves the interests of the community as a whole.

The RM should remain flexible regarding whether banked land is sold outright, or leased. In both cases, the deal terms should be structured to help facilitate development (i.e., deferring initial lease payments, vendor-take-back mortgage, etc.). However, the RM must ensure that any transfer of land is accompanied by a strong development agreement that provides the opportunity to take the site back in a situation where the buyer/developer doesn't follow through in a timely way. In doing do, the RM will give itself recourse in the event that land remains vacant for an extended period following a sale/lease.

Lastly, the RM should consider contributing a portion of the proceeds received through the sale/lease of municipal land to the Prairie Lakes Community Fund, allowing these transactions to provide long-term community benefit in the form of grants.

STRATEGIC ACTION 02

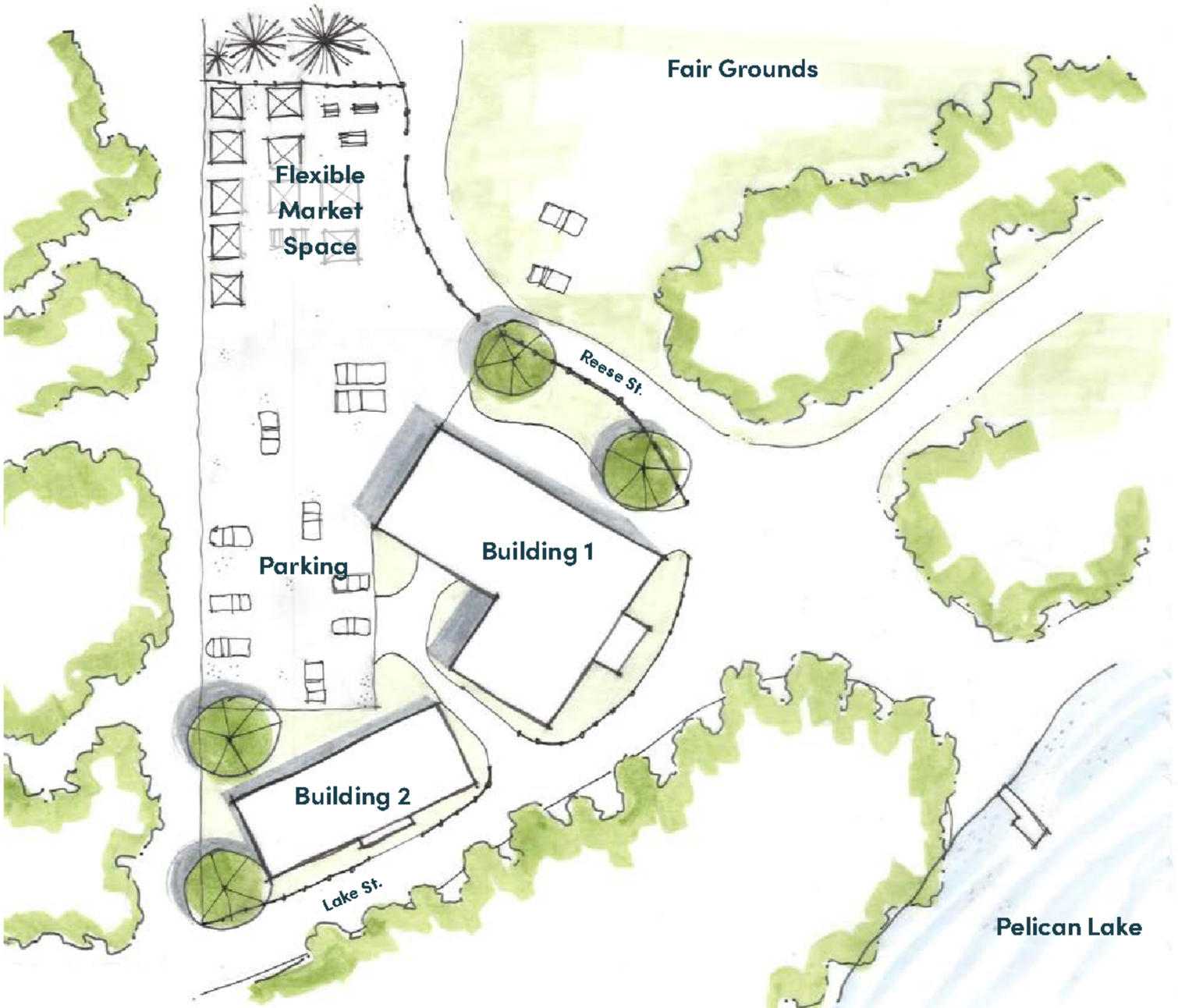
Redevelop the Site of the Former Arena and Stables

The Ninette Arena was once located on the site of the Agricultural Fairgrounds, adjacent to the shoreline of Pelican Lake. Now a concrete pad used for parking, the site of the former arena is also located next to a set of abandoned stables. Together, these structures occupy approximately 1.5 acres at the south end of the Fairgrounds. Given that both sets of buildings have reached the end of their lifecycle, are municipally-owned, and are advantageously located adjacent to Pelican Lake, the site is a prime candidate for redevelopment once the RM has adopted a Surplus Lands Policy. The portion of the site containing the former arena and stables should be subdivided from the Fairgrounds, and made available for redevelopment.



