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2007 YORK REGION VISITORS' GUIDE

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated February 27, 2007, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to update Regional Council on the 2007 York Region Visitors' Guide, a tourism public/private initiative.

3. BACKGROUND

The tourism Visitors' Guide is the cornerstone of the regional marketing strategy with the goal to increase revenues to area municipal communities and establishments. The Visitors' Guide provides comprehensive information regarding area Municipalities, attractions, accommodations, arts, theatre, dining, shopping, golfing, marinas, nature, event listings and more. The Visitors' Guide also provides complimentary listings for many community festivals, agricultural fairs and events.

The Visitors' Guide provides affordable advertising opportunities that allow regional tourism stakeholders an opportunity to partner with the region and leverage their limited marketing dollars.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The Visitors' Guide utilized the 2006 format changes that enabled the print quantity to double to 150,000 copies without increasing the advertising costs for the industry partners to participate, while providing a more compact, consumer friendly publication.

The creative design and advertising sales were facilitated in-house to reduce administrative costs. Quebecor World was chosen as the successful proponent to print the Visitors' Guide based on lowest price quotation.

Each year, the importance of the Visitors' Guide continues to build resulting in an increase of tourism business participation. This year's accomplishments include an increase of advertising partners from 152 in 2006, to 187 in 2007, (a 23% increase) resulting in the publication size increasing from 64 pages, to an 80 page Visitors' Guide in 2007.

The Visitors' Guide supports York Region's commitment to the Ontario Disability Act by identifying tourism facilities with wheel chair accessibility, the publication font size has been increased and an adobe acrobat pdf version will be posted on the tourism web site allowing individuals to adjust screen and print size.

4.1 Marketing and Distribution

The Visitors' Guide is marketed as the fulfilment piece for consumer inquiries generated from the various consumer advertising, promotional campaigns, and trade show participation as outlined in the Regional Council approved 2007 tourism marketing program. To further extend marketing reach, an electronic version will be available on the region's tourism website www.yorktourism.com.

The region contracts with the CTM Brochure Display Company to distribute the Visitors Guide from May through September. This service guarantees circulation to Greater Toronto Area Hotels, Attractions, Theatres, Corporate Businesses, Ontario Travel Centres, areas of Kawartha/Peterborough, Niagara Falls/St. Catharines, and South-western Ontario.

Staff also undertake an extensive distribution program throughout York Region and the Province via Chambers of Commerce, Tourist Information Centres, area Municipalities, Welcome Wagon, Travel Centres, Libraries, Industry partners, and Tourism Toronto.

4.2 Relationship to Vision 2026

The Visitors' Guide supports the goals related to the "Arts, Heritage and Culture Opportunities" and the "Vibrant Economy" sections outlined in Vision 2026.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The region's tourism business model is based on recovery of revenues through advertising sales and partnerships to offset the costs for production of the Visitors' Guide.

The net cost to print and distribute 150,000 copies of an 80 page Visitors' Guide was \$61,205.32.

The revenue generated by advertising sales totalled \$89,250, representing a surplus of just over \$28,000 (\$28,044.68), which is used to offset design costs and other tourism opportunities.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

This publication plays an integral role in driving new business and generating revenues into establishments in all area Municipalities. Increased revenues provide positive economic impacts through new employment opportunities, stimulates business growth and retention, and supports the sustainability of the tourism and related business sectors.

The Visitors' Guide is the only comprehensive regional publication which is marketed beyond York Region to drive overnight traffic from the Greater Toronto Area, Ontario and the United States to area Municipalities.

7. CONCLUSION

The Visitors' Guide is designed to generate revenues into the region and is an anchor component of the region's annual tourism marketing program. There is growing Municipal and tourism industry support and recognition for the region's tourism efforts and the Visitors' Guide plays an integral role in this success.

For further information about this report, please contact Brenda McGowan, Senior Tourism Promotion Coordinator, Economic Development Branch at (905) 830-4444 ext. 1553 or brenda.mcgowan@york.ca.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause was included in the agenda for the April 4, 2007 Committee meeting.)