



Initiative on the New Economy

**Service Provision in Rural and Small Town Places:
A Report for Wood River, Saskatchewan**

**Diane Martz, Ingrid Brueckner and Karmen VanderZwan
Centre for Rural Studies
St. Peter's College
Muenster, Saskatchewan**

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INITIATIVE ON THE NEW ECONOMY - ABOUT THE PROJECT

The *Initiative on the New Economy* project of the Canadian Rural and Restructuring Foundation works closely with residents, service providers, voluntary organizations, business members, and decision makers to identify factors that contribute to building capacity in rural and small town places across Canada. Capacity is the ability of people residing in a place to mobilize their assets and resources to cope with stress and transition, or to capitalize on opportunities. Such capacity is built from trust and relationships grounded in institutions, organizations, businesses, and services alike. The Initiative on the New Economy is built on four key themes to explore capacity including *local governance, communications, services, and the environment*. This report explores the relationship between services and capacity.

The Services Research Centre conducted site profile surveys in the summer of 2003. This is the third survey conducted since 1998 with a goal to track services over time. Services play two key functions in building capacity. First, services help rural and small towns to cope with restructuring and transition as a result of economic downturns or even plant closures. Job losses stemming from industrial restructuring or closure can place increased demands on local services for education and training, welfare, counselling, health care, and other support services. Without such services, residents would have to cope with the additional burden of having to leave their town to access assistance. Job and service losses present a significant challenge to rural and small towns places working on revitalization.

Second, services provide opportunities for building relationships, partnerships, and trust. Together, these can lead to new partnerships and innovative ways for delivering services where they might otherwise not exist. For example, schools or senior centres can act as multi-functional facilities for the community where local volunteer groups, sporting clubs, local theatre, and others can do their work in the absence of other facilities. Another example might be the way that post offices can act as a one stop shop for a range of government services. This report focuses on the current service provision levels in rural and small town Canada. In particular, this report will compare the availability of services in the R.M. of Wood River, Saskatchewan with services available in other research sites across Canada, as well as with services available in other study sites within Western Canada. In each of these tables in this report, the availability of services in Wood River is compared to the 22 sites surveyed across Canada and to the 8 study sites in Western Canada.

ABOUT THE SERVICE INVENTORY

The Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation has been conducting research in 32 rural and small town sites from across Canada. These sites form a type of “rural observatory” in which aspects of the *Initiative on the New Economy* project may be examined. The sites participating in this project reflect the diversity of the Canadian landscape, and include forestry and mining towns, farming communities, and tourism towns. Furthermore, some of these places are located adjacent to metropolitan areas, while others are more isolated.

In the summer of 2003, researchers visited 22 sites across Canada to update a service provision inventory. Data were collected to examine the availability of a range of services including:

education	community
health	transportation
protection services	recreational
legal	basic shopping
business services	commercial shopping
communication	economic development organizations
elderly and childcare	housing
government	

AVAILABILITY

Copies of the site reports on services availability were distributed to participating sites. Additionally, copies have been posted on the INE website (nre.concordia.ca) and on Greg Halseth's website (<http://web.unbc.ca/geography/faculty/greg>).

Copies of the larger *Service Provision in Rural and Small Town Canada* report are available in a number of locations. At the University of Northern British Columbia, copies have been deposited at the Weller Library or can be accessed on Greg Halseth's website: <http://web.unbc.ca/geography/faculty/greg>. Copies are also available on the website of the Initiative of the New Economy at: nre.concordia.ca.

For further information about this report or other available reports on services, please contact Greg Halseth at:

Geography Program
University of Northern British Columbia
3333 University Way
Prince George, B.C.
V2N 4Z9

Telephone: (250) 960-5826
E-mail: halseth@unbc.ca

For further information about other INE reports, please contact:

Bill Reimer
Initiative on the New Economy
Dep't of Sociology and Anthropology
1455 boul. de Maisonneuve O.
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec
H3G 1M8

Telephone: (514) 848-2424
E-mail: reimer@vax2.concordia.ca

Diane Martz, Director
Centre for Rural Studies
St. Peter's College
R.P.O. Box 40
Muenster, Saskatchewan
S0K 2Y0

Telephone: (306) 682-7870
E-mail : martzd@stpeters.sk.ca

Booklet Contributors: Diane Martz, Ingrid Brueckner, Karmen VanderZwan, Greg Halseth, Laura Ryser, Virginia Pow, Nora King, and Kelly Giesbrecht.