Any redevelopment of the site should be public-facing, support year-round activities and permanent residents of Ninette, and be mutually supportive of other lake-front uses and activities. The RM should complete the sale/lease in a fair and transparent manner following its new policies, finding a preferred developer or partner whose proposal most closely aligns with the Community Vision and Guiding Principles. Possible future uses for the site might include:

- A mixed-use development with commercial and residential units
- A craft brewery
- A café/bakery
- A Museum/gallery/exhibition space
- A boutique retailer
- A flexible market space
- A hotel and/or other hospitality use
- An event space/wedding venue
- A new fire hall



Concept - Former Arena and Stables Redevelopment

STRATEGIC ACTION 03

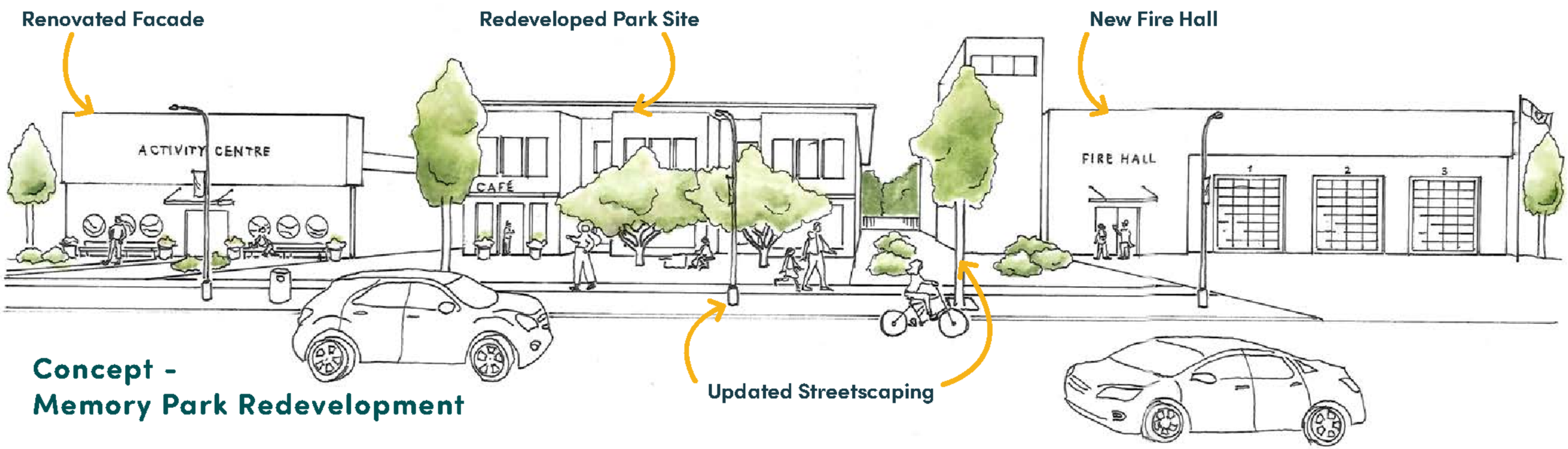
Activate Memory Park

The site of Memory Park, located on Ninette's main thoroughfare, Queen Street, adjacent to the community hall and fire hall, has also been identified as a municipally-owned asset with the potential for enhanced use. Currently, the park is home to the Ninette War Memorial, which commemorates local residents who lost their lives during military service. The site also features benches and a table, along with a community garden.

Although the Park is host to an important part of Ninette's heritage, the RM should explore ways to provide greater value to residents and visitors. Strategies for interim activation of municipally-owned lands adopted as part of the Surplus Lands Policy may be applicable. The Park could be used as a testing ground for new ideas and initiatives (tactical urbanism), or be upgraded in a more permanent fashion.

This might include a covered shelter to make the park a more suitable venue for hosting events such as weddings or performances, the addition of public art, or the incorporation of amenities of interest to younger residents, such as a multi-use sports court. More radically, the RM might consider relocating the War Memorial to a new location and redeveloping the site in accordance with its Surplus Lands Policy.

Similar to the redevelopment of the stables and former arena, any new land use at the Memory Park site should be public-facing at ground level. Any redevelopment should also reinforce Queen Street's character as a hub for services used not only by Ninette residents, but also those living in surrounding communities and visitors across all seasons. Given that the sale and redevelopment of municipal parkland can sometimes be a contentious issue, it is recommended that the RM engage the public to ensure any changes to Memory Park are supported by the community.



