



Report to: Development Services Committee

Report Date: December 11, 2023

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**SUBJECT:** Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program - 2023

**PREPARED BY:** Peter Wokral, Senior Heritage Planner, ext. 7955

**REVIEWED BY:** Regan Hutcheson, Manager Heritage Planning, ext. 2080  
Stephen Lue, Senior Development Manager, ext. 2520

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1) THAT the Staff report, dated December 11, 2023, titled, “Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program - 2023”, be received;
- 2) THAT Council supports the following financial assistance for four project requests, representing \$25,173.61 in grant assistance:
  - a) The proposed replacement of one modern window, and the re-conditioning of two historic wooden windows at 819 Bur Oak Avenue, subject to the applicant obtaining a Heritage Permit for the proposed work (up to a maximum of \$6,122.61);
  - b) The repair and replacement of damaged brick at 5 George Street, Markham Village, subject to the applicant obtaining a Heritage Permit for the proposed work (up to a maximum of \$3,051.00);
  - c) The installation of a ground sign approved by the City at 4470 Highway 7 East Unionville, subject to the applicant removing existing abandoned and non-compliant signage (up to the maximum of \$1,000.00);
  - d) The reconditioning of the historic wooden windows, and installation of appropriate new storm windows at 8961 Ninth Line, subject to the applicant obtaining a Heritage Permit (up to a maximum of \$15,000.00);
- 3) THAT the grants be funded through the Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program Fund, Account 620-101-5699-23065 (\$30,000.00 available for 2023);
- 4) AND THAT staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

**PURPOSE:**

This report recommends the approval of the grant assistance for commercial façade improvements at 819 Bur Oak Avenue, 5 George Street, 4470 Highway 7 East, and 8961 Ninth Line.

**BACKGROUND:**

***The grant program was created in 2004***

Council approved the creation of the Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program (the “Façade Program”) and the Commercial Signage Replacement Grant Program (the “Signage Program”) for properties in commercial use located in the City’s Buttonville, Markham Village, Thornhill, and

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Unionville heritage conservation districts, and for individually designated commercial properties located outside of these districts.

***The Programs provide financial assistance to motivate positive improvements***

The purpose of the Façade and Signage Programs is to encourage and assist in the exterior improvement of privately-owned buildings, in commercial use, through joint public/private action and investment. Both heritage and non-heritage buildings in heritage districts are encouraged to apply. The Programs strive to address substantive improvements rather than short-term, cosmetic changes with the main goal being to help stimulate the revitalization of historic core areas.

***Grant assistance is subject to eligibility requirements***

Properties within the identified areas must be in commercial use to be eligible for grant assistance. Both owners and tenants of a commercial property can apply. The subject property must not be in default of any municipal taxes, local improvements, or any other monies payable to the City (fees or penalties). Also, the property must not be the subject of a by-law contravention, work order, or outstanding municipal requirements. Approved work completed since the 2022 deadline for applications to the program, may also be considered eligible for grant assistance.

***A range of exterior façade improvements are eligible for assistance***

a) Heritage Properties

Eligible facade improvements on heritage properties may include the following:

- i) Repair or restoration of original features (cornices, parapets, eaves, other architectural features)
- ii) Repair, restoration, or replacement of windows and doors
- iii) Cleaning and repair of masonry
- iv) Removal of non-original siding or facing
- v) Installation of new signage in accordance with the Special Sign District policies of the City's Sign By-law

b) Non-Heritage Properties

Eligible façade improvements on non-heritage properties may include the following:

- i) 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.)
- ii) Improvements to the principal facades of incompatible buildings provided such work is sympathetic and compatible with the historic character of the area and the policies of the heritage conservation district plan
- iii) Re-cladding in more traditional materials complementary to the district character

***The maximum amount of grant assistance depends of the heritage status of the property***

The maximum Façade Program grant is \$10,000 for non-heritage properties and \$15,000 for heritage properties. The assistance is in the form of a 50/50 matching grant that is paid upon completion of approved work. An applicant can receive one grant per calendar year. As a condition of any grant of more than \$5,000 or more, the property owner is required to enter into a façade easement agreement, in perpetuity, with the municipality.

For 2023, Council allocated \$30,000.00 to these Programs, as part of the approved 2023 Capital Budget.

***Grant recipients must enter into a Letter of Understanding with the municipality***

The Letter of Understanding establishes a formal arrangement between the applicant and the City, and outlines the amount of the grant, the work to be done, and the project completion date.

**OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:**

***The City received four applications for 2023; all are recommended for funding***

Four applications were received by the deadline of September 28, 2023, and collectively requested up to \$27,673.61, as summarized in Table 1 with further details provided in Appendix “A”.