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INITIATIVE ON THE NEW ECONOMY - SERVICE PROVISION IN RURAL AND SMALL TOWN PLACES: A REPORT FOR WOOD RIVER, SASKATCHEWAN

Site Description - Wood River, Saskatchewan

The Rural Municipality (RM) of Wood River is located in south-central Saskatchewan approximately 140 km southwest of Moose Jaw and 80 km north of the Canada-United States border. The RM includes the two communities of Woodrow and Melaval, and a smaller population in Thomson Lake Regional Park. The town of Lafleche is located inside the rural municipality, but is not part of the census division we are working in and as a result are not counted as part of Wood River. Although this community is excluded, the majority of services are located here. Two provincial highways pass through the RM crossing each other at the southeast corner of Lafleche. Highway 58 runs north and south and Highway 13 runs east and west.

Farmland represents the topography of the Wood River area. The land is hilly with small clumps of trees. The Wood River winds its way through the rural municipality. Thomson Lake Regional Park is 8 km north of the town of Lafleche, and is the first human-made lake and park in Saskatchewan. There is a small community of cabins and houses, over 200 camping sites, a marina, swimming pool and a golf course.

The economy of Wood River is predominantly based on agriculture. In the northern part of the Rural Municipality agriculture largely consists of grain and oilseed production. The southern part of the Rural Municipality is mostly ranching and mixed farming.



POPULATION PROFILE - WOOD RIVER, SASKATCHEWAN

The population of the R.M. of Wood River, Saskatchewan declined from 437 residents in 1996 to 370 residents in 2001 (Statistics Canada 2001). Wood River has faced challenges more recently with the demolition of the Wheat Pool elevator in 2001. Overall, it has an older family oriented population that includes a substantial population of seniors. This has important implications when planning the delivery of a range of services, such as recreational, educational, health, and senior services. A major challenge facing this community is the out-migration of youth, particularly when examining individuals between 20 - 24 years of age.

Population	Site: Wood River		
	Total	Male	Female
Population in 2001	370	195	170
Population in 1996	437	245	195
1996 to 2001 population change (%)	-15.3	-20.4	-12.8
Total - All persons	370	195	170
Age 0-4	10	0	5
Age 5-14	35	20	15
Age 15-19	40	20	20
Age 20-24	15	15	5
Age 25-44	65	35	35
Age 45-54	80	40	35
Age 55-64	45	25	20
Age 65-74	45	20	25
Age 75-84	25	15	10
Age 85 and over	5	0	5
Median age of the population	47.3	48.0	47.2

Source: Statistics Canada 2001.

SERVICE PROVISION IN RURAL AND SMALL TOWN PLACES

Services play an important role in retaining and attracting residents and businesses as they enhance local quality of life. However, rural and small town places across Canada are experiencing tremendous change stemming from economic and social restructuring in an increasing global economy. As a result of industrial restructuring, many small towns have been experiencing population declines. At the same time, federal and provincial government policies have been withdrawing some of the service infrastructure that can provide a foundation for revitalizing rural and small town places and assist residents to cope with stress. Some rural and small town places adjusted to transition through establishing innovative services or diversifying their local economies. These types of innovation suggest one way by which services help to build capacity within a place.

Services also help to build capacity by providing opportunities for building relationships, partnerships and trust, which subsequently can lead to new partnerships and innovative ways for delivering services where they might otherwise not exist. Together, services can help to enhance local quality of life and mitigate out-migration from rural and small town places.

Educational Services

Educational institutions are playing a changing role in maintaining quality of life in rural and small town places. Schools provide amenities through their libraries, theatres, and art galleries in places that would otherwise not have access to such services. They also play a larger economic development role. Community colleges can provide skilled and professional workers, act as a broker of services, and act as a repository of information. They can also design programs and services that are relevant and respond to the changing labour market conditions of small places.

