

VISITOR
FRIENDLY COMMUNITY
ASSESSMENT PLAN



TOWN OF
MILLET

June 2012

Introduction

Millet is a charming community dedicated to family enjoyment. We are looking for new ways to improve what we have in our community to increase tourism. With the increased value of this market, economic development will follow. When coming to Millet, you will need to take a few hours to browse our unique stores and enjoy a meal at one of our delicious eateries. The Town of Millet has a championship status in the National Communities in Bloom Program, with an accredited awarding winning museum. We are an active town with more than 65 acres of park, lit paved trails and pathways, ball diamonds, soccer fields, curling rink, an Agriplex with an NHL quality ice rink and even a splash park for the kids.

Making Millet a tourism destination, we need to become visitor friendly, by making our community a memorable experience for visitors. We need to focus on maintaining the aesthetics of the downtown core, improving the directional signage and encourage standardized, professional and consistent customer service.

Completing a visitor friendly community assessment will give us the knowledge and understanding of what our strengths and weaknesses are. It will help us identify gaps in visitor friendliness and how these gaps could be overcome. This will also give us the chance to display our accomplishments and achievements to our visitors, so that they will be encouraged to come back time and time again.

The tourism committees' vision and mission statements are consistent with the goal of the Town of Millet.

'Millet is a picturesque historic community with its sights firmly set on the future offering visitors, businesses, and resident's memorable opportunities and events.

Come Play in Our Back Yard!'

'To contribute to the excellence and success of Millet and area as a tourism destination.'

Sponsor and Working Group

Our sponsor is the Town of Millet and our working group members are:

- Carol Sadoroszney Communities In Bloom
- Vicki Pyle Canadian Video
- Tracey Leavitt Millet Museum
- Pat Garrett Millet Tourism
- Karien Rempel Millet Liquor Store N More
- Geoff Lynch Millet Recreation Rep
- Lisa Schoening Tourism Manager
- Eleanor Pydde Council Representative
- Jerold Leblanc Photographer/Out of Town Resident
- Darlene Pohl Public at Large

With the diversity of this group, we were able to see, project, find and detail the strengths of the Town and areas for improvement. From the point of view of an out of town resident, to the downtown business core, the parks/recreation facilities and the service quality we were able to comprise a substantial list of what our community needs to become visitor friendly.

Approach

The Visitor Friendly Community Assessment approach involved several components and steps.

Components

Steps

Getting Started -

- Champion & sponsor

Are You Ready...

- Establish working group

- How to see with `visitor eyes`

Dreaming -

- What does visitor friendly mean to you

Where Do You Want To Be...

- Benefits & Visioning

Information Gathering -

- What do you offer

Where Are You Now...

- Who are your visitors

- What is your role

- Photographs - Seeing Your - Take photographs
- Community Through 'Visitor Eyes' - Collect other visitor eyes information
- Community Assessment - - Complete assessment
- How Do You Get There... - Identify top gaps
- Action Plan - - Develop the plan
- Setting The Course... - Present to sponsor
- Implement, Monitor, Measure - - Organize - Implement
- Are You There Yet... - Monitor - Measure - Results

Approach (2)

The working group held several meetings from late November 2011 through May 2012. This also included work outside of the meetings by several individual members. Lots of discussion occurred during the meetings and throughout the process. A summary of key activities and findings are presented by each component.

Getting Started - Are You Ready...

Our Sponsor is... the Town of Millet.

The champions are... the 10 members comprising the Visitor Friendly working group consisting mainly of the diversified members of the tourism board, a resident knowledgeable in the secret shopper experience and an outside resident, showing us the 'visitor eyes' point of view.

Dreaming - Where Do You Want To Be...

- Visitor Friendly
- greeting with a smile & a caring attitude
 - information about the town & area activities
 - cleanliness & beautification
 - signage, amenities & people
- Benefits
- People will stay longer and or consider moving to the community
 - Help the business sector become more profitable
 - to show case what we have to offer
- Visioning
- Millet is a picturesque, historical community with its sights firmly set on the future; offering visitors, businesses & residents memorable opportunities & events.
- Come Play In Our Back Yard!

Information Gathering - Where Are You Now...

- What Do We Offer
- An inventory of products in and around our community, such as; attractions, services, facilities, amenities, parks, unique and specialty shops
- Who Are Your Visitors
- Mainly day use visitors coming to Millet for specific attractions.
 - To shop at our specialty shops or to go on a unique tour.
 - Are en route to another destination and or require services related to travel.
- What is Our Role
- We need to sell what unique businesses & attractions we

have to offer.

