

# Best Practice

## The Renaissance Gaiety Theatre Project

### CONTACT

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Project Date: 2009 (Ongoing)

### THE PRACTICE

The Town of Gravelbourg acquired the Renaissance Gaiety Theatre in 2009/2010 to be used as a community arts and cultural centre. The theatre is governed by a non-profit organization and is operated in the context of existing and potential partnerships. The theatre generates revenue through special events, fundraisers, special programming and facility rental. The goals of this project were restoring and conserving a heritage building, celebrating heritage, culture and community, and developing community leadership and community spirit by engaging the region.

### THE PROCESS

The project was initiated by the Town of Gravelbourg's Economic Development Office (EDO) and Sports, Cultural and Recreation Office (SCRO). The EDO created a business plan and a five year financial pro-formas to determine the feasibility and financial viability of the project. This project was presented to Town Council to determine if the project should be pursued. 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 of 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 individuals with diverse knowledge and experience. The Board also created two subcommittees, governance and programming, to guide the decisions of the theatre. The subcommittees include Board members whose interests and talents relate to either governance or programming. Programming has been directed by the programming committee with theatrical assistance from the Theatrical Artist in Residence, Angela Christie. 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.

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

The renovations of the theatre were funded by the Town of Gravelbourg and the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation. The theatre required a new furnaces, windows, foundation upgrades, electrical work, plumbing work and barrier free renovations.

### THE RESULTS

Measurable project outcomes include:

- a) The Town of Gravelbourg restored a heritage building, beautifying downtown
- b) The theatre is now an energy efficient heritage building
- c) The theatre is an active community centre

- d) Over 150 people from around the region have volunteered at the theatre in the past year
- e) There is involvement from other community organizations
- f) There is artistic and cultural programming that was not previously offered
- g) A community play with a cast of 30 local performers occurred in March 2010
- h) A live show is performed once a month
- i) The theatre is working with Culture Exchange: A program that supports local up and coming artists
- j) There has been an increase in heritage awareness
- k) Regional partnerships have been established
- l) The theatre is now part of the heritage walking tour

## LESSONS LEARNED

The primary lesson learned was the importance of communication when working with a large volunteer base. It is important to delegate tasks to the proper individual and provide proper recognition. The second lesson was to budget for the unexpected when working with older buildings. Another important lesson learned is that any vision is possible, with hard work and realistic goals, combined with perseverance and passionate people.