Table 1: Availability of Education Services - 2003

Services	NRE Sites:		Wood River:	
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
Pre-school/kindergarten	50.0%	62.5%	X	Y
Elementary school	63.6%	62.5%	X	Y
High school	27.3%	37.5%	X	Y
CEGEP / College	18.2%	25.0%	X	Y
Continuing Education	27.3%	37.5%	X	Y

* Note: X refers to not being available within the listed category and Y refers to being available within the listed category.

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Results indicate that educational services are available in a greater proportion of sites in Western Canada when compared to the total sites across Canada (Table 1). Furthermore, over half the

sites in Western Canada provide early childhood educational services, including pre-school and elementary school services. While Wood River does not have these educational facilities within the site, most of these services are available immediately adjacent to their site in Lafleche. These services include the pre-school, the elementary school, and the high school. Continuing education is also available within close proximity to the site at the Cypress Hills Regional College in Gravelbourg, just ten kilometres from the boundary of the R.M.. Residents in Wood River have the option to go to two regional colleges for education, these include Gravelbourg's regional college or the South East Regional College located 30 minutes away from the R. M. boundary in Assiniboia.

Health Services

Health services play an important role in attracting new labour and retaining residents. However, during times of economic and social restructuring, closures in hospitals and the centralization of physical and mental health services can be difficult on the elderly and the poor who do not have access to a vehicle and who live in a place with limited transportation services. However, it is not just the utility of health services that is of concern, but also the potential loss of health care jobs that can lead to a further decline in the local economy and population.

Table 2a: Availability of Health Services - 2003

Services	NRE Sites:		Wood River:	
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
Hospital	18.2%	25.0%	X	Y
Health centre / CLSC	27.3%	25.0%	X	Y
Medical clinic	40.9%	50.0%	X	Y
Blood / urine testing facility	36.4%	37.5%	X	Y
X-ray facility	22.7%	37.5%	X	Y
Baby delivery facility	4.5%	12.5%	X	X
CT scan facility	0.0%	0.0%	X	X
Pharmacy	40.9%	37.5%	X	Y
Ambulance	36.4%	37.5%	X	Y
Emergency services	18.2%	25.0%	X	Y

* Note: X refers to not being available within the listed category and Y refers to being available within the listed category.

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Health care facilities are limited in most of the rural and small towns examined (Table 2a). Of particular interest is that fewer than 40% of sites have a health centre, hospital, or pharmacy, and just over one-third of the sites have ambulance services. This carries important implications for residents commuting for medical emergencies or health care reasons. However, half of the sites in Western Canada have a medical clinic. Overall, medical facilities are more available in Western Canadian sites when compared to the national sample. In Wood River, while health care facilities are not available within the site boundaries, most of these facilities are located

within 30 minutes in Lafleche. The closest baby delivery facility is located 140 kilometres away in Moose Jaw. However, in an emergency, a baby can be delivered in Gravelbourg. The closest CT scan facility is located 400 kilometres away in Saskatoon.

The availability of health care professionals is also limited in small places (Table 2b). In fact, only home care visits are available in more than half of the sites. Even those services deemed as essential, such as doctors, are only located in just over 35% of the sites across Canada. Sites in Western Canada are slightly better equipped with health care services when compared to the national sample. The majority of sites in Western Canada have a medical clinic, doctors, home care visits, a public health nurse, and even speech therapy. While none of the listed health care professionals are in Wood River, some health care professionals, such as doctors, nurses, public health nurses, and respite care, are located immediately adjacent to the site in Lafleche. More specialized health professionals, such as optometrists and physiotherapy, are accessible within 30 minutes in the regional centre of Assiniboia. The closest dental surgeon is located over 200 kilometres away in Regina.

