



Report
Staff Report
 The Corporation of the City of Brampton
 2/10/2025

Date: 2025-01-29

Subject: **Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs Close-Out**

Contact: Damanpreet Mathouda, Planner III, Downtown Revitalization

Report number: Planning, Bld & Growth Mgt-2025-113

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the report from Damanpreet Mathouda, Planner III, Downtown Revitalization to the Planning and Development Committee Meeting of February 10, 2025, re: **“Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs Close-Out”** in Wards 1 and 3, be received;
2. That Council approve the close-out of the Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs, effective February 10, 2025, acknowledging the Program's success to date in balance with administrative challenges, and the ongoing and planned major capital investments to revitalize Downtown Brampton;
3. That as part of the close-out of the Building and Façade Improvement Programs, all active, under review applications and all approved, in process applications that receive subsequent Council endorsement, which advance to construction completion are processed and paid accordingly;
4. That no new applications be accepted or considered after the close-out of the programs on February 10, 2025; and
5. Once all projects are completed and all applicants have been paid accordingly, any remaining budget in capital project accounts #197827-001, #197827-002, #247827-001 and #247827-002 be returned to their original funding source.

OVERVIEW:

- **2013 to support the revitalization of historic Downtown Brampton by providing matching grants, up to a maximum amount based on eligibility, to landowners and businesses.**
- **This report offers a comprehensive review of the Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs, expanding upon the report previously presented to Council on April 8, 2024, entitled “Building Improvement Grant**

Application for 27 & 27A Queen Street East”, which assessed the programs from 2019 to 2024 through digital records only. Staff have since examined all applications and data stored in both archives and online systems. This analysis includes a detailed review of the program's overall performance, successes, and challenges encountered since the program's initiation in 2013.

- Since 2013, the Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs have received 77 applications: 35 under the Building Improvement Grant and 42 under the Façade Improvement Grant. Over this period, 49 applications were successfully completed, disbursing approximately \$1.25 million in grants and leveraging \$4.5 million in private investment, achieving a 4:1 return on the City's funding.
- The close-out process for the Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs includes closing 14 active, under review applications and all approved, in process applications, with an estimated grant allocation of \$342,877 for both building and façade improvements. Staff will prioritize finalizing these applications in alignment with Program Guidelines by working closely with applicants to address outstanding requirements and ensuring timely completion.
- While the programs successfully attracted private investment, their closure reflects a strategic shift to address administrative challenges and policy inefficiencies. Property owners can still apply for the Paul Willoughby Heritage Incentive Grant, which supports the preservation, maintenance, and restoration of designated heritage properties.
- Moving forward, the City will prioritize transformative projects such as Downtown Streetscape Improvements on Queen and Main Streets, Centre for Innovation, Heritage Theatre and Southern Blocks Redevelopment, Riverwalk, and the redevelopment of Ken Whillans and Garden Squares. These efforts are designed to advance Downtown Revitalization goals, deliver long-term economic benefits, and enhance the vibrancy of Downtown Brampton.
- There are no financial impacts from the adoption of the recommendations in this report.

BACKGROUND:

The Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs under the Central Area Community Improvement Plan supports the revitalization of historic Downtown by providing matching grants, up to a maximum amount, based on eligibility to property and business owners intending to improve their buildings.

Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs - Overview

The Central Area Community Improvement Plan (CIP), was approved by Council in November 2007 and enacted in January 2008, subsequently amended in June 2010 and September 2019. The Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs were initiated

in 2013 as part of the CIP, and their study area boundary generally encompasses the strip of buildings along Main Street and Queen Street, bordered by Vodden Street to the north, Chapel Street to the east, Wellington Street to the south, and McMurchy Avenue to the west, as shown in Attachment 1.

The CIP is facilitated through a comprehensive toolbox consisting of eight incentive programs, two of which are the Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs (BFIP):

- The Building Improvement Grant eligible projects focus on internal works, such as structural repairs, installation/upgrade of fire protection systems, and building system upgrades.
- The Façade Improvement Grant eligible projects focus on exterior renovations, such as sign changes, restoration of exterior materials, and window/door upgrades to address issues related to safety and security.

Goals and Objectives of the Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs

The goals and objectives of the programs are to:

- Recognize aging building infrastructure in the Downtown core and incentivize private investment to improve the overall quality of commercial/mixed use building stock.
- Support property owners in their efforts to upgrade their properties and improve the viability of the buildings for new businesses to locate in the Downtown core.
- Encourage and support the ongoing active reuse of heritage buildings.
- Improve the visual appearance of building façades surrounding the Downtown.

