Prepared by: Matthewson & Co.

Quality of Life Report

Town of southey

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## Our Vision:

"A short scenic drive from the City of Regina, our residents enjoy the benefits of both city and small-town life. We have amenities and services suited for everyone, no matter your interests or faith. Neighbours become friends here in Southey."

## Town of Southey Council and Staff:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Position** | **Name** | **Email** |
| Mayor | Leigh Bishop | [l.bishop@southey.ca](mailto:l.bishop@southey.ca) |
| Deputy Mayor | Rob Dukes | [r.dukes@southey.ca](mailto:r.dukes@southey.ca) |
| Councillor | Gordon Baragar | [g.baragar@southey.ca](mailto:g.baragar@southey.ca) |
| Councillor | Ralph Boehmer | [r.boehmer@southey](mailto:r.boehmer@southey). ca |
| Councillor | Susan Hillier | [s.hillier@southey.ca](mailto:s.hillier@southey.ca) |
| Councillor | Harvey McEwen | [h.mcewen@southey.ca](mailto:h.mcewen@southey.ca) |
| Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) | Cindy Baumgartner | [townofsouthey@sasktel.net](mailto:townofsouthey@sasktel.net) |
| Administrative Assistant | Taneill Nightingale | [tosouthey@sasktel.net](mailto:tosouthey@sasktel.net) |
| Public Works Foreman | Tristian Mohr | [southeyforeman@gmail.com](mailto:southeyforeman@gmail.com) |
| Assistant Public Works Foreman | Eric Kainz | [southeymaintenance@gmail.com](mailto:southeymaintenance@gmail.com) |

## Introduction:

The Council and Administration are committed to working with the public to develop a strategic plan with actionable items.

Matthewson & Co. works with the Town of Southey to work through this process. So far, we've:

1. The Council had an in-person strategic planning session with Matthewson & Co.
2. Matthewson & Co. assisted with publicizing a quality-of-life survey.
3. Matthewson & Co. analyzed the data from the quality-of-life survey.
4. Matthewson & Co. reviewed Council meeting minutes going back three years.
5. Matthewson & Co. reviewed the Statistics Canada census.
6. Matthewson & Co. wrote this draft to act as a point of reference to be reviewed by the Council and the public.

Once the Council and public have reviewed this draft and had the opportunity to make comments or suggestions, Matthewson & Co. will update the document and begin implementing the plan.

## Quality of Life Survey Results:

## Demographics:

There were 147 responses to the survey, representing approximately 18% of the population (not including children).

74.1% of respondents were female, and 24.5% were male - this tells us that we may need to try different strategies to engage the male population in future attempts.

100% of respondents' first language is English. Statistics Canada tells us that non-English speakers are in the community and should also be engaged in future attempts.

Fortunately, survey responses were represented by many age groups.

Around 32.2% of respondents have lived in the community for more than 20 years, though about 6.8% have lived in Southey for less than one year, telling us that people are moving into the community.

## Attractive Attributes:

Southey residents shared many things they enjoy about the community and what sets it apart from other communities of comparable size in Saskatchewan. The responses that came up several times are:

* The proximity to Regina and access to a main highway make Southey an attractive community for commuters and quick trips to the city.
* Respondents indicated that most necessities are available in Southey, though sometimes items are more expensive than in the city. (At no fault of the Town.)
* Southey has a great community spirit, and people enjoy events and celebrations.
* Many called the community a "nice size, quiet, safe, clean, and friendly."
* Some respondents mentioned their appreciation for Town maintenance personnel and their excellent job keeping the community.
* Many respondents consider taxes and utilities reasonable.
* There are great opportunities for recreation, including the beautiful Communiplex facility and the splash park.
* There are four churches in the community.
* Many residents volunteer in the community, attend local events, contribute to local fundraisers, and support local businesses.

## Opportunities for Improvements:

* Some people have had to wait two months to see a doctor or access lab services.
* There is a need for more health care such as chiropractic, dental, massage therapists, etc.
* There was a recurring request for more activities for all ages, including arts and culture opportunities.
* There is a need for more childcare.
* There were many requests for a gym/fitness facility.
* It is clear that beautification should be addressed. (Dilapidated buildings, some roads and sidewalks are in poor shape, more greenery/flowers around Town would be appreciated, community benches, Christmas decorations, etc.)
* There were several requests for an indoor or outdoor pool.
* Respondents suggested providing business incentives to encourage new businesses to set up shop in Southey and keep storefronts appealing.
* The website and social media page are very vague and rarely updated. The new Facebook page seems to be updated more regularly.
* The community would benefit from bylaw enforcement. (I.e., barking dogs, loose cats, unkept properties, etc.)
* Roads and sidewalks are in poor condition in some areas, and sometimes, residents consider snow removal dismal.
* An event space for the local drama club performances, dance practice/recitals, weddings, and conferences would greatly benefit the community.
* Opportunities for new (and existing) families to meet others in the community are needed.
* Some business hours affect shopping locally.
* There is a need for pet care throughout the day and a dog park.
* There is a need for an increased police presence.
* There are concerns about the transparency between the Council and residents.
* The highway appeal does not represent the lovely community that Southey is.
* 77.5% of respondents have never seen the Town budget, and 76.2% would like to access the budget via the Town website.