Table 2b: Availability of Health Professionals - 2003

Services	NRE Sites:		Wood River:	
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
Doctors	36.4%	50.0%	X	Y
Nurses	36.4%	37.5%	X	Y
Dentists	27.3%	12.5%	X	Y
Dental surgeons	9.1%	0.0%	X	X
Optometrists	18.2%	25.0%	X	Y
Home care visits	54.5%	75.0%	X	Y
VON	13.6%	0.0%	X	Y
Social workers	22.7%	12.5%	X	Y
Public health nurse	31.8%	50.0%	X	Y
Physiotherapy	22.7%	25.0%	X	Y
Speech therapy	31.8%	50.0%	X	Y
Occupational therapy	13.6%	12.5%	X	Y
Respite care	22.7%	12.5%	X	Y

* Note: X refers to not being available within the listed category and Y refers to being available within the listed category.

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Protection Services

Protection services contribute to community capacity in a number of ways. For example, volunteer fire departments and various crime watch programs provide opportunities for community involvement and interaction, both of which can build trust and leadership.

Protection services are more available than most other service areas (Table 3). Most notably, fire departments and 911 are in more than half the sites across Canada. Local police or RCMP services are limited in sites across Canada overall, including sites in Western Canada. While

there is no police detachment in the Wood River Rural Municipality, police from Gravelbourg, ten kilometres away, do police the area. In Lafleche, there is a volunteer fire department with nine fire fighters. 911 service and a rural crime watch is available in the Wood River Rural Municipality. Wood River also have the 1st Responders, a volunteer group that respond to emergency situations in the Wood River and Lafleche area.

Table 3: Availability of Protection Services - 2003

Services	NRE Sites:		Wood River:	
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
Police (Local / RCMP)	22.7%	25.0%	X	Y
Fire department	68.2%	87.5%	X	Y
911 emergency line	86.4%	100.0%	Y	
Neighbourhood Watch	31.8%	37.5%	X	X
Rural Crime Watch	13.6%	25.0%	Y	

* Note: X refers to not being available within the listed category and Y refers to being available within the listed category.

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Legal Services

Legal services are another example of specialized services that are often not found in rural areas. The absence of legal services has important implications as residents must commute to go to court, to access legal services to prepare wills or purchase real estate, or have passports or affidavits signed.

Overall, legal services are very limited in the INE sites across Canada (Table 4). In this case, half of the sites in Western Canada have a notary public. While legal services are not available in Wood River, these services are all available within 30 minutes. A notary is accessible in Lafleche, while lawyers and the court are located in Gravelbourg.

Table 4: Availability of Legal Services - 2003

Services	NRE Sites:		Wood River:	
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
Lawyer	18.2%	12.5%	X	Y
Notary	40.9%	50.0%	X	Y
Court	18.2%	25.0%	X	Y

* Note: X refers to not being available within the listed category and Y refers to being available within the listed category.

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Financial Services

Businesses also play a role in providing a range of activities that enhance the quality of life of a place, as well as the economic viability and stability of the place. Business owners play an important role in community development as they can provide leadership in volunteer groups either as members or in a leadership role. Small local businesses are also an important source for fundraisers and sponsor specific local organizations or events.

Table 5: Availability of Business Services - 2003

Services	NRE Sites:		Wood River:	
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
Banks	36.4%	37.5%	X	Y
Credit Union / Caisse Populaire	50.0%	62.5%	X	Y
ATM	50.0%	62.5%	X	Y
Micro-financing	9.1%	25.0%	X	Y
Insurance office	50.0%	62.5%	X	Y
Industrial park	22.7%	37.5%	X	X
Real estate	18.2%	12.5%	X	Y
Accounting	45.5%	42.9%	X	Y

* Note: X refers to not being available within the listed category and Y refers to being available within the listed category.

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Overall, credit unions, ATMs, and insurance offices are found in half the sites across Canada (Table 5). More than half the Western Canada sites also have a credit union, ATMs, and insurance offices. This has important implications for not just retaining residents, but also for retaining and attracting businesses as well. Most financial services are located immediately adjacent to Wood River in Lafleche. Recent changes in financial services in Lafleche include the opening of a new office building on Main Street by Lafleche Credit Union in 2000. A TD Canada Trust bank is also located in Lafleche for Wood River residents to use. The closest industrial park is located in Regina.

Communications

Connectivity is crucial in the new economy. Communication services also allow residents to maintain contact with family and friends. With improved communication infrastructure, such as telephone services, Internet, and cell phone service, rural and small town places can attract businesses that no longer have to be located in cities, and they can improve local employment opportunities. They can also use communications services to support business networks.

Table 6: Availability of Communication Services - 2003

Services	NRE Sites:		Wood River:	
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
Cell phone – analog	86.4%	87.5%	Y	
Cell phone – digital	40.9%	25.0%	X	X

* Note: X refers to not being available within the listed category and Y refers to being available within the listed category.

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Overall, analog cell phone service is widely available across the INE sites in Canada, including Wood River (Table 6). Almost 41% of the sites also enjoy digital cell phone service. Fewer sites in Western Canada have digital cell phone service when compared to all the sites across Canada. While digital cell phone service is not available in Wood River, SaskTel Mobility has announced that digital cell phone service is scheduled to be available in the area by the end of 2003.

Elderly and Childcare Services

Childcare services provide an important part of the educational and care services in rural and small town places. Childcare also provides men and women with children an opportunity to participate in the labour force. Other services of importance are seniors' services including nursing homes and retirement homes. These services are particularly important given the aging of the Canadian population and that many rural and small town places are not yet well equipped to deal with seniors' needs.

Table 7: Availability of Child and Elderly Services - 2003

Services	NRE Sites:		Wood River:	
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
Daycare	45.5%	37.5%	X	Y
Senior citizen's nursing home	18.2%	12.5%	X	Y
Senior citizen's retirement home	31.8%	25.0%	X	Y

* Note: X refers to not being available within the listed category and Y refers to being available within the listed category.

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

An inventory of 22 sites across Canada indicates that many are not equipped to meet the needs of young families or seniors (Table 7). While some such services are provided by formal groups recorded in site profiles, there is considerable informal care offered by family and friends. In particular, sites in Western Canada are less equipped to offer these services. However, while

elderly and childcare services are not available in Wood River, these facilities are located in Lafleche.

Government Services

Town halls and post offices are the most frequently available government services in rural and small town places. Post offices not only provide a service and identity, but also opportunities for routine social interaction to build relationships. Other government services play an important role in community capacity by providing a local source of expertise and knowledge upon which the community can draw.

The rural and small town sites examined do not have access to many government services overall, although the listed government services are offered by a greater proportion of sites in Western Canada (Table 8). Of particular concern to sites experiencing social and economic restructuring is that none of the sites have HRDC or Employment Insurance offices. Furthermore, few sites have social assistance offices. Consequently, during economic and industrial restructuring or plant closures, households experiencing stress will have to go outside the site for services to help them cope. Wood River is equipped with two post offices, one in Woodrow and one in Melaval. There is no town hall for the Wood River Rural Municipality, however, people use the halls in Lafleche. Moreover, other government services are only accessible in larger regional centres, most notably Assiniboia, Moose Jaw, and Regina.

Table 8: Availability of Government Services - 2003

Services	NRE Sites:		Wood River:	
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
Human Resources Dev. Canada	0.0%	0.0%	X	Y
Employment Insurance	4.5%	0.0%	X	Y
Provincial Auto License Office	18.2%	50.0%	X	Y
Social Assistance Office	22.7%	37.5%	X	Y
Town hall	68.2%	87.5%	X	Y
Post office	81.8%	100.0%	Y	

* Note: X refers to not being available within the listed category and Y refers to being available within the listed category.

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Community Services

Community services can provide an important foundation from which to build relationships, and can be important sources to draw upon during times of economic and social stress. The availability of community services in rural and small town places varied considerably (Table 9).

Overall, sites in Western Canada have more community services with the exception of food banks, clothing exchanges, and second hand stores. Regardless, youth drop-in centres, women's drop-in centres, and senior's drop-in centres are available in more than half of the sites in

Western Canada. Only a senior's drop-in centre is within close proximity to Wood River residents as there is one located in Lafleche. This is particularly important given the substantial population of seniors living in Wood River. A youth drop in centre for the Wood River region was located in Lafleche. However, due to declining youth population in the Rural Municipality, the program shut down. The nearest youth drop-in centre and personal aid services is located in the regional centre in Assiniboia. Other community services are available in Moose Jaw.