Property owners and tenants are eligible to receive grants of up to \$20,000 per property, while properties with multiple storefronts or street addresses are eligible for grants of up to \$30,000. Additionally, work being undertaken for properties designated under the Ontario Heritage Act is eligible for grants of up to \$50,000.

Both programs aim to enhance the appeal of the Downtown area for businesses, and incentivize residents seeking to live, work, or conduct business downtown. By improving the functionality of the current building inventory, these programs contribute to downtown's economic vitality.

CURRENT SITUATION:

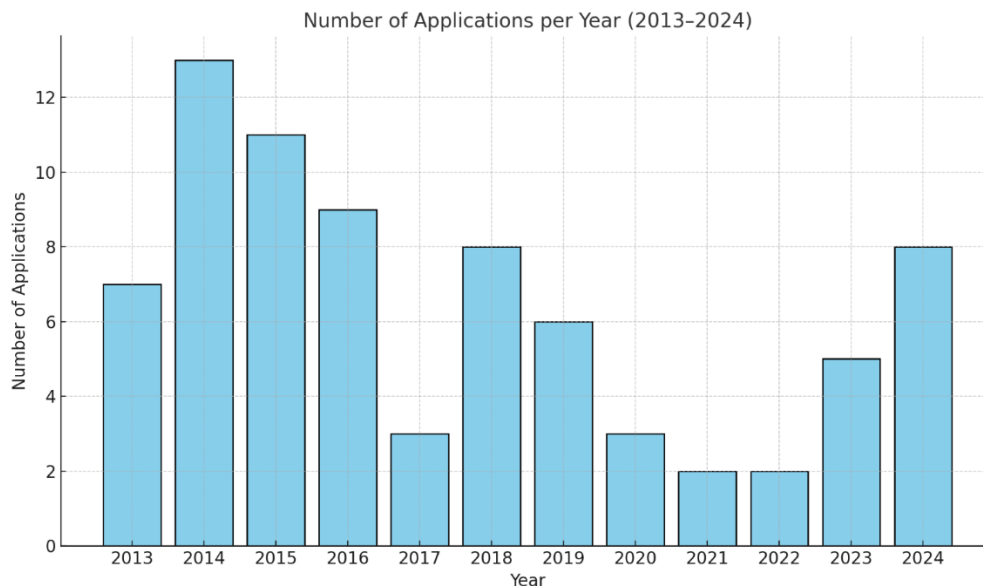
Following the comprehensive review of the programs presented on April 8, 2024, staff completed a further, in-depth analysis of the Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs since their inception in 2013. Staff took stock of all applications from 2013 to 2024, explored the programs successes and challenges, in the evolving context of City's Downtown Revitalization efforts.

Applications for the Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs, 2013 – 2024

As part of this process, staff retrieved and examined archived hard-copy applications and data from before 2019, alongside more recent records from 2024. This review provides a holistic assessment of all applications received and processed from 2013 to 2024, offering insight into the program's overall impact.

Total Applications Received

Since the launch of the Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs in 2013, a total of 77 applications have been submitted across both programs. Of these, 35 applications were submitted under the Building Improvement Grant, and 42 applications under the Façade Improvement Grant. The graph below illustrates the annual application trends.



The number of applications peaked in 2014, with 13 submissions, followed by 11 in 2015. This strong initial interest reflects the program's alignment with the immediate needs of property owners, particularly in addressing aging buildings and encouraging investment in Downtown Brampton.

Application numbers have declined over the years, with only 5 submissions in 2023 and a modest increase to 8 in 2024. Notably, there were as few as 2 applications in 2021 and 2022, respectively, likely due to the economic challenges of the pandemic.

Closed Applications

From 2013 to 2024, a total of 49 applications were closed to full completion and construction, representing a total of 64% of all applications submitted. The total grant amount disbursed for these completed applications includes:

- \$515,048 for the Building Improvement Grant; and
- \$731,544 for the Façade Improvement Grant.

This represents a combined total of approximately \$1.25 million grant amount. These grants facilitated approximately \$4.5 million in private investment, demonstrating the program's potential to leverage public funds effectively, with approximately just over \$4 of private investment for every \$1 invested by the City only. These accounts for applications that went through the entire BFIP process, were constructed and closed.