## Arts and Culture:

67.2% of respondents believe that arts and culture are a vital part of a thriving community and had their own opinions on what arts and culture initiatives they would like to see the Town invest in, including, but not limited to:

* Arts classes (painting, crafting, pottery, etc.)
* Camps for kids.
* Indigenous celebrations.
* Music programs.
* Writing programs.

## Recreation:

Respondents indicated their most favoured facilities and recreation opportunities in Southey.

* 1. Communiplex (76.6%)
  2. Health Centre (72.3%)
  3. Playgrounds (66%)
  4. Memorial Hall (57.4%)
  5. Splash Park (55.3%)
  6. Library (34%)
  7. Curling Rink (29.1%)
  8. Other (Ball diamonds, senior centre, etc.) (17.7%)
  9. Legion (6.4%)
  10. Museum (4.3%)
* Hockey, skating (and the rink in general) are favourites to many Southey residents, closely followed by baseball, curling, soccer, and dance.
* Pickleball, drama club, library programs, the gun range, and fishing at the trout pond were also repeatedly mentioned as favourite recreation activities.
* Several respondents mentioned that they are not aware of the recreation programs happening in the community.
* When asked what recreation programs or facilities respondents would like to see in the community, most responses were: a year-round pool, public gym, dog park, recreational volleyball and badminton, and a 4H club, to name a few.
* Based on responses, the Town Hall would benefit from significant improvements, as would the museum, library, rink, school, and sports facilities/grounds such as the curling rink, soccer field, and baseball diamond.

## Summary of Quality-of-Life Survey Results:

Overall, respondents enjoy several things about the community, and like any community with a limited budget, some things could be improved. We can use this information to build on Southey's strengths and devise a plan to address the weaknesses.

# SWOT Analysis:

This section includes strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats from reviewing meeting minutes over the past three years, responses from the survey, and Matthewson & Co.'s assumptions based on the website and social media page.

## Strengths:

* The Town distributes monthly newsletters.
* The Council is diligent in declaring conflicts of interest.
* There is an RCMP detachment in Town.
* There were internet upgrades in 2021.
* The Council is committed to working with Indigenous communities to achieve reconciliation.
* Lab services are available in Southey.
* There are events such as the annual town-wide garage sale.
* Property crimes are less common than in larger centres.
* The proximity to Regina and the access to a main highway.
* Most necessities are available in Southey.
* Southey has a great community spirit and events and celebrations.
* Many called the community a "nice size, quiet, safe, clean, and friendly."
* The town staff does an excellent job of maintaining the community.
* Many consider taxes and utilities reasonable.
* There are great opportunities for recreation, including the beautiful Communiplex facility and the splash park.
* There are four churches in the community.
* Many residents volunteer in the community, attend local events, contribute to local fundraisers, and support local businesses.

## Weaknesses:

* The fire hall requires emergency lighting.
* Several Councillors and staff resigned in 2023.
* The Health Center is potentially underused.
* Beautification needs improvement. (Dilapidated buildings, roads and sidewalks in poor shape, more greenery/flowers around Town, community benches, Christmas decorations, etc.)
* The website and social media page are very vague and rarely updated.
* Bylaw enforcement is dismal. (I.e., barking dogs, loose cats, unkempt properties, etc.)
* Roads and sidewalks are in poor condition in some areas, and sometimes, residents consider snow removal dismal.
* Event space for local events is limited. (I.e., local drama club performances, dance practice/recitals, weddings, conferences, etc.)
* There is no way for new (and existing) families to meet others in the community.
* Some business hours affect shopping locally.
* There is nowhere for daytime animal care.
* There is no dog park.
* Police presence is minimal.
* There are concerns about transparency between the Council and residents. (Have never seen the budget, unaware of where tax dollars go, etc.) Lack of perceived transparency in the budget creates resentment and mistrust.
* Residents believe taxes are too high, possibly due to the lack of transparency between the Council and the residents.
* Residents are often unaware of local events.
* Activities lack possible attendance due to inconsistent communications.
* The highway appeal is poor.
* A small number of people attend Council meetings.
* Town lots are small.
* There is a lack of advertising opportunities on the highway corridor that could entice people to come into Southey.
* Hard water.
* There are few rental opportunities for housing and businesses, which could result in stunted community growth.
* Many facilities need improvements.
* Lack of partnerships with other communities results in missed opportunities for cost savings.
* Some facilities are not age-friendly.

