



MEMORANDUM



TO: Heritage Markham Committee

FROM: Peter Wokral, Senior Heritage Planner

DATE: May 14, 2025

SUBJECT: Financial Assistance
2025 Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program
4592 Highway 7 E., Unionville
Review of 2025 Grant Applications

Purpose

To obtain Heritage Markham Committee's review and recommendation regarding Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program applications for 2025

Background

- **Creation of the Program:** The City created the Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program in 2004 to assist in the exterior improvement of privately owned buildings in commercial use located within the City's heritage conservation districts initially offering \$50,000 in total potential grant money. See Attachment B - Eligible Work;
- **Grant assistance:** 50% of eligible costs up to \$10,000 for a non-heritage district property and 50% of eligible costs up to \$15,000 for a heritage property;
- **Expansion of Program Eligibility:** In 2015, the program was expanded to make buildings individually designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, and in commercial use, eligible for grant funding, provided the property meets all other eligibility requirements of the program. Previous to this change, only commercial properties located within the City's four heritage conservation districts were considered to be eligible for grant funding;
- **Notice/Advertising:** This Program was advertised through social media, outreach to local BIA's, and community digital message boards ;
- **Applications Received in 2025:** The City has received only one application
- **Heritage Markham Review:** Applications are to be reviewed by Heritage Markham as part of the approval process;
- **Funding Availability:** Council allocated \$30,000 in the grant budget for this program;
- **Grant Requests:** The requested amount of grant funding is \$15,000.00 which is \$15,000.00 less than what was allocated for the 2025 program.

The applications and the amount of grant assistance requested is summarized in the Table 1 below. Further application details and photographs are provided in Attachment A.

| Table 1: Summary of Grant Requests and the Amount Recommended by Staff | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| Address | Grant Request by Owner ½ of Lowest Quote Provided | Staff Calculation of ½ of Eligible Work | Grant Amount Recommend by Staff based on \$30,000.00 available | Description of Work |
| 4592 Hwy. 7 E. Unionville (Markville Ford) | \$15,000.00 | \$15,000.00 | \$15,000.00 | Removal of paint from brick and re-conditioning of original wooden window frames |
| TOTAL | | | \$15,000.00 | |

Staff Comments

4592 Hwy. 7 E.

- The subject property is part of the Markville Ford dealership, outside of the boundaries of the Unionville Heritage Conservation district, individually designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act and subject to a Heritage Conservation Easement agreement with the City.
- The proposed work is eligible for funding under the Grant Program. **Grant Request \$15,000.00**
- Staff recommends grant funding up to a maximum of **\$15,000.00** (1/2 of lowest quote) subject to the Owner obtaining a Heritage Permit to ensure the most appropriate method of paint removal and the provision of a second professional quote for the proposed work.
- Having administered the Commercial Façade program since 2004, staff has noticed that there have been several years where the demand for grant funding has been considerably less than the amount of funding allocated by Council, whereas the demand for Designated Property Grants have often exceeded the amount of funding available.
- The reasons for this are not fully understood as the program offers the most substantial grant amounts for heritage buildings (\$15,000.00), but it may be due to the requirement to enter into a façade easement agreement with the City as a condition of grants exceeding \$5,000.00.
- Heritage Staff would like to see the program utilized more and have the following suggestions:

- Revise the eligibility requirements to require façade easement agreements for grants exceeding \$7,500.00;
 - Open the program to historic places of worship instead of requiring them to apply to the Designated Heritage Property Grant Program, which was primarily intended to provide financial assistance to owners of historic residential properties.
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- The reasoning behind the latter suggestion is that the conservation and restoration of historic places of worship tend to be more costly than the restoration of historic residences given the scale and complexity of these buildings and most places of worship have shrinking congregations less able to pay for the upkeep of these buildings.
 - It is also noted that there were three separate places of worship that initially applied to the 2025 Designated Heritage Property Grant Program requesting a total of \$12,000 of grant funding or one fifth of the funds allocated to the program. The maximum grant of \$5,000 is often insignificant in comparison to the quoted price of the conservation work and it reduces the amount of grant money available to owners of historic homes.
 - If historic places of worship were eligible for the Commercial Façade Grant Program, they would have access to grants of up to \$15,000 per year (3 times as much as they are now) and the Commercial Façade Program would be more fully utilized.

