

Façade Conservation and Enhancement Grant Policy Update

ISSUE

Administration has worked with the Business Improvement Districts (BID) to review the Façade Conservation and Enhancement Grant Policy (Policy) and this report provides a list of updates for City Council's consideration.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services recommend to City Council:

1. That the proposed amendments to Council Policy C09-040, Façade Conservation and Enhancement Grant, as outlined in this report, be approved; and
2. That the City Clerk be requested to make the necessary amendments to Council Policy C09-040, the Façade Conservation and Enhancement Grant.

BACKGROUND

The Façade Conservation and Enhancement Grant Program (Program) was approved by City Council in 2013 and provides grants to property owners and businesses to improve the façade of their building. To qualify, a building must be located in an established commercial area defined as a BID or a key commercial area in the following neighbourhoods: Kelsey-Woodlawn; Mayfair; Caswell Hill; Westmount; King George and West Industrial, provided there has been allocated funding for that area.

The Program currently receives \$30,000 in funding from the Urban Design Streetscape Operating Budget to allocate to successful projects throughout the year. Additionally, the Heritage Operating Budget includes \$10,000 which may be allocated to successful projects which fall under the Heritage Conservation Incentive stream of the Program. Since 2013, the Program has provided grants to 47 façade improvement projects.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

In consultation with the BIDs, a number of policy updates have been identified to provide greater efficiency and clarity in administration of the Program, and ways to better meet the needs of applicants. Key changes to the Policy are outlined below.

Modification of Funding Streams

The existing Policy has three funding streams; applications with a total project budget greater than \$5,000, applications with a total project budget less than \$5,000, and projects that involve heritage conservation. During consultation, the BID Directors highlighted a need to fund small maintenance-only projects. To achieve this, Administration recommends allocating a portion of the funding to a Building Refresh Incentive stream. The funding streams would therefore be as follows:

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1. The Façade Conservation and Enhancement Incentive
 - a. This stream is intended to support larger, comprehensive façade redevelopment projects with a total project budget over \$5,000.
 - b. The potential size of this grant will not change and applications under this incentive will remain eligible for a grant up to 50% of the total costs of the project to a maximum of \$16,000.
 - c. This stream is funded out of the Urban Design Streetscape Operating Budget.
2. The Heritage Conservation Incentive
 - a. This stream is intended to support the conservation of heritage façades.
 - b. The potential size of this grant will not change and applications under this incentive remain eligible for a grant up to 10% of the total costs of the project to a maximum of \$4,000.
 - c. This incentive is funded by the Heritage Operating Budget.
3. The Building Refresh Incentive
 - a. This stream is intended to support small maintenance and improvement projects.
 - b. It will be clarified that projects with a budget of less than \$5,000 are permitted to include maintenance items in their funding requests.
 - c. The potential size of this grant will not change and applications under this incentive remain eligible for a grant up to 50% of the eligible project costs to a maximum of \$2,500.
 - d. This stream is funded by the Urban Design Streetscape Operating Budget.

Eligibility Requirements for the Heritage Conservation Incentive

This stream is intended to support the conservation of Saskatoon's heritage facades. Currently, applicants may be eligible for the grant if their buildings are listed on the City of Saskatoon Built Heritage Database, or if the building age is at least 40 years old. In consultation with the BID Directors, it is proposed to change the eligibility requirements so that only buildings that are on the Saskatoon Register of Historic Places or Built Heritage Database would be eligible. Further, in recognition that heritage is not always a certain age, but a continuum, it is proposed that the minimum age requirement of 40 years be removed. These changes were presented to the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee on November 3, 2021 and no concerns were noted at that time. In summary, the following changes are proposed:

- a. Removing eligibility for the Heritage Conservation Incentive for any building which only qualifies because it is at least 40 years old.
- b. Eligible properties must be buildings listed on the Saskatoon Register of Historic Places or in the Built Heritage Database.
- c. Changing the word rehabilitation to conservation to align with other Heritage related policies.

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Application and Adjudication Timing

Under the current Program, applications can be received at any time throughout the year, and funding is awarded on a first-come first-served basis. To ensure funding is available for Façade Conservation and Enhancement, and Heritage Conservation projects which may apply later in the year, proposed changes to timing include:

- a. The Façade Conservation and Enhancement Incentive stream, and Heritage Conservation Incentive stream would move to a twice-per-year intake period for applications.
- b. The Building Refresh Incentive stream would continue to be awarded on a first-come first-served basis.

Flexible Eligibility for Program Areas

The current Policy lists specific commercial areas which can be allocated funding. Administration is recommending removing the list of specific commercial areas which are eligible, in order to allow future requests for funding allocations in more or other areas of the City without amending the Policy. At this time, this will not change which areas currently have been allocated funding under the Program, but will provide for future flexibility.

Proposed changes to the Program Areas include:

- a. Removing the list of specific locations, thereby allowing the Program to be applied to any area, with allocated funding.

Administration Materials and Housekeeping

Several housekeeping amendments to the Policy are also included for clarity and consistency.

- a. The Adjudication Matrix which is used to evaluate applications and award funding has been revised to be more user-friendly and transparent for applicants. This document is included in Appendix 1 of this report and will be included in the Policy.
- b. Further detail on the evaluation criteria, including examples of successful projects, will be available to both applicants and the Adjudication Committee through a Program Guide which will be developed and maintained by Administration. The purpose of the Program Guide is to provide clear direction to applicants on how to submit their proposals, explain the process, and to provide examples of successful design principles that applicants may wish to incorporate into their project.
- c. An 18-month extension for applications has also been added to address situations where reasonable delays to project completion occur.

A summary of the proposed changes, including the housekeeping amendments, is included in Appendix 2 and a copy of the Policy with tracked changes is provided in Appendix 3.

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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications related to the proposed Policy amendments.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no other implications.

NEXT STEPS

If approved by City Council, the City Clerk will make the necessary amendments to Council Policy C09-040, Façade Conservation and Enhancement Grant.

APPENDICES

1. Façade Conservation and Enhancement Incentive Adjudication Matrix
2. Façade Conservation and Enhancement Program – Proposed Changes
3. City of Saskatoon - Council Policy with Updates

REPORT APPROVAL

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