Concept - Memory Park Redevelopment

BY-LAW ENFORCEMENT

The enforcement of municipal by-laws regulating matters such as noise and property maintenance can be challenging in jurisdictions where capacity is limited and distances between communities are substantial. Currently, by-law enforcement in Ninette is performed by a third-party contractor retained by the RM. Changes to by-law enforcement practices must consider and balance the needs and perspectives of elected officials, local government staff, and the public. However, there are proven practices that municipalities of all sizes, including the RM of Prairie Lakes, can adopt to improve by-law enforcement outcomes. Moreover, the benefits of these changes would not only be felt in Ninette, but across the entire RM.



STRATEGIC ACTION 04

Review Municipal By-laws with a Focus on Clarity and Enforceability

The RM of Prairie Lakes should conduct an internal review of its existing municipal by-laws to identify areas of weakness, confusion, or over-regulation, and subsequently amend current by-laws or draft new by-laws as necessary. In particular, the review should focus on the following criteria:

Are the by-laws worded in a clear, specific, and understandable way?

When a by-law is vague, unnecessarily complex, or otherwise lacks clarity, fair enforcement becomes a challenge. From the public's perspective, attempting to comply with a by-law that is difficult to understand can be both frustrating and onerous. On the municipality's side, enforceability is reduced when a by-law does not provide direct parameters and coherent direction. Beyond individual by-laws, the RM should also ensure that separate by-laws do not create further confusion by contradicting each other.

Are the by-laws realistically enforceable?

Even if a by-law is worded in an enforceable way, the demands it places on municipal resources may be too burdensome to allow for fair and consistent enforcement across the municipality. This in turn may lead to accusations of bias or favoritism, where similar situations are treated differently because enforcement staff are stretched too thin. To mitigate this, the RM of Prairie Lakes should consider amending by-laws where needed to streamline their enforcement while still regulating important issues.

Are current by-laws adequate?

As issues and circumstances change, a municipality's set of by-laws may become obsolete or ill-suited to dealing with new challenges that emerge. The RM should review whether any additional by-laws are required to safeguard quality of life in Ninette for all who enjoy the community.

STRATEGIC ACTION 05

Develop a Municipal By-law Enforcement Policy

To further create a sense of fairness and quality, the RM of Prairie Lakes should adopt an official by-law enforcement policy to guide the case management of all by-law infractions. This policy would outline a consistent process to be used in the case of each complaint, setting standards for receiving, assessing, and responding to possible violations.

Additionally, the policy will help manage expectations amongst the public, and promote long-term consistency that will outlast council terms and changes in municipal staffing. The policy will help to justify courses of action taken by the RM, refute any questions of bias or unfairness, and protect against uneven enforcement. The policy should be written according to the same standards for clarity specified in Strategic Action 04 and be easily accessible to the public.

Local stakeholders suggested that improved by-law enforcement would help attract investment to the area.



BRANDING + PROMOTIONS

Ninette has unique features and natural beauty which broadly appeal to people across all demographic groups. In a competitive market for the attraction of tourists and new residents, particularly as communities across Manitoba and beyond work to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic, the community must find a way to differentiate itself and effectively showcase these assets to maximize their benefit and usage. By pursuing innovative branding and promotional strategies, Ninette can increase its profile on the Provincial stage and build recognition as a desirable travel destination or new home. Ultimately, branding is about creating a distinct community identity for Ninette that becomes familiar across the Westman region and even beyond.

When asked what image they associate with Ninette, most residents and visitors answered "the Lake".



STRATEGIC ACTION 06

Build on Existing Strengths

Ninette should build on its existing strengths to create a stronger community identity – principally Pelican Lake and the variety of recreational opportunities which it offers. With sailing, boating, and fishing in both the winter and summer, and similar activities being popular in Ninette, opportunities to enhance infrastructure supporting lake use and promote new lake-based activities should be explored. Promotion and branding of Ninette should look to bolster this image of a lakeshore community with a variety of recreational offerings and people enjoying the natural beauty of the region as well as urban services and amenities.

Alignment with Development Plan:

Policies for Healthy, Resilient, and Sustainable Communities suggest that member municipalities should help communities to thrive by focusing on maintaining local assets that improve quality of life, such as main streets, public parks, heritage resources, and other places residents value, while also supporting initiatives that help strengthen community identity.

STRATEGIC ACTION 07

Explore Partnerships

To successfully create awareness about Ninette on a provincial scale, the RM should pursue partnerships with individuals and organizations whose reach extends beyond the Pelican-Rock Lake region. Travel Manitoba, for example, offers a variety of marketing resources, including a Tourism Brand Playbook, to its partners. Smaller-scale partnerships could include working with digital influencers with large online followings to create content promoting Ninette, or reaching out to the organizers of regional walking, biking, bus, or food tours to make Ninette a stop on their journeys. The LUD could also participate in initiatives such as Communities in Bloom, a competitive program which encourages local residents to pursue community improvement through landscaping, heritage conservation, and environmental action.