Suggested Recommendation for Heritage Markham

THAT Heritage Markham supports a matching grant of up to \$15,000.00 for the removal of paint from the brick and re-conditioning of original window at 4592 Highway 7 East provided the owner obtains a heritage permit for the most appropriate method of paint removal and a second quote for the work;

THAT Heritage Markham supports revising the eligibility requirements of the Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program to only require the owner to enter into a Façade Easement Agreement with the City for grants exceeding \$7,500.00 beginning in 2026;

AND THAT Heritage Markham supports making historic places of worship eligible for a revised Commercial Façade and Historic Place of Worship Grant Program.

Appendix 'A'

Summary of 2024 Commercial Façade Improvement/Signage Grant Requests

592 Highway 7 E., Unionville

Status: Designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act and subject to a Heritage Conservation Easement Agreement



| Proposed Work | Quote 1 | Quote 2 |
|--|---------------------------------|---------|
| Removal of paint from brick and re-conditioning of historic wooden window frames | Holt Construction Services Ltd. | NA |
| Total Cost | \$37,290.00 | NA |

Attachment B - Grant Program – Eligible Work

4.0 Eligible Improvements

For this program, “façade” is defined as follows:

“The entire exterior front surface of a building which abuts the street from grade to eave or fascia line. Improvements above the storefront level, including roof repairs and roof replacement, are only eligible when performed in conjunction with storefront improvements.

Where a building abuts two streets or an alley, empty lot, parking area or open space, such building may have other faces considered facades if the City, at its sole discretion, determines they are highly visible”.

In the City of Markham, a number of former residential buildings have been converted to commercial uses, such as in the core area of old Unionville. These forms of buildings are also considered eligible for assistance under this grant program.

4.1 Heritage Properties

Eligible facade improvements on **heritage properties** may include:

- Repair or restoration of original features (cornices, parapets, eaves, other architectural features)
- Repair, restoration or replacement of windows and doors
- Cleaning of masonry in a sensitive manner where proven necessary (excluding sandblasting)
- Re-pointing of masonry in a traditional manner
- Removal of non-original siding or facing
- Removal of inappropriate signage
- Repair or restoration of authentic historic storefront treatment
- Painting in original or period colours
- Exterior lighting improvements
- Awnings
- Installation of new signage in accordance with the City’s Sign By-law for Special Sign Districts
- Structural improvements necessary for continued use
- Other capital improvements which the City, in its sole discretion, determines are important to incorporate as an integral part of the total façade improvement design

4.2 Non-Heritage Properties

Eligible façade improvements on **non-heritage properties** may include:

- Renovation of existing commercial storefronts in accordance with standard principles of traditional storefront design (fascia board for signage above storefront, appropriate display windows, removal of incompatible alterations, etc.)
- Improvements to the principal facades of incompatible buildings being sympathetic and compatible with the historic character of the area and the policies of the heritage conservation district plan
- Re-cladding in more traditional materials complementary to the district character
- Installation of traditional awnings
- Other capital improvements which the City, in its sole discretion, determines are important to incorporate as an integral part of the total façade improvement design

4.3 Ineligible Projects

The following types of work are not grant eligible:

- Manufacture of commemorative plaques
- Insulation
- Restoration or renovation of building interiors
- Structural works to the exterior to accommodate modern renovations
- Sandblasting of brick
- Security systems
- Interior window coverings
- Non-permanent fixtures
- Murals

4.4 Eligible Expenses

Eligible costs shall be the cost of materials, equipment and contracted labour to complete eligible improvements, as supported by invoices to the satisfaction of the City. Labour provided by the applicant or tenant of the building will not be an eligible cost. Other reimbursable expenses include professional, legal and architectural/ design fees, to a maximum grant of \$1,000.

4.5 Eligibility Considerations

The following considerations will apply when reviewing all applications for grant assistance:

- a) The project must comply with the policies and guidelines of the area's heritage conservation district plan;
- b) Preference will be given to applications proposing work on heritage properties;
- c) On heritage properties, conservation and restoration of original architectural features will occur to the extent possible;
- d) There will be a monetary participation by the applicant (for eligible work) equivalent to that being requested from the City;
- e) The grant program should not reward poor stewardship.