Next Steps for Close-Out and Outstanding Processing

Between 2013 to 2024, an inventory of 28 either Active/Under Review, In Process/Approved and Approved/Expired applications were compiled. The following definitions were used to categorize the applications:

- **Active Applications/Under Review (Not Approved):** A formal application has been submitted and is currently undergoing the preliminary review process. These applications will be brought forward for Council approval, upon completion of the review process.
- **In Process/Approved Applications:** A formal application has been submitted, the initial review process is complete, and the grant amount has been approved by Council. The application is now in the next stage, where the grant will be issued once the improvement construction work has been completed.
- **Approved/Expired Applications:** A formal application has been submitted, the initial review process was completed, and the grant amount has been approved by Council. However, the applicant did not follow through with the requirements outlined in the Council resolution or complete the related work by the specified date in the approval or agreements.

The total number of Active/Under Review, In Process/Approved and Approved/Expired applications, along with the total grant amounts for each program, is summarized in the tables below:

Programs	Active/Under Review (Not Approved) (#)	Estimated Grant Value (\$)
Façade Improvement Grant	3	\$100,250
Building Improvement Grant	3	\$50,621
Total	6	\$150,871

Programs	In Process/Approved (#)	Estimated Grant Value (\$)
Façade Improvement Grant	4	\$100,000

Building Improvement Grant	4	\$92,005
Total	8	\$190,005

Programs	Approved/Expired (#)	Estimated Grant Value (\$)
Façade Improvement Grant	7	\$160,999
Building Improvement Grant	7	\$156,126
Total	14	\$317,125

In summary, the close-out process for the Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs includes 14 applications currently in an Active/Under Review (not approved) and In Process/Approved status, with an estimated allocation of **\$340,876**. Staff will prioritize closing out these 14 applications in accordance with Program Guidelines. Staff will work closely with applicants to address any outstanding requirements and ensure timely completion of all necessary steps and continue to report to Council as needed. Grants for approved applications will be issued upon verification of completed improvement work and submission of all required documentation.

For the 14 approved, but expired applications, totaling **\$317,125** in grants, these applications were approved, no new budget or additional funds were requested, and there is no further action required on these applications. The funding for these projects was managed on an 'as-completed' basis, meaning the funds remained unspent until identified for use in applications that advanced to completion.

Revisiting the 2024 Forecasted Applications

In April 2024, staff anticipated approximately 8 applications for the Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs over the year, with projected grant requests of \$15,000 for the Building Improvement Grant and \$150,000 for the Façade Improvement Grant, which anticipated a total estimate of \$165,000 of grants needed. These estimates were based on preliminary discussions with landowners, landlords, and business owners regarding project eligibility and estimated construction costs.

However, as of February 2025, none of these anticipated applications have been submitted. With the Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs set to close effective February 10, 2025, any previously anticipated applications will no longer be eligible for funding.

Funding Summary

The Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs are funded through Reserve #88-Community Improvement Plan. Table 1 provides an overview of the grants allocated or

the Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs for Council-Approved Applications from 2019 to 2024.

Table 1: Community Improvement Plan (CIP) Allocation of Grants for the Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs (2019 and 2024)

Community Improvement Plan (CIP) Allocation of Grant (2019 and 2024)						
Activity Description	Approved Budget (2019 and 2024)	Spending to Date (Completed)	Uncommitted Balance	Active Applications (Not approved)	Council Approved Applications	Remaining Balance
Building Improvement Program Grant	\$300,000	\$64,999	\$235,001	\$50,622	\$92,006	\$92,373
Façade Improvement Program Grant	\$300,000	\$47,367	\$252,633	\$100,250	\$100,000	\$52,383
Total	\$600,000	\$112,366	\$487,634	\$150,872	\$192,006	\$144,756
Financial status based on information from February 2025.						
Defined Terms:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved Budget: Total Council approved grant allocated to the Building and Façade Improvement Programs Grant. • Spending To Date: Total amount of grant spent on complete (closed) applications, which has been disbursed to the applicants. • Uncommitted Balance: Remaining balance for Building and Façade Improvement Programs Grant. • Active Applications (Not Approved): A formal application has been submitted and is currently undergoing the preliminary review process. • Council Approved Applications: A formal application has been submitted, the initial review process is complete, and the grant amount has been approved by Council. The applicant is in progress completing work and demonstrating compliance to the requirements of the grant. 						

