

TO: Mike Van Milligen, City Manager
FROM: Kristin Hill, Bee Branch Project Communications Specialist
DATE: July 9, 2019
RE: **City of Dubuque Storm Drain Mural Pilot Project**

INTRODUCTION

This memo transmits for City Council review and approval of a City of Dubuque Storm Drain Mural Pilot Project in the Bee Branch Watershed.

BACKGROUND

The Paint Iowa Beautiful is a partnership between Keep Iowa Beautiful and Diamond Vogel Paint. The program provides free paint to a wide variety of public service projects throughout Iowa. During the 16-year partnership, over 9,640 gallons of paint and hundreds of local volunteers have helped 786 community projects in Iowa.

DISCUSSION

In cities across the country, small-scale murals have transformed storm drains from functional infrastructure into engaging works of art that draw attention to water-quality protection. It is a popular misconception that pollutants that flow into storm drains are removed at a wastewater or pollution control facility.

When it rains, stormwater runs down the street into storm drains which flows untreated into our local creeks, streams, and rivers. Along the way it picks up litter, leaves, grass clippings, and other pollutants. Storm drains can also become a hot spot for illicit dumping – trash, grease, paint, cigarettes, and more. As a result, these stormwater pollutants flow directly into the Catfish Creek, Bee Branch Creek, and ultimately, the Mississippi River without treatment, impairing the health of our waterways.

The City of Dubuque submitted a grant request to the 2019 Paint Iowa Beautiful Program for paint to complete a Storm Drain Mural Pilot Project in the Bee Branch Watershed. The project was awarded eight free gallons of paint supplied by Diamond Vogel. The grant requires the project be completed by December 31, 2019. The Storm Drain Mural Pilot Project will serve as a unique and engaging educational program in Dubuque. The goal is to draw attention to the usually discreet concrete infrastructure in

hopes that observers will stop and think about where the water flows after it enters the storm drain and they role we all play in maintaining water quality.

The pilot will include a call for artists to submit designs and paint murals on three storm drains located in high foot traffic areas in the Bee Branch Watershed. The project will be open to all artists/artist groups including school groups and individual students. Preference will be given to local artists. When designing artwork, artists will be encouraged to consider the following themes:

- Stormwater Pollution: Only rain down the storm drain.
- Environmental Protection: The importance of clean water.
- Local Ecosystems: Wildlife habitats and natural beauty.

The designs will be selected by a panel of judges, comprised of members from the Arts and Cultural Affairs Advisory Commission and the Catfish Creek Watershed Management Authority, who are both supportive of the pilot. All proposals will be evaluated on artistic merit and unique storm drain integration. Upon project completion, the artists will receive a \$500 stipend for each mural painted.

The storm drains will be power washed and prepped before painting and low VOC (volatile organic compound) eco-friendly paint and sealer will be used. Ongoing maintenance costs are not expected as the murals are only semi-permanent and will fade over time after accomplishing their outreach purpose. Maintenance of the art will not be required. If the pilot is successful, additional partnerships and funding opportunities will be explored to expand the project to include additional storm drains.

BUDGET IMPACT

The City of Dubuque has been awarded eight free gallons of paint supplied by Diamond Vogel through the Paint Iowa Beautiful Program to complete three storm drain murals. Artists will be required to bring their own brushes, containers for mixing, and tools for painting. A combination of \$750 Arts and Culture Special Projects funds and \$750 NPDES stormwater funds can provide \$1,500 for artist stipends.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends City Council approval of a Storm Drain Mural Pilot Project in the Bee Branch Watershed to help educate the public of the direct connection between storm drains and local water quality.

REQUESTED ACTION

The requested action is for City Council approval of the enclosed resolution in support of this pilot project.

Enclosures

CC: Deron Muehring, Civil Engineer
Jill Connors, Economic Development Director
Dean Mattoon, Engineering Assistant
Gina Bell, Sustainable Community Coordinator
Jerelyn O'Connor, Neighborhood Development Specialist
Randy Gehl, Public Information Officer