

Staff Report

Report To: Community Services Committee
Report From: Andy O'Leary, Facilities Booking Coordinator
Meeting Date: September 23, 2026
Report Code: CS-26-091
Subject: City of Owen Sound Community Ambassador Award

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-26-091 respecting the City of Owen Sound Community Ambassador Award, the Community Services Committee recommends that City Council:

1. Approve the draft criteria for a Community Ambassador award as outlined in the report;
2. Direct staff to finalize the award criteria and necessary forms for 2027; and
3. Direct staff to include the Community Ambassador Award in the annual Volunteer Award process beginning in 2027.

Highlights:

- The City of Owen Sound has recognized volunteers from our community for almost 45 years. In 2026, Council suggested adding a Community Ambassador Award to expand the current Volunteer Awards.
- The Ambassador Award Recipient would be formally recognized alongside the recipients of the volunteer awards at a City Council meeting. The Community Ambassador Award would be presented bi-annually in the opposite year as the Owen Sound Celebrates Arts, Culture and Volunteers.

Vision 2050 - Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: The recommendation contributes to core service delivery or a corporate initiative that enables service delivery for one or more strategic priorities.

Previous Report/Authority:

At its meeting held on January 26, 2026, City Council passed resolution no. [R-260126-010a](#) as follows:

"WHEREAS awards in municipalities recognize the individuals, groups or businesses for their significant contributions and impact to the community; AND WHEREAS these community recognition awards acknowledge contributions which have represented the municipality positively in areas of arts, philanthropy, economic and business development, education, entertainment, and athletics;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT City Council directs staff to bring forward a report in 2026, prior to the consideration of the 2027 Award Recognition nomination and selection process, regarding:

1. Potential components of a Community Ambassador Award; and
2. An award program review, aligning with the Vision 2050 Strategic Plan."

Background:

For almost 45 years, the City of Owen Sound has been recognizing volunteers from community groups and organizations who have made a significant contribution to the quality of life in the City of Owen Sound by annually awarding a Volunteer of the Year, and Senior of the Year.

Since 1994, the Committee has also recommended to Council an individual whose name is submitted to the Ontario Government for the "Senior of the Year" Award. This award provides Municipalities with an annual opportunity to honor an outstanding local senior. Recipients are individuals who, after age 65, have enriched the community's social, cultural, or civic life without personal or financial gain.

In 2018, a Youth Volunteer of the Year was added for volunteers 21 years of age and under. This award recognizes youth who have positively impacted the City through volunteering but may not yet have the years of experience

the Volunteer of the Year award winners traditionally have. A scoring tool is used to score and make a recommendation to Council.

In 2025, the Volunteer of the Year award was renamed “The Jan Chamberlain Volunteer of the Year”. Ms. Chamberlain was a former City Councillor who exemplified what it meant to be a community leader, volunteering her time on countless project with many community groups and organizations. Jan was the recipient of the Volunteer of the Year Award in 2008 and the Senior of the Year Award in 2021.

In 2026, Council requested that staff bring forward a report regarding the potential components of a Community Ambassador Award.

This report provides an outline of the award, draft criteria, and suggested process.

Analysis and Options:

Draft Owen Sound Community Ambassador Award

The purpose of the City of Owen Sound Ambassador Award is to recognize an individual, group, organization, business, or team that has made an outstanding contribution to promoting, representing, or enhancing the reputation of the City of Owen Sound locally, regionally, provincially, nationally, or internationally.

The award would honour those who act as positive ambassadors for the community through leadership, achievement, advocacy, innovation, hospitality, service, or representation that brings recognition, pride, investment, participation, or goodwill to Owen Sound.

The City already recognizes volunteers and contributors to arts and culture. The Ambassador Award will fill a different recognition space by focusing on community representation and reputational impact. This award will recognize those who elevate Owen Sound’s profile or contribute to civic pride in ways that may not fit within the existing volunteer or cultural award categories.

This award will recognize broader contributions, including tourism, sport, business, community leadership, public service, innovation, environmental stewardship, education, reconciliation, inclusion, heritage, events, or other activities that bring positive attention to the City.

Draft Award Criteria

Award nominees do not need to reside in Owen Sound, provided their actions have had a clear and positive impact on the City's reputation, visibility, or community well-being.

Nominees may include any of the following:

Individual: A resident, former resident, or person with a meaningful connection to Owen Sound.