The funding summary reveals that the programs have struggled to fully utilize its resources, with significant funds remaining unspent and limitations in the number of projects reaching completion. This underperformance, coupled with declining application numbers, highlights inefficiencies in the program's guidelines and overall administration.

Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs- Success and Challenges

The Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs were established to support the revitalization of the Downtown area by incentivizing private investment in building improvements. While these programs have contributed to various successes, a comprehensive review has revealed several issues and challenges that have affected their overall effectiveness.

Success

The Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs have provided matching grants to property and business owners, enabling both interior and exterior upgrades to commercial and mixed-use buildings. By supporting projects that range from structural repairs to façade beautification, the programs have contributed to preserving the character of the historic Downtown while fostering economic activity.

An achievement of the programs has been their ability to attract and support new businesses in the Downtown. Notable examples include Pizzanini at 18 Main Street South, Street Bitz at 20 Main Street South, and MacaronZ at 43 Queen Street East, which have brought vibrancy and diversity to the local business scene. Another key success is 6 George Street, which became home to the Altitude Accelerator, which supports entrepreneurs and has attracted high-profile businesses like Admitly, Brickeye, and Mosea Technologies to the Innovation District. Similarly, 10–14 George Street North, supported by the program, has been transformed into Paranest Executive Suites, offering coworking and private office spaces that are now fully occupied by a range of professional services. Completed projects have enhanced property values and improved Downtown's appeal.

Notable projects such as those at 43 Queen Street East, 35 Queen Street East, and 40 Queen Street West have transformed façades, creating a more inviting atmosphere for visitors and shoppers. The acquisition and planned renovations of 8–18 Queen Street West by Kapil Financial Services, inspired by previous successes, further demonstrate how the program continues to encourage reinvestment in neglected properties.

The programs' impact has also extended beyond financial outcomes. By revitalizing older building stock and preserving heritage properties, they have helped maintain the cultural and architectural identity of Downtown Brampton. For instance, the installation of an elevator at 60 Queen Street East (Old Mill), funded by the program, improved accessibility to one of the area's most historic buildings, making its third floor usable for the first time.

Challenges

Despite some very successful examples over the 11 years since their inception, only 64% of applications have reached full completion and construction, highlighting the need for improved processes to streamline approvals and construction timelines. Staff have identified additional issues including the number of projects/applications that expired and were never completed, the program's administrative challenges, and additional issues with policy interpretation.

Expired Applications

Approximately 20% of applications that were approved by Council and secured legal agreements with private interests – expired, and did not advance any further than the agreement stages, which did not result in any downtown construction or revitalization.

The cross-functional staff resources used to support these expired applications can be used in more effective ways.

Administrative Challenges

The application process for the Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs is lengthy and can involve administrative delays at multiple stages, contributing to a lengthened timeline. Various departments and stakeholders require substantial time to complete their reviews, which extends the approval and implementation date. A common issue at the application submission stage is incomplete applications, often missing essential details such as owner authorization forms, adequate quotes, or sufficiently detailed scopes of work. These deficiencies necessitate additional staff time for follow-up and review. In the past, this process has delayed private investment as applicants resubmit and await processing cues and approvals, countering the objective to revitalize downtown.

Applications frequently require revisions and amendments to meet programs standards, including ensuring the scope of work is clearly defined and providing additional documentation such as site plans, heritage impact assessments (HIAs), architectural drawings, or sign by-law details. These revisions prolong the approval process and place administrative burden on staff to coordinate and advance the applications.

Policy Concerns

Policy misalignment has been a significant challenge for the programs, with unclear eligibility criteria, overlapping requirements, and administrative complexities creating barriers for applicants. Specific policy concerns include:

- **Policy 2.4.1 (i):** Restrictions prohibiting work commencement before grant approval have frequently been overlooked by applicants, leading to ineligibility and added challenges for both applicants and administrators.
- **Policy 2.4.4 (a), (b), and (e):** Misunderstandings around funding caps, which limit grants to \$20,000 per property, \$30,000 for properties with multiple storefronts, and 50% of eligible costs, have caused confusion and unrealistic expectations among applicants.
- **Policy 3.1.2 (d):** The requirement for two detailed contractor estimates has led to inefficiencies, with applicants often facing difficulties in obtaining two quotes or ensuring clarity and consistency between them.