- Emphasize our biggest attraction is participating in the Communities in Bloom Program
- Support major minor sports events. Show what we provide for the kids and the benefits we have for the adults.

Photographs - Seeing Your Community Through `Visitor Eyes`...

- | | |
|---|---|
| Taking Photos | - We had no problem in collecting photos of businesses, facilities, churches and other key areas of the town. Our photographer was not from the community, so was able to give his insights on the pros & cons of what he would look for as a visitor to Millet (seeing Millet through 'visitor eyes'). |
| Collect Other
Visitor Eye
Information | - The committee feels it would be a good idea if we have some outsiders come in to look at the photos. We could get their point of view and reaction as well as what would they be interested in? |

Community assessment - How Do You Get There...

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Complete Assessment | A detailed assessment was completed, using the five visitor friendly community assessment characteristics:

1) Ambiance 2) Wayfinding 3) Quality Service 4) Public Services/Visitor Amenities 5) Visitor Information |
|---------------------|--|

Identify Top Gaps The top gaps were identified from the assessment

Action Plan - Setting The Course...

Develop the plan Actions for addressing the top gaps were identified and
are included in this report

Present to sponsor Recommendation from the Tourism Committee to present
to sponsor

Implement, Monitor, Measure - Are You There Yet...

Organize This component will be initiated, once the

Monitor Visitor Friendly Plan is endorsed by the sponsor

Results

Implement

Measure

Current Tourism Situation

We are currently starting with a new tourism committee. Our role is to take the different areas of our community and amalgamate them together so that all areas are working with one another to achieve tourism benefits for Millet. We need to sell what unique businesses and attractions we have to offer and emphasize on our biggest attractions, such as our Harvest Festival and the Communities in Bloom Program.

To understand what we have, we did an inventory of all our products and services we have to offer from; the business sector, parks and recreation, cultural, services, facilities, specialty shops and the community itself. This helped guide us to understand what our strengths and weaknesses are.

We then assessed the key points for visitor friendly awareness. Five major points were derived from this procedure. The ambiance is considered the beauty and how the community feels to the visitor. Way finding is about signage in and around the town, as to the accessibility to find your way around. Quality of service is the areas visitors go to first, i.e. gas stations, retail businesses, etc. and were they treated well. Public services, amenities and visitor information are areas such as the museum, visitor information, public facilities, washrooms, recreation, etc. Were our visitor's needs met and did they have a clear understanding of what our community has to offer. Was a list of events, attractions, and entertainment available to them?

A list was compiled of the visitor friendly key points. In assessing these, we also listed and identified the gaps in the five major areas.

Market Information

We have gathered inventory, market information, what the gaps are between what we have to offer the visitor and what we need to develop. After gathering the information, we now will be looking into utilizing the resources Millet has to offer and upgrading the areas necessary to improve and increase visitors to Millet. We want people to come, visit, stay and live. We are now compiling what types of visitors we can accommodate, as well, looking into our amenities, services, needs and requirements. We will be using information from our Marketing Plan to help us further define the types of visitors we currently attract and want to attract in the future.

We are looking into the number of participants, visitors and guests that have and will be coming to Millet. The majority of visitors/participants are currently daytrips. Our summer/winter seasons are when we have the larger number of visitors. This is due to special events and tournaments. As numbers vary from season to season and year to year, we will be keeping track and compiling statistics as to the type of events and tournaments, etc. our visitors are interested in. This will also give us a better idea as to what services and areas we should focus on first.

Because most of our visitors are day-use visitors, we need to provide a list of events, maps, what we have to offer in services, amenities and facilities. We need to keep the signage visible and up to date of the necessary requirements for travelers, such as; service stations, food establishments and washroom/waste dump facilities. Also to provide information on what our town has to offer in picnic areas, walking trails, recreation amenities and community facilities.

Role in Tourism

Now that we have completed the visitor friendly community assessment process, it has given the working group a better understanding of the role we have to perform from marketing to enticing the visitor. This will help us keep the visitors we have and market to the ones we would like to have. We are a community that has lots to offer and be proud of.

Because of a main Highway passing through the downtown corridor of Millet and a secondary Highway, we are a traveler's thoroughfare. This means an easy access to our community. We provide gas stations, an award winning museum, laundry mat, waste dump area, picnic areas, 65 acre park, walking trails, NHL size hockey arena, splash park, gazebos, specialty shops and a number of community facilities. We now provide for the day-use visitor, from the young to the elderly.

