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Date November 29, 2021 **Report No.** 2021-499

To Chair and Members
Brantford Heritage Committee

From Patrick Vusir, Planner, Long Range Planning
People, Legislated Services and Planning

1.0 Type of Report

Consent Item
Item For Consideration

2.0 Topic Heritage Grant Program Pilot Period Review and Proposed Updates [Financial Impact = Anticipated \$65,075 to be carried forward from January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2025 in the Council Priorities Reserve (RF0558)]

3.0 Recommendation

THAT the following comments of the Brantford Heritage Committee BE INCLUDED in Staff's Report to Committee of the Whole – Planning and Administration on December 14, 2021.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4.0 Purpose and Executive Summary

This Report reviews the pilot period of the City of Brantford's Heritage Grant Program and provides the Brantford Heritage Committee with the opportunity to provide comments on the Heritage Grant Program for inclusion into Staff's Report to Committee of the Whole – Planning and Administration.

When the Heritage Grant Program was launched in September 2019, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic could not have been foreseen. Ultimately, despite the negative impacts of the pandemic, the Heritage Grant Program was able to process three applications during the pilot period. Two applications have been approved by Council, the work completed and grants issued. A third application is currently pending a Council decision in December 2021.

Staff will be recommending that Council extend the pilot period to December 31, 2025 with two main administrative changes to improve the administration of the program:

1. Staff will recommend that Council delegate its approval authority to the Director of Planning / Chief Planner in consultation with the Brantford Heritage Committee, which is similar to the existing delegation of authority for approving Heritage Permits. This change will reduce the review timeframe from between two (2) and three (3) months to one (1) month with decisions for Grant Applications made concurrently with any required Heritage Permit.
2. Staff will be recommending minor changes to the application requirements for Heritage Grant Applications to simplify the application process.

With respect to funding allocation for the extended pilot period, Staff will be recommending that unspent funds allocated to the Heritage Grant Program for the original pilot period remain available for the extended pilot period. For each year of the pilot period (2019, 2020, and 2021), Council allocated \$25,000 from the Council Priorities Reserve (RF0558), for a total of \$75,000 to fund Heritage Grants. Having processed a total of three applications (two approved and completed and a third pending approval), Staff anticipate that \$65,075 could be carried forward into the extended Heritage Grant Program pilot period.

Staff will report back to Council regarding the number of applications and amount of funds granted through the Heritage Grant Program on an annual basis. As part of the extended pilot, Staff will also continue to monitor the effectiveness of the Heritage Grant Program, and report back to Council regarding an annual funding allocation before the end of the extended pilot period in December, 2025.

5.0 Background

On July 24, 2018, Council passed By-law 116-2018 (“Heritage Grant Program By-law”) to establish a Heritage Grant Program under the authority of the *Ontario Heritage Act* (refer to Report [CD2018-077](#)). Staff proceeded with

background work to implement the program and formally launched the Heritage Grant Program in September 2019 for a pilot period which ends on December 31, 2021. The Heritage Grant Program was created to encourage and assist owners of designated heritage properties to restore and preserve their buildings of historic and architectural value. Properties designated individually or as part of a heritage conservation district under the *Ontario Heritage Act* are eligible for the program which provides grants to cover up to 50% of the total costs of eligible projects, up to a maximum grant of \$5,000. Grants are provided to the owner upon satisfactory completion of the work within one year of the approval date. Council is the approval authority for all applications to the program, in consultation with the Brantford Heritage Committee.

As part of the adoption of the Heritage Grant Program By-law in 2018, Council's resolution directed Staff to report back to Council before the end of the 3-year pilot period in order to update Council on the effectiveness of the Heritage Grant Program and determine an annual funding allocation. During the Heritage Grant Program pilot period Council allocated \$25,000 annually for the three years that the pilot program was scheduled to run, for a total of \$75,000 funded from the Council Priorities Reserve (RF0558).