Table 9: Availability of Community Services - 2003

Services	NRE Sites:		Wood River:	
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
Food bank	31.8%	25.0%	X	X
Clothing exchange / depot	18.2%	0.0%	X	X
Second hand stores	40.9%	37.5%	X	X
Youth drop-in centre	22.7%	50.0%	X	Y
Women's drop-in centre	22.7%	50.0%	X	X
Senior's drop-in centre	31.8%	75.0%	X	Y
Half-way house	4.5%	12.5%	X	X
Women's resource centre	9.1%	0.0%	X	X
Personal aid services	31.8%	37.5%	X	Y

* Note: X refers to not being available within the listed category and Y refers to being available within the listed category.

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Transportation

Transportation infrastructure can have important implications not only for attracting economic activity to a place, but also for enhancing the quality of life of vulnerable groups in rural and small town. Transportation services, especially freight services, can play an important role in attracting industry by providing additional options to export products. However, without adequate, affordable transportation options, mobility can be difficult for women, seniors, or those with disabilities to move within the community and to access services in adjacent centres. Being mobile enables citizens to have access to services, to be involved in the community, and to develop local friendship ties and support networks, and to experience social activities.

The higher availability of gas stations and automobile repair services in these places reflects Canada's general reliance on the automobile (Table 10). Other transportation services are less frequently available, most notably local transit service, passenger rail service, boat / ferry services, and airport service. However, sites in Western Canada offer a greater variety of transportation services. In fact, while the majority of sites in other regions did not have inter community bus service or freight train services, most sites in Western Canada have these services. The CP Railway goes through both Melaval and Woodrow. A gas station and automobile repair services are available in Woodrow at the Woodrow Co-op Gas and Service station. Other transportation services are more limited within the area. However, Wood River residents can access inter-community bus service through the Saskatchewan Transportation Company (STC) in Lafleche.

Table 10: Availability of Transport Services - 2003

Services	NRE Sites:		Wood River:	
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
Local bus transit	0.0%	0.0%	X	X
Inter-community bus station	31.8%	62.5%	X	Y
Train – passenger	4.5%	0.0%	X	X
Train – freight	36.4%	87.5%	Y	
Airport	18.2%	37.5%	X	Y
Helicopter port	22.7%	37.5%	X	X
Boat / ferry terminal	13.6%	12.5%	X	X
Taxi	27.3%	25.0%	X	Y
Gas station	86.4%	87.5%	Y	
Automobile repair	63.6%	87.5%	Y	

* Note: X refers to not being available within the listed category and Y refers to being available within the listed category.

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Recreation Services

When examining all of the sites, recreational services showed the greatest range of availability compared to any other service category (Table 11). This bodes well for the retention and attraction of residents, as well as the overall quality of life of these places. More notable recreational services available include indoor skating rinks, community playing fields, community centres, libraries, municipal parks, skiing and hiking trails, and campgrounds. Many of these services can be important places where events can be held to foster a sense of community.

Across Canada, most sites offer either an indoor skating rink or an outdoor skating rink. Recreational services less frequently available across Canada include fitness facilities, such as athletic clubs, as well as entertainment features such as live theatre or cinemas. A greater range of recreational services are available by a majority of sites in Western Canada. In fact, all of the sites in Western Canada offer municipal parks and campgrounds.

Table 11: Availability of Recreation Services - 2003

Services	NRE Sites:		Wood River:		
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes	
Curling rink	31.8%	75.0%	X	Y	
Bowling lanes	22.7%	25.0%	X	Y	
Indoor municipal swimming pool	13.6%	25.0%	X	Y	
Outdoor municipal swimming pool	18.2%	25.0%	Y		
Indoor municipal skating rink	50.0%	75.0%	X	Y	
Outdoor municipal skating rink	31.8%	25.0%	X	Y	
Community playing field	81.8%	87.5%	Y		
Community gym	50.0%	62.5%	X	Y	
Community centre	81.8%	87.5%	X	Y	
Private athletic club	13.6%	12.5%	X	Y	
Municipal athletic club	18.2%	37.5%	X	Y	
Theatre (live performance)		13.6%			X
Cinema (movie theatre)	4.5%	0.0%	X	Y	
Museum	36.4%	37.5%	X	Y	
Library	77.3%	62.5%	X	Y	
Municipal parks	77.3%	100.0%	Y		
Provincial parks	22.7%	25.0%	X	Y	
Tennis courts	31.8%	37.5%	X	Y	
Skiing trails	50.0%	62.5%	X	X	
Hiking trails	63.6%	62.5%	Y		
Golf courses	36.4%	50.0%	Y		
Campgrounds	68.2%	100.0%	Y		

* Note: X refers to not being available within the listed category and Y refers to being available within the listed category.