Our community consists of both younger families and seniors. We need to focus on providing information about Millet, including what we have to offer, as well as improved signage, and overnight accommodations. We have the pride, community spirit and endurance to show case our community through the information and fact-finding we have derived from this visitor friendly exercise.

Visitor Friendly Key Points in Assessing

The working group completed a detailed assessment using the five visitor friendly community characteristics. This helped us to identify the top gaps to work on. To keep us focused, we continually referred to the key points listed below.

1. **Ambiance**
 “The community looks & feels nice to me”

2. **Wayfinding**
 “I can easily find my way around”

3. **Quality Service**
 “I was treated well during my stay”

4. **Public Services/Visitor Amenities**
 “My needs were met during my stay”

5. **Visitor Information**
 “I have a clear understanding of what the community offers”

Identified Gaps

Ambiance:

1. Entrance Signs

- East and West and add 'Prettiest Little Town in Alberta' to the North and South. South entrance fence painted white.
- More seasonal color
- Green & White theme
- Continuity

2. Vacant Lots and Buildings

- Maintenance and / or removal of old signs
- Garbage removal and grass cutting
- Appealing frontage, clean windows
- Alleys maintenance

3. Main Street and Parks

- Park Benches, Picnic Tables and Garbage Receptacles
- Washrooms
- Trail upgrade
- Signage
- Maintenance
- Themed Parks through Communities in Bloom

4. Expanding Splash Park

- Playground – green
- Larger Picnic Area
- Washroom
- Large trees for shade

5. Secondary Highway 616

- Banners – seasonal/recreational
- Agriplex maintenance & landscaping
- Outdoor Art

Wayfinding/Signage

- 1. Recreational & Amenities**
 - uniformed signage
- 2. Trail Maps at entrances**
 - need updating
- 3. Trail Signs**
 - need updating
- 4. Community Information Depository**
- 5. Other signs**
 - Dogs on leash/no dogs allowed
 - No golf allowed
 - No ATV's/Skidoos

Quality Service

- 1. Consistent view of cute, quaint, charming and overall friendly**
- 2. Manual for employers/employees/volunteers**
- 3. Recognition Awards**
- 4. Secret Shopper Data**
- 5. Public 'Ambassador' behaviour encouragement**
 - publishing community awards

Public Services/Amenities

- 1. Accommodations**
- 2. Public Transit**
- 3. Public Washrooms**
- 4. Cell phone service (i.e. Agriplex)**
- 5. Minimal Visitor Information Centre hours**
 - in conjunction with local events

Visitor Information

- 1. Website**
 - current and engaging
 - including social media, Facebook, Twitter, You tube, Wifi
- 2. Maps/ Brochures**
 - Continue to distribute with QR codes and GPS
- 3. Business/community facilities**
 - Consistent brochure/map placement (i.e. plastic holders)
 - Event Information
- 4. Outdoor display board with lights**
 - at Town Office or Agriplex
 - process to handle information and kept current
- 5. Edmonton Regional Tourism Group (ERTG) participation**
 - Board member
 - Trade shows
 - Upgrade booth (i.e. tourism photos)

Initiative Summary and Actions

The top gaps were reviewed to see if there were overlaps or fit better in a different category. A further review was then done to see if there were similar gaps that could be grouped to identify overall initiatives.

Action plan decisions were made based on group knowledge. The following criteria were used to help guide the action planning.

- **Timeline:** Short term – 1 year or less; Medium term – 1 to 5 years; Long term – 5 or more years
- **Who Responsible:** Who might take a lead role in, or support moving this action forward

To help identify priorities, possible investment cost and possible recurring or on-going costs were considered. This was done as a rapid assessment and is only intended to provide broad estimates that could be factored into each action.

- **Possible Investment costs (IC):** Low/inexpensive cost – less than \$1,000; Moderate cost - \$1,000 to \$5,000; High cost - \$5,000 +
- **Possible Recurring costs (RC):** Low/inexpensive cost – less than \$1,000 per year; Moderate cost - \$1,000 to \$5,000 per year; High cost - \$5,000 + per year

The following guidelines were used to identify suggested priorities (at this time):

- **High priority:** easy to implement, inexpensive, consistent with vision, benefits other aspects of the community, strong contribution to visitor friendly
- **Medium priority:** may be difficult to implement, moderate costs, possible community benefits, some contribution to visitor friendliness
- **Low priority:** difficult to implement, costly, inconsistent with vision, no community benefits, weak contribution to visitor friendliness

