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Town of Aurora

Committee of the Whole Report

No. PDS25-039

Subject: Adoption of the Heritage Grant Program

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Department: Planning and Development Services

Date: April 8, 2025

Recommendation

1. That Report No. PDS25-039 be received; and
2. That Council adopt the Heritage Grant Program as attached to this report.

Executive Summary

This report seeks Council's adoption of the Heritage Grant Program.

- In May 2024, Council passed a Motion to establish a Heritage Grant Program
- The Heritage Grant Program supports conservation and restoration efforts for designated heritage properties
- The Grant Program was informed by consultation with the Heritage Advisory Committee and is defined by three funding categories

Background

In May 2024, Council passed a Motion to establish a Heritage Grant Program

The Member Motion gave direction to staff to establish a Heritage Grant Program aimed at providing financial support to designated heritage property owners for their conservation and restoration efforts. Staff have prepared the Heritage Grant Program in-house with no external consultant costs or capital budget implications.

Analysis

The Heritage Grant Program supports conservation and restoration efforts for designated heritage properties

The Heritage Grant Program offers financial support to designated heritage property owners for the conservation or restoration efforts of their property. Designated heritage properties include those designated individually under Part IV or as part of a district under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

The program is aimed to incentivize designated heritage property owners to sustain and protect Aurora's heritage assets for the long-term. By offering financial assistance for conservation works for heritage properties across the Town, the program ensures that individual efforts in preserving our shared heritage are recognized and supported. The Grant Program is also a further tool to incentivize owners to pursue designation of their properties, to become eligible to receive grant opportunities.

The Grant Program was informed by consultation with the Heritage Advisory Committee and is defined by three funding categories

Most often, heritage grant applications will occur alongside a required Heritage Permit Application to approve an alteration/the project work. All applicants are expected to submit at least two cost estimates for the proposed work along with the documents required in a Heritage Permit application.

Town staff, the Heritage Advisory Committee, and Council will consider the applicability and eligibility of the Heritage Grant Program opportunity throughout the Heritage Permit review process. The grant approval rests on the Heritage Permit being approved, and the proposed work receiving all necessary approvals for any other required permits. An overview of eligible works is also provided in the Table further below in this report.

Grant applications can also be received for exceptional cases where a heritage permit is not necessarily required, such as for graffiti removal. In these cases, approval of grant funding still requires the review and approval of the Heritage Advisory Committee and Council.

Once the proposed work is complete, the applicant will be required to schedule an inspection to ensure conformity with the grant approval conditions and provided drawings. The grant will only be released upon approval of the inspection of the completed work. The Heritage Grant Program is not intended to be applicable to retroactive projects.

The grants are awarded once the project is completed and meets the standard deemed sufficient by Town staff. Upon completion of the work, staff and the Heritage Advisory Committee will inspect as required. Work done in a poor or defective manner or contrary to the conditions of the grant approval will not be funded.

The level of funding awarded to a project is determined at the sole discretion of Council, after review and recommendation by staff and the Heritage Advisory Committee. The grant funding categories are outlined in the table below:

Table 1: Grant Funding Structure

Grant funding category	Major Works	Moderate Works	Minor Works
Grant funding amount	Up to \$10,000	Up to \$5,000	Up to \$1,000
Example of eligible works	Comprehensive façade restorations and enhancements Structural improvements Comprehensive repairs of major original architectural elements	Repair of original windows and/or doors Reconstruction of lost architectural features	Graffiti removal Technical studies or historic documentation Upkeep of a defined heritage feature

Approved applications undertaking works below the grant amount will see the full costs of the project covered, and the remaining difference will be retained back to the grant funding pool. If the project costs exceed the grant level, the applicant will receive the full grant amount. The applicant will be responsible for covering the remaining difference between project costs and the grant amount. Funding for the Heritage Grant Program is to come through the Heritage Reserve Fund. Strategically, there is also an annual cap on Heritage Grant Application approvals (set at \$30,000 but subject to Council discretion), to ensure the reserve fund is sufficiently maintained and replenished. The Grant Program has been specifically developed to allow full discretion and control over the approval of grants to Council, after consultation with Town staff and the Heritage Advisory Committee. Council retains the sole right to refuse or approve applications and funding.

Advisory Committee Review

The Heritage Grant Program was presented to the Heritage Advisory Committee on Monday, December 9, 2024. A recommendation from the Heritage Advisory Committee was to establish partnerships with local hardware stores to offer relief to designated heritage property owners undertaking conservation efforts. Town staff have reached out to the Aurora Home Hardware Building Centre, who has agreed to be a general supporting partner for the Heritage Grant Program as well. Applicants to the Grant Program will be put in contact with the Aurora Home Hardware Building Centre to further assist with materials and supplies discounts. The Committee also specifically commented on having a category for graffiti removal, as although the majority of projects will run through a concurrent heritage permit review process, exceptions for minor works such as graffiti removal assistance can be provided as needed. The Committee also further expressed that a focus be made on encouraging façade enhancements as a priority.

Legal Considerations

Applicants with eligible projects will submit the Heritage Grant Program application, and if approved, will be required to enter into an agreement with the Town to ensure the requirements for the completion and inspection of the work are met. Upon successful completion and inspection, funds will be released.

Financial Implications

The Heritage Grant Program is to be funded from the Heritage Reserve which presently has an uncommitted balance of \$299,600. Staff recommend that the Heritage Grant Program's annual application approvals be initially capped at \$30,000 per year. This cap amount will be adjusted, if necessary, in response to the Heritage Reserve's health.

The financial impact of each Heritage Grant Program application on both the annual maximum cap and the Heritage Reserve will be included with each report to inform Council's decision.

Communications Considerations

There is currently a Heritage Grant Program page on the Town website. With the commencement of the grant program, Town staff will work to advertise the program further through social media and print media, and begin receiving applications.

Climate Change Considerations

The adoption of the Heritage Grant Program will encourage the sustainable conservation of heritage elements to support reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Link to Strategic Plan

The Heritage Grant Program supports the Strategic Plan goal of Supporting an Exceptional Quality of Life for All by satisfying requirements in Celebrating and Promoting Our Culture, through the preservation and conservation of local heritage buildings and attributes.

Alternative to the Recommendation

1. That Council provide direction.

Conclusions

This report provides an overview of the Heritage Grant Program. The Heritage Grant Program has been developed in response to a Council Motion and has been informed by consultation with the Heritage Advisory Committee, as an opportunity to provide financial support and assistance for the preservation and conservation of local designated heritage properties.

Attachments

Attachment 1 – Heritage Grant Program

Attachment 2 – Heritage Grant Program Application Process Diagram

Previous Reports

Memorandum to the Heritage Advisory Committee dated December 9, 2024.

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on March 20, 2025

Approvals

Approved by Marco Ramunno, Director, Planning and Development Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer