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Date December 13, 2022 **Report No.** 2022-700
To Chair and Members
Committee of the Whole – Planning and Administration
From Nicole Wilmot, MCIP, RPP
Chief Planner and Director of Planning and Development Services
People, Legislated Services and Planning

1.0 Type of Report

Consent Item
Item For Consideration

2.0 Topic **Greyfields Community Improvement Plan – Budget for the Administration of Capital-Funded Grant Programs [Financial Impact – None]**

3.0 Recommendation

- A. THAT Report 2022-700, entitled “Greyfields Community Improvement Plan – Budget for the Administration of Capital-Funded Grant Programs”, BE RECEIVED; and
- B. THAT Staff BE DIRECTED to submit an unmet need for the administration of the Commercial Façade, Landscaping and Connectivity Improvement Grant and the Mixed Use Building Improvement Grant programs in the Greyfields Community Improvement Plan for consideration in the 2023 Operating Budget.

4.0 Executive Summary

On June 22, 2021, Brantford City Council approved the Greyfields Community Improvement Plan (CIP), including the Greyfields Property Tax Increment-Based

Grant, and directed Staff to report back in 2022 to present a budget for the administration of the two capital-funded grant programs in the CIP: the Commercial Façade, Landscaping and Connectivity Improvement Grant and the Mixed Use Building Improvement Grant. The Commercial Façade, Landscaping and Connectivity Improvement Grant is aimed at facilitating improvements to the appearance and accessibility of existing commercial and mixed-use properties located within Target Greyfield Revitalization Areas, as identified in **Appendix A**. The Mixed Use Building Improvement Grant supports the conversion of existing buildings located within the Target Greyfield Revitalization Areas into mixed use buildings with both commercial and residential uses. To begin administering these grant programs, Staff recommends allocating a Greyfields CIP budget of \$100,000 which would be used for the payment of grants and for advertising the programs. Staff is seeking direction to submit an unmet need for the administration of these programs for consideration in the 2023 Operating Budget.

5.0 Purpose and Overview

The purpose of this Report is to present a proposed budget to Council for consideration and direction regarding the funding of the two capital-funded grant programs in the Greyfields Community Improvement Plan: the Commercial Façade, Landscaping and Connectivity Improvement Grant and the Mixed Use Building Improvement Grant.

6.0 Background

On June 22, 2021, Brantford City Council approved the Greyfields Community Improvement Plan (CIP) (refer to Report [2021-370](#) and the approved [Greyfields CIP](#)). The CIP is intended to facilitate and encourage redevelopment and reinvestment in greyfields within the City's Built-Up Area, outside of the Downtown Urban Growth Centre (UGC) which is subject to the Downtown CIP.

Greyfields can generally be described as previously developed commercial sites that are vacant or underutilized, and/or in a state of neglect or disrepair. Greyfields are viewed as lands where there are opportunities for revitalization because they have access to existing public services, infrastructure, and utilities and, unlike brownfields, are not perceived to be subject to environmental contamination. As such, revitalization of greyfield properties is an efficient way to accommodate new housing growth and achieve intensification goals and can also promote economic development and be a catalyst for positive change within a neighbourhood.

The Greyfields CIP includes the following three grant programs:

- The Property Tax Increment-Based Grant is intended to promote the transformative redevelopment of greyfields across the Built-Up Area into new mixed-use developments (i.e., with both commercial uses and residential uses) that will increase a property's assessed value. The program operates as a tax rebate, offsetting a portion of eligible redevelopment costs by phasing in the property tax increase that resulted from the redevelopment over ten years. Depending on the provision of affordable housing units in a redevelopment project, the grant may be enhanced to provide a greater tax rebate. This is the only Greyfields CIP program that applies across the entire Built-Up Area (excluding the Downtown Urban Growth Centre where the Downtown CIP applies).
- The Commercial Façade, Landscaping and Connectivity Improvement Grant is aimed at facilitating improvements to the appearance and accessibility of existing commercial and mixed use properties located within Target Greyfield Revitalization Areas, as identified in **Appendix A**. These Target Areas were identified after completing a city-wide inventory of greyfield sites to delineate areas with clusters of greyfields and at-risk sites that are considered to be most in need of financial support to facilitate revitalization. The boundaries of these Target Areas are limited to lands zoned for commercial uses located along various intensification corridors and arterial roads.
- The Mixed Use Building Improvement Grant supports the conversion of existing buildings located within the Target Greyfield Revitalization Areas into mixed use buildings.

The Property Tax Increment Based-Grant is the only grant program currently available since the Greyfields CIP was approved by Council. A capital budget is not required to administer the program because its grants are provided as tax rebates funded from the increase in property taxes resulting from the redevelopment. The Commercial Façade, Landscaping and Connectivity Improvement Grant and the Mixed Use Building Improvement Grant are capital-funded grant programs; therefore, in order to offer these two programs, Council would need to allocate funds to a reserve for the payment of grants. At the time of approving the Greyfields CIP, Council directed Staff to report back in 2022 to present a proposed Greyfields CIP budget for the administration of these two capital-funded grant programs for further consideration.