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Wood River residents enjoy a variety of recreational services both within the site and within close proximity to Wood River. Locally, there is an outdoor municipal swimming pool, baseball diamonds, hiking trails, a golf course, and campgrounds at Thomson Lake Regional Park. In fact, there have been many improvements made to these campgrounds and to the recreational facilities in the area over the last decade. In 1994, natural gas was made available to the cottage areas. In this same year, water and sewer lines were installed. In 1995, improvements were made to the camping including the construction of a sheltered kitchen area and a shower building. The next year, a new pumphouse was built. In 2000, the shower building was replaced. Currently, there are 104 electrified campsites at Thomson Lake and 120 seasonal sites.

Other recreational facilities, notably a community gym, a community centre, and a library, are located in Lafleche and are within close proximity. A theatre and skiing trails are located in Moose Jaw, approximately 140 kilometres away from Wood River.

Shopping

Shopping services contribute to the success of the local economy, and are considered to be an important gauge of the economic health of rural and small town places. Shopping is also an important recreational activity and provides opportunities for social interaction. Low levels of shopping services can lead to out-of-town shopping and perhaps even out-migration.

The service inventory indicates that most sites across Canada are able to offer shopping services that residents would need to access on a more frequent basis, notably grocery stores (Table 12). A greater proportion of sites in Western Canada have a grocery store and a liquor store. While Wood River does not have basic shopping services, a farmer's market is located within 30 minutes in Gravelbourg and other basic shopping services are located adjacent to Wood River in Lafleche.

Table 12: Availability of Basic Shopping Services - 2003

Services	NRE Sites:		Wood River:	
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
Grocery store	68.2%	87.5%	X	Y
Farmer's market	13.6%	12.5%	X	Y
Liquor store	54.5%	75.0%	X	Y
Bakery	27.3%	25.0%	X	Y

* Note: X refers to not being available within the listed category and Y refers to being available within the listed category.

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Most of the sites across Canada are minimum convenience service centres (Table 13). These places generally offer a hardware store, a drug store, a bank, and two other convenience functions such as a variety store. About one-third of the sites function as a full convenience centre. These places offer all the services of a minimum convenience centre, plus a laundry or dry cleaning store, jewelry, appliances, or furniture, clothing, lumber, building materials, shoes, garden supplies, and a motel or hotel. Finally, just under 20% of the sites fulfill the role of a partial shopping centre. These towns carry all the services of a full convenience centre plus some specialty services such as a camera shop, a floral store, radio or television store, or women's accessories. Full convenience centres and partial shopping centres were more likely to be located in sites that were not adjacent to metropolitan areas. The availability of commercial shopping services in Western Canada are very similar to the national average. The Woodrow Co-op gas station enables Wood River to function as a minimum convenience centre. A full convenience centre is located in Lafleche, and a partial shopping centre is located in Assiniboia. All of these are within a 30 minute drive for Wood River residents. If residents wish to access services of a complete shopping centre or a secondary wholesale retail centre, they would travel to Moose Jaw. The closest primary wholesale retail centre is located 211 kilometres away in Regina.

Table 13: Availability of Commercial Shopping Services - 2003

Services	NRE Sites:		Wood River:	
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
Minimum Convenience Centre	86.4%	87.5%	Y	
Full Convenience Centre	36.4%	37.5%	X	Y
Partial Shopping Centre	18.2%	25.0%	X	Y
Complete Shopping Centre	0.0%	0.0%	X	X
Secondary Wholesale Retail Ctr	0.0%	0.0%	X	X
Primary Wholesale Retail Ctr	0.0%	0.0%	X	X

* Note: X refers to not being available within the listed category and Y refers to being available within the listed category.

