

To:	Warden Milne and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	January 25, 2024
Subject / Report No:	CAOR-CW-01-24
Title:	Green Development Standards – January 2024 Update
Prepared by:	Rebecca Danard
Reviewed by:	Randy Scherzer
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	All
Status:	

Recommendation

1. That report CAOR-CW-01-24 be received for information; and
2. That a by-law be brought forward for Council’s consideration to authorize the Warden and Clerk to sign a contribution agreement with Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) for a \$445,600 grant from the Codes Acceleration Fund that will support and enhance the Green Development Standards project in partnership with Wellington County and Dufferin County.

Executive Summary

Creating Green Development Standards is one of the five key next steps identified in Grey County’s climate action plan “Going Grey in Grey”. Grey, Dufferin and Wellington Counties have joined together to collaboratively create Green Development Standards (GDS) for 3 upper tier and 24 lower tier municipalities which will be tailored to rural communities through extensive consultation. Each County committed \$75,000 towards this project, staff created an RFP and awarded the contract to Urban Equation and The Planning Partnership. Work began on this project in Q4 of 2023.

Staff also applied for external funding from NRCan’s Codes Acceleration Fund to support and enhance the GDS Tri-County project. In November 2023, staff received notification from NRCan that our application had been conditionally approved for funding, contingent on successfully negotiating a contribution agreement. The potential contribution from NRCan totals \$445,600, extends the project to March 31st, 2027, to include implementation phases, and includes support for additional training, a talent attraction plan, and a fully funded staff contracted resource to assist with implementation of the GDS in all three Counties. Staff recommend passing a bylaw to authorize the Warden and Clerk to sign the contribution agreement with NRCan which will enhance and support the GDS project.

Background and Discussion

Tri-County Green Development Standards Project

Creating Green Development Standards is one of the five key next steps identified in Grey County's climate action plan "Going Grey in Grey". In 2022 Grey, Dufferin and Wellington Counties came together to develop a unified approach to Green Development Standards. The project's objective is to develop and accelerate the adoption, compliance, and enforcement of a Green Development Standard in the whole region in consultation with the local municipalities, the development industry and others. The approach involves using a change management framework and creating resources and activities to support stakeholder engagement and adoption of the Green Development Standards that works for everyone.

The key activities include outreach and engagement with a variety of stakeholders through presentations, workshops, and webinars to advance the creation of a consistent framework. This project is innovative because it will collaboratively create Green Development Standards for 3 upper tier and 24 lower tier municipalities, customized for small rural communities. Benefits include avoiding GHG emissions; mitigating energy poverty; capacity building and innovation in the housing and development sectors; creating service efficiencies; investments in the regional economy; and creating communities more resilient to climate change. Ultimately, the project seeks to create a consistent development framework, offer resources and tools to accelerate the adoption of more efficient standards in energy and building codes in the region. Including these efficient standards at the construction stage is the most efficient time to incorporate these improvements to the building envelope and will help to reduce energy costs as well as expensive retrofits in the future.

Each County committed \$75,000 towards this project, and applied for external funding from NRCan's Codes Acceleration Fund in April 2023. Because there was uncertainty on whether funding would be received from NRCan, and given the delay in hearing about the funding, staff decided to proceed with a scaled back version of the project based on the funds committed to from each of the Counties that was included in the 2023 approved budget (\$225,000 total budget). Staff created an RFP and awarded the contract to Urban Equation and The Planning Partnership. Work began on this project in Q4 of 2023.

Codes Acceleration Funding

In November 2023, staff received notification from NRCan that our application had been conditionally approved for funding, contingent on successfully negotiating a contribution agreement. The potential contribution from NRCan totals \$445,600 and extends the project to March 31st, 2027. Eligible expenses can be claimed only after the contribution agreement is in place (expected February 2023). Current project expenses are being covered by the Counties' contributions.

The increase in funding supports and enhances the Green Development Standards project. Additions to the project include:

- Additional consultations with the public, municipal staff, and the development industry to identify gaps and challenges as well as solutions and incentives.