Group or team: An informal group, committee, team, or collective.

Organization: A not-for-profit, community organization, institution, or association.

Business: A local business or enterprise that has positively represented Owen Sound.

Youth Nominee: Eligible, provided the contribution aligns with the award purpose.

Senior Nominee: Eligible, provided the contribution aligns with the award purpose.

Nominees may have demonstrated or represented any of the following:

- Has represented Owen Sound in a positive, respectful, and meaningful way at a local, regional, provincial, national, or international level.
- Has helped raise awareness of Owen Sound as a desirable place to live, visit, invest, create, learn, compete, or participate.
- Has inspired pride among residents and strengthened the community's identity, reputation, or sense of belonging.
- Has demonstrated leadership, excellence, or achievement in a field or activity that reflects positively on the City.
- Has contributed to the social, cultural, recreational, environmental, economic, or civic well-being of Owen Sound.
- Has demonstrated conduct that reflects the City's values of inclusion, respect, accessibility, equity, reconciliation, and community-mindedness.
- Has either made a sustained contribution over time or achieved a significant one-time accomplishment that brought recognition or benefit to Owen Sound.

- Has acted as a positive role model and helped build goodwill within or beyond the community.

To preserve the integrity of the award, the following are ineligible.

- Current members of Council, for activities performed as part of their elected duties;
- Current City employees, for activities performed as part of their paid employment;
- Individuals or organizations whose contribution is primarily political, partisan, or campaign-related;
- Self-nominations, unless Council chooses to allow them;
- Nominees whose actions are inconsistent with the intent of the award or could reasonably bring the City into disrepute;
- Previous recipients of the Ambassador Award within a defined period, such as five years, unless the new nomination is for a substantially different achievement.

Council may wish to allow City employees or elected officials to be nominated only for contributions clearly outside their official duties.

A draft nomination form is attached to this report.

Draft Scoring Tool

Evaluation Area	Description	Suggested Weight
Positive Representation of Owen Sound	Demonstrated promotion or representation of the City	25%
Community Impact	Benefit to residents, visitors, businesses, organizations, or the broader community	25%
Civic Pride and Reputation	Contribution to community pride, identity, visibility, or goodwill	20%
Leadership, Achievement, or Innovation	Demonstrated excellence, initiative, leadership, or distinction	15%
Alignment with City Values	Inclusion, respect, accessibility, equity, reconciliation, and positive conduct	15%
Total		100%

The Community Ambassador Award would be presented biannually in the opposite year as the Arts and Culture Awards. This will assist in maintaining the prestige of the award and avoid creating an expectation that it must be awarded every year, regardless of nomination quality.

Similar to the volunteer award, recipients of the Ambassador Award would receive a framed certificate from the City, Bruce Grey MP, Bruce Grey MPP, a trophy/plaque, and a small gift. Recognition would be posted on the City's website and included in a media advisory.

Similar to the Volunteer of the Year Program, the Community Services Committee could serve to review the nominations and make a recommendation to Council regarding the recipient.

Resource Alignment:

Financial Resources

Council should establish an annual operating budget amount to support the award of \$1000.

Human Resources

Staff time and committee time would be required to finalize the development of the program, promote applications, adjudicate the nominations and prepare for the presentation of the award.

Time and Scheduling

This project would be added to staff's workplan in 2027 with the first award being done in 2027.

Technology and Infrastructure

The City's website would be used to host information regarding the Ambassador Award, criteria, nominations and past recipients.

Climate and Environmental Impacts:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Communication and Engagement:

Information will be circulated to the public through the City's website, social media platforms and a media release. Nomination forms would be forwarded

to community groups and organizations as well as local schools to promote each award. School Principals, minor sport organizations and community groups also receive this information.

Following the awards ceremony, a media advisory would be distributed to notify members of the public.

Report Developed in Consultation With:

- Briana Bloomfield, City Clerk
- Aidan Ware, Director and Chief Curator, TOM
- Viveca Gravel, Community Development Coordinator
- Jennifer Wright, Events Coordinator
- Michelle Prescott, Corporate Services Facilitator

Attachments:

1. Attachment 1 – DRAFT Community Ambassador Criteria
2. Attachment 2 – DRAFT Community Ambassador Scoring Tool

Reviewed by:

Ryan Gowan, Manager of Arena Operations

Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Andy O'Leary, Facilities Booking Coordinator at aoleary@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 ext. 1255.