



Department Source: Community Development - NS

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: September 17, 2018

Re: Adopt A Spot Beautification Program Report

Executive Summary

Council members have requested additional information regarding the Adopt-A-Spot Beautification (AASB) program in light of some beds lacking maintenance. This memo will share history and the current status of the program as well as steps that may be taken to improve the appearance of beds.

Discussion

History

The Adopt A Spot Beautification (AASB) Program started more than 20 years ago in conjunction with the creation of the Office of Volunteer Services. Starting with just a few beds, there now are 101 locations in the program. Currently, 85 have active volunteer adopters. Three beds are idle from the program as they have been redeveloped by a team including the Stormwater utility, the Office of Sustainability and Public Works, or will be in the coming 12 months. Thirteen locations are available for adoption.

Staff with Volunteer Programs, part of Neighborhood Services in Community Development, is responsible for managing the program. New adopters are oriented to the expectation for beds to be weed-free and have color throughout the growing season. Volunteer Programs provides mulch for beds once annually as well as annual flowers in the spring and bulbs in the fall. Plants are provided as needed for new or refurbished beds. Parks & Recreation pays for the cost of water; Volunteer Programs funds the maintenance for hydrants.

Volunteer Programs staff reviews beds two or three times each year with feedback given to adopters. Adopters of beds with on-going maintenance issues are communicated with directly and volunteers who do not meet program expectations are terminated from the program. Many beds are well maintained and have been for years.

When beds are between adopters, or adopters need temporary assistance, staff may find community service volunteers to assist, schedule group work days, or pay a vendor to complete maintenance. The Public Works Department has also provided assistance to some beds with their temporary staff.

Staff in Public Works, Sustainability, Volunteer Programs and Storm water are working together to evaluate modifications of several locations throughout the City to find lower maintenance options for each group's responsibilities. This includes analysis by Public Works and Sustainability to determine the potential maintenance costs for different styles of landscaping, including staff costs and direct costs. That examination is still in its early



development. While some facets are known, staff are in the process of figuring out what types of projects could work best at various locations, identifying potential cost savings, and determining other impacts including aesthetics, mowing responsibilities and environmental impacts. Some sites have been tried with success, but the transferability of that to the larger AASB program needs to be explored. The changes and research currently under way may help with potential Climate Action and Adaptation Plan initiatives.

Challenges

There several challenges to the operation of the AASB Program:

- The number of beds has increased significantly over the last 20 years as more medians and roundabouts have been added to the City that include landscaping.
- Successful adopters take on a huge responsibility. Many of the beds are more than 200 square feet. The work is physically demanding and many times in locations very near traffic. Volunteers who join the program have good intentions but the time and effort required for success is great.
- The City has few resources for beds that do not have an adopter or when a volunteer is not meeting program goals. Volunteer Programs has maintained some beds this year by using an outside vendor. Funds are not available to do this as a routine. Public Works has improved a few larger roundabouts to decrease the City's mowing responsibility. Knowledge from that has been used to assist adopters with native plantings and other options. Parks & Recreation cares for several locations throughout the City and downtown that are not part of the AASB program. Neither department has resources dedicated to maintaining the number of beds without volunteer adopters.

Options for improving the program

Volunteer Programs staff are beginning a quality improvement project for the AASB program and propose the following actions in the next year, with the assumption that no additional funds are available to support the program:

- Focus on recruitment of new volunteers to help care for the 13 available beds with outreach emphasized in January – March 2019 in advance of the growing season.
- Continue to use a third party vendor for maintenance for unmaintained beds to the extent of our available funds.
- Remove inactive beds from the program if volunteers are not found to care for them within a specific timeframe. The end result may be relinquishing beds to MO DOT or Public Works-Streets to be hardscaped or planted in native vegetation, xeriscape or (less likely) turf depending on the location.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: N/A

Long-Term Impact: N/A



Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Primary, Secondary Impact: Secondary, Tertiary Impact: Tertiary

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Primary, Secondary Impact: Secondary, Tertiary Impact: Tertiary

Legislative History

| Date | Action |
|------|--------|
| n/a | n/a |

Suggested Council Action

Acceptance of this report.