

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE - JUNE 16, 2008

DOORS OPEN VAUGHAN 2009

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Community Services in consultation with the Director of Recreation and Culture recommends:

1. That the Doors Open Vaughan 2009 pilot project, be approved.
2. That the recommended work plan for the program as outlined in this report be implemented commencing in 2008.
3. That \$65,500 be allocated to the 2009 Cultural Services Operating Budget to cover the implementation of the program.

Economic Impact

The projected costs related to hosting a Doors Open Vaughan event is approximately \$70,500. Should Council approve this initiative for implementation as a pilot-project, costs associated with this event to be incurred in 2008 will be covered in the Cultural Services Operating Budget. The balance, a total of \$65,500, is to be added to the 2009 Cultural Services Operating Budget in order to fully implement the program.

Communications Plan

Communication of any Council decision on this matter will be related to the various advisory committees identified in this report. Additionally, any Doors Open event hosted by the City will require Corporate Communications to develop a comprehensive promotional plan to communicate and advertise the event.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to determine the feasibility of hosting a Doors Open Vaughan event that not only celebrates Vaughan's heritage/history, but also generates tourism interest, celebrates Vaughan's ethno-cultural diversity and contemporary or notable architectural buildings, landmarks and interiors.

Background - Analysis and Options

Council approved on November 26, 2007 a joint request from the Chairs of the Tourism Advisory Committee (VTAC), Arts Advisory Committee (AAC) and Community Equity & Diversity Committee (CEDC) that directs staff to conduct a feasibility study with respect to an annual Doors Open event in the City of Vaughan that examines the costs and benefits of such an event to improve the following:

1. The perception of Vaughan as an area of tourist interest.
2. The awareness on the part of the general public of significant examples of contemporary architectural and interior design styles within the City of Vaughan.
3. The appreciation by local residents of the diversity of the community in which they live as evidence by the range of religious, ethno-cultural, and institutional facilities across Vaughan.
4. Determine the feasibility of pursuing non-heritage sites that may be of interest to the residents/tourists.

Ontario Heritage Trust Criteria for a Community's Doors Open Event/Site

Doors Open Ontario is a province-wide celebration sponsored by the Ontario Heritage Trust that highlights a community's history and culture. A community hosting an event coordinates open house tours to sites of historic, architectural, natural or of cultural significance. Access to all sites must be free of charge to participants. Doors Open events first originated in Europe in 1984 and began in North America in 2000 and in Toronto in 2002. Since its introduction in Ontario, the Ontario Heritage Trust estimates there have been over 2 million visits to participating Doors Open Ontario sites. In 2008, there are approximately 55 municipalities participating in the Doors Open Ontario program. The program is designed to create access, awareness and excitement to sites and provide residents and visitors with a unique opportunity to explore sometimes hidden and interesting places and spaces in Ontario.

The City of Vaughan hosted its first Doors Open event on September 6 and 7th, 2003. Fifteen sites were featured that included City-owned heritage buildings/landmarks, places of worship, commercial businesses and privately-owned heritage homes. Approximately 200 visitors per day were reported at each site mainly from the Vaughan community and from across southern Ontario.

The Ontario Heritage Trust identifies a number of benefits to hosting a Doors Open event as follows:

- Promotes community pride and cultural awareness.
- Draws visitors from other areas of Ontario, Canada and abroad.
- Builds a legacy by integrating heritage and culture into community planning and events.
- Generates economic and business opportunities at the community level through programming and tourism packages.
- Creates opportunities for sustainable tourism development and partnerships.
- Maximizes tourism opportunities.

Although, the focus for events are encouraged to be "heritage" in scope, staff from the Ontario Heritage Trust encourage communities to be creative in planning their event. Heritage Trust staff have confirmed that while heritage is the primary focus for a Doors Open event, municipalities are encouraged to broaden the scope of their event to include sites that represent culture, architecture, natural and built heritage in a wide-range of ways. For example, eligible Vaughan sites may include those that represent the community's multi-cultural population such as its places of worship, festivals or events. Also acceptable are modern architectural or innovative buildings of architectural distinction, theatres, galleries and natural, cultural landscapes such as parks and open spaces.

A review of 2008 Doors Open tours across Ontario shows a number of sites are indeed modern or non-heritage in nature. Some of these sites include:

- County of Oxford LEED Administrative Building (Civic Centre)
- Lawson Nature Reserve, Oxford County
- Oxford Honey Processing Facility
- Thornton Water Treatment Facility (municipal water treatment plant)
- Toronto's BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir (Hindu Temple at Finch and Highway 427)
- Toronto's Don Valley Brickworks
- Mississauga's Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Temple
- Meadowvale Theatre
- Meadowvale North Reservoir and Pumping Station
- SMC Pneumatics Canada Ltd in Mississauga (manufacturer of pneumatic components)
- Aurora's Farmers Market

Tourism Capacity

Hosting a Doors Open event has the potential of bringing in hundreds of visitors to a community if an event is interesting and unique enough to feature sites that will draw people from across Ontario. Doors Open events have become popular over the years and have a large following across Ontario. Moreover, an event in Vaughan provides an opportunity to bring together Vaughan's multi-cultural community and create an awareness of landmarks, buildings and natural landscapes both contemporary and historical in character within the City to Vaughan and neighbouring communities.

In order to maximize tourism capacity, an innovative and interesting event must be organized. It is recommended that community partners be invited to take part in this event (i.e. business community, community service organizations, cultural organizations, historical societies/groups, performing and visual artists, etc) to deliver a uniquely-Vaughan event that will draw on a maximum number of visitors to the event.