STRATEGIC ACTION 08

Tie in with Innovative Local Projects

In recent years, interest from the private sector has grown in creating larger scale seasonal attractions and lodgings along Pelican Lake. Currently, the historic Ninette Sanatorium is undergoing extensive renovations to transform the building into a site for short-term rentals. Transformational projects have the potential to shift perceptions of Ninette and the wider region. Although the "Castle on the Lake" development, which would have seen the creation of a resort and event centre on a 104-acre parcel near Ninette, has been shelved, there is now newfound interest in similar large-scale projects. Branding and promotion of Ninette should tie in with these kinds of projects in a mutually beneficial manner. By raising the profile of Ninette, private investors stand to attract more interest in their projects, and vice versa.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION

The RM of Prairie Lakes is already part of an effective regional land use planning partnership with neighbouring municipalities, as a member of the Pelican-Rock Lake Planning District (PRLPD). This spirit of collaboration can be extended to other spheres of municipal jurisdiction, pooling resources to develop increased capacity and better outcomes for all partners.

Alignment with Pelican-Rock Lake Development Plan: Section 20 of the Plan addresses Municipal and Regional Cooperation. It notes that, given the low population density across all member municipalities, the RM of Prairie Lakes, RM of Argyle, and Cartwright-Roblin Municipality should explore opportunities for inter-municipal agreements and partnerships with senior levels of government to assist in the implementation of the Development Plan.

STRATEGIC ACTION 09

Bridge Capacity Constraints Through Joint Staffing Arrangements with Neighbouring Municipalities

Limits on staffing and financial resources often mean that smaller rural communities are required to focus on the day-to-day management and governance of their communities, without the chance to plan for the future. As a result, positions such as a municipal economic development officer (EDO) go unfilled. The RM of Prairie Lakes should consider approaching its neighbours, in particular its partners in the PRLPD, regarding the possibility of hiring joint staff to help attract investment to the region and attract growth that will benefit all communities in the area, including Ninette. Even further, Prairie Lakes may consider forming a regional Community Development Corporation (CDC) with nearby jurisdictions, subject to ministerial approval. These not-for-profit arms-length corporations engage in activities that support local economic growth and investment.

STRATEGIC ACTION 10

Establish a Regional Recreation Commission

Regional recreation commissions have proven to be effective tools to increase recreational programming in rural areas across Manitoba. Partnerships such as the Rat River Recreation Commission (RM of De Salaberry and Village of St-Pierre-Jolys) and the Edgewater Recreation Commission (Town of Powerview-Pine Falls and RM of Alexander) have proven to be effective at augmenting the collective recreational offerings of regions beyond what individual members could have achieved on their own. The RM of Prairie Lakes should approach neighbouring municipalities to gauge interests in forming a jointly funded recreation commission, and determine what a possible mandate and set of responsibilities for the organization might be. Some recreation commissions are purely focused on program facilitation, while others have a broader role that includes capacity building among service providers and facility management. Ultimately, a regional recreation commission is likely to open a greater variety of activities and programs to residents of Ninette and the RM as a whole.

STRATEGIC ACTION 11

Partner with Sailing Organizations

The physical characteristics of Pelican Lake make Ninette ideally suited to host competitive sailing events, having played host to the Mobility Cup and Canada Summer Games in the past. In light of these unique features, the RM should actively engage in dialogue with regional, national, and possibly international sailing organizations and governing bodies to seek investment which could further enhance Ninette's status as an elite sailing destination, capable of hosting bigger and more prominent competitions.



STRATEGIC ACTION 12

Maximize the Use of Existing Recreational Assets

Although Ninette is lacking in purpose-built recreational facilities, the nearby community of Dunrea offers both an arena and gymnasium which have recently been improved. Being only an 8-minute drive from Ninette, the RM should encourage residents of the LUD to use the facilities in Dunrea as much as possible. Events and recreational opportunities in Dunrea should be well-promoted in Ninette, and the RM should explore ways to create a sense of ownership of the facilities amongst all Prairie Lakes residents. Even a simple action such as changing the name of the rink to the Prairie Lakes Arena could help to entice users from Ninette. Separately, the RM should establish a volunteer group to perform light maintenance work on the basketball court located on the site of the LUD's former school. Rehabilitating this amenity would provide young people in Ninette with a sporting amenity within walking distance during the summer months.

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

Strategic actions contained in this section focus on how the RM can achieve maximum return on the investment of public funds in Ninette, while also aligning with the Vision and Guiding Principles. Acknowledging there is a limit on the resources that can be dedicated to Ninette over the Plan's lifetime, some of the proposed expenditures are designed to occur piece-by-piece over an extended period, while others can be completed on an ad-hoc basis or be of benefit to the entire municipality.



