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**Subject:** Public Realm Investment Program Summary and Achievements

**Report to:** Planning and Economic Development Committee

**Report date:** Wednesday, November 6, 2019

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## Recommendations

1. That the Public Realm Investment Program achievement details **BE RECEIVED** for information.

## Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to provide an overview and update of the Public Realm Investment Program (PRIP) to the Planning and Economic Development Committee.
- Launched in 2016, PRIP is a funding partnership program administered within the Planning and Development Services Department by the Urban Design and Landscape Architecture Section, and receives an annual budget of \$250,000.
- The program provides Local Area Municipalities (LAMs) with funding for individual streetscaping enhancement projects and public spaces along or adjacent to regional roads.
- In four years, PRIP has partnered on 20 projects, awarded almost \$1,000,000 of funding, leveraged \$5,275,282 in capital investment, and assisted in the delivery of impactful and transformative projects across nine municipalities.
- Monitoring the projects implemented through the program provides Council with evidence of the benefits of investment in the public realm.

## Financial Considerations

### 2016

In 2016, the PRIP pilot was launched with a one-time budget of \$250,000. Applications to the program were received from 7 municipalities for 10 projects with a total funding ask of almost \$700,000. Combined, the projects receiving an award had a total value of almost \$1,800,000. In this initial year, the program did not require LAMs to match the Regional commitment. The PRIP pilot verified the need for a focused public realm funding program for spaces along or adjacent to regional roads.

### 2017

In 2017, PRIP built on the success of the pilot program and received a council approved base budget of \$250,000 through the 2017 budget process. The program included a requirement for matching funding and was expanded to cover a larger suite of

enhancements. As with the 2016 pilot, the 2017 program was oversubscribed with a total funding request of \$504,000 for projects from five LAMs. Combined, the projects receiving an award had a total value of \$817,000.

## 2018

In 2018, PRIP continued to build on the success of the previous two years, and received a council approved base budget of \$250,000. The 2018 program was oversubscribed, with a total funding request of \$484,620 for six projects from six local area municipalities. Combined, the projects receiving an award had a total value of \$2,102,412.

## 2019

In 2019, PRIP received a council approved base budget of \$250,000. The 2019 was oversubscribed, with a total funding request of \$467,500 for six projects from four local area municipalities. Combined, the projects receiving an award had a total value of \$566,000.

Table 1 – PRIP Project Funding Summary by Municipality (2016-2019)

| <b>Municipality</b> | <b>Total PRIP Funding</b> | <b>Municipal Investment</b> | <b>Total Project Values</b> | <b>No. of Projects Funded</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Fort Erie           | \$17,000                  | \$13,000                    | \$30,000                    | 1                             |
| Grimsby             | \$27,000                  | \$76,000                    | \$103,000                   | 2                             |
| Lincoln             | \$75,000                  | \$35,000                    | \$110,000                   | 2                             |
| Niagara Falls       | \$129,310                 | \$2,632,209                 | \$2,761,519                 | 2                             |
| NOTL*               | \$10,000                  | \$51,000                    | \$61,000                    | 1                             |
| Pelham              | \$42,000                  | \$42,000                    | \$84,000                    | 2                             |
| Port Colborne       | \$0                       | \$0                         | \$0                         | 0                             |
| St Catharines       | \$100,000                 | \$124,000                   | \$224,000                   | 1                             |
| Thorold             | \$0                       | \$0                         | \$0                         | 0                             |
| Wainfleet           | \$0                       | \$0                         | \$0                         | 0                             |
| Welland             | \$219,190                 | \$375,453                   | \$594,763                   | 4                             |
| West Lincoln        | \$380,500                 | \$925,500                   | \$1,306,000                 | 5                             |
| <b>Total:</b>       | <b>\$1,000,000</b>        | <b>\$4,274,162</b>          | <b>\$5,274,282</b>          | <b>20</b>                     |

\*NOTL project withdrawn by municipality in 2017

Each year PRIP has been oversubscribed with demand for partnership funding exceeding the available annual program budget of \$250,000. Demand will continue to grow as LAMs and the Region invest in the quality and design of public realms. The creation and implementation of a Regional Complete Streets Standards Manual in the near future will elevate the design standards of regional roads. PRIP funding will be integral to support the municipal and regional collaboration in building successful public realm spaces and vibrant and complete regional roads. PRIP funding can supplement local municipal funding of projects to leverage exceptional outcomes.