Additionally, it will be essential to provide visitors with a meaningful and well-organized experience while taking part in a Doors Open Vaughan event. This will involve providing interpretive tours, cultural experiences, displays and information at each site. The event organizing committee and staff must make certain each site is manned with appropriate volunteers that will not only ensure public safety, but also deliver historical, architectural and cultural information to visitors. This will require volunteer cooperation from each participating group/site in sharing and endorsing a common vision for the event. Interpretive training and tourism/marketing expertise will be required to ensure a quality event is developed and implemented.

Program Implementation & Work Plan

1. Form Organizing Committee

A requirement to host a Doors Open event in Vaughan in 2009, is forming an organizing committee. Should Council approve undertaking this initiative, this should be done as soon as possible. The Committee should consist of a range of community partners, including members from the Tourism Advisory Committee (VTAC), Arts Advisory Committee (AAC) and Community Equity & Diversity Committee (CEDC), Heritage Vaughan Committee, Society, the business community (e.g. Chamber of Commerce, Kleinburg BIA), and representatives from the various cultural organizations in the community. This committee will form the vision, objectives and goals for the event and ensure all are achieved in a timely manner. Committee members will be integral in contacting community organizations to "open" their buildings and sites to the public and also serve as volunteers for the event.

2. Teaming-Up of Staff Resources

It is recommended that staff resources and expertise from the various City departments such as Recreation & Culture, Parks, Economic Development (Tourism), and Corporate Communications be teamed up to provide assistance to the project on an ongoing or on a "as needed" basis. Additionally, it is recommended that a part-time staff resource with cultural tourism experience (9-month contract) be hired to coordinate the project. This lead person will be responsible for generating interest and participation in the event with community groups and the Vaughan business community. Also, this person will ensure each site has informative interpretive tours and/or displays, organized and well-planned events or demonstrations, an adequate number of scheduled volunteers and a safe environment/area to visit.

3. Register and Confirm Sites with Doors Open Ontario by January 2009

Communities must have the ability to open a minimum of 12 sites and events must take place between April and October. At least 10 sites must be confirmed by January 2009 and an event date must be confirmed by this time as well. Registration and a registration fee will be required by December 2008.

4. *Soliciting Volunteers*

Volunteers will be a key factor in ensuring an event is successful. Volunteers will provide interpretive tours/information; manage visitors at each site and help carry out all aspects of the event.

5. *Brochure Tour Guide and Marketing Initiatives*

Staff will develop main brochure tour guide that will be distributed to each household in Vaughan. Additionally, this same information will be posted on the Doors Open Ontario website and distributed in the Doors Open Ontario booklet produced and distributed (an estimate 500,000 copies) by the Ontario Heritage Trust. Local promotional initiatives will also be developed in an effort to create awareness of the event in the community.

6. *Budget/Costs*

The following budget represents total costs to produce a Door Open event. It should be noted that costs may be off-set through securing sponsorship and partnership opportunities:

Graphic Design work for main brochure/tour guide with in-house photography and in house text write-ups	\$4,000
Brochure production/printing @ 100 thousand	\$15,000
Ad mail distribution to all Vaughan households/business	\$9,000
Marketing& Advertising	\$4,000
Registration fee to Doors Open Ontario	\$1,500
Banners/signage/handout for each site & mobile signs	\$5,000
Mileage	\$1,000
Opening Ceremonies	\$1,000
Staff (part-time contract)	<u>\$30,000</u>
TOTAL	\$70,500

Should this initiative be approved by Council for implementation as a pilot-project, the projected costs related to hosting a Doors Open Vaughan event is approximately \$70,500. Costs associated with this event to be incurred in 2008 will be covered by the Cultural Services Operating Budget. The balance, a total of \$65,500, is to be allocated to the 2009 Cultural Services Operating Budget in order to fully implement the program.

7. *Overall Benefits*

Potential benefits in hosting an event are mostly associated with a community development point of view and the primary benefits are as follows:

1. An increased number of visitors to the community by providing a unique cultural experience (i.e. historical, architectural, natural/outdoor, artistic, and culturally diverse).

2. An increased awareness and celebration of Vaughan's cultural, multi-cultural and business assets within the community for the benefit of visitors and for the residents of Vaughan.
3. An opportunity for cultural groups to collaborate, network and cultivate relationships and perhaps develop future partnerships.
4. An opportunity to advance Vaughan's cultural assets/sectors by providing an opportunity to showcase them at a local and provincial level.
5. An opportunity to develop a sense of place within the community by showcasing and identifying community cultural assets and opportunities.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020

In consideration of the strategic priorities related to Vaughan Vision 2020, the report will provide:

- STRATEGIC GOAL:
Service Excellence - Providing service excellence to citizens.
- STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:
Preserve our heritage and support diversity, arts and culture.

This report recommends a change from the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have not been allocated.

Regional Implications

There are no Regional implications associated with this report.

Conclusion

A Doors Open Vaughan event is an opportunity for the City to bring together Vaughan's multi-cultural community and create an awareness of landmarks, buildings and natural landscapes both contemporary and historical in character within Vaughan to residents and neighboring communities. It has the capacity to increase the number of visitors to the community by providing a unique cultural experience. It provides an opportunity for cultural groups to collaborate, network and cultivate relationships. It also has the potential to develop future partnerships and a chance to advance Vaughan's cultural assets/sectors by showcasing them at a local and provincial level. Lastly, an event can help develop a sense of place within the community by showcasing and identifying community cultural assets and opportunities.

Attachments

None

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Respectfully submitted,

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