- Training and certification opportunities for capacity building (skill and knowledge development to assist in the implementation) for municipal staff, development industry, tradespeople, students and educators. Potential topics include modular construction, complete communities, energy efficient design/construction practices and appropriate density.
- Work with a consultant, external stakeholders and internal economic development teams to create a talent attraction plan to help address local industry capacity building regarding energy efficient/net zero design and construction practices.
- Compile and make available the resources developed throughout the process including plans and strategies, “playbooks”, tools and forms, recorded webinars, presentation slides, etc. This toolkit will assist other rural municipalities on creating Green Development Standards.
- Present and disseminate information through established networks and organizations to share learnings and best practices. For example: Western Ontario Warden’s Caucus, Rural Ontario Municipalities Association (ROMA), The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM), Eastern Ontario Warden’s Caucus, Association of Municipalities Ontario (AMO), Rural Ontario Institute, ICLEI Canada’s Livable Cities Conference, FCM Conference.
- Hiring a contract staff person for 2 years fully funded from the grant to facilitate the implementation of Green Development Standards in the region. This person will be hired once the Green Development Standards have been finalized and will act as a resource for municipal staff and developers in all three Counties.
- Annual recognition events to celebrate outstanding achievements in local green development.

Grey, Dufferin and Wellington have previously committed a total of \$75,000 each to support the GDS project; however, we anticipate that the final contribution from each County will be less than \$50,000 based on the support and enhancements provided by the NRCan grant. Any partnership contributions that are not used during the course of the project will be transferred back to the County partners. The Tri-County partnership funds allows the project to continue until the contribution agreement is in place and will cover any unexpected or ineligible costs over the course of the project.

Staff recommend that Council pass a by-law authorizing the Warden and Clerk to enter into a contribution agreement with NRCan to obtain the Codes Acceleration Funding. The Schedules that are specific to this project are attached to this report. The remainder of the agreement will be reviewed by staff once it is available from NRCan. Apart from the Schedules, the agreement text will be consistent for all projects supported by this funding. It is non-negotiable.

Legislated Requirements

Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.P.13 and Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c.25 – The provisions of the Planning Act and Municipal Act allow municipalities to include sustainable design of landscape elements and to provide municipalities with the option to require site plan drawings to show municipal green building construction requirements that will be authorized by the Building Code and established by municipal by-law.

Financial and Resource Implications

As noted previously, Grey, Dufferin and Wellington have previously committed a total of \$75,000 each to support the GDS project; however, we anticipate that the final contribution from each County will be less than \$50,000 based on the support and enhancements provided by the NRCan grant. Grey County's contribution to the project is funded from reserves. The contributions from the Counties allows the project to continue until the contribution agreement with NRCan is in place and will cover any unexpected or ineligible costs over the course of the project. The GDS project and the partner contributions have been carried over from the 2023 Budget. This is a multi-year project and therefore any funds not spent in 2024 will be carried over into subsequent budgets until the project has been completed (March 2027). Any partnership contributions that are not used during the course of the project will be transferred back to the County partners.

Creating the Green Development standards will require 0.3 FTE of staff time which will be provided as part of the existing Climate Change Team and has been built into the Climate Team's workplan between October 2023 – March 2025. Staff time costs for Grey County are an eligible expense for the project. Staff time costs at the partner municipalities (Dufferin and Wellington County) are not eligible for the grant funding. They will be contributing staff time as an 'in-kind' contribution to the project.

The implementation stage will require a two-year contract position April 2025 – March 2027. This person will be hired once the Green Development Standards have been finalized and will act as a resource for municipal staff and developers in all three Counties. This position will be fully funded by the NRCan contribution. In the unlikely event that the NRCan funding falls through, this position will not be hired. Other deliverables linked to the funding will be dropped from the project unless funding from another source is secured.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal: Clerks, Planning, Finance
 - AODA Compliance (describe)
 - Contribution to Climate Change Action Plan Targets (describe)

Green Development Standards will support the community goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from new buildings. It is one of the 5 Key Next Steps identified in Going Green in Grey.

- External: Wellington County, Dufferin County, NRCan

Appendices and Attachments

1. CAO-CW-01-24 Green Development Standards - NRCan Schedules