

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 15, 2016

Item 3, Report No. 40, of the Committee of the Whole (Working Session), which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on November 15, 2016.

3 BEAUTIFICATION STRATEGY- VAUGHAN A BEAUTIFUL EXPERIENCE ALL WARDS

The Committee of the Whole (Working Session) recommends:

- 1) That the recommendation contained in the following report of the City Manager and the Director of Transportation Services, Parks and Forestry Operations, dated November 7, 2016, be approved and staff take into consideration all the comments made at the meeting by Members of Council; and
- 2) That Communication C2, presentation material titled “Vaughan A Beautiful Experience, Horticulture Strategic Plan”, dated November 7, 2016, be received.

Recommendation

The City Manager and the Director of Transportation Services, Parks and Forestry Operations, in consultation with the Manager of Corporate Asset Management, recommend:

1. That Council endorse ‘Vaughan, A Beautiful Experience’, set out as Attachment 1.

Contribution to Sustainability

This report contributes to the goals and objectives within Green Directions Vaughan, The City’s Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan, specifically:

Goal 2: To ensure sustainable development and redevelopment.

Goal 4: To create a vibrant community where citizens, business and visitors thrive.

Goal 5: To be leaders in advocacy and education on sustainability issues.

Economic Impact

Identified in the 2017 capital project submission is a request for \$247,200.00. The funds are identified to assist in highlighting Canada 150th anniversary celebration through horticultural enhancements at various locations across the City. The funds will also be assigned to begin implementation of the strategy with infrastructure investments in newer technology, self-watering/reservoir style planters and baskets and to address the areas of the City where there are deficiencies in horticulture assets.

The City has also applied for an external grant through the Canada 150 Fund; results of the funding submission are anticipated in the next three – six months.

Communications Plan

Part of the strategy is to work with the community and various community groups, to encourage participation in making Vaughan beautiful. Pending approval, a comprehensive communications plan with public engagement as a core activity will be developed to inform residents of the new beautification strategy and how they can actively participate.

There will be an additional promotion for the Canada 150th anniversary celebration, to encourage residents to beautify Vaughan through our existing program, Curb Appeal.

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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to address Council's concerns that were raised at the November 15th, Finance Administration and Audit Committee meeting, regarding the distribution of the City's horticultural assets including planters, shrubs, flowers, beds and baskets. The objective of the strategy is to leverage the findings from the surveys which staff have outlined in a terms of reference study. Findings presented to Council include:

- The establishment of the Beautification Levels of Service for the City of Vaughan's assets;
- The categorization of the City's horticultural assets; and
- Development of a prioritized list of assets for beautification in celebration of Canada's 150th anniversary of Confederation.

Background - Analysis and Options

The City of Vaughan historically has not had a clear strategy for beautification. The efforts to beautify the City have been focused on select areas based on the availability of funding and resulted in an unequal distribution of horticultural assets.

December 15, 2015 Council Meeting Adoption

Proposed at the November 15th FAA committee meeting and adopted at the December 15, 2015 Council meeting, Staff were directed to report back on the following:

1. That Finance and Public Works staff confirm how much has been spent from the Keele Valley reserve to date for the projects and initiatives in the Maple area:
2. That staff explore the feasibility of using the Keele Valley Reserve on a go forward basis to fund streetscape and floral displays city wide, with priority being given to the Wards that are severely deficient; and
3. That staff prepare a list of possible projects in each Ward that could be funded from this reserve and report back to Council by June 2016:

Terms of Reference for the Beautification Strategy

From Council's directive, staff embarked on an analysis of horticulture operations, how areas and locations should be identified and how to equitably distribute horticultural assets. Staff also took into consideration Canada 150th anniversary celebration and how the City could celebrate this year long event through legacy projects in each Ward.

Beautification is a subject of interest to all constituents of a municipality and one that is passionately debated, yet there is no commonly accepted view of beautification. No peer municipality has been able to put forward a system of metrics to guide beautification efforts. This represents a leadership opportunity for Vaughan Staff to develop such a system.

A study was commissioned to understand what beautification means to the constituents of the City of Vaughan and to understand the strategies implemented by the City of Vaughan's peer municipalities.

In order to obtain a local understanding of beautification, a number of surveys were developed aimed at several target groups. Staff contacted peer municipalities and community groups and, provided an online survey for City of Vaughan citizens and City staff.

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The findings showed:

- That there are no definite parameters established by other communities.
- Along with other methods, municipalities employ horticulture to enhance the beautification of streetscapes in priority areas.
- Common assets utilized included floral displays, hanging baskets, planters, trees, as well as signage, banners and murals.
- Constituents focus was on flowers and shrub beds as the most important beautification presentation.

