



Report to: Economic Development Committee

Meeting Date: April 24, 2017

SUBJECT: Support for Markham's Food and Agricultural Industry
PREPARED BY: C. Kakaflikas ext.6590

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report dated April 24th entitled "Support for Markham's Food and Agricultural Industry" be received as information.

BACKGROUND:

At the Economic Development Committee meeting on November 21, 2016, Culture and Economic Development staff presented "Markham 2020: Success by Design, Performance Review of the City's 10 Year Economic Strategy". Council adopted the report findings and asked that staff review and report back on ways in which the City supports the agricultural industry.

DISCUSSION:

The City of Markham preserves agricultural lands for farming activity through its Official Plan in accordance with provincial and regional planning policy. Section 3.7 of the City's Official Plan sets out policies adopted by Council to preserve agricultural land on a long term basis with a minimum of disruption from incompatible uses "to encourage the farming community to maintain long range farm planning and soils management".

Markham's Sustainability Plan, entitled "Greenprint" further reinforces the City's agricultural land use preservation policies citing the strategic importance of long term food security and health of the community. Further, Markham's corporate strategic plan entitled "Building Markham's Future Together" identifies "Building a safe and sustainable future", as one of the four strategic goals of the Corporation of the City of Markham.

The Culture and Economic Development Department in partnership with its stakeholders, undertakes activities to support the development of the food and agricultural industry. The focus of this report is to provide Council with an overview of initiatives underway in support of the food and agricultural industry in Markham.

Markham-led Activities in Support of the Food and Agricultural Industry

1. The Markham Agricultural Advisory Committee is a volunteer advisory committee established by Council in 2010 following the recommendations of an Agricultural Assessment Study conducted in 2009. The MAAC provides advice and recommendations to Council on issues concerning Markham's agricultural community. The committee receives support from Legislative Services and Communications, Sustainability and Asset Management, and Development Services.

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2. The City of Markham's Culture and Economic Development Department seeks opportunities to develop and promote the Agri-Food sector through the following:
- a) **Markham Thrives:** Through the department's tri-annual newsletter, the City of Markham promotes and showcases business achievements and economic development success stories. The current edition of Thrives features one of Markham's food producers, "Top Tomato Foods" which was bestowed the Premier's Award for Agrifood Innovation Excellence in 2016.
 - b) The **Markham Small Business Centre** hosts educational and training workshops for businesses on a variety of subjects including digital marketing, business planning, and bylaws, permits, licenses and health regulations. Several food production businesses have attended these sessions. In addition, a number of food based businesses have been launched through MSBC's Starter Company youth grant program including specialty ethnic foods reflective of the community.
 - c) **ventureLAB**, Markham's Regional Innovation Centre, has worked with over two dozen food related companies, assisting them with business planning, market research, and product innovation. In February 2017, one of ventureLAB's food industry clients, "Good Food for Good", moved to Markham from North York. ventureLAB assisted this high potential food entrepreneur with securing a \$30,000 grant from the Ontario Centres of Excellence. Part of the investment is being used to open a small food production facility at Warden and Denison, in Markham.
 - d) **Destination Markham.** Among the objectives of the Destination Markham strategy currently under development, is to identify and promote distinctive Markham experiences and to draw residents and visitors to Markham attractions including culinary and agri-food attractions.
 - e) The Culture and Economic Development Department staff collaborate with Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs Economic Development Advisors on food-related initiatives brought forward by prospective and/or new business entrepreneurs. Staff help identify regulators and funding strategies for clients seeking to start or expand an agri-food business.
 - f) Provide support for and participate in York Region led agricultural industry initiatives (as outlined below).

Regional Municipality of York-led Initiatives in support of the Food and Agricultural Industry

1. York Regional Council created the York Region Agricultural Advisory Liaison Group in 2001 as a means to support the agricultural industry in York Region. The Group comprises representation from several associations across the region including the Markham and East York Agricultural Society. The Chair of the

York Region Agricultural Advisory Liaison Group, Kim Empringham, is also a member of the Markham Agricultural Advisory Committee (MAAC).

2. York Region is currently engaging a consultant to undertake a “York Region Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy” in consultation with the York Region Agricultural Advisory Liaison Group. The objectives of the strategy are to:
 - Gain an understanding of the current trends and forces impacting agriculture and food in York Region
 - Gain an understanding of the economic impact of the agri-food sector in York Region
 - Identify agricultural sub-sectors with the greatest potential for creating and sustaining employment and investment in York Region
 - Identify strategic priorities to support and grow the agricultural sector in York Region
 - Identify potential partners and opportunities to work collaboratively on common issues around agriculture and food in York Region

The consultant is currently undertaking Part One of the strategy focused on a literature review, stakeholder consultation, and metrics for measuring agri-food sector performance in York Region. Markham Culture and Economic Development staff are participating in the stakeholder consultation phase and are facilitating introductions to food related companies and interested stakeholders in Markham. Part Two of the strategy, the economic impact analysis, will begin in May and the final Agriculture and Agri-food strategy will be delivered by the consultant in September 2017. Markham staff will continue to take part in the strategy development process.

3. Marketing Activities: YorkScene and Central Counties Tourism produce marketing materials that package and promote agri-tourism attractions in York Region including local farmers markets, “pick your own” produce farms, and wineries. Examples of marketing materials include the Farm Fresh and Pumpkin Trail maps available online and in print.
4. The Director of Culture and Economic Development participated in the York Region Agriculture Advisory Liaison Group’s (YRAALG) Agri-Food Innovation Tour aimed at exploring opportunities to enhance Economic Development across York Region through the Agri-Food sector.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Not Applicable.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not Applicable.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Supporting Markham's food and agricultural industry aligns with the following areas of strategic focus: Engaged, Diverse and Thriving City; and Safe and Sustainable Community.

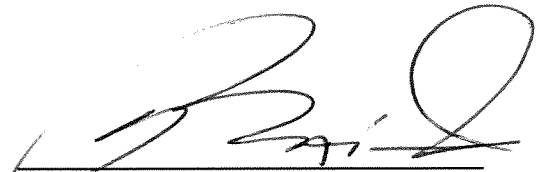
BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Not Applicable.

RECOMMENDED BY:



Stephen Chait, Director, Culture
and Economic Development



Jim Baird, Commissioner
Development Services