

Township CIP program boosts local business

By Mark Pavilons

Small business is the hub of activity in the community. If you're looking for help in sprucing up your storefront, the Township is more than willing to help out.

The Township offers funds to local businesses for physical improvements, through the Community Improvement Plan.

There have been several successes over the past 16 months that the program has been in place.

According to Jamie Smyth, King's economic development officer, five grants have been dished out to date, with two more applications pending.

In his report to council, Smyth pointed out there are some 270 properties in village cores that could be eligible for financial incentives. Brochures were sent out twice to all property owners within the areas eligible for grants. The four-page brochures are regularly hand delivered to businesses.

'Partners In Prosperity,' a motto developed in the fall of 2015, accompanies the signage provided to successful grant recipients, pointing to the Township's support in the program. The benefits of the program were stressed to participants in the three inaugural business forums held earlier this year in Nobleton, Schomberg and King City.

Testimonials and an infomercial were produced and are available on King's website and social media channels.

Smyth pointed out the videos highlight some of the 'quick wins' where property owners made good use of the funds.

'These additional promotional tools should be beneficial at garnering further interest and ultimately successful grant recipients for the program,' Smyth said in his report.

Word of mouth is also spreading the message and proving effective.

Smyth noted the application process has been designed to be simple, 'nimble' and responsive. Some applications, though, have had challenges in obtaining quotes, drawings, plans and photographs.

While it's straightforward, it does require a significant amount of time on staff's part to respond and consult with the applicants.

The Township has allocated a substantial amount of money. In 2016, \$18,554 was given to three recipients. In 2016, a total of \$41,446 was available in the grant reserve fund and two applicants received \$5,354. Any money left over will be offered next year.

Smyth pointed out the CIP takes a long-term approach to revitalization. That's why it needs to be responsive to see results.

'... it was critical that the program establish some quick wins that have set the tone and act as successful case studies for future interest in and promotion of the program.'

The financial incentives under the plan encourage owners to make the improvements. The Township must also take a leadership role to help with village revitalization and prosperity.

Strategies undertaken by the Township can also go a long way to boost the commercial centres of the three villages. King should continue to look at streetscaping improvements, acquiring and improving land and leading the way with further studies to support community vision.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer lauded the program, noting we have to keep encouraging people to take advantage of it.

The visible improvements help, and are quite noticeable, according to Councillor David Boyd, who's had some Nobleton businesses take advantage of the funds.

Councillor Cleve Mortelitti added it's 'really good to see tangible results.'

Mayor Steve Pellegrini is pleased the program is 'picking up steam.'

For more on the CIP, visit [king.ca](#) or contact Smyth's office.