

Status of Report – Exploration of Municipal Partnership with Vung Tau City, Vietnam**Report Purpose**

To update Council on formal discussions for strengthening the current municipal relationship through a friendship or sister city agreement.

Recommendation

THAT the Exploration of Municipal Partnership with Vung Tau City, Vietnam report be brought back to Council on the revised date of April 7, 2020.

Original Due Date: Q4 2019

Revised Due Date: Q2 2020

Council and Committee History

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| December 11, 2018 | THAT Administration report back to Council in Q1 of 2019 on the advisability of strengthening Strathcona County's existing municipal to municipal relationship and ties with Vung Tau City, Vietnam in the context of a formal economic relationship (building on already developed relationships between our respective communities), and that the report contain recommendations on how to proceed. |
| April 30, 2019 | THAT the Mayor, on behalf of Council, send a letter to Vung Tau City to initiate formal discussions for strengthening the current municipal relationship through a friendship or sister city agreement, and send copies of the letter to the Ambassador of Vietnam to Canada and the Chairman of Ba Ria –Vung Tau Province to make them aware of this correspondence; and THAT, subject to receipt of a favourable reply, Administration develop, for Council's consideration, a framework for such an agreement. |

Rationale

The government of Vung Tau City, Vietnam received Council's letter dated April 30, 2019. The initial response has been positive, although we do not have an official written response from Vung Tau City. Representatives from Vung Tau City have indicated in conversations with the Mayor's Office five pillars of interest they wish to pursue in an agreement with Strathcona County:

1. Economic development

Vung Tau is interested in bolstering their economic development in the areas of tourism, oil and gas service and engineering, and market development. As the region is also a petroleum based economic centre and a strong agricultural region, there are opportunities to exchange information on creating efficiencies in both industries.

2. Designated as a Smart City

Vung Tau is to implement smart city technology and are planning to examine options to better understand the data they are going to collect, such as understanding traffic and waste water management.

3. Urbanization/Skills Development

Vung Tau is seeing a significant rise in population due to the movement of people from rural to urban areas and they recognize skill gaps between the rural population and the needs of urban work.

4. Culture and Tourism

Vung Tau City is becoming a tourism destination for residents of Vietnam and other south-east Asian countries. The region is interested in increasing visitors from Canada via joint promotion programs with Strathcona County, to promote awareness and opportunities in both tourism and economic development for both communities.

5. Recreation

The playground Strathcona County built in 2010 is famous in Vung Tau City, because of its prominent location is a symbol of international friendship and is the only playground of its kind in the city. There is interest in Strathcona County's expertise in recreation facilities to aid Vung Tau in developing their own.

An internal working group has been established to understand mutually beneficial initiatives that can be used to develop a sister agreement. The following departments are involved:

- Intergovernmental Affairs
- Economic Development and Tourism
- Recreation, Parks and Culture
- Planning and Development Services
- Information Technology Services

A sister city or twinning agreement would have concise timelines and plans to ensure the County and Vung Tau pairing is serving both communities.

Before developing an agreement, we are waiting for a written response form Vung Tau and will return to Council in Q2 2020 with an update. The internal working group will continue to meet in order to develop deliverables for the agreement that provide value and address Strathcona County's corporate priorities.

Enclosure

1. Letter to Vung Tau City (April 30 2019)