These policy misalignments and administrative inefficiencies have hindered the overall success of the program. As a result, the decision to close the programs reflects the need to redirect resources toward more impactful initiatives that better align with community needs.

Building and Façade Improvement Programs in Broader Context - Then versus Now

The Building and Façade Improvement Programs (BFIP) was launched in 2013 at a time when Downtown Brampton faced challenges with limited economic activity, aging infrastructure, and a lack of vibrant public spaces. At that time, the programs played a critical role in supporting local businesses by providing grants to repair and upgrade their storefronts, which helped boost the Downtown economy and enhance the overall appearance of the area.

The current landscape in Downtown Brampton reflects a significant shift toward addressing larger challenges, where the City's transformative downtown projects are all gaining immense momentum and are designed to drive long-term economic growth. These major projects include Downtown Streetscaping, Ken Whillans and Garden Squares Redevelopment, Riverwalk, Centre for Innovation, and the Heritage Theatre and Southern Blocks Redevelopment. These projects underscore the City's commitment to unlocking the prosperity and full potential of Downtown Brampton as a vibrant and resilient urban core. These large-scale projects will generate significant benefits, including stimulating private sector investment and increasing property values. While the Building Improvement and Façade Programs was effective in encouraging individual businesses to make improvements, the City now needs to prioritize the delivery of major capital projects.

While we close the Building Improvement and Façade Programs, there is still an opportunity for downtown businesses to improve their buildings based on heritage value. Applicants can continue to take advantage of the Paul Willoughby Heritage Incentive Grant, which supports the preservation, maintenance, and restoration of designated properties. This grant offers funding to cover half of the cost of eligible conservation work, up to a maximum of \$10,000, subject to available funding, on the condition that the property owner matches the grant amount. Eligible projects must focus on the care and rehabilitation of existing heritage attributes or restoration efforts that contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

There are no financial impacts from the adoption of the recommendations in this report. There are sufficient funds to pay all Active/Under Review and In Process/Approved applications in the following projects:

Project	Project Description	Approved Budget	Spending to Date	Uncommitted Balance
197827-001	Community Improvement – Building Improvement	\$150,000	\$64,999	\$85,001

197827-002	Community Improvement – Façade Improvement	\$150,000	\$47,367	\$102,633
247827-001	Community Improvement – Building Improvement	\$150,000	\$0	\$150,000
247827-002	Community Improvement – Façade Improvement	\$150,000	\$0	\$150,000
Total		\$600,000	\$112,366	\$487,634

Once all the Active/Under Review and In Process/Approved applications advance to completion, and have been paid in full, staff will advise Finance to close the Building and Façade Improvement capital projects, and any remaining funds will be returned to source (Community Improvement Plan Fund).

Other Implications:

There are no other corporate implications associated with the report to close-out the Building and Façade Improvement Programs.

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA:

The Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs have supported the City's Strategic Focus Areas - Growing Urban Centers & Neighborhoods as well as Culture and Diversity. Over their duration, these programs have contributed to the growth of Brampton's local economy, the preservation and enhancement of cultural heritage assets, and the activation of spaces that celebrate cultural diversity through business and community engagement. While the programs are being closed, the City continues to be committed to unlocking the economic and livability potential of Downtown Brampton through major capital investments, construction and activations coordination and strategic policy development, which all continue to advance in an expedited manner.

CONCLUSION:

The Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs have served as a valuable tool in supporting the revitalization of Downtown Brampton over the past 11 years. These programs facilitated important private sector investment, preserved cultural heritage, and improved the functionality and aesthetics of the Downtown core. However, the evolving needs of Downtown Brampton, coupled with administration challenges and program inefficiencies, necessitate a strategic shift in focus. Staff will work with applicants to close the 14 Active/Under Review and In Process/Approved applications applications to responsibly bring the program to a close.

The recommendation to close the programs reflects the City's intent to focus revitalization efforts on larger, transformative projects that align more effectively with current priorities.

Major initiatives such as the Downtown Streetscaping Improvements on Main and Queen Streets, Riverwalk, Centre for Innovation, Heritage Theatre and Southern Blocks Redevelopment, and the redevelopment of Ken Whillans and Garden Squares will foster a vibrant and resilient urban core.

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Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – Building and Façade Improvement Grant Programs Study Area Boundary