



Corporate Report

NO: R241

COUNCIL DATE: December 15, 2008

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council DATE: December 11, 2008
FROM: General Manager, Finance & Technology FILE: 1850-20
SUBJECT: Neighbourhood Matching Grants Program

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

1. approve a Neighbourhood Matching Grant Program as generally described in this report with an allocation to the program of \$25,000 for 2009 and direct staff to develop an appropriate policy and procedures for Council approval in relation to the process of awarding grants under this Program; and
2. authorize staff to forward a copy of this report to the delegation from the Surrey Association of Sustainable Communities that appeared before Council regarding this matter.

BACKGROUND

On June 16, 2008, Bonnie Burnside and Rick Hart of the Surrey Association of Sustainable Communities (Surrey ASC), attended Council-in-Committee to present Council with the outcomes of the "Building Strong Communities" workshop held in May 2008. The purpose of this workshop was to identify mechanisms to activate the community. The Surrey ASC has requested that Council consider providing small matching grants to unofficial groups to improve and celebrate their neighbourhoods as a mechanism to promote community development. Council directed staff to report back on such an initiative.

DISCUSSION

Council provides community support to local non-profit organizations in various ways; these include Local Government Act tax exemptions, Council-directed projects (Council Initiatives), on-going leases, crime prevention initiatives, business and tourism grants, community art matching grants, recreation partnership matching grants, and one-time grants. However, there currently is no mechanism for small unofficial groups to access funding that would help them

improve or celebrate their neighbourhood. Based on research, both Seattle and Los Angeles have successfully implemented “Neighbourhood Improvement” initiatives that provide funding to small groups for neighbourhood beautification improvements.

One of Council’s stated priorities for the City is “city beautification”. One of the objectives of the Plan for the Social Well-being of the Surrey residents is to encourage citizen engagement. Staff is of the view that the introduction of a matching grant program for neighbourhood groups to beautify and celebrate their neighbourhood would assist the City of Surrey in achieving the above-stated beautification priority and citizen engagement objective. One of the purpose of such a program would be to enhance the streetscapes of the City by providing a funding source for a small-scale projects initiated by neighbourhood groups and organizations. The funding will enable groups to take more direct responsibility for the civic spaces in their neighbourhood through beautification projects. The program would also provide small matching grants to neighbourhoods for the purpose of holding a neighbourhood celebration.

The City would provide funding to match funding, volunteer labour and/or donated goods and services raised by the neighbourhood.

In general terms, to be eligible for match funds for beautification projects, the project would meet the following general criteria:

- have demonstrated neighbourhood support for the project in the immediate environs of the project;
- have approval from all immediately adjacent property owners;
- be completed in no more than 12 months;
- be located on publicly accessible property (right-of-way, neighbourhood common area etc.);
- be within the City’s legal jurisdiction to permit;
- be designed for low maintenance and the project must include a maintenance plan to which the neighbourhood commits to responsible for fulfilling;
- be safely implemented by volunteers; and
- be sponsored by a neighbourhood-based group that commits to over-seeing the project implementation and maintenance.

Types of project that would be considered under the program would include, but would not necessarily be limited to:

- **Neighbourhood Identity** – installation of entrance beautification, flower beds, shrubs, landscaping, etc.
- **Other Physical Improvement** – the installation of street furniture or other physical features (i.e., benches, garbage receptacles, street light banners, etc.)
- **Recognition** – Neighbourhood Beautification Day, property owner awards program, etc.
- **Community Building** - a neighbourhood festival or celebration, a street clean up day, a citizen engagement workshop, etc.
- **Maintenance** - cleaning/painting of street furniture, graffiti clean up, mural refurbishing, sidewalk clean up, etc.

Subject to Council approval of the recommendations of this report, staff will develop a policy and procedures for Council approval that will guide the process for awarding grants under this Program.

In relation to the first year of the program in 2009, funding of \$25,000 should be allocated to this initiative, which has been included in the 2009 proposed City Grants budget that will be considered by the Finance Committee, on December 16, 2008.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that Council approve a Neighbourhood Matching Grant Program as generally described in this report with an allocation to the program of \$25,000 for 2009 and direct staff to develop an appropriate policy and procedures for Council approval in relation to the process of awarding grants under this Program.

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