STRATEGIC ACTION 13

Enhance the Former Railbed as an Active Transportation Corridor

The railbed for the former C.N. Rail spur line, which runs through the northern portion of Ninette from east to west, is currently used as an informal active transportation trail. The majority of the corridor is municipally owned, although a portion in town is privately held. Since 2020, interest in trails and active transportation has skyrocketed nationally, and Ninette has an opportunity to capitalize on this trend. The railbed holds tremendous potential to be enhanced and transformed into an amenity that benefits residents young and old throughout all months of the year. To do so, the RM should take the following steps:

Alignment with Development Plan:

Settlement areas are encouraged to provide active transportation infrastructure, including paths, trails, and/or sidewalks. Doing so offers an alternative to automobile use, contributes to healthy lifestyles, and a reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Develop a Master Plan for the corridor

Prior to making any investments in improvements to the railbed, a vision and plan should be developed to coordinate actions efficiently and establish an end goal for the project. Potentially, the railbed could form part of a wider active transportation loop that connects to the Fairgrounds and Terry Fox Memorial Park. The Master Plan could also dictate a phased approach to development of the corridor, coordinating step-by-step improvements over the long term.

Explore assembling a continuous network

Given that a portion of the corridor is privately owned, the RM should approach landowners to assess whether acquiring a portion of the land is feasible, or whether an agreement can be reached to continue the corridor over private holdings. The RM should also identify areas where the installations of pedestrian crossings could expand the network and hold discussions with Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure where applicable.

Pave the trail

To improve accessibility and usability, the RM should pave the trail section by section, in alignment with the Master Plan. Paving the trail increases appeal for those with mobility challenges, caters to a wider range of transportation modes, and improves overall safety.

Add amenities along the trail

To diversify possible corridor uses and further enhance usability, the RM should add a variety of amenities along the trail length such as:

- Lighting to allow safe access outside daylight hours;
- Wayfinding and/or interpretive signage
- Benches and other seating areas to provide places to rest;
- Shading to promote use on sunny days;
- Outdoor exercise equipment;
- A children's play area;
- Handrails;
- A water fountain; and
- Safety features at road crossings.

The specific location of amenities can be identified in the Master Plan, but more can be added on an ad hoc basis. The RM should also contemplate ways to optimize the trail for 4-season use, such as turning a portion into a skating trail over the winter.

Ninette residents indicated that increased access to trails was their top priority for new activities in the area.



STRATEGIC ACTION 14

Construct a New Fire Hall that Meets the Community's Needs

The Ninette volunteer fire department has been vocal about their need for a new fire hall that meets modern standards and can house all their equipment. Ultimately, adequate fire protection infrastructure is critical to long-term community growth, providing a more hospitable development climate and reducing insurance costs. As the effects of the other Strategic Actions begin to take shape in Ninette, the RM should ensure that the community's fire hall meets the standards required to support growth.



Former Fire Hall Sign

STRATEGIC ACTION 15

Implement Development Incentives

A cost-effective approach to attracting desired types of growth is the offering of development incentives to eligible private sector projects. The RM of Prairie Lakes should first identify what Ninette's greatest development needs are (such as seniors or multi-unit housing, mixed-use commercial and residential buildings, etc.). Next, the RM should determine what kind of development incentive is appropriate and realistic given municipal resources. Examples of possible incentives include:

- A progressive credit on municipal taxes for qualifying developments;
- Establishing a tax increment financing program;
- Allowing for the modification of certain zoning requirements on density if a development provides certain public benefits (density bonusing);
- Waiving certain permitting and application fees; and
- Offering other types of grants/loans permitted under the Municipal Act.

Once the RM has decided which type of incentive it would like to offer, a set of eligibility criteria should be established to define the parameters for development proposals to qualify for the incentive. These criteria may include provisions related to development type, size, location, and proposed use. The incentive program and eligibility should be codified, either in an existing (i.e., Zoning By-law) or a new municipal by-law.

STRATEGIC ACTION 16

Protect Pelican Lake

The health of Pelican Lake is critical to the long-term growth and economic prosperity of Ninette. It is therefore crucial to the success of this Community Vision and Strategic Plan that the RM take the steps necessary to safeguard the Lake from the threats of pollution and invasive species. The Healthy Lake Committee already receives support from the RM for their activities and this should continue over the Plan's lifetime. The RM should also advocate to the Provincial Government where necessary for increased supports in monitoring and proactive action to prevent the spread of Zebra Mussels to the Lake, and consider increasing its own messaging about how to prevent this species from spreading.

Alignment with Development Plan

Section 6.2.5 Outdoor Recreational Resources of the Plan contains policies pertaining to the Seasonal Recreation Areas surrounding Pelican Lake. These policies dictate that the areas surrounding the Lake should be protected and maintained for outdoor recreation and related uses, shielded from incompatible development, and grow sustainably to match the capability of the land. Further, the Plan establishes a buffer limiting the establishment of livestock operations adjacent to the Lake to mitigate against pollution.