## **Analysis**

On July 9, 2019, staff provided a memo to the Planning and Economic Development Committee outlining the 2019 PRIP funding allocations (PDS-C 13-2019). Staff committed to providing an overview of completed projects to the Planning and Economic Development Committee in the fall of 2019. Monitoring the success of projects implemented through this program provides Council with an understanding of the benefits of investment in public realms.

PRIP has been well received by the LAMs and has been utilized by 9 of the 12 LAMs. The program has been able to leverage available funding to achieve quality design and construction outcomes. This success can also be attributed to the technical and design assistance offered to the LAMs by the Region's Urban Design and Landscape Architecture team. A collaborative approach to design through the program is delivering impactful and transformative projects that promote a positive image of Niagara.

### **Program Overview**

The Public Realm Investment Program was launched in the fall of 2016 and is now in its fourth year of providing funding to local area municipalities for streetscaping enhancement projects along regional roads. The aim of the program has been to partner with LAMs to strategically enhance streetscapes by investing in projects in a way that increases the transformative impact of these works. The program offers LAMs funding for over 40 different enhancements in categories ranging from hardscaping, complete streets infrastructure, road crossing measures, street furniture, landscaping, community identity and wayfinding, and environmental sustainability features.

### **Award Process**

Funding for projects is provided through a competitive process. LAMs are invited to apply. Included in the invitation is a complete application package and the scoring criteria against which projects are evaluated. Completed applications from LAMs are evaluated by a technical team of Regional staff from Planning and Public Works and scored for funding priority based on the evaluation criteria. Barring any technical issues, a letter of funding commitment is provided to the LAM outlining the scope of the funding. The Planning and Economic Development Committee is informed of the funding commitments through a funding award memo.

### **Awarded Project Status**

A total of 20 projects have been assigned funding through PRIP. Nine projects have already been completed successfully. Eight projects are currently either under construction or are in the final planning stages prior to tender. One project was withdrawn from PRIP by the municipality in 2016, and the status of two projects in

Pelham with a total Regional commitment of \$42,000 (\$12,000 in 2017 and \$30,000 in 2019) is pending municipal budget approval at this time.

For a full listing of PRIP funded projects since 2016, please see Appendix 1.

## **Alternatives Reviewed**

None.

## **Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities**

Ongoing support for the Public Realm Investment Program supports a number of Council's strategic initiatives in the following ways:

### **Supporting Businesses and Economic Growth**

- Objective 1.1: Economic Growth and Development
  - PRIP applies a forward thinking approach to economic development in Niagara through public realm investment opportunities which help to transform regional roads into vibrant places that attract people and investment.

### **Healthy and Vibrant Community**

- Objective 2.1: Enhance Community Well-being
  - PRIP helps to foster safe and inclusive neighbourhoods and communities through providing streetscape enhancements along regional roads which focus on increased accessibility, consider Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, and provide comfortable, enjoyable public space for people to participate physically, socially, and economically in their communities.

### **Responsible Growth and Infrastructure Planning**

- Objective 3.3: Maintain Existing Infrastructure
  - PRIP supports sound asset management planning to ensure sustainable investments in our infrastructure by partnering with local municipalities and coordinating streetscape design on infrastructure renewal projects to achieve higher quality outcomes for communities, and eliminating the duplication of efforts.
- Objective 3.4: Facilitating the Movement of People and Goods
  - PRIP supports the implementation of Niagara's Transportation Master Plan through the application of Complete Streets in transportation projects, contributing to safe and healthy streets that support active transportation by providing collaborative funding and design support to make the most out of Regional and municipal contributions to projects.

#### Sustainable and Engaging Government

- Objective 4.1: High Quality, Efficient and Coordinated Core Services
  - PRIP offers the opportunity to achieve cost-efficiencies through coordinated service delivery and collaboration with local area municipalities on public realm enhancement projects.

#### Other Pertinent Reports

- PDS-C-13-2019 Public Realm Investment Program Funding Commitment Update

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#### Appendices

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|------------|-----------------------------|--------|
| Appendix 1 | PRIP Project Summary Table  | Page 6 |
| Appendix 2 | 2019 PRIP Application Guide | Page 8 |