

# Best Practice

## The Renaissance Gaiety Theatre Project

### CONTACT

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**Project Date:** 2009 (ongoing)

### THE PRACTICE

Part of the town's vision is to preserve and commemorate heritage throughout the community. To further develop this vision, the town acquired and renovated a heritage building, the Renaissance Gaiety Theater, to be used as a community arts and cultural centre.

### THE PROCESS

The project was initiated by the Town of Gravelbourg, the Economic Development Office (EDO), and the Sports, Cultural and Recreation Office (SCRO). The EDO created a business and five year financial plan to determine the feasibility and financial viability of the project. This was presented to town council to determine if the project should proceed. Upon approval from council, community consultations were held to gauge community perspective and potential participation. The final community meeting was a planning session to determine the vision, mandate and goals for the theatre.

Based on the response from the community, the EDO and SCRO proceeded with the project. A Board of Directors was formed from community and regional members to direct and govern the theatre. The Board is comprised of diverse knowledge and experience varying from administration to theatrical programming. The Board created two sub-committees, governance and programming, to guide the decision making process. The sub-committee includes Board members whose interests and attributes relate to either governance or programming.

Programming has been directed by the programming committee with the theatrical assistance from the Theatrical Artist in Residence, Clare Middleton. The Town of Gravelbourg received a Creative Partnerships grant from the Saskatchewan Arts Board to hire a professional theatrical artist to work with the community. Clare has been responsible for live theatrical performances, coffee houses and working with the community in the arts.

Once the structure of the Board was firmly established, the Board incorporated as a non-profit corporation, the Renaissance Gaiety Theatre Incorporated. From this point the next steps were to create all governance documents including bylaws, policy, budget, membership packages, rental agreements and sponsorship packages.

The renovations were funded by the Town of Gravelbourg and Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation. The theatre required new furnaces, windows, foundation upgrades, electrical and plumbing work and barrier free renovations. These renovations were essential to open; however, now complete the building is an energy efficient building.

## THE RESULTS

Measurable project outcomes:

- The Town of Gravelbourg restored a heritage building beautifying downtown and building upon its heritage reputation;
- The theatre is now an energy efficient heritage building;
- The theatre currently has 10 group memberships;
- Over 150 people from around the region have volunteered at the theatre in the past year;
- There is artistic and cultural programming in the community that wasn't previously offered;
- Programming for all ages and genres ensures involvement from the community and region; and
- Regional partnerships have been established.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The primary lesson learned was the importance of communication when working with a large volunteer base. It is important to delegate the right task to the proper person and provide proper recognition. The second lesson learned was to budget for the unexpected when working with older buildings.