



Community Planning and Development Department

Wednesday, November 06, 2024

Subject: Proposed Membership in the Greening the Landscape Research Consortium

Recommendation:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive Report 2024-0250 Proposed Membership in Greening the Landscape Research Consortium, for information;

AND THAT Council direct staff to become members and collaborative partners within the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre's Greening the Landscape Research Consortium, including a \$5,000 membership for three consecutive years, to be funded through the Community Planning & Development Operating Budget.

Background:

The Town of Pelham has been invited to become a member of the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre's Greening the Landscape Research Consortium (herein referred to as 'Consortium'). The Consortium conducts scientific research, supports industry collaboration, and facilitates the transfer of knowledge to advance the collective capacity of key groups involved in urban forestry. Members of the Consortium define research priorities, drive the development of research studies, and collaborate closely with other key players and experts in urban forestry across Ontario. While the Consortium operates out of Vineland Research and Innovation Centre's central hub in Niagara, membership is open to organizations across all of Ontario.

This report outlines the benefits and advantages for the Town of Pelham in becoming members of the Consortium, particularly for contributing to and advancing the Town of Pelham's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, as well as the Corporate Climate Adaptation Plan. The Town's Environmental Coordinator position, which was created as a shared role with the Town of Lincoln in May 2024, is closely aligned with this initiative. This role is responsible for advancing climate adaptation strategies and green infrastructure projects, making it well-suited to support and

integrate the Consortium's research and collaborations into the Town's environmental goals.

This report is written to endorse the Town of Pelham joining the Consortium as a member on a three-year trial basis. In return for a three-year \$5,000 annual membership, the Town of Pelham will advance their understanding of green/environmental initiatives and assist with various projects. This proposal does not contemplate or require any increase in staffing for the Town of Pelham.

Analysis:

The Consortium is a critical platform for fostering collaboration and addressing urban forestry challenges through scientific research and knowledge sharing. Since its inception in 2021, the Consortium has brought together 24 members, including numerous municipalities, conservation authorities, nurseries, landscape architects, and other key stakeholders, to tackle our shared challenges and urban forest needs.

The first phase of the Consortium's research, spanning June 2021 through July 2024, centered on five research studies that addressed climate-resilient tree canopies, bridging connections and collaboration between tree producers and planters (e.g., nurseries and municipalities), influencing public perceptions of tree planting and management, establishing best practices for tree establishment and maintenance, as well as developing training and tools for tree planting and maintenance.

Because urban tree challenges are too big for one group to solve, the Consortium provided a unique opportunity for members of this important work to come together and build a unified approach to inform and support shared efforts in greening the landscape. The Consortium Research Team is currently working to set new goals and research priorities that will guide the development and growth of sustainable, resilient urban spaces through Phase 2 of the Consortium. The attached workplan outlines the strategic priorities and case studies for the next phase of research (2024-2027).

Key Benefits of Membership:

1. Supporting Strategic Priorities

The Town of Pelham's Strategic Plan emphasizes key areas such as environmental sustainability, enhancing public spaces, and community well-being. Membership in the Consortium directly supports these strategic priorities through:

Environmental Sustainability and Climate Adaptation: Directly aligning with the Strategic Plan's goal *to prioritize actions that continue to protect and conserve our*

natural environment, the Consortium's research will provide data and innovative solutions that will enhance Pelham's urban green spaces, improving the quality and functionality of our public spaces, while fostering long-term sustainability.

Additionally, the Town's Corporate Climate Adaptation Plan emphasizes the need to bolster local resilience to climate impacts. Membership in the Consortium will allow the Town of Pelham to leverage immediately applicable research and tools to enhance tree canopy, low-impact development solutions, etc., thereby mitigating heat island effects, flood risks, and community vulnerability.

Community Well-being: As part of the Strategic Plan's goal to *enhance quality of life*, the Consortium's focus on greening urban spaces will support the Town of Pelham's initiatives to create healthier public spaces. Increased green spaces which are healthy, resilient, and attractive can contribute to improved mental and physical health, air quality, access to shade, and more.

2. Demonstrating Leadership in Sustainability

Membership in the Consortium will position the Town of Pelham as a regional leader in sustainable urban development and environmental stewardship, reflecting Pelham's strategic emphasis on *innovation and leadership*. This membership will not only give staff access to current and innovative research in urban forestry, but it will also enhance our reputation as a municipality committed to leading by example in urban forestry and sustainable practices. This also aligns with the Town's Corporate Climate Adaptation Plan's vision to be proactive in addressing climate change, setting an example for neighboring municipalities and encouraging collaboration for broader environmental impact.

3. Accessing Expertise and Networking Opportunities

The Consortium provides access to leading research and expertise, offering opportunities to:

Learn from Experts: Staff can leverage the knowledge of specialists in sustainable urban forestry to guide and enhance our projects within the Consortium and the Town more broadly, directly supporting our commitment to innovative and effective solutions.

Collaborate and Network with Key Actors in Urban Forestry: The Consortium brings together all key players in urban forestry, including multiple municipalities within Niagara and beyond, professional associations, academic researchers, consultants, developers, suppliers, nurseries, non-governmental organizations, and other landscape professionals across Ontario. These relationships often extend beyond activities in the Consortium, allowing for opportunities to build strategic

partnerships, share resources, and collaborate on projects that advance mutual goals.

Stay Informed: Participation in industry workshops, tours, and seminars can help ensure our municipality remains at the forefront of best practices, research, and trends in urban forestry and green infrastructure.

Financial Considerations:

Becoming a standard member and collaborative partner with the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre's Greening the Landscape Research Consortium has a cost of \$5,000 per year with a 3-year commitment.

Alternatives Reviewed:

There is no obligation for the Town to participate in the Consortium; accordingly non-participation is a viable alternative.

Strategic Plan Relationship: Environmental and Climate Change Adaptation

This initiative has the chance to support environmental stewardship, support the larger connecting environment in the Region and increase Pelham's green/environmental profile. By working with other municipalities and local partners, Pelham can attain a greater understanding and increase professional support.

Consultation:

N/A

Other Pertinent Reports/Attachments:

Appendix A: Greening the Landscape Research Consortium Work Plan (2024-2027)

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