6.0 Analysis

The City of Brantford's Heritage Grant Program was created to encourage and assist owners of designated heritage properties to restore and preserve their buildings of historic and architectural value. The Heritage Grant Program provides assistance in the form of a lump-sum grant based on 50% of the eligible costs of the proposed work, to a maximum individual grant amount of \$5,000 per application. Eligible work is that which appropriately preserves, restores, repairs or enhances the heritage attributes of the designated property.

An overview of the current administrative process and program uptake is provided below, followed by a review of two aspects of the program which Staff is recommending to change so as to improve program administration: 1) reducing review timelines, and 2) simplifying application requirements. Lastly, this Report includes an overview of program elements that are not recommended to change at this time but will continue to be monitored over the course of the recommended extended pilot period.

6.1 Overview of Grant Program Administration

The City's Heritage Grant Program is administered by Staff in the Planning Department with assistance from Staff in Legal and Real Estate Services

and Finance. Additionally, Staff in Building Services, Development Engineering, and Brantford Fire are consulted for each grant application. The grant application process set out in the Heritage Grant Program By-law is as follows:

1. A property owner contacts the Planning Department to inquire about the Heritage Grant Program. Planning Staff sets up a formal consultation meeting to review the proposed work, determine its eligibility for the Heritage Grant Program, and outline the application process for the Owner.
2. The Owner contacts various tradespeople and contractors to provide quotes for the work to be completed. A Heritage Grant Program application must be accompanied by at least two quotes for a similar scope of work.
3. Planning Staff reviews the Heritage Grant Program submission and prepares two reports: the first to Brantford Heritage Committee and the second to Committee of the Whole – Planning and Administration.
4. Brantford Heritage Committee reviews the Heritage Grant Application and Staff's recommendation and provides comments which are included in Staff's Report to Committee of the Whole – Planning and Administration.
5. Committee of the Whole – Planning and Administration reviews the Heritage Grant Application together with Staff's recommendation and the comments of Brantford Heritage Committee and makes a recommendation to Council.
6. Council makes a decision to approve or deny the Heritage Grant Application. If approved, a grant agreement is executed by the City and the Owner to address the program requirements and govern grant issuance.
7. Once work is completed, the Owner provides proof to Planning Staff that contractors have been paid in full. Planning Staff conduct a site visit to determine if the work is completed as set out in the grant agreement.

8. Once work is completed as set out in the agreement and the proof of payment is submitted to the City, Planning Staff begin the grant issuance process with Finance. Planning Staff close the file after the grant is issued to the Owner.

The process outlined above typically takes two (2) or three (3) months from the time of application submission (step 3 above) to decision by Council (step 6 above) and does not take advantage of potential delegation of authority to reduce review timelines.

6.2 Heritage Grant Applications Received

Since the launch of the Heritage Grant Program in 2019, Planning Staff have responded to many inquiries, and despite the COVID-19 pandemic, three applications for grant funding have been received by the City. As of the writing of this Report, two applications are complete and the third is pending a decision by Council (concurrent with this Report).

Heritage Grant HG-01-21: 211 Brant Avenue

The City received the application for Heritage Grant HG-01-21 for 211 Brant Avenue on May 18, 2021. The grant application sought assistance with maintenance and restoration work. The scope of work consisted of: removing peeling paint from existing cedar shingles; removing and replacing damaged cedar shingles with new cedar shingles; and, repainting the building to a new two-tone colour scheme where cedar shingles were painted to match existing stucco and trim was painted white. The work proposed by the Applicant consisted of Minor Alterations which Staff could approve through delegated authority. A Minor Alteration Letter was issued by Staff on June 17, 2021. Council approved Heritage Grant HG-01-21 in an amount of \$2,900 on August 24, 2021 and following completion of work and inspection by Staff, the full grant was issued to the Owner on October 21, 2021.

