

Report to Council

Report Title:	Spruce the Bruce Enhanced Program		
Prepared By:	Paulette Peirol, Community Development Coordinator		
Department:	Economic Development		
Date:	December 14, 2021		
Report Number:	ED2021-10	File Number:	C11ED
Attachments:	Spruce the Bruce Committee Report, Spruce the Bruce Review – MDB Insight		

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby accept Report ED2021-10 - Spruce the Bruce Enhanced Program, prepared by Paulette Peirol, Community Development Coordinator, for information.

Report:

Background:

Bruce County conducted a thorough review of its “Spruce the Bruce” community development program earlier this year, through MDB Insight. Over 10 years, the program has supported over 450 businesses and organizations, including municipalities such as Brockton, and businesses in downtown Walkerton. The MDB Insight report is attached. Its key recommendations include:

- Expand Spruce the Bruce to create an “industry stream” in addition to the “community stream” for downtowns
- Modernize policies, zoning bylaws, etc to facilitate innovative investment opportunities
- Expand the geographic scope of municipal Community Improvement Plans (CIPs), and incentives for a range of economic sectors
- Assist with rebranding for any municipality that is interested
- Increase collaboration with stakeholders
- Develop a clear, results-oriented investment attraction strategy for Bruce County
- Fix bottlenecks
- Communicate and measure impacts of program

The recommendations were approved by the County in August, 2021, and staff consulted with local economic development officers about changes to the STB program in the Fall.

Analysis:

The county's Enhanced STB Community Development Program is outlined in a Nov. 18th report to its Planning and Development Committee (see attached). It will include an updated guide and staff support for communities wishing to join the program, or looking to make updates and refresh their community toolkits. (Walkerton's community toolkit includes the blue and white Walkerton logo and branding, "Clean Water Living.")

The Enhanced STB Program will include two grant streams: a Community Stream with financial incentives for commercial businesses in downtown cores; and a new Industry Stream to address regional issues such as housing and transportation, and support a broader range of businesses and operations.

To qualify for Industry Stream grants, municipalities will have to broaden their CIPs. This was noted in the report, which encourages municipalities to expand the geographic scope of their CIP by-laws to enable the disbursement of financial incentives outside the downtown. "It is important to note that the first step is for each municipality is to update their CIP, as financial incentives can only be offered to applicants within the CIPs."

Fortunately, Brockton is in the final stages of updating and expanding its CIP to meet this criteria. Staff have been working to ensure that the new Brockton CIP aligns with the county's proposed initiatives, so Brockton businesses will be able to take advantage of them. This will be coming to Council early in the New Year.

The Enhanced STB program is expected to launch in the first quarter of 2022, with \$125,000 budgeted for both the Community and Industry streams. This is the same amount that was budgeted for the program over the past 10 years, even though incentives will be expanded.

There is an opportunity to partner with the county to leverage CIP budgets and match STB funds for various programs, as the municipalities of Huron Kinloss and South Bruce Peninsula have done – sharing the cost with the county and grant recipient three ways, rather than splitting it 50/50 with the business.

The Enhanced STB program will contain the following additional incentives for businesses and organizations:

Community Grant Stream:

- Building Interior Renovation Grant
 - For commercial properties within the downtown core

Industry Grant Stream:

- Business Accessibility Adaptability Grant
 - To help businesses adapt and renovate to accommodate people with disabilities
- Enhanced Product Development Grant
 - To assist tourism businesses adapt to the impacts of the pandemic
- Destination Infrastructure/Active Transportation Grants
 - Capital improvements to core attractions like the Bruce Trail, Saugeen River, Rail Trail, beaches, etc. related to parking, restrooms, staging and lookouts
 - Projects that make a bike friendly community

- Signage to improve visitor experiences
- Projects that connect destination infrastructure to the downtown core
- Capital improvements to improve forms of active transportation, including walking, cycling, rollerblading, water focused activities (paddling, etc) and winter activities like snowshoeing
- Agri-food Innovation Grant
 - To encourage investment in technologies or innovations that create efficiencies in production, labour and supply chains, for example, that reduce or replace labour intensive production practices, reduce food waste in the supply chain, or vertical farming.
- Residential Improvement Grant
 - To support rehabilitation of existing residential units and/or construction of new units. Includes renovations in mixed-use buildings, and conversions of excess commercial and vacant spaces to create additional residential units. Can also be used for vacant lots to be converted to mixed use or residential use, where two or more units are created.

The Enhanced STB program is designed to address emerging issues in housing and transportation, as well as widen the envelope of incentives for industries and businesses beyond the commercial cores of the county.

Brockton is in a good place to take advantage of the initiatives proposed. We bring this to Council's attention for information purposes and awareness of programs proposed to help business, housing and industry in 2022.

Sustainability Checklist:

What aspect of the Brockton Sustainable Strategic Plan does the content/recommendations in this report help advance?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| ● Do the recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision? | Yes |
| ● Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Cultural Vibrancy? | N/A |
| ● Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Prosperity? | Yes |
| ● Do the recommendations contribute to Environmental Integrity? | Yes |
| ● Do the recommendations contribute to the Social Equity? | N/A |

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective?
N/A

Reviewed By:



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Respectfully Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paulette Peirol".

Paulette Peirol, Community Development Coordinator

Reviewed By:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sonya Watson".

Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer