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Item No. 10
Halifax Regional Council
January 13, 2015

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY:

Bob Bjerke, Chief Planner & Director, Planning and Development

DATE: December 15, 2014

SUBJECT: Urban Orchard Pilot Project

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

January 28, 2014, Regional Council, Item 11.3.2: **Mayor's Conversation on a Healthy and Liveable Community**. In a motion passed by Regional Council, staff were directed to develop and implement an urban orchard pilot project plan, including possible sites, best practices, and a funding and process framework with the aim of establishing an urban orchard pilot project in HRM within the scope of the Urban Forest Master Plan as part of the 2014/15 Budget Year.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter-Section Two-Purpose of Act:

Purpose of Act

2 The purpose of this Act is to:

- (a) give broad authority to the Council, including broad authority to pass by-laws, and respect its right to govern the Municipality in whatever ways the Council considers appropriate within the jurisdiction given to it;
- (b) enhance the ability of the Council to respond to present and future issues in the Municipality; and
- (c) recognize that the functions of the Municipality are to
 - (i) provide good government,
 - (ii) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality, and
 - (iii) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

BACKGROUND

Regional Council has adopted Healthy Communities as a Core Priority Area. In order to identify key opportunities and initiate the development of a Healthy Communities implementation framework, a public engagement event, *The Mayor's Conversation on a Healthy and Liveable Community* was held in October 2013. Participants expressed interests in enhancing active transportation, fostering local food production, and improving accessibility. Further discussion of the need to promote local food production and food security resulted in a recommendation to develop an urban orchard pilot project. The initiative is consistent with the Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP) goal to increase the amount of edibles available from the urban forest. It is also in line with similar food security objectives outlined in the Regional Plan.

DISCUSSION

The Municipality's first urban orchard project was implemented on Saturday, October 18, 2014. Seven fruit trees and over one hundred berry shrubs were planted by volunteers at Leighton Dillman Park on the Dartmouth Common. The project was developed in cooperation with Halifax Diverse of the Atlantic Chapter of the Sierra Club Canada Foundation and members of the Dartmouth Common Community Gardens. Best practices research and a consultation workshop were conducted by a UFMP research team under the direction of Dalhousie University's Dr. Peter Duinker. Project funding was provided in part by a \$4,000.00 grant from Tree Canada's Edible Trees program. Grant money was used to purchase plant materials as well as provide two public events at Leighton Dillman Park. Site design and preparation was supervised by staff horticulturalists and arborists.

October's planting was preceded by several months of consultation, planning and research with the project partners. Members of the Dartmouth Common Community Garden group provided overall leadership in the selection and planting of the orchard. The group is also committed to the long term care of the area.

Work is underway to expand the pilot project and explore further urban orchard opportunities with an additional nine groups that are currently part of the Municipality's Community Garden program. The Parks and Recreation Department will provide planning and material resources and ongoing support under the auspices of its existing Community Garden program. An urban orchard training workshop will be scheduled for these community garden groups in March 2015.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report. Funding for the Program is provided under project CP990001 Street Trees.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

On June 26, 2014 an urban orchard consultation workshop was held at Dalhousie University. Background information on Halifax's urban orchard initiative and on successful orchard projects in other cities was compiled in a discussion paper distributed to guests prior to the workshop. Participants included community garden leaders, agriculture professionals, health workers, and community and environmental interest groups. Several Halifax staff and Councillors also took part in the event.

A public event was held at Leighton Dillman Park on September 27, 2014. The urban orchard project partners were on hand to display an urban orchard concept plan for the park and to answer questions from the public.

ATTACHMENTS

None

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.php> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

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