Protecting the health of Pelican Lake was a top priority for both survey respondents and community stakeholders.





STRATEGIC ACTION 17

Conduct a Municipal Housing Needs Assessment

In recent years, housing need and affordability has become one of the most serious and urgent issues facing Canadian municipalities of all sizes. A Housing Needs Assessment is a tool used to guide municipal actions to address housing issues under their jurisdiction by comprehensively assessing the state and suitability of the local housing stock. Relying on data sources such as the Canada Census, property transaction records, and permit issuance statistics, a Housing Needs Assessment may evaluate the following metrics:

- Existing housing stock and gaps in the housing continuum;
- Population growth, age profile, and household characteristics;
- Housing market and construction trends;
- Dwelling age, conditions, and suitability; and
- Households in core housing need.

The housing needs assessment should also contain a projection of the number of dwelling units required over a prescribed period to meet current needs and expected demand. The RM of Prairie Lakes should conduct a housing needs assessment for the entire municipality to gain a clearer, data-driven understanding of what current needs are in its communities, and how these may change over the coming years. This exercise will also help to inform other strategic actions such as the development of a surplus lands policy (1.1) and implementing development incentives (5.3).

Alignment with Development Plan

In Settlement Centres such as Ninette, the Plan calls for diversifying housing options, including the type, size, and tenure of dwellings, in order to support community members with varying needs based on age, income, and personal interests. In particular, there is a need for housing that will allow seniors to age in place.

Nearly 50% of residents feel there is not enough permanent housing in Ninette.



VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

Volunteers are a distinct part of what makes Ninette a special place to live. Local residents have a strong interest in making their community more friendly, beautiful, and liveable, and match this passion with action. The following strategic actions provide the RM with direction to support and grow the capacity of volunteers and community groups, and empower community members to play an active role in the development of Ninette over the long term.

STRATEGIC ACTION 18

Support Community Organizations

The RM should continue to empower groups such as the Healthy Lake Committee, Terry Fox Park Committee, and Pelican Lake Agricultural Society not only through financial support, but also by assisting in the recruitment/ retainment of volunteers, providing training opportunities, and improving the volunteer experience. Statistically, older Canadians (i.e., Baby Boomers and older) are the most likely to spend significant amounts of their time volunteering. However, any organization that draws on volunteers from a single generation will ultimately face succession challenges due to fatigue and burnout. The RM can help mitigate these challenges by actively promoting the activities of community groups and broadcasting the need for volunteers as necessary. The RM can also consider ways to pay recognition to volunteers, such as holding an annual appreciation event.

Healthy Lake Committee

STRATEGIC ACTION 19

Organize Volunteer-Based Community Improvement Activities

The RM of Prairie Lakes can also become an active organizer, in a limited capacity, of local volunteers. Creating an annual "Community Cleanup Day" or similar event where community members come together for the common good and participate in the beautification of Ninette is a low-cost action the RM can take to harness the enthusiasm of residents in service of the Community Vision. However, care should be taken so as not to create the impression that the RM is taking advantage of free labor to complete tasks that would otherwise be the responsibility of paid municipal staff. The goal of the event should be to unite community members behind a common goal while having fun and contributing to Ninette in a way that inspires pride and shows the value of volunteering. A day-long no-strings-attached event is also a way to introduce prospective volunteers to the benefits of community involvement, opening the door to longer-term commitments with other organizations.

This event could be paired with a sort of "volunteer drive', where local organizations can recruit for specific needs in the upcoming year, and may also be linked to the existing community-wide annual yard sale.



Example: City of Morden Community Annual Cleanup Day

STRATEGIC ACTION 20

Offer Grants to Implement the Community Vision + Strategic Plan

General grants for community groups are distributed by the RM, including through the Prairie Lakes Community Fund. However, the RM should consider creating a new grant associated with the Community Vision + Strategic Plan. This grant should be widely publicized, and used to encourage a greater diversity in local activities and attractions (e.g., a local flea market or farmers' market), groups willing to undertake community greening or beautification initiatives, or initiatives that support the branding and promotion of Ninette. By aligning a portion of the total amount granted to community groups annually with this Plan, the RM can accelerate its implementation while using resources efficiently and responsibly. These grants could also be supported by the Prairie Lakes Community Fund, once it reaches a sufficient size.

IMPLEMENTATION

The table on the following pages indicates how each proposed strategic action aligns with the Plan's Guiding Principles, outlines a proposed time frame, and identifies potential partners to assist with implementation.

