

Rural Municipality of Gimli

The new RM of Gimli was formed January 1, 2003, by the amalgamating the Town of Gimli and the RM of Gimli. Situated on the south western shore of Lake Winnipeg, the rural areas are characterized by agriculture, several cottaging communities and commercial fishing, while the urban area is a major regional service centre and offers many professional, recreational and tourist services.

The benefits of forming as one municipality were first identified when the two municipalities had partnered to develop a shared vision for their communities. The municipalities soon understood that their ability to capitalize on economic development opportunities for the region could be more effective if a single government could promote and optimize the attractions and strengths of both the urban and rural areas.

The already strong relationship between the town and the rural municipality was developed over many decades, and the communities were already partners in many ways. Municipal service sharing agreements were in place in several areas (fire protection, recreation, waste management, planning) and many successful joint projects had already been undertaken (construction of the district recreation centre, the fire hall, the library and the floodway). To fully meet the goals outlined in the strategic vision, however, the Councils thought it was necessary for the two municipalities to amalgamate.

The two Councils undertook consultations with the public, executives of local organizations, as well as cottage owner associations. The feedback received through these consultations was useful because it allowed council members to define and understand areas of concern and, most importantly, consider options for how to address those concerns.

Through the consultation process, three key concerns were raised:

- The effect on property taxes was the question most commonly asked by ratepayers. To get a clear picture of the financial implications of a merger, the councils hired a consultant to develop a projected budget for a combined municipality. The councils were therefore able to confirm their own analysis that property taxes would not increase because of the merger.
- Maintaining the identity of the urban community was also a concern. To address this concern, Councils implemented on a transitional basis a Local Urban District (LUD) consistent with the boundaries of the former town. The LUD was eliminated after 4 years. The LUD provided a mechanism to recognize the different service levels desired in the urban area.

Community leaders shared a vision that one local government for Gimli would enable the two communities to build on their history of cooperation and optimize economic development opportunities for the region.

Community forums were an opportunity for community leaders to share their vision, explain the process for restructuring, and gave residents the opportunity to ask questions.

There were some transitional challenges with the amalgamation, however most of these were known beforehand and strategies were adopted to address them. Using its vision as a guide, the new municipality has focused on promoting its natural advantages and exploring new economic development opportunities.

For more information contact:

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***Working together,
community leaders
found effective
solutions to local
challenges.***