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Council sustains CIP?grant program

By Mark Pavilons

The importance of boosting small business in King hasn't escaped the notice of local councillors.

Council approved a staff report, calling on sustained efforts to promote grants in the Community Improvement Plan, and cementing the CIP as essential to the overall visions and goals of all three major communities in the municipality.

According to Economic Development Officer Jamie Smyth, the CIP?was adopted back in the fall of 2014, with council approving ongoing funding. This financial incentive program has been actively promoted and directed at businesses and property owners for more than two years.

?Getting Down to Business ? Guide to Starting or Expanding your Business??was launched on www.economicking.ca this past February. The video provides local testimony of the program's success and is seen as an effective marketing tool.

Smyth noted some 180 properties in village cores could be eligible for this program. Direct mail packages were sent out to all property owners within the villages in 2015 and again in 2016 and 2017.

During his presentation to council, Smyth pointed out that with recent applications, 5 out of 9 properties were new businesses to King. Three out of 9 were converted from residential to commercial assessments.

For every $1 the Township pitched in, applicants contribute another $18.50, making this a win-win for everyone.

The application process is designed to be simple, ?nimble and responsive??Smyth noted. A new CIP?Review Committee Checklist has been created to aid the program administrator and committee during the review and approval process.

It's a bit difficult to peg the impact and value of the program. Certain measures are used, including total dollar value of investment, number of successful applications and square footage of created commercial space.

Smyth explained the primary purpose of the CIP is to ?enable financial incentives to assist in the revitalization of private property and encourage improvements in accordance with the design guidelines of the plan.?

Smyth did stress the municipality needs to take a leadership role in helping in the revitalization of King City, Nobleton and Schomberg. Strategies and action plans, in the areas of design guidelines, banner policies, sidewalk repairs, street furniture, etc., can all help in this regard.

Staff created a worksheet to assist other staffers and councillors to align, prioritize and monitor all relevant strategy programs.

A total of $45,161.77 was distributed to seven recipients in 2015 and 2016. There is still some $30,000 in grant reserves. A total of almost $70,000 was available in 2017 and so far, $36,821.53 has been distributed. There are currently two applications pending.

Smyth said staff expect the full $70,000 to be allocated by the end of the year. Any remaining balance will go back into the CIP?reserve.

?The CIP?takes a long-term approach to revitalization,? Smyth said. ?This change will take time, and is best accomplished through incremental, small improvements that will add up to big changes over time.?