Overall Ambiance / Visual Appeal

Initiative One:

Improve the visual appeal of Secondary Hwy 616 entering into Millet

(Gaps: Entrance Signs E/W, add slogan, seasonal color, green/white

Theme, continuity, banners, outdoor art)

Actions:

Action/s Required	Timeline	Who Responsible	Possible IC/RC Priority	How measure / evaluate
Initiate immediate banners (May – October 2012)	Short	Millet Museum	Low / Low High	Installed by third week of May
Explore and Implement Year Round Banner Program	Medium	Millet Tourism	High / Low Medium	Recommendations identified Presented to council and if approved implemented
Explore and implement an outdoor art program along Hwy 616 and other areas of Millet	Medium	Town, Millet in Bloom, Businesses, Organizations	Low / Low Medium	Approach identified to implement art Art program Implemented

Overall Ambiance / Visual Appeal

Initiative Two:

Encourage and improve aesthetics of the downtown core focusing on maintenance (Gaps: vacant lots/signage, garbage & refuse, alleys, exterior building visual appeal issues, more garbage receptacles, park benches)

Actions:

Action/s Required	Timeline	Who Responsible	Possible IC/RC Priority	How measure / evaluate
Continue monitoring and maintenance of park benches/garbage receptacles to improve aesthetics	Short	Parks & Recreation and Millet in Bloom partnership	Moderate / Moderate <hr/> High	Benches/Receptacles visually improved & maintained
Develop an overall plan for benches and receptacles maintenance (which includes locations, maintenance and upkeeps for all of Millet)	Medium	Parks and Recreation	Low / Low <hr/> High	Plan developed and implemented
Develop a year round community wide program that encourages businesses and residents to participate in and improve beautification of Millet	Short	Millet in Bloom	Low / Low <hr/> High	Program Implemented
Identify gaps impeding building owners and business owners from participating in main street beautification of building fronts and alleys Identify ways to encourage participation	Short	Millet Tourism and Millet Museum	Low / Low <hr/> High	Gaps identified Approach Implemented

Overall Ambiance / Visual Appeal

Initiative Three:

Encourage and Improve maintenance and landscaping of the

Agriplex

Actions:

Action/s Required	Timeline	Who Responsible	Possible IC/RC Priority	How measure / evaluate
Create and Implement a plan with the Ag Society to maintain and landscape the Agriplex	Short	Parks and Rec	Moderate / Moderate	Partnership formed
			High	Plan developed and implemented

Wayfinding/Signage

Initiative One:

Develop and implement a uniform signage strategy and program for Millet (focusing on recreational amenities, visitor attractions, Entrance ways, uniform recreation amenities, trail maps/entrances, On leash/ no golf/no ATVs – Skidoos)
Main Street Signage to Amenities (consistent with other signage programs)

Actions:

Action/s Required	Timeline	Who Responsible	Possible IC/RC Priority	How measure / evaluate
Develop an overall signage policy for Millet and amend existing by-laws accordingly	Short	Millet Tourism	Low/Low <hr/> High	Policy submitted to council
Develop signage strategy and program	Short	Millet Tourism	Low/Med <hr/> High	Strategy and program implemented

Quality Service/Professionalism

Initiative One:

Encourage standardized, professional and consistent customer service in the tourism sector (Gaps: basic customer service manual, secret shopper, business recognition awards, directory for business operators)

Actions:

Action/s Required	Timeline	Who Responsible	Possible IC/RC Priority	How measure / evaluate
Develop a customer strategy for tourism to improve quality service	Medium	Millet Tourism	Low/Med ----- High	Strategy completed and implemented
Research (secret shopper, update business recognition awards)	Short	Millet Lion's Club	Low/Low ----- High	Implemented within existing program
Collect, Implement & Support Business Recognition Awards (i.e. implement plaques, window stickers)	Short	Millet Lion's Club	Low/Low ----- High	Completed and implemented

Quality Service/Professionalism

Initiative Two:

Encourage awareness of being community ambassadors to local residents (community awards)

Actions:

Collect information from Leduc and develop strategy for Millet	Medium	Millet Tourism	Low/Low	Strategy presented to the public
			High	

Public Service/ Visitor Amenities

Initiative One:

Explore the potential and opportunities for attracting accommodation investment in Millet

Actions:

Action/s Required	Timeline	Who Responsible	Possible IC/RC Priority	How measure / evaluate
Conduct research for attracting accommodation in Millet (i.e. Fixed, B&B's, Campgrounds, etc.)	Long	Town Staff	Med/Med	Research completed and recommendations made
			Low	