TIMELINE	
Short Term	1-3 Years
Medium Term	3-5 Years
Long Term	5-10 Years
Ongoing	Continuing Commitment

GUIDING PRINCIPLES	
	Encouraging Development and Investment
	Providing Recreational Opportunities for All
	Protecting and Enjoying Pelican Lake
	Growing Ninette's Population
	Supporting Community and Volunteers

	STRATEGIC ACTIONS	TIMELINE	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	GUIDING PRINCIPLES
Municipally-Owned Lands				
01	Develop a Surplus Lands Policy	Short Term	Community Foundation	
02	Redevelop the Site of the Former Arena and Stables	Long Term	Private Sector	
03	Activate Memory Park	Medium Term	Private Sector	
By-law Enforcement				
04	Review Municipal By-laws with a Focus on Clarity and Enforceability	Short Term		
05	Develop a Municipal By-law Enforcement Policy	Short Term		
Branding + Promotions				
06	Build on Existing Strengths	Ongoing	Healthy Lake Committee, Pelican Lake Yacht Club	
07	Explore Partnerships	Short Term	Tourism Groups, Influencers	
08	Tie in with Innovative Local Projects	Long Term	Private Sector	

	STRATEGIC ACTIONS	TIMELINE	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	GUIDING PRINCIPLES
Regional Collaboration				
09	Bridge Capacity Constraints Through Joint Staffing Arrangements with Neighbouring Municipalities	Short Term	Neighbouring Municipalities	
10	Establish a Regional Recreation Commission	Medium Term	Neighbouring Municipalities	
11	Partner with Sailing Organizations	Long Term	Sail Manitoba, Sail Canada	
12	Maximize the Use of Existing Recreational Assets	Short Term	Local Volunteers, Dunrea Arena	
Community Investment				
13	Enhance the Former Railbed as an Active Transportation Corridor	Long Term	Southwest Community Options	
14	Construct a New Firehall that Meets the Community's Needs	Medium Term	Fire Department, Province of Manitoba	
15	Implement Development Incentives	Medium Term	Future Community Development Corporation, Province of Manitoba	
16	Protect Pelican Lake	Ongoing	Healthy Lake Committee, Province of Manitoba	
17	Conduct a Municipal Housing Needs Assessment	Short Term	CMHC, Province of Manitoba	

	STRATEGIC ACTIONS	TIMELINE	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	GUIDING PRINCIPLES
Volunteer Resources				
18	Support Community Organizations	Ongoing	Community Fund	
19	Organize Volunteer-Based Community Improvement Activities	Short Term		
20	Offer Grants to Implement the Community Vision + Strategic Plan	Long Term	Community Fund	

APPENDIX A - ENGAGEMENT

SUMMARY

Scatliff + Miller + Murray (SMM) has been retained by the Rural Municipality of Prairie Lakes (the RM) to prepare a Community Vision and Strategic Plan for the LUD of Ninette. While the impetus for this project is the immediate need for a strategy around Ninette's recreational lands and facilities, the community visioning and planning process is an opportunity to take a broader look at community priorities around growth and development, and define strategic directions to guide the RM's actions and initiatives.

Community engagement is a critical piece of the project, giving local residents and stakeholders the chance to impact and shape the final document. SMM coordinated several engagement activities over the summer of 2023, including attending the annual Ninette Fair to speak with attendees and administer a community survey, circulating a modified version of the survey accompanying property tax bills mailed to all RM residents, and interviewing key stakeholders to develop a more in-depth understanding of key issues. This report summarizes the results of the engagement program.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

For the Ninette Fair, held Saturday July 17th, 2023, SMM prepared a survey to be distributed to all attendees, whether residents or visitors of the community. The survey was designed to collect basic demographic information, general impressions of Ninette, and priorities for the future. Respondents had the option to complete the survey virtually by scanning a QR code, or by completing a hard copy. Subsequently, a similar version of the survey designed to be completed only by residents of the RM was included in municipal tax bills, again via a scannable QR code. In total, 39 responses were collected at the Ninette Fair, while an additional 49 individuals completed the mailed version, for a total of 88 responses.

Combined Demographic Data

The majority of respondents (66%) to the surveys were over the age of 50, with over 36% (31 individuals) falling within the 51-65 age range. Just 6 respondents (7%) were 30 years old or younger. Nearly half of all respondents live in two-person households, while one-person households were the next most common living arrangement (19 individuals, equivalent to 22%). Most respondent households (76%) did not contain anyone under the age of 18. 49% of the total respondents were either permanent or seasonal residents of Ninette.

Local Residents

Of the 41 respondents who identified themselves as residents of Ninette, roughly half indicated they are permanent residents of the community, while the remaining half are seasonal residents. Over half of respondents who live permanently or seasonally in Ninette also said they have been living in the community for 10 years or more. Seasonal residents of Ninette owned primary residences in a variety of locations, including Brandon, Winnipeg, Wawanesa, Portage La Prairie, and Gladstone. Nearly 90% of residents who completed the survey said Pelican Lake had initially attracted them to live in Ninette. Family, affordability, and friends were also popular responses. The Lake was also frequently cited as the best thing in Ninette by respondents, along with services such as the restaurant and gas station, and the sense of community and small-town atmosphere. Finally, the Lake was

the most common response to the question "what is the one image that pops into your head when you think of Ninette?". Several answers also mentioned yachts and sailing, and the main street.

