

Staff Report

Council Meeting Date: April 28, 2025

Subject: ECDEV-2025-12 Spruce the Bruce Grant Update

Report from: Jennifer Isber-Legge, Economic Development Coordinator

Attachments:

Recommendation

Be It Resolved that Council hereby approves Report ECDEV-2025-12 Spruce the Bruce Grant Update;

AND approves offering Community Improvement Plan Incentive Grants through the Bruce County Spruce the Bruce platform, to support 50% of eligible project costs for applicants within Arran-Elderslie, up to a maximum total program amount of \$17,540.47.

AND FURTHER that Council approves an exemption to the Municipal Procurement By-law to allow for the purchase holiday lights for Tara from Classic Displays in order to align with the design recommendation of the Tara Community Working Group.

Background

On January 13, 2025, Council approved offering Community Improvement Plan (CIP) Incentive Grants through Bruce County's Spruce the Bruce program, committing to fund 1/3 of applicable project costs for eligible applicants, up to a maximum of \$20,000. A total of \$2,459.53 was awarded through three successful grant applications. Bruce County's program funding was fully allocated, and the Spruce the Bruce application portal was closed at the end of March.

On January 27, 2025, Council endorsed five Municipal project applications to the Spruce the Bruce program. All five municipal projects have since received full approval and are moving forward as planned.

1. Community Marketing Grant – Chesley Parks and Trails
 2. Community Marketing Grant – Washrooms with Wow
 3. Streetscape Beautification Grant – Banners for Tara
 4. Streetscape Beautification Grant – Main St Bridge Parkette, Chesley
 5. Streetscape Beautification Grant – Holiday Lights in Tara
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Analysis

To continue supporting business and property owners in our downtowns and contribute to revitalization efforts, the Municipality of Arran-Elderslie can utilize the remaining \$17,540.47 through the Spruce the Bruce platform. This funding can be used to offer matching grants, covering 50% of eligible project costs for approved applicants.

At the time applications closed, six Arran-Elderslie businesses had expressed interest in the grant opportunity.

To continue with the momentum of Spruce the Bruce and to support Arran-Elderslie businesses staff is recommending continuation of the program with 50% support from the municipality (instead of 1/3 County of Bruce and 1/3 Municipality of Arran-Elderslie) using the remaining funds from the 2025 budget.

The program would be administered by Bruce County, focusing on four eligible project categories, while the Municipality would promote the initiative as an Arran-Elderslie grant opportunity.

Project Category	Max Project Expenses	Business	Arran-Elderslie
Façade Improvement	\$8,000	\$4,000	\$4,000
Perpendicular Signage	\$1,500	\$750	\$750
Awning Grant	\$2,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
Fascia Signage	\$2,000	\$1,000	\$1,000

Update on Arran-Elderslie Spruce the Bruce Projects

1. Chesley Parks and Trails
 - Currently gathering content for a new printed brochure, downtown signage, and website updates.
 - Design work begins early June, with project completion targeted for mid-July.
2. Washrooms with Wow
 - Summer Tourism Students will collect information on public washroom facilities.
 - Design work starts June 16, with partial installation before end of July and full completion by end of August.

3. Banners for Tara

- Banner design recommendations will follow the May Tara Community Working Group (TCWG) meeting.
- An accessible picnic table is also included for downtown Tara; location and color to be confirmed after the May TCWG meeting.

4. Main St. Bridge Parkette, Chesley

- Conversation is underway with contractors to install a solid surface, fencing, signage, décor, and an accessible picnic table.
- Design recommendations will follow the May Chesley Community Working Group meeting.

5. Holiday Lights in Tara

- The TCWG selected a green tree with a white star design, reflecting Tara's signature green and a more general holiday theme to allow extended seasonal display.
- TCWG reviewed options from multiple vendors and selected Classic Displays (Mississauga, ON).

Staff is requesting an exemption from the procurement by-law to proceed with this vendor in alignment with TCWG's design preference.

Link to Strategic/Master Plan

6.2 Supporting Businesses and the Local Economy

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding/Link to Procurement Policy

Funds allocated in the 2025 Economic Development budget as a Strategic Initiatives and Downtown Revitalization.

Approved by: Emily Dance, Chief Administrative Officer