Methodology

The data gathered from the research revealed valuable insights into our current practices, challenges, and suggestions for a beautification strategy that is tailored specifically to Vaughan.

The qualitative research conducted was an in-depth review of available information on municipal websites as well as in depth questionnaires sent to appropriate departments of those municipalities. The questions were developed to address the following objectives:

- Determine current definitions of beautification.
- Determine if a beautification strategy was being implemented.
- Understanding the beautification priorities.
- Establish whether quantitative metrics are in place to measure beautification.
- Determine the extent and sources of funding for beautification.
- Determine whether beautification is a municipal wide effort or driven by small number of departments.
- Determine the level of community involvement in the beautification effort.

To assist in understanding constituents' views and preferences a survey was conducted utilizing social media channels. The City of Vaughan Corporate Communications Department launched this survey through the City's website and received 289 responses.

Community groups, Kleinburg Business Improvement Association, Thornhill Garden and Horticultural Society, Woodbridge Horticultural Society and York Fusion Gardening were also provided with questionnaires.

Twelve (12) municipalities were selected based upon population size approximately similar to Vaughan, proximity to Vaughan and reputation for beautifying their municipality. Eight (8) municipalities responded to the survey, most municipalities employ horticulture to enhance beautification of streetscapes in priority areas. Horticulture is also used by some municipalities for destination parks.

Proposed Levels of Service

The level of service introduced in the beautification strategy is derived largely from the system used by Vaughan's Urban Planning division of Development Planning Department. The reasons for adoption of this system are:

- To ensure resources are being distributed as the result of a transparent, fair and independent process that reflect the values of the community.
- To enable the implementation of a maintenance regime that is aligned with the new classification system.

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- To facilitate a smooth transition of horticultural assets from Development Planning to Horticulture as both organizations will utilize a common language and planning framework.

The levels of service are broken down into four (4) categories:

- Basic
 - Low urban intensity
 - Minimal pedestrian connections
 - No distinctive community identity
 - Little opportunity for economic development and/or no space for upgrades
- Standard
 - Urban intensity
 - Moderate pedestrian and vehicular traffic
 - Ratepayer association
 - Limited opportunity for economic development or space for upgrades
- Enhanced
 - Higher urban intensity
 - Good pedestrian accessibility
 - Popular commuter route
 - Active Heritage site
 - Good opportunity for economic development or space for upgrades area
- Premium
 - High urban density
 - Significant Civic/Cultural importance
 - High traffic volume
 - Significant community identity
 - Key area for economic development
 - Space available for upgrades

Prioritization Factor

Using a prioritization scheme gives Staff the opportunity to use horticultural resources more effectively.

Several criteria can be used to identify those locations that can make the largest impact from a beautification investment. Considerations include the civic and cultural importance of the site, visibility to both pedestrian and vehicular traffic, its linkage in terms of the community, the ability to drive tourism and economic activity, proximity to an area acknowledged significant and the opportunity to accommodate horticultural investment.

Criteria Factors:

- Identified urban location
- Pedestrian connections to other areas
- High travel demand
- Community identity is present
- Identifies as a key area of economic development or tourism
- Proximity- adjacent land use supports upgraded streetscape
- Opportunity/space exists for upgrade

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Relationship to Term of Council Service Excellence Strategy Map (2014-2018)

In consideration with the strategic priorities related to the Term of Council Service Excellence Strategy Map (2014 – 2018), the strategy plan – *Vaughan A Beautiful Experience* will give clear direction for horticulture in the future, and with the implementation of new technologies, staff time will be maximized.

- *Invest, renew and manage infrastructure and assets*
- *Continue to cultivate an environmentally sustainable city*

Regional Implications

Staff will continue to work with the Region through the Municipal Streetscape Partnership Program funding application to collectively identify important gateways and features along Regional roads.

Conclusion

The new strategy will enable the City of Vaughan to fulfill the definition of beautification, making improvements in the public realm through the use of horticultural assets.

The beautification strategy takes Horticulture in a new direction. The implementation of the proposed framework will establish clear levels of service, which do not currently exist. It also set clear direction for the division and clear expectations for all stakeholders.

A new maintenance regime will be developed that will be tailored to the new site classifications with priority sites receiving the highest level of service and lower tier sites receiving levels of service in accordance to Horticulture's resourcing levels.

It will also enable the City to meet the expectations of the residents who have expressed, through the survey the importance of flowerbeds, shrubs and trees making a city beautiful.

Finally, it will put the City of Vaughan in a leadership position for a Horticultural strategy compared to other municipalities.

Attachment

1. Vaughan A Beautiful Experience.

Report prepared by:

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(A copy of the attachments referred to in the foregoing have been forwarded to each Member of Council and a copy thereof is also on file in the office of the City Clerk.)