Heritage Grant HG-02-21: 176 Wellington Street

The City received the application for Heritage Grant HG-02-21 for 176 Wellington Street on July 6, 2021. The grant application sought assistance with masonry maintenance and repair work involving the replacement of damaged bricks and repointing of deteriorating mortar joints. Masonry repairs are classified as Major Alterations and a Heritage Permit was required. Staff processed the associated Heritage Permit HA-04-21

concurrently with the Heritage Grant Application and both were reviewed by Brantford Heritage Committee at its August 9, 2021 meeting. Following Brantford Heritage Committee's recommendation that Heritage Permit HA-04-21 be approved, Staff issued a Heritage Permit under delegated authority on August 13, 2021. The Heritage Grant Application was reviewed by Committee of the Whole – Community Development on September 14, 2021 and Council subsequently approved Heritage Grant HG-02-21 in the amount of \$3,200 on September 28, 2021. Following completion of work and inspection by Staff, the grant was issued to the Owner on November 18, 2021.

Heritage Grant HG-03-21: 175 Brant Avenue

The City received the application for Heritage Grant HG-03-21 for 175 Brant Avenue on November 9, 2021. The application is seeking financial assistance for a range of masonry repairs consisting of mortar repointing at various locations on the exterior walls of the building, the reconstruction of the exterior brick wall and sill for a bay window at the rear of the building, and the reconstruction of one chimney which will include replicating the original decorative brick corbelling. An associated Heritage Permit application (HA-08-21) was received on October 18, 2021 and reviewed by the Brantford Heritage Committee at its meeting on October 25, 2021. In this instance, Staff was of the opinion that the required masonry repairs were of an urgent nature and encouraged the Owner to apply early to ensure certain aspects of the work could be completed before winter, with a subsequent Grant Application submitted as soon as a second quote could be secured as required by the Heritage Grant Program By-law. Heritage Grant HG-03-21, seeking \$3,825, will be reviewed by Committee of the Whole – Planning and Administration at the December 14, 2021 meeting. A final decision on Heritage Grant HG-03-21 is anticipated at the December 21, 2021 meeting of Brantford City Council.

6.3 Extension of the Heritage Grant Program Pilot Period and Recommended Amendments to the Program

At the time of its creation, the Heritage Grant Program was intended to run for a three year pilot period so that program uptake could be assessed and Staff could report back to Council to establish a permanent allocation of funds to continue the program. Staff is of the opinion that that the uptake of this Program has been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the full benefits of the program could not be realized during

the pilot period. Public health restrictions from March 2020 through to the present – in particular the closure of non-essential businesses during what would have been the first “construction season” after program launch – and the associated losses in income for many individuals, limited the potential for owners of designated heritage properties to take advantage of the Grant Program. The subsequent increase in demand for home renovations was also unforeseen and had the effect of limiting contractor availability to take on work involving designated properties while demand and supply chain issues increased the costs of materials for all manner of projects.

In order to truly assess the benefit of the program and recommend a consistent annual funding allocation, Staff recommends that the Heritage Grant Program pilot period be extended for an additional three years, until December 31, 2025. It is recommended that the existing funding allocation for the program (equivalent to \$25,000 per year, for 2019, 2020, and 2022, as outlined in Section 7 of this Report), less the funds previously disbursed or committed, remain allocated to the program for the extended pilot period. Staff propose that yearly updates are provided to Council outlining the grants approved and funds committed or disbursed in that calendar year. At the completion of the extended pilot period, Staff will report back to Council with a more fulsome review of program uptake, recommended permanent funding allocation, and propose any additional changes to the function of the program.

Staff has also identified opportunities to improve the program that are recommended to be implemented in the extended pilot period, if approved. The proposed changes consist of reducing the time between application submission and a decision through the use of delegated authority (discussed in Section 6.3.1), and simplification of some application requirements (discussed in Section 6.3.2.). Staff will be proposing that the recommended changes discussed below would be captured through the creation of a new Heritage Grant Program By-law that would be used to administer newly received applications. Staff are also proposing that the current Heritage Grant Program By-law is recommended to remain in force until all grants approved pursuant to its authority are completed.

