



Overview

On November 3, Rainmaker's Casey McMechan and Julie Lang met with the Village of Nobleford's CAO, Kirk Hoffman to discuss the community's investment readiness. Although Nobleford is one of the smaller communities in the SouthGrow region, there is a clear vision and determination to move projects along efficiently.

Mr. Hoffman has the proper tools and packages readily available for any investor interested in the Nobleford area. Not only is Mr. Hoffman prepared with a sound business case for setting up in Nobleford, but also he shows legitimate pride and enthusiasm in the town that makes him an excellent ambassador for the village, and great first point of contact for prospective businesses. Nobleford's economic development team also has an excellent ability to leverage grants at every level of government, and raise private funds in the community for infrastructure projects and other desired amenities.

Potential obstacles, which could affect the ease of setting up a new business in the community have been considered thoroughly. Steps have been taken to expedite the business approval processes and encourage new investment. As a result, 18 new businesses have set up in Nobleford in the past four years alone, adding to what is already a very prosperous community compared to some of the SouthGrow communities.

Overall, Nobleford is ready if a potential investor and/or business were to ask for information and resources on the village. Mr. Hoffman has information and an investment package readily available.

Community Aspired Business

Nobleford has indicated that they are not desperate to grow their population aggressively over the short term, rather focus on a 15 to 20 year plan for the community. Nonetheless, certain items that are on the radar for Nobleford include expanding the library, developing or attracting more retail shops for downtown, and a regional recreation centre that can be differentiated from surrounding community's recreation centres in terms of the types of courts or programs offered.

Challenges

The population of Nobleford is only about 1,400 people, most of whom already have jobs making it difficult to attract larger businesses that may require larger pools of labour. There is also a lack of senior management experience within the village that limits the type of investor it can attract.

Nobleford's proximity to Lethbridge means that a large portion of the population commutes there for services and some shopping. This makes it a challenge to build a business case for setting up grocery stores and other services in the village.

Opportunities



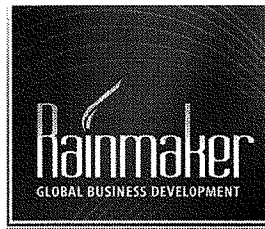
AG Growth International (AGI), a leading manufacturer of portable and stationary grain handling, storage and conditioning equipment, including augers, belt conveyors, storage bins, handling accessories and aeration equipment, is Nobleford's largest employer, employing between 150 and 200 people. Having AGI in Nobleford creates an opportunity to increase chances of attracting complementary businesses into a cluster. Some complementary businesses could include a grain processor, an aeration service company, etc. In many respects, having AGI already successfully established in the community gives other prospective investors confidence that they can run a profitable business in Nobleford.

Nobleford also has had the lowest municipal taxes in Alberta for the past six years, which makes it an especially excellent place to set up for low-margin businesses with low variable costs.

Other added value and opportunity:

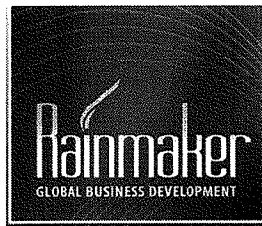
- Business attitude and entrepreneurial mindset throughout the community
- CP rail runs through the village
- Extremely proactive CAO with a business mindset
- Modern infrastructure
- Financially well off community

Fibre Optic lines are installed throughout the community that should help attract IT and home based businesses.



Investment Readiness/Investment Attraction Matrix

INVESTMENT READINESS FACTORS	
Map	Yes
Interviewee Overall Knowledge of Community	5
Have a Future Growth Plan	5
Knowledge of Current Businesses and Their Level of Success	5
Identifying Appropriate Businesses for the Growth of the Community and Why	5
Investor Materials besides SouthGrow Profile	5
Commercial Land Available	4
Residential Land Available	4
Entrepreneurial Mindset	5



<i>INVESTMENT ATTRACTION FACTORS</i>	
Proximity to Highway	3
Proximity to Rail	5
Professional Services	4
Schools	4
Recreational Facilities	4
Access to Skilled Labour	5
Access to Unskilled Labour	3
Proximity to Lethbridge	5
Proximity to Border	3
Internet Access	5
Favourable Tax Rates (based on commercial/industrial mill rates)	5

Website Feedback

Nobleford's website has good information specific to economic development. It is also inviting to see how easy it would be for an investor to set up a business in the community. Nobleford's Business Directory is also resourceful to an investor, in that it specifies address, contact person, phone number, and description. However, too much information can sometimes hinder investors if there is an overwhelming amount of information. Consider combing certain parts. For example, under the section "Maps" is found under both the About section and Land and Economic Development section.

Aesthetically, the front page of the website needs to look more visually appealing.



Recommendations

Nobleford is clearly an excellent example of a community that has done everything in its power to plan for and proactively seek new business investment.

Nobleford should target more agriculture--based companies that could service multiple sub-- sectors within the agriculture industry. Businesses that complement the AG Growth supply chain in Nobleford could be excellent targets. One way to begin this process would be to look at other locations where AG Growth has established business and do some research on what other complimentary businesses have also set up there.

Nobleford's CAO is very knowledgeable about the village and the statistics. His ability to leverage grant money to fund infrastructure and other projects could be the key for developing other assets that could potentially attract new businesses to set up in the region.

RECOMMENDED INVESTMENT ATTRACTION STRATEGY: **Opportunistic**