



**Subject: Rural Economic Development Program – Transfer Agreement**

**To: Council**

**From: Chief Administrative Office**

Report Number: 2022-61

Meeting Date: March 22, 2022

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### **Recommendation:**

That Chief Administrative Office Report 2022-61 be received; and

That Council approve the Transfer Agreement in Appendix A between The Corporation of the City of Port Colborne and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs for funding from the Rural Economic Development Program; and

That a by-law to enter into the Transfer Agreement with the provincial government be brought forward.

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### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the outcome of an application to the Rural Economic Development Program and to request approval for an agreement between the City and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA).

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### **Background:**

The Rural Economic Development (RED) Program provides funding for municipalities, not-for-profit organizations, Indigenous communities, and local service boards for projects that remove barriers to investment, open doors to economic development in small and rural communities, help facilitate economic diversification, build community capacity and create jobs. The program has two project streams: Strategic Economic Infrastructure and Economic Diversification and Competitiveness.

Acting on recommendations in the Economic Development Strategic Plan 2018-2028, specifically the goal of refreshing Port Colborne's image as an attractive place to invest,

live, and visit, staff in the Economic Development & Tourism Services Division submitted an application to the Strategic Economic Infrastructure stream of the RED Program on October 1, 2021. This application presented a project called “West Street Renewal Project: Connecting the City’s Waterfront and Downtown” and consolidated several related projects into one. As originally introduced in Report 2021-248, this project is focused on new and updated signage, improved safety and accessibility, streetscaping features, and landscaping amenities.

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## **Discussion:**

OMAFRA recently notified staff that the City of Port Colborne will receive \$77,520 for the West Street Renewal Project, which represents the full 30% that the City was eligible to receive. The Niagara Region will also contribute \$15,000 to this project, bringing the total funding amount to \$92,520. Once the funding agreement with OMAFRA is signed and submitted, the City will have until September 2023 to complete its renewal of West Street.

To position the City’s RED application for a successful result, staff worked with a landscape architect on a concept plan that would help OMAFRA representatives visualize what a transformed West Street could look like. This concept plan is a starting point for discussion and will be further refined over the next two months before going to Council and the community for feedback. Staff believe that any future changes to West Street should coincide with the waterfront redevelopment and revitalization plan for the south end of West and King Street.

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## **Internal Consultations:**

The Economic Development & Tourism Services Division has consulted and will continue to consult staff in Corporate Services and Public Works.

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## **Financial Implications:**

Contributions from OMAFRA and the Niagara Region will provide the City with \$92,520 for its West Street Renewal Project. The total budget for this project is projected to be \$300,000. Some of the remaining 70% (or \$207,520) of the project budget will be drawn from the 2022 Capital Projects Budget. Specifically, the Promenade improvement project 22C-PW-B41 that has a remaining balance of \$250,000. In an effort to lessen the reliance on this budget, staff have identified other government funding programs that may offer financial support.

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## **Public Engagement:**

This project will include continued consultations with the Downtown Port Colborne BIA and local businesses on West Street, including those along the West and Princess Street corridor.

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## **Strategic Plan Alignment:**

The initiative contained within this report supports the following pillars of the strategic plan:

- Attracting Business Investment and Tourists to Port Colborne
  - City-Wide Investments in Infrastructure and Recreational/Cultural Spaces
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## **Conclusion:**

\$92,520 in contributions from OMAFRA and the Niagara Region will give the City additional funds to complete its West Street Renewal Project. Staff look forward to bringing back to Council a more detailed concept plan as well as a breakdown on financing this spring.

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## **Appendices:**

- a. RED5-09735 – Transfer Agreement
- b. By-law – RED Transfer Agreement

Respectfully submitted,

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**Report Approval:**

All reports reviewed and approved by the Department Director and also the City Treasurer when relevant. Final review and approval by the Chief Administrative Officer.