6.3.1 Streamline Grant Approval Timeframe

The Heritage Grant Program currently functions with a three-stage review process before an Applicant receives a decision

regarding their Application. As outlined in Section 6.1, Staff conducts an initial review of a Grant Application and then prepares a report to the Brantford Heritage Committee and an additional report to the Committee of the Whole – Planning and Administration which in turn makes a recommendation to Council for a final decision on the application. The time between submitting a Heritage Grant Application and Council making a decision on the application is typically between two and three months, depending on time of year (i.e. Council’s summer meeting break would result in an extended approval timeframe for applications processed during that period). Applicants and potential applicants have indicated to Staff that this two-to-three month review is a potential deterrent to applicants wanting to apply to the program because it presents challenges with the retention of contractors who are looking to schedule work shortly after being retained and may result in expired quotes.

Staff will be recommending that the administration of the Heritage Grant Program follows a similar model to the Heritage Alteration process, which uses delegated authority. In comparison to the Heritage Grant Program, the alteration process - which reviews and approves the work which is the subject of grant funding - has been delegated to Staff for maintenance matters (Minor Heritage Alterations) and to Staff in consultation with the Brantford Heritage Committee for more comprehensive alterations and new construction (Major Heritage Alterations, or “Heritage Permits”). The Heritage alteration review process typically concludes in one (1) month, while a Heritage Grant Application is subject to a two (2) or three (3) month review process between date of submission and date of decision. Staff has encouraged concurrent Heritage Grant and Heritage Permit applications where possible, but ultimately timing is determined by the Committee of the Whole – Planning and Administration and Council reporting cycles that follow the required Brantford Heritage Committee meeting.

Staff will be recommending that the approval of Heritage Grant Applications be delegated to the Director of Planning / Chief Planner when recommended by the Manager of Long Range Planning in consultation with the Brantford Heritage Committee. The proposed delegation of authority would allow for Heritage Grant Applications to be reviewed and if appropriate, approved,

within a one-month cycle concurrently with the Heritage Permit for the associated work. Three grant programs offered by the City – the Lead Financial Incentive Program, Private Sanitary Sewer Lateral Replacement Grant, and Basement Flooding Prevention Grant Program – currently function using a similar process of a Council-approved budget and delegation of authority to Staff to approve grants and administer the program.

Delegation of authority will reduce the number of reports prepared by Staff, while also allowing applicants to proceed with their projects more quickly and improving the uptake of the program. The continued requirement for consultation with the Brantford Heritage Committee ensures there will be a public record with respect to every Heritage Grant Application which includes the nature of the work, the eligible costs, and the grant amount. It is the opinion of Staff that this will maintain an appropriate level of oversight with respect to the disbursement of public funds while improving the application process for Heritage Grant Program Applicants.

In order to implement the above recommended changes, Staff proposes that Policy Corporate-010: Delegation of Authority, be amended to give the Director of Planning authority to approve Heritage Grant Applications and execute associated Heritage Grant agreements between the City and applicants.

6.3.2 Simplify Application Requirements

As part of a Heritage Grant Application, an Applicant is required to provide the following supporting materials:

1. A completed application form;
2. A plan showing the location of the building or structure;
3. A detailed description of the proposed works;
4. Photographs of the building and areas where work is proposed;
5. An estimated project budget including a detailed breakdown of the cost of materials, contracted labour,

rented equipment, and related expenses necessary to complete the work; and

6. A minimum of two (2) cost estimates for the proposed work.

Staff recommends that the requirement for a plan showing the location of the building or structure (item 2 above), as well as an estimated project budget (item 5 above) be removed from the requirements of a complete application. In the course of administering the Heritage Grant Program, Staff has found that these requirements make the application process more challenging for applicants and are not necessary for Staff's review of applications. The preparation of a site plan requires applicants to have a level of technological or manual skill that adds unnecessary complexity and time to prepare a complete application. Typically, photographs are sufficient to identify the location of work on the site. Additionally, Staff Reports already include both a location map and aerial photo which show the layout of the property in detail as they are prepared using the City's professional mapping software. With regard to a project budget, given the modest maximum grant amount available (\$5,000), Staff have not encountered a project or potential project with a significant number of components where a project budget compiling multiple quotes is necessary. Typically, inquiries and applications have focused on projects that can be undertaken by one contractor (e.g. a mason) and the quotes reviewed by Staff included the details required of the overall project budget (equipment, materials, labour, etc.), rendering the separate document unnecessary.

