



Report to: General Committee

Meeting Date: April 3, 2017

SUBJECT: City Wide Streetscape Beautification
PREPARED BY: David Plant – Manager, Parks Operations

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the report dated April 3, 2017 titled City Wide Streetscape Beautification be received AND
2. THAT staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to advise on future streetscape deployment strategies.

BACKGROUND:

The streetscape beautification program was originally implemented in 1978 on the 3 Main Streets (Unionville, Markham and Yonge Street) due to the lack of boulevard area to plant traditional flower beds. As the City continued to grow, Operations received requests for additional horticultural streetscape enhancements resulting in a total City wide inventory of 2,665 baskets/barrels/planters being deployed in 2008. As part of the 2009 budget process, Operations realigned the program with reductions which adjusted the total levels to approximately 1,500 baskets, barrels and planters City wide in 2009. The current streetscape beautification program has undergone refinements since 2009 but has not kept pace with the changes that have occurred with growth as the Town grew into a City.

The present streetscape beautification program is focused on established deployment and quantities within six wards of the City. The current program does not represent all wards, nor does it address any issues regarding sustainability. Converting a large number of smaller planters to large self watering planters presents the opportunity to more closely align with Markham's Greenprint Sustainability goals through increased water efficiency and emissions reductions. Additionally, one of the primary objectives of the City's Public Realm Program is to increase pride in our public spaces that results in better usage, calmer streets and community engagement.

Within the current streetscape beautification program exists an opportunity to modify the program to have plantings strategically deployed to high impact locations representing all eight Wards within the City to present a more visually impactful streetscape Citywide. As the City begins preparation for the celebration of Canada's 150th birthday, our visual presence should be given additional focus to proudly mark this occasion for the citizens of Markham while working within existing approved budgets.

CURRENT PROGRAM REVIEW:

The current streetscape program places emphasis on the historic community main street areas of the City and is not an equitable representation across the entire City. Areas identified many years ago as community hubs have changed with development and expansion making them ineffective as locations for streetscape plantings.

One of the ongoing challenges of container streetscaping is the commitment of time and resources required to water and fertilize the material on a daily basis. While these smaller planters fit well into a main street setting, their capacity to survive without daily watering is very limited. Staff has made adjustments to plant selection to utilize more drought tolerant plants.

The original objective of the streetscape beautification program was to add colour and vitality to the 3 community main streets of Thornhill, Unionville, and Markham. Over time, additional areas were added which were intended to represent community hubs like Victoria Square, Denison Street, and Middlefield Road. With growth beyond these immediate areas, the original objectives of the program is no longer being met as cars either bypass the area or travel through it at a high rate of speed.

In an effort to accurately assess the current streetscape deployment throughout the City, staff observed traffic flow and speeds Citywide to better understand what options may present better solutions.

Most notably, we observed the following situations in our existing streetscapes which were identified as missed opportunities.

1. Planters and baskets placed in areas where they became virtually invisible due to the high rate of speed and volume of vehicles.
2. Planters placed in areas where the plants materials are regularly vandalized and removed making the planters ineffective.
3. Planters and baskets placed in areas which were once major thoroughfares and have now become local roads
4. Planters placed directly in front of private businesses within main street deployments which do not represent any City interest.
5. Planting beds within City median strips and at the entrances at community gates that lack any colour or appeal due to overgrowth of materials and weeds.

PROPOSED SUSTAINABLE STREETSCAPE PROGRAM:**1. PRINCIPLES/DESIRED OUTCOMES**

To ensure that the Markham streetscape program is effective and relevant to all residents of the City, there are key deliverables that should be clearly identifiable. These deliverables are as follows.

- Beautification of the City as a whole should be the primary objective so regardless of the ward number you can experience beautification.

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- Streetscaping should contribute to traffic calming as colour enhances stark areas and provides visual interest to hard landscape elements.
 - Sustainability should be at the core of the program to maximize water conservation opportunities while providing high quality plantings, identifying opportunities to convert annual plantings to drought resistant perennials where suitable.
 - Emerging destination areas within the City should be promoted to recognize additional community business areas and reflect a citywide approach to beautification.
 - Our municipal seat of government should be a welcoming place (Everybody Welcome) that reflects our innovation, inclusion and heritage and supports our corporate initiatives as the public's main meeting place and destination for residents and tourists.

