
TO: Mayor Kogon and Members of Council

SUBMITTED BY: Rebecca Taylor, Business Development Officer

DATE: June 17, 2019

SUBJECT: Gritty to Pretty 2.0 Beautification Program

ORIGIN: Recommendations in *Centre First: Downtown Amherst Action Strategy*, suggestions in the tourism assessment of the Northumberland Shore by Destination Development International (Roger Brooks), and a new Beautification and Streetscaping Program funding opportunity from Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Affairs.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY: MGA Section 48 (3): *In addition to matters specified in this Act or another Act of the Legislature, the Council may adopt policies on any matter that the Council considers conducive to the effective management of the municipality.*

RECOMMENDATION: That the Gritty to Pretty 2.0 beautification program be referred to the June 24, 2019 regular meeting of Amherst Town Council for approval.

BACKGROUND: The DMA's Beautification and Streetscaping Program is designed to support the development of attractive and inviting areas where visitors are enticed to spend money in a municipality. Key investments can rejuvenate areas, foster local pride, encourage economic development and enhance the character of municipalities.

Several commercial properties in Amherst could benefit from improvements to facades, signage, and exterior lighting. These improvements would enhance Amherst's tourism development.

In 2018, the Town of Amherst partnered with the Amherst & Area Chamber of Commerce to deliver a Gritty to Pretty program with \$25,000 in funding from the Department of Municipal Affairs. All of the program funding was disbursed toward beautification improvements of commercial properties.

This year, an application for program funding requested \$25,000, with \$6,000 requested to update a vacant downtown building for use as a visitor information centre and \$19,000 requested for commercial property beautification and streetscaping projects. The DMA approved \$20,000 and staff would like to allocate the full amount toward commercial property beautification and streetscaping projects.

DISCUSSION: An application for funding was submitted to the Department of Municipal Affairs to establish a program in Amherst that would offer grants for commercial property beautification and streetscaping projects, up to 50% of eligible expenses, to a maximum of \$4,000 per



property. The Town of Amherst has been approved for \$20,000 grant. The DMA requires grant funding to be distributed through a partner organization and the Amherst & Area Chamber of Commerce is willing to administer the grant application, approval, and disbursement process.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS: There are no financial implications for the Town of Amherst, as the funding will be received by the Town and then disbursed to the partner organization.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Commercial property owners throughout Amherst were contacted through the process to determine an interest in participating. The Amherst & Area Chamber of Commerce and the Amherst Area Heritage Trust were consulted and are supportive of the concept.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS: All work done through the program must comply with any applicable municipal, provincial, and federal environmental regulations.

SOCIAL JUSTICE IMPLICATIONS: The program guidelines encourage barrier-free improvements with smooth ground-level entrances, wide doorways, clearly visible signage and handrails to facilitate accessibility for people with physical limitations.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve the Gritty to Pretty 2.0 Program.
2. Do not approve the Gritty to Pretty 2.0 Program.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed Memorandum of Understanding
2. Proposed Design Guidelines & Information Package