With the removal of the two identified supporting materials, Staff recommends that a clause be added to the Heritage Grant Program By-law to allow additional supporting materials to be required as necessary to accurately describe the scope of a Heritage Grant Application. This would allow Staff the flexibility to require additional supporting materials, such as a project budget or property sketch, where the additional materials are needed to clarify the application but without the same "one size fits all" approach of the current by-law that may unnecessarily complicate the application process.

Additionally, upon approval of a grant application, the Applicant is required to enter into a Heritage Grant Agreement with the City which sets out the requirements of the program, governing the obligations of the Applicant to complete the conservation work appropriately and setting out the amount of grant funding and how the grant is issued. As part of the pilot period, existing agreement templates were utilized to generate a Heritage Grant Agreement. If the pilot period is extended, Planning Staff will continue to work with Legal and Real Estate Services to further refine the Program Agreement to reflect the nature of the Heritage Grant Program, and to ensure it is straightforward and clear for applicants yet still provides the required level of assurance that funded projects appropriately conserve designated heritage properties.

6.4 Other Issues Considered

6.4.1 Ability to Secure Two Quotes

Several inquiries and applicants noted a difficulty in securing two quotes as required for a complete application to Brantford's Heritage Grant Program. Reasons given included concerns about the ability to find qualified contractors who could provide quotes in a timely manner due to the more specific nature of heritage related work (e.g. there are limited contractors with experience in slate roof repair/installation) and existing commitments. In other instances, the general increase in demand for home renovations and increased costs of materials due to the supply chain issues can make it difficult for potential applicants to secure two quotes in a timely manner. These contractors may be unable or unwilling to provide quotes and take on new work within a given timeframe due to existing commitments.

The requirement for two quotes outlining the same or similar scope of work is a common requirement of municipal grant programs across Ontario, which typically issue grants based on the lower of the two quotes. The requirement for two quotes has the benefit of giving a property owner a choice and ensuring that they have more information available before committing to work on their property. The benefit to the City is increasing the municipality's ability to ensure costs are legitimate. This provides a balanced approach between providing assistance but exercising

fiscal responsibility with taxpayer money and not paying for costs that are not legitimately incurred. Staff does not recommend changing the requirement for two quotes as part of a Heritage Grant Application at this time.

6.4.2 Grant Amount

In the course of fielding inquiries about the Heritage Grant Program, several potential applicants expressed a desire to see a larger grant, either as a larger percentage of eligible costs (i.e. greater than 50%) or as an increased maximum grant amount (i.e. greater than \$5,000). With respect to project costs, Staff received inquiries for projects of varying scopes, and large scale projects, such as the replacement of a slate roof or extensive rehabilitation of wooden window components, easily incurred eligible costs that reached the maximum grant amount (\$5,000) despite the grant accounting for well below 50% of eligible project costs.

Staff acknowledges that a maximum grant of \$5,000 can result in some projects being supported at less than 50% of eligible project costs, and accordingly, the Heritage Grant Program cannot provide an equivalent level of support to both smaller scale or targeted projects and large scale projects. The maximum grant amount of \$5,000 was chosen as it reflected the maximum amount used by other municipalities that were reviewed by Staff during the initial creation of the City's Heritage Grant Program. Together with the initial annual funding allocation of \$25,000 each year for three years, the maximum grant amount of \$5,000 per individual grant ensures that Heritage Grant Program funds could be distributed to a reasonable number of applicants and properties.

