

Funding for Façade Grants Outside of City Centre Business Improvement Districts

ISSUE

The purpose of this report is to provide an interim update on a request from City Council to provide options for a funded façade improvement grant outside of the City Centre Business Improvement Districts. Within currently approved budgets, no additional funding sources have been able to be identified and work is continuing on the Façade Grant Program review. Recommended changes to the program administration and Council Policy C09-040 -Façade Conservation and Enhancement Policy will be presented in 2021.

BACKGROUND

The Urban Design – City Wide Program (City Wide Program) was a temporary program intended to extend urban design work and programming throughout the city. The Program operated from 2008 until midway through 2016. The funding source was a Land Sales Administration Fee which was collected as part of all land sales by Saskatoon Land. Although it was intended to operate for five years, funding continued due to strong land sales. Once land sales slowed down, funding was discontinued and the Program began to wind down. City Wide Façade Programs were no longer funded after mid-2016. The residual funding has been predominantly dedicated to urban design efforts in the Sutherland Business Improvement District (BID) area.

At the November 26, 2018 Preliminary Business Plan and Budget meeting, it was requested that Administration report back in 2019 on options for a funded façade improvement program outside of the City Centre Business Improvement Districts (BIDs).

At the June 13, 2019 meeting, the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services received a report discussing the Funding Reallocation for the Heritage Conservation Program.

During its August 12, 2019 meeting, City Council requested Administration report back in 2019 on options for a funded façade improvement program outside of the City Centre BIDs.

CURRENT STATUS

Façade and Heritage Façade Grants

There are two types of façade grants available to commercial properties within the City Centre BIDs; façade grants and heritage facade grants. These grants are administered under Policy C09-040 - Façade Conservation and Enhancement Policy. The Streetscape Reserve dedicates \$30,000 annually to assist property owners with façade improvements. The Heritage Reserve provides \$10,000 annually to assist with façade

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improvements to any building that has heritage value. Prior to 2014, these two grant programs operated independently but were merged for efficiency reasons.

Façade Grants in the City Wide Program

While in operation, the Urban Design – City Wide Program offered a variety of programming which included façade grants for buildings outside of the City Centre BID areas. The City Wide Program did not have a specific category for heritage facades; all façade grant applications were treated the same. During its time (from 2008 to 2018), there were nine façade improvement projects funded by the City Wide Program, two of which received funding related to heritage elements (former CPR Station and the Sutherland Hall). The Streetscape – City Wide Reserve was the funding source for these grants, which contains residual funds from the City Wide Program.

The Administration paused façade grants in the City Wide areas in 2018 pending a comprehensive review of the Façade Grant Program and due to the lack of a sustainable funding source.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Sustainable Funding Source is Required

The Urban Design – BID Program is funded by the Streetscape Reserve. This funding is tied to parking meter revenue and is therefore not available for grants in areas outside of the City Centre BIDs. It should be noted, that while the Sutherland BID has parking meters and began contributing to the Streetscape Reserve in May, 2015, it is currently not included in the Urban Design – BID Program and does not have access to the façade or heritage façade grants.

Administration is undertaking a comprehensive review of the Façade Grant Program, to be completed by mid-2021. This review will help to determine the appropriate annual funding required to be dedicated to façade grants. As an interim program, funding may remain from the City Wide Streetscape Reserve to provide these grants. However, in the longer term, the Administration will report back, in advance of the 2022 budget deliberations, on a potential funding source for façade grants and other urban design programming as part of a new City Wide Program.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is estimated \$234,000 will be available in the Streetscape - City Wide Reserve at the end of 2020. A program review is being undertaken which will assist in prioritizing future spending of this funding.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal, social, or environmental implications identified.

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NEXT STEPS

Administration will continue work on the Façade Grant Program review and will present recommended changes to the program administration and Council Policy C09-040 - Façade Conservation and Enhancement Policy in 2021.

REPORT APPROVAL

Written by: Catherine Kambeitz, Heritage and Design Coordinator
Paul Whitenect, Manager, Neighbourhood Planning Section

Reviewed by: Lesley Anderson, Director, Planning and Development Division

Approved by: Lynne Lacroix, General Manager, Community Services Department

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