<b>Table 1: Summary of Grant Requests and the Amount Recommended by Staff</b>			
<b>Address</b>	<b>Grant Request by Owner ½ of Lowest Quote Provided</b>	<b>Staff Calculation of ½ of Eligible Work</b>	<b>Grant Amount Recommend by Staff based on \$30,000.00 available</b>
819 Bur Oak Avenue (Part IV Designation)	\$6,122.61	\$6,122.61	\$6,122.61
5 George St. (Markham Village Heritage District)	\$3,051.00	\$3,051.00	\$3,051.00
4470 Hwy.7 E. (Unionville Heritage District)	\$3,500.00	\$1,000.00*	\$1,000.00
8961 9th Line (Part IV Designation)	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$27,673.61</b>	<b>\$25,173.61</b>	<b>\$25,173.61</b>

\* Maximum Permitted in Signage Program

***Specific criteria are used to evaluate the grant requests***

Heritage Section Staff and Heritage Markham, Council’s heritage advisory committee, are required to review the grant applications based on the following criteria:

- The project must comply with the policies and guidelines of the area’s heritage conservation district plan (if applicable).
- Preference is given to applications proposing work on heritage properties.
- On heritage properties, conservation and restoration of original architectural features will occur to the extent possible.
- Projects must obtain municipal approval to qualify.
- The assistance should not reward poor property stewardship.
- Substantive improvements rather than short-term cosmetic patch-ups should be given priority.
- Has the property already received grant assistance from the program in previous years?

All four applications are considered by Heritage Planning staff to meet the eligibility requirements, subject to conditions. Staff recommend that Heritage Markham support the funding that will be presented at the December 13, 2023, meeting, and do not expect the Committee to recommend any changes to the Staff recommendation.

***The grant submissions are supportable***

Staff recommend that Council fund the projects based on the \$30,000.00 available from the 2023 budget.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The requested grants are funded through the Heritage Façade/Signage Replacement Project Account 620-101-5699-23065, which has a 2023 allocated budget of \$30,000.00. The total sum of the grant assistance recommended by staff for allocation through the Facade and Signage Programs for 2023 is up to \$25,173.61.

**HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS**

Not Applicable

**ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

Assisting with the costs of restoring and improving commercial properties individually designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act* and commercial properties in heritage conservation districts promotes private investment, increases property values, and property tax revenue, while strengthening a sense of community and civic pride.

**BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:**

Review by: Heritage Markham Committee and Finance Department.

**RECOMMENDED BY:**

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Giulio Cescato, MCIP, RPP  
Director of Planning and Urban Design

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Arvin Prasad, MCIP, RPP  
Commissioner of Development Services

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Appendix 'A' Summary of 2023 Commercial Façade Improvement/Signage Grant Requests

## Appendix 'A'

### Summary of 2023 Commercial Façade Improvement/Signage Grant Requests

#### 819 Bur Oak Avenue, Markham, formerly Chillax Salon and Spa

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



Proposed Work	Quote 1	Quote 2
Re-conditioning of 2 historic wooden windows and replacement of 1 modern window on the commercial ground floor of building	David Wylie Restoration Ltd.	None provided
Total Cost	\$12,245.22	NA

**Staff Comment:** Staff supports grant funding up to \$6,122.61 (1/2 of the quote provided) subject to the applicant obtaining a heritage permit for the work, as the application meets the eligibility requirements of the program.



**5 George Street, Markham Village Heritage Conservation District, Robbins Properties Ltd.**

**Status:** Type 'A' heritage building in the Markham Village HCD and subject to a Heritage Conservation Easement Agreement



Proposed Work	Quote 1	Quote 2
Repair and replacement of damaged brick located just above the front veranda and rear deck	Everest Restoration	I.J. Berta Construction Ltd.
Total Cost	\$6,052.00	\$6,554.00

**Staff Comment:** Staff supports grant funding up to the maximum of \$3,051.00 (1/2 the value of the lowest quote) as the application meets the eligibility requirements of the program, subject to the applicant obtaining a heritage permit for the proposed work.

**4470 Hwy. 7 E. Unionville, Professional Office Space****Status:** Class 'B' building Unionville Heritage Conservation District

Proposed Work	Quote 1	Quote 2
Installation of new non-illuminated ground sign approved by the City	Infinite Signs	None provided
Total Cost	\$7,000.00	NA

**Staff Comment:** Grant funding in the maximum amount of \$1,000.00 available through the Commercial Signage Replacement Grant Program for new signage (based upon the paid invoice) is supported for the installation of the ground sign approved by the City provided the applicant removes any existing abandoned or previously installed signage on the property.

**8961 Ninth Line, Markham, First Academy Montessori School**



**Status:** Individually designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act and subject to a Heritage Conservation Easement Agreement.



Proposed Work	Quote 1	Quote 2
Re-conditioning of historic wooden windows and installation of appropriate aluminium storm windows	David Wylie Restoration Ltd.	None provided
Total Cost	\$52,884.00	NA

**Staff Comment:** Grant funding in the amount of \$15,000.00 (the maximum permitted for a heritage building based on the quote provided) is supported as the application meets the eligibility requirements of the program, subject to the applicant obtaining a Heritage Permit for the proposed work.