The true purpose of the Heritage Grant Program's pilot period, to assess an appropriate annual funding allocation, was frustrated by the COVID-19 pandemic; accordingly, Staff is unable to accurately recommend an annual funding amount at this time. Staff recommends that funds previously allocated to the Heritage Grant Program but not disbursed or committed to an existing application continue to be available for the remainder of a new,

extended pilot period after which Staff will provide an update to Council.

On the basis of the foregoing recommendation, Staff recommends that the grant calculation formula of 50% of eligible costs to a maximum individual grant amount of \$5,000 be maintained at this time. Based on the program uptake over the new pilot period, Staff will consider whether a revised formula or maximum grant amount should be contemplated by Council at the end of the extended pilot period.

7.0 Financial Implications

Funding for the Heritage Grant Program is provided through the Council Priorities Reserve (RF0558) in accordance with Council's resolution on July 24, 2018 (recommendations D-G):

- "D. THAT the Heritage Grant Program as outlined in Sections 8.2.2 to 8.2.7 of Report CD2018-077 BE APPROVED; and
- E. THAT \$5,000 BE FUNDED as a one-time allocation from the Council Priorities Reserve (RF0558) in 2018 to advertise the Heritage Grant Program; and
- F. THAT \$25,000 BE FUNDED from the Council Priorities Reserve (RF0558) annually for 2019-2021 to support the Heritage Grant Program; and
- G. THAT Staff BE DIRECTED to report back before the end of the 3-year pilot period to update Council on the effectiveness of the Heritage Grant Program."

Additionally, the allocation of funds for 2021 was subject to the one-year payment deferral outlined in [Report 2020-458](#) and associated resolution approved by Council on October 27, 2020 which stated (Item 11.4.5, Recommendation B. vii.):

- "B. THAT should the City be unsuccessful in obtaining Phase 2 Municipal Operating Funding under the Safe Restart Agreement to offset reduced casino revenues, the following mitigation measures BE APPROVED to eliminate the impact of reduced casino revenues on the 2021 operating budget:

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- vii. Delay the 3rd year funding allocation for the Heritage Grant Program to 2022.”

Staff will be recommending to Council that the funds made available in the Council Priorities Reserve (RF0558) in accordance with the foregoing Council resolutions remain allocated to the Heritage Grant Program for an extended pilot period ending on December 31, 2025 so that Staff may accurately recommend an annual funding allocation. The funds carried forward would reflect the total allocation (\$75,000) less funding committed and/or disbursed as part of existing Heritage Grant applications. Assuming that Application HG-03-21 is approved by Council on December 21, 2021, the committed and disbursed grant funds would be \$9,925 and the available funding allocation to carry forward until December 31, 2025 would be \$65,075. Accordingly, there are no new financial implications to the City arising from this Report but the extension of the Heritage Grant Program pilot period will require the existing funding allocation to be maintained.

If Council approves extension of the Heritage Grant Program pilot period to December 31, 2025, Planning Staff will work with Communications Staff to update residents and property owners using announcements on social media, such as through the City’s Twitter and Facebook pages. Such advertising will not require a budget allocation.

8.0 Conclusion

Council created a Heritage Grant Program to assist the owners of designated heritage properties with the maintenance and restoration costs associated with owning older homes. At the time of program creation, Council directed that the program receive a funding allocation of \$25,000 per year for three years for a total allocation of \$75,000. Council also directed Staff to report back before the end of the program in 2021 to provide an update on program implementation and determine an appropriate annual funding allocation beyond 2021. Despite the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Heritage Grant Program was able to process three grant applications. Staff will therefore be recommending that the Heritage Grant Program pilot period be extended to December 31, 2025 and the available funds remaining in the Council Priorities Reserve (RF0558), anticipated to be \$65,075, be carried forward. As part of this extended pilot period, Staff will be recommending minor changes to the administration of the Program as discussed in this Report be enacted by a new Heritage Grant By-law and amendment to Policy Corporate-010: Delegation of Authority, to improve the function of the program for Applicants.



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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