Public Service/ Visitor Amenities

Initiative Two:

- Enhance visitor amenities (public washrooms; downtown, splash Park, outdoor rec. areas
- Enhance Pipestone Creek Park System (expand Splash Park -Green Playground, larger picnic area/s, washroom, shade trees, Garbage Receptacles, trail upgrades, park signage, maintenance
- Develop a uniform plan for the Pipestone Creek Park System

Actions:

Action/s Required	Timeline	Who Responsible	Possible IC/RC Priority	How measure / evaluate
Coordinate for consistency and continuity Communicate activities on an ongoing basis	Short	Parks & Recreation, Tourism, CIB and Public Works	Low/Low ----- High	Activities coordinated and visitor gaps addressed
Continuation of the current recreation and parks program	Short	Parks & Recreation	Low/Low ----- High	Feedback from the four partners
Implement approved upgrades and enhancements identified in parks & recreation plan	Medium	Parks & Recreation	Med/Med ----- Medium	Upgrades have been implemented

Visitor Information

Initiative One:

Improve awareness of, and access to visitor information
to visitor information prior to arrival (Gaps: website, social media,
QR codes, GPS, ERTG, trade shows)

Actions:

Action/s Required	Timeline	Who Responsible	Possible IC/RC Priority	How measure / evaluate
Continue upgrades to website to be current & engaging	Ongoing	Millet Tourism	Nil/Nil High	Google Analytics (monitor on a monthly basis)
Evaluate the results of the pilot social media project Determine action course	Short	Millet Tourism	Nil / TBD High	Level of engagement
Create a policy and procedures for a free area in Town for Wifi access	Short	Town and Public Library	Low / Low Medium	Wifi implemented
Create QR codes to Millet Tourism website and on promotional materials	Short	Millet Museum	Low/Low High	On website and promotional materials Evaluate #'s using codes
Identify GPS locations on map for county attractions on map/ website	Short	Millet Tourism	Low/Low High	GPS completed on web Calls if not accurate
Maximize ERTG membership participation and update annual Ads In guides	Ongoing	Millet Tourism	Low/Low Medium	Business feedback on comment cards
Provide events to monthly e-newsletter, trade shows Update trade show booth	Ongoing	Millet Tourism	Low/Low Medium	Feedback

Visitor Information

Initiative Two:

Improve access and timeliness to visitor information while in
 Millet (Gaps: distribute maps/brochures; business/facilities displays;
 Outdoor display boards; community info depository – brochures)

Actions:

Action/s Required	Timeline	Who Responsible	Possible IC/RC Priority	How measure and evaluate
Identify key locations (indoor/outdoor) to provide tourist information (e.g. Agriplex, Community Hall)	Medium	Millet Tourism	Moderate/Low <hr/> Medium	Completion and visitor reaction
Consistent displays throughout the businesses of Millet & area	Short	Millet Tourism	Low/Low <hr/> High	Installed and stocked

Visitor Information

Initiative Three:

Minimal Visitor Information Hours for events

Other types of Media to Showcase Millet's attractions

Actions:

Action/s Required	Timeline	Who Responsible	Possible IC/RC Priority	How measure and evaluate
Research feasibility and cost to extend VIC hours beyond existing If not feasible identify If feasible – determine specific events most appropriate	Medium	Millet & District Historical Society	High/High <hr/> Medium	Study completed Improved access to VIC
Investigate different types of media to showcase Millet's attractions (e.g. Zoom Media)	Medium	Millet Tourism	Med/Med <hr/> Medium	Results compiled Decision made on recommendations

General Gaps that apply across the Community and to Visitor Friendly

Initiative One:

To secure volunteers to assist with projects

Actions:

Action/s Required	Timeline	Who Responsible	Possible IC/RC Priority	How to measure and evaluate
Create volunteer groups to assist with projects i.e. park path upgrades & maintenance (adopt-a-path)	Ongoing	Dependent upon project	Low / Low ————— Depends on project	Volunteers come forward
Create volunteer positions for students through non-profit organizations to receive scholarships (SCIP)	Short	Millet Museum	Low / Low ————— High	Students to receive scholarship

Next Steps

Upon endorsement by the sponsor, the next steps will be to implement Millet's Visitor Friendly Plan. This plan is a living document. It will evolve and be adjusted as actions are completed, the plan monitored and Millet becomes more visitor friendly.