Residents were asked to provide 3 words to describe their ideal future Ninette. The most mentioned word was "clean", followed by "lake", and "friendly/community". When asked what they felt was missing from Ninette, residents more frequently cited more diverse recreational opportunities and/or facilities, particularly for young people, followed by more businesses and services. A new fire hall was also mentioned by some respondents. Currently, residents participate in a variety of activities in the community, such as motor boating, fishing, ATVing, and swimming, although sailing does not appear to be popular with residents. Residents indicated they would like to have more active transportation trails in the community, along with zip lining and pickleball.

Residents were asked to indicate their top 3 priorities for the RM to pursue. Across both surveys, the most important priority was preserving/improving the health of Pelican Lake, followed by attracting more businesses, and more year-round recreational opportunities. Developing the waterfront was the 4th most important priority.

Just two respondents said they rent out their cottage/home in Ninette. One respondent indicated they rent out their dwelling for between 1-4 weeks in the summer, while the other rents their cottage or home out for more than 12 weeks a year. Both advertise using word of mouth, while one uses online advertising as well.

Opinions regarding whether enough permanent housing exists in Ninette were fairly split, with slightly more respondents feeling that there was sufficient housing. Respondents who said there was a lack of housing in the community indicated that seniors housing was most needed, followed closely by all other types.

Visitors to Ninette

Visitors coming from outside Ninette were asked to respond to a different series of questions, in order to better understand the perspectives of tourists and Prairie Lakes residents living in other parts of the RM who do not own property in Ninette. In total, this group included 45 respondents across both surveys (51% of all respondents). 10 of these respondents (22%) lived on rural properties, while eight (18%) said they reside in Belmont, and seven (16%) reported living in other seasonal communities along Pelican Lake.

Predictably, 13 of the 19 visitors surveyed at the Ninette Fair had come to the LUD specifically for the event, although some were also in the area to visit family and friends and for camping. All, save one, had previously visited Ninette, and said they continue to return for a variety of reasons, including volunteering with the fair, family and community connections, and recreational opportunities. Residents of other communities in Prairie Lakes indicated they visit Ninette principally for the Lake, which they felt is the best thing about the community, followed by the services it offers.

When asked what types of activities they pursue in Ninette, the most common answer among visitors and non-resident was motor boating (47%), followed by fishing, ice fishing and canoeing/kayaking. Only four visitors said they participate in sailing. Visitors tended to describe the Ninette as "beautiful", somewhat at odds with the perception held by local residents. When asked what services and/or amenities were missing, visitors mentioned

more restaurants, businesses, signage, and permanent structures at the fairgrounds.

Final Thoughts

All respondents were given the opportunity to share any additional thoughts they might have about Ninette at the end of the survey. Some of the following points were noted:

There is a need for more businesses and services to attract new residents;

- The fire department needs expansion;
- Municipal by-laws and rules require improved enforcement;
- There should be focus on the entire RM, not just Ninette;
- The health of Pelican Lake must be protected; and
- Public and private properties need to be better maintained.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

SMM also conducted stakeholder interviews with business owners, volunteers, and organizational representatives from Ninette and the surrounding areas, to explore some of the issues raised through the surveys in greater detail. Some stakeholders were longtime permanent residents of the community, while others were seasonal residents.

Generally, all stakeholders interviewed felt positively about Ninette. Stakeholder were clear that the Lake, and its continued health, is a fundamental strength of Ninette, along with the tourism generated by this natural asset. Many also mentioned that they value Ninette's sense of community and the volunteers who perform key services, such as the fire department, the Healthy Lakes Committee, the Yacht Club, and the Terry Fox Park Committee. Stakeholders were appreciative of the variety of services such as gas and grocery available in the community, and most felt that Ninette possesses significant potential which could be further realized through key actions on the part of the RM.

When discussing elements of Ninette which could be improved, many stakeholders cited better and more even enforcement of municipal by-laws, particularly those relating to derelict properties and outdoor storage on residential lots. Stakeholders also wanted to see the RM improve the maintenance of roads, boulevards, and sidewalks, including faster snow clearing during the winter months. Some stakeholders indicated that a new firehall is a key need in Ninette, while a lack of housing options was also cited as a weakness. Given the importance of the Lake to the local economy and lifestyle, almost all stakeholders expressed concern that not enough was being done to prevent the spread of zebra mussels. Stakeholders also mentioned how, with the growing numbers of young people in Ninette, more recreational opportunities for youth are needed. Certain interviewees indicated that, in their view, municipal Council could be more open-minded to new ideas and action-oriented.