7.0 Corporate Policy Context

7.1 2021-2022 Council Priorities

The Commercial Façade, Landscaping and Connectivity Improvement Grant and the Mixed Use Building Improvement Grant in the Greyfields CIP will support the following desired outcome in City Council's priorities for 2021-2022:

Desired Outcome 1: All neighbourhoods in the City are safe, vibrant, attractive, and inclusive.

The grant programs are directly focused on stimulating investment by the private sector to revitalize greyfield sites through property improvements. These revitalization projects will provide increased economic and housing opportunities and act as a catalyst for positive change in Brantford's neighbourhoods.

8.0 Input From Other Sources

Planning and Development Services Staff consulted with Finance Staff in the preparation of this Report.

9.0 Analysis

The Commercial Façade, Landscaping and Connectivity Improvement Grant incentivizes improvements to the appearance and accessibility of existing commercial or mixed-use properties in the Target Greyfield Revitalization Areas (refer to **Appendix A**). This program aims to support the ongoing use of these properties while creating a more attractive streetscape with enhanced walkability and accessibility. In particular, this grant supports the improvement of:

- Commercial façades that front a public right of way (e.g., accessibility improvements such as the installation of accessible doors or ramps, and enhancing or adding new architectural details);
- Hard landscaping (e.g., permanent planters) and site amenities (e.g., outdoor patios, bicycle parking) fronting a public right of way; and,
- Pedestrian connectivity from the private realm to the public realm (e.g., walkways, lighting).

The CIP allows for a maximum grant of \$15,000, or 50% of total eligible costs, whichever is lesser.

The Mixed Use Building Improvement Grant facilitates the conversion of existing buildings in the Target Greyfield Revitalization Areas to mixed use buildings with commercial uses on the ground floor, and residential and office or other permitted commercial uses on the upper storeys. This grant is targeted at improving existing main street-style, multi-storey buildings which contribute to the character of the Target Greyfield Revitalization Areas. In order for a project to be eligible for this program, it must result in a mixed use building that includes a commercial use and a residential use. This may include the following:

- Conversion of existing commercial or vacant upper-storey space into residential, office, or other permitted uses;
- Conversion of ground floor residential uses into commercial uses; or
- Conversion of commercially zoned residential dwellings into mixed used buildings.

The Mixed Use Building Improvement Grant provides financial assistance to facilitate interior renovations that are required to ensure the buildings are in compliance with the Building Code, Fire Code, and Property Standards By-law (Chapter 465 of the City of Brantford Municipal Code). Eligible renovations may include accessibility improvements, installation or upgrades to fire or noise protection elements, installation of ventilation or HVAC requirements, and upgrades to electrical, plumbing or other similar features.

The CIP allows for a maximum grant of \$10,000 or 50% of eligible costs per unit that is converted, whichever is less, with a maximum for the entire property of \$30,000, or 50% of eligible costs, whichever is less.

Administration of these two capital-funded grant programs would require Council to allocate funds to a reserve for the payment of grants. A proposed budget of \$100,000 is recommended, as discussed further in Section 10 of this Report.

10.0 Financial Implications

To begin administering the Commercial Façade, Landscaping and Connectivity Improvement Grant and the Mixed Use Building Improvement Grant programs in the Greyfields CIP, a proposed budget of \$100,000 is recommended, which would allow the City to fund three to six applications seeking the maximum grant values. It is recommended that a maximum of \$500 of the budget be used for advertising the grant programs, which would cover the cost of printing and postage to mail a notice to property owners within the Target Greyfield Revitalization Areas. Staff is seeking direction to submit an unmet need for the

administration of these programs for consideration in the 2023 Operating Budget.

It is also noted that Council is the approval authority for all applications to the Greyfields CIP programs. Should Council allocate a Greyfields CIP budget for the capital-funded grant programs, the financial implications of each application will be presented to Council when the application is brought forward for consideration.

11.0 Climate and Environmental Implications

There are no negative climate or environmental implications arising from this Report.

12.0 Conclusion

This Report presents a proposed budget of \$100,000 for the administration of the two capital-funded grant programs in the Greyfields Community Improvement Plan: the Commercial Façade, Landscaping and Connectivity Improvement Grant and the Mixed Use Building Improvement Grant. Staff is seeking direction to submit an unmet need for the administration of these programs for consideration in the 2023 Operating Budget.



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Attachments

Appendix A – Target Greyfield Revitalization Areas

In adopting this report, is a by-law or agreement required? If so, it should be referenced in the recommendation section.

By-law required yes no

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and/or City Clerk yes no

Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council? yes no

Appendix A – Target Greyfield Revitalization Areas