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Economic Development Organizations

Economic development organizations can play an important role in promoting the community to attract not only additional businesses, but also to attract a wider population base. While there is not a wide range of economic development organizations in these sites, it is particularly critical to note that there are only approximately 20% of the sites across Canada with local business development corporations and rotary clubs (Table 14). As these organizations are comprised of local business individuals, they are important sources to draw upon during economic and social restructuring.

Table 14: Availability of Economic / Development Organizations - 2003

Services	NRE Sites:		Wood River:	
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
Community Business Dev. Ctrs	0.0%	0.0%	X	X
Fed / Prov Econ. Dev. Agencies	0.0%	0.0%	X	X
Chamber of Commerce	18.2%	25.0%	X	Y
Local Business Dev. Corporation	18.2%	37.5%	X	Y
Economic / Community Trust	4.5%	12.5%	X	Y
Career Training / Placement	13.6%	25.0%	X	Y
Financial / Business Consulting	27.3%	37.5%	X	Y
Real Estate Boards	0.0%	0.0%	X	Y
Tourism Associations	27.3%	25.0%	X	Y
Rotary clubs	18.2%	12.5%	X	Y

* Note: X refers to not being available within the listed category and Y refers to being available within the listed category.

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Economic development organizations appear to have a stronger presence in sites in Western Canada than the national sample. Community Business Development Centres and Federal /

Provincial Economic Development agencies are organizations only available in Atlantic Canada. Of particular interest, all of the economic development organizations are located within 30 minutes of Wood River. Furthermore, there is an economic loans co-operative, a merchant association, and a rotary club located in Lafleche that serves Wood River residents. Other economic development organizations are located within 30 minutes in Gravelbourg. The Red Coat REDA is responsible for economic development in the region and has an office in Assiniboia.

Housing

A new category added to the service inventory in 2003 was housing. Housing has been used as an incentive to attract residents to rural and small town places. However, lack of housing options is a problem in rural and small town places that can lead to out-migration. Housing options can improve the quality of life of residents, especially the more vulnerable citizens, including senior citizens or those with disabilities.

Although, initially, social housing does not appear to be widely available in sites across Canada, there are strong regional differences (Table 15). A greater proportion of sites in Western Canada offer the widest range of social housing options. In fact, half of the sites in Western Canada have assisted or subsidized housing for seniors. There are three duplexes in Lafleche that fulfill the needs of social housing.

Table 15: Availability of Social Housing Services - 2003

Services	NRE Sites:		Wood River:	
	Canada % Yes	West % Yes	Within the Site	Within 30 Minutes
Co-op Housing	13.6%	25.0%	X	Y
Rent Supplement Units	22.7%	37.5%	X	Y
Subsidized Housing - Seniors	31.8%	50.0%	X	Y
Subsidized Housing - Families	31.8%	37.5%	X	Y
Subsidized Housing - Single People	9.1%	25.0%	X	Y
Subsidized Housing - Special Needs	13.6%	25.0%	X	Y

* Note: X refers to not being available within the listed category and Y refers to being available within the listed category.

Source: CRRF NRE 2003 Site Profile.

Challenges and Opportunities for Wood River, Saskatchewan

A challenge for Wood River will be to diversify its local economy. Fortunately, there are many services within close proximity to help residents cope with social and economic restructuring. Many educational, health, financial, and recreational services, for example, are located adjacent to the site in Lafleche or within 30 minutes away in Gravelbourg. To cope with changes to the agricultural economy and restructuring, Wood River residents access government services, such as HRDC programs or employment insurance in Assiniboia. Furthermore, potential local entrepreneurs can access loans from the economic loans co-operative in Lafleche. Furthermore,

Wood River is continuing to promote its recreational assets. In particular, it has been promoting its outdoor tourism assets at Thomson Lake Regional Park, including camping, swimming, and hiking. The number of year round residents is also increasing at Thompson Lake. These assets will go a long way, not just in attracting tourists and economic activity, but also for retaining residents.

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