

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Wednesday, May 20, 2020

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: HORTICULTURE BEDS SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

FROM:

Mary Reali, Acting City Manager
Zoran Postic, Deputy City Manager, Public Works

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To seek Council approval of the new Horticulture Beds Sponsorship Program.

Report Highlights

- In Fall 2019, The City of Vaughan received an Audit and Accountability Grant from the Province of Ontario to achieve a 4% target in front-line cost avoidance.
- Staff retained a consultant to complete a feasibility study of a sponsorship program.
- The proposed sponsorship program will help off-set the cost associated with the City's horticulture program, while providing businesses with partnership opportunities.
- The proposed sponsorship program will be launched by Summer 2020 in partnership with Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations and the Municipal Partnerships Office.

Recommendation

1. That the new Horticulture Beds Sponsorship Program, as substantially presented in this report, be approved.

Background

The Audit and Accountability Grant led to developing a Horticulture bed sponsorship program to help recover costs and sustain service levels

In 2019, the City of Vaughan was one of 39 participating municipalities to receive an Audit and Accountability Grant from the government of Ontario for the purposes of building towards four cents on the dollar in cost avoidance for front-line city services in large municipalities. This provided the opportunity to conduct focused reviews of programs and services with the commitment to demonstrate value for dollar. Staff retained Dillon Consulting to complete a feasibility study for a sponsorship program for horticulture beds and sports fields (Attachment 1: Dillon Consulting). As a next step, the Municipal Partnerships Office along with Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations, have developed a 2020 workplan for a new Horticulture Beds Sponsorship Program to add to existing sponsorship asset inventory.

Horticulture is responsible for beautification through hanging baskets, planters, and planting beds throughout the City (excluding parks and open spaces). As of Dec 2019, there are 785 hanging baskets, 557 planters, 406 planting beds and 802 shrub beds. This is a tax-based service which generates a lot of interest from citizens; there is a great deal of civic pride in the establishment and upkeep of horticulture assets throughout Vaughan neighbourhoods.

In 2016, a beautification strategy was approved through Council that identifies four classification of horticulture sites – premium, enhanced, standard, and basic – along with the associated service strategy. These classifications have been converted to a 3-level scale, Class A includes both premium and enhanced assets, Class B includes standard assets, and Class C includes basic assets. Currently there are 70 sites that are classified as Class A or Class B which is available for potential sponsorship.

As with all tax-based services, we are continually challenged to keep up with the growth of the City while delivering service excellence and being fiscally responsible. A sponsorship model is proposed for a subset of our Class A and Class B sites in an effort to deliver services more efficiently, while also providing opportunities to elevate awareness of our local businesses through advertising.

Cost-effective sponsorship opportunities provide visibility options for small businesses while continuing to beautify Vaughan

The purpose of the Horticulture Beds Sponsorship Program is to generate alternative sources of revenue for this important city service. With more than 12,000 businesses in

Vaughan, with 80% of them small businesses, the Horticulture Sponsorship Program aims to:

- Provide support to the small business community through cost-effective, highly visible partnership opportunities
- Generate additional interest in the Corporate Partnership Program in Vaughan
- Continue to beautify City neighbourhoods through partnerships with the business community with future growth potential creating beautification and community pride
- Generate alternative sources of revenue that partially off-set operational maintenance costs
- Provide an opportunity for all businesses to invest in the beautification of the community to which they provide service
- Provide a cost-effective outlet for businesses to reach their clients

Previous Reports/Authority

[Vaughan: A Beautiful Experience, Public Works, 2016](#)

Analysis and Options

This pilot program aims to raise revenue with companies sponsoring Horticulture beds to help offset planting and maintenance costs

As recommended in the feasibility report, a low-risk pilot Sponsorship Program is proposed for 2020; the sponsorship scope includes approximately **40-50 Class A or Class B Beds** currently distributed across all Wards, in high-traffic locations. Guided by the Corporate Partnership policy, staff will complete site selection work to ensure each location (see Attachment 2) is suitable for sponsorship, provides ample recognition, and can be maintained within current service levels.

Each site location will be priced based on traffic counts, size of garden bed, and visibility in the surrounding area. An estimated +/- \$50,000/year in revenue will go towards offsetting the cost of planting and maintaining these horticulture beds. Throughout the first year of the program, sales will be monitored, and locations will be adjusted, as required. The goal is to have this program launched in 2020 and sponsorship sold by years-end for signage installation in Spring 2021. Staff are cognizant that this timeline may require adjustment based on operational capacity due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Depending on demand, this program has the potential to expand to more locations deemed appropriate by staff.

Brand identity and promotional plans will be developed with Corporate and Strategic Communications to minimize costs

Upon program approval, staff will work alongside Corporate and Strategic Communications to develop a name and brand identity along with a dedicated web page and promotional plan for the program. Once the program has launched, city-controlled platforms will be utilized such as social media, e-newsletters and community events to market and promote the program with minimal overhead costs.

Financial Impact

The Municipal Partnerships Office will manage the program with a 20% administrative recovery model applied. All other revenue will be transferred to the Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations Department to offset the cost of the maintenance of each site. Sponsorship agreements will be in place with first right of refusal for initial sponsors to renew. There may be minimal costs associated with initial promotion of the program, but those will be covered with existing budget. The only financial impact will be revenue generated to off-set budget and reduce the tax-burden.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

None.

Conclusion

The Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations department is seeking to off-set the cost of maintaining Horticulture Beds throughout the City and is recommending the launch of the Sponsorship Program in 2020 of 40-50 Class A or Class B Horticulture beds. The Municipal Partnership Office was engaged to package, price, sell the assets and manage the program as part of their Council approved sponsorship inventory. With this approval, both departments will launch the program by Summer 2020 with the goal to sell out the program by December 2020, with implementation in Spring 2021. This timeline is subject to the City's operational capacity related to our Covid-19 response which is consistently evolving.

For more information, please contact Cristina Prinzo, Acting Manager, Municipal Partnerships and Sponsorship, ext. 8187.

Attachments

1. Dillon Consulting: Horticulture and Sports Fields Sponsorship Model
2. Horticulture Sponsorship Location Maps

Prepared by

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