2. STREETSCAPE PROGRAM ELEMENTS

- Hanging baskets and heritage style barrels in business areas and larger high impact planters at highly visible intersections.
- Community entrance features repurposed to remove overgrown and unpleasing materials and replace with low maintenance drought resistant colourful perennials.
- Pollinator gardens and demonstration gardens at City facilities complete with signage to provide public education and promote pollinators.
- Civic facilities where the public meet including libraries, community centers and Civic Centre treated with a combination of annuals at building entrances, perennials in parking lot island beds and road entrance beds, and pollinator demonstration gardens incorporated into the green space to allow public engagement.
- New emerging destination/business areas to promote community engagement.
- Continuation of fall bulb planting in high impact areas with Canada 150 commemorative tulips planted in place of traditional colours for spring 2017.

3. DEPLOYMENT PRIORITY AREAS

- Civic Centre raised planters to be arranged with impactful low maintenance annuals to showcase our municipal seat of government.
- Civic Centre sign bed to be planted to celebrate Canada's 150th birthday and showcase our seat of government. (This planting bed will be subject to review for the 2018 budget year to ensure alignment with City objectives)
- Hanging baskets and street level planters on the three historic main streets (Yonge Street, Main Street Unionville and Main Street Markham) while recognizing two new destination/business areas on Bur Oak Avenue and Cathedral High Street.
- Establish twenty seven new high impact locations with planters to be deployed at key intersections across all eight wards.

4. BENEFITS OF NEW SUSTAINABLE STREETScape

More eligible placements of streetscapes across all 8 wards of the City, that will promote the Greenprint – Markham’s Sustainability Plan.

Cost effective solutions that promote all forms of sustainability through the effective implementation of:

- Equitable distribution of high visibility horticulture Citywide.
- Self watering planters which reduce watering frequency schedules.
- Drought tolerant annual and perennial plants.
- Traffic calming throughout the entire City by softening hardscapes with colour.
- Defined neighborhood gateways with lower maintenance colourful plants.
- Conversion of selected annual plantings to perennial plantings such as beds on Town Centre Boulevard.
- Addressing problem areas from public input.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The costs associated with the 2017 Citywide Streetscape Beautification program will be within the approved budget of \$89,839.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS:

No staff impact.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

This revised streetscape beautification program aligns with the City’s sustainability, environmental and financial priorities.

OPERATING BUDGET AND LIFECYCLE IMPACT

There is no change to the existing operating budget and the replacement cost of planters has been included in the Lifecycle Reserve Study,

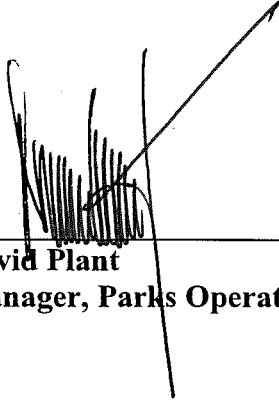
BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

- Finance
- Sustainability and Asset Management
- Operations

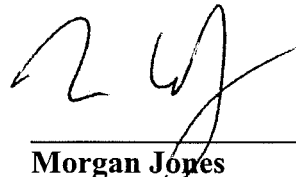
CONCLUSION:

Staff recommends that the City realign its current streetscape program focusing on achieving both Green print and Public Realm strategy objectives in all wards of the City. In addition to continuing to deploy planters in our historic business districts, newly identified business districts and high visibility locations across all 8 Wards of the City

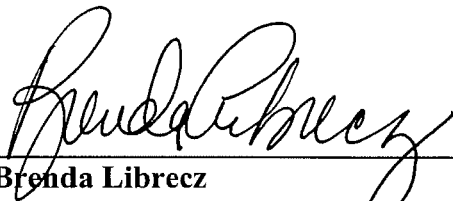
will round out the program. The new streetscape program will promote continuity of communities and allow all Markham residents to experience beautification and benefit from sustainable outcomes and informed public realms.



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