

REPORT FROM THE MANAGER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Re: 2024 Driftscape Subscription Renewal

RECOMMENDATION

That the report from the Manager of Economic Development dated Jan 3, 2024 be received;

And that Council approve the renewal of the Driftscape annual subscription for 2024 at an upset limit of \$6,888 plus tax

BACKGROUND

Elliot Lake completes the first year subscription to Driftscape on January 31, 2024. This product, which serves as a digital tour guide, has much great potential. Not only does the app feature points of interest, it also highlights dining, stay and shopping options. This easy to use application allows visitors to access information about the City, and the businesses that choose to be part of the app, 24 hours a day either on their mobile device or on the website.

The application is quickly gaining traction with 120,000 users and 8,000 monthly users. Neighbouring communities including Blind River and Manitoulin have also become subscribers, which adds to engagement in the area. Users can access information about the City either once they are in the area or elsewhere, which allows for pre-trip planning and another channel for promotion of the City's assets.

ANALYSIS

Tourism has been identified as a major economic driver for the city. Many tourists choose to explore independently and with the use of digital platforms. While welcome centers are very valuable, visitors may choose not to use them or may arrive after they close. Driftscape highlights all of Elliot Lake's points of interest as well as places to stay and eat. All other businesses were given the opportunity, for only \$10 per year, to be listed on the app and nearly 30 businesses have joined.

Staff have taken the opportunity to make the most of this resource by splitting its use among several departments including Recreation and Economic Development. Adoption in the first year has been slow for tourism, but recreation saw a boost in December with the Rock The Holidays Driving Tour. The app saw 5,267 views with 4,000 of them being tied to the driving tour. The most popular tourism engagement has been the downtown art walk. The application has been featured on the City's Explore Guide, at the trailhead and tent cards have been provided to select restaurants and hospitality providers.

On a go forward basis, staff will, at the recommendation of the Driftscape team, make more use of the self guided tour function which should increase usage even more.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The annual subscription is \$6,888 plus applicable taxes.

LINKS TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Establish a comprehensive marketing plan for the municipality by promoting the diverse strengths of Elliot Lake; highlighting its natural beauty and outdoor activity focused lifestyle to attract tourism, residents, and retirees. This plan should focus on both new and returning residents for both traditional and remote worker opportunities.

SUMMARY

Staff are recommending that Council approve the renewal of the Driftscape subscription for 2024 to bolster the City's tourism efforts.