## Opportunities:

* Respondents’ biggest concern was that the health center cost the community abundant tax dollars and may not be used to its fullest potential.
* There are vacant Town lots available for purchase, and there has been discussion around marketing and advertising, putting ads on free sites, and getting proper signage for spring.
* Wilker Developments is interested in building several homes within the Town on Town lots. These would be rentals/rent to own.
* Sign corridor on HWY #6.
* There is an opportunity to improve communication methods to reach the community. Some ideas were emails, an enhanced social media presence including added detail, a more in-depth newsletter that other organizations and businesses can add to, and posters around Town.
* There is an opportunity for a group to start a daycare.
* There is an opportunity for infill due to the availability of empty lots and the proximity to the city.
* There is an opportunity to market the empty lots to those interested in small-town living but would receive help from the proximity to Regina.
* There is an opportunity to clean up the Town and improve main street.
* There is an opportunity to provide benches around the community and on the walking path.
* There is an opportunity to consider partnerships within the community and with neighbouring communities.
* There is an opportunity for community engagement.
* There is a need for more activities for all ages, including arts and culture opportunities.
* There is a need for more childcare.
* There were many requests for a gym/fitness facility in the community.
* Residents suggested offering business incentives to encourage new businesses to shop in Southey and keep storefronts appealing.

## Threats:

* Wait times can be up to two months to see a doctor or nurse practitioner or access lab services.
* There is no access to other health care services like chiropractic, dental, massage therapists, etc. Lack of comprehensive medical could result in people moving to the city as they age.
* The condition of some roads and sidewalks may make it difficult to age in place.
* RBC closed.
* (2020) RCMP calls remained like 2019, and drug-related calls have increased.
* There is no indoor or outdoor pool in the community.
* People will go elsewhere for rental space for events (Drama club performances, dance practice/recitals, weddings, conferences, etc.) since there is no adequate space in the community.
* The lack of local businesses (and limited hours) means people shop in the city.

# Strategies for Addressing the SWOT:

1. Focus on marketing, marketing, marketing. Community members should be aware of things going on within their community, including events, groups/boards/committees to join, recreation opportunities, job opportunities, rental housing, housing for sale, lots for sale, meeting minutes, access to Council meetings, anything the community should know, can and should be marketed. Social media is a great start; however, not everyone is on social media, so keeping the website up to date and using offline strategies are equally important.
2. Use the proximity to Regina as a marketing strategy to draw people into the community. However, drawing people in will not work without **housing!**
3. Use public meetings to improve transparency between the Council and residents.

* If the budget is made public, many people will not know how to interpret the information and hearing from the Council regarding the budget may be beneficial.
* Residents think their taxes are too high, probably because they are unaware of how we calculate taxes. "Taxes are way lower in larger centres." Yes, because they have a larger tax base to support the hundreds of other budget items!!

1. Ensure residents are aware they can attend Council meetings. Make them available via Zoom to encourage attendance. Meeting minutes should be available ASAP to improve transparency!
2. Host a volunteer appreciation night to say "thank you" to those who keep programs/clubs/etc, up and running.
3. Determine a plan for the Health Care facility. Can we increase its use?
4. Develop an asset management plan for addressing the road/sidewalk improvements where funding isn't available.
5. Keep an eye out for funding availability for:

* Beautification
* Road/sidewalk improvements
* Asset management plans
* Town hall improvements or construction
* Water treatment
* Housing assessment
* Accessibility improvements
* Sign corridor
* Pool

1. Develop information/welcome packages for newcomers.
2. Look into potential business incentives for someone to start a gym, dog daycare, or other items.
3. Purchase rental space to offer to potential business owners.
4. Host a public meeting with the RCMP so residents know why police presence is lacking.
5. Develop partnerships with nearby communities to save money.
6. Decide if there is a group that would be interested in starting a daycare cooperative.
7. Decide if local businesses would be willing to extend business hours 1-2 days a week to encourage shopping locally for those who commute.
8. Develop a communications plan.

# Suggestions from Matthewson & Co.:

1. Engage the Council to develop mission statements and principles.
2. Develop a marketing plan to support the community.
3. Look at ways to improve the use of the health centre.
4. Develop and implement an art and culture plan.
5. Develop and implement a communications plan.
6. Develop and implement a beautification plan.
7. Develop and implement beautification plans for storefront businesses.
8. Consider bylaw enforcement.
9. Develop BREI plan.
10. Create an asset management plan.
11. Create and implement a recreation plan.

# Implementation Plan:

To be determined..