

CITY OF ST. CATHARINES
COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (2020CIP)

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

☐ Façade Improvement Program (FIP)

On November 16, 2020 the City adopted a new Community Improvement Plan, herein referenced as the 2020CIP. The 2020CIP offers four (4) financial incentive programs to the private sector to help offset a portion of project costs incurred for redevelopment projects, brownfield remediation, and building façade improvements. The incentive is provided after project completion.

The four (4) programs are as follows:

1. Tax Increment Finance Program (TIF)
2. Brownfield Tax Increment Finance Program (BTIF)
3. Brownfield Tax Assistance Program (BTA)
4. Façade Improvement Program (FIP)

The following guidelines provide an overview of the **Façade Improvement Program (FIP)**, including eligibility, criteria, process and program timelines, application submission requirements, and requirements to commence payment of the incentive. Prospective applicants are encouraged to read the 2020CIP for more specific program details prior to making application.

The **Application Form** for the FIP Program can be found [here](#)

1. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Façade Improvement Program (FIP) provides a one-time grant to help offset project costs for a building façade improvement after the project is completed.

The value of the grant is up to 50 % of eligible project costs incurred, to a maximum of \$10,000 per building façade. More than one building façade on a property may be eligible for a grant.

Heritage FIP Grant (HFIP)

Properties designated under Part IV or V of the Ontario Heritage Act, or listed on the City's Heritage Register, and undertaking heritage restoration works as part of a building façade improvement, are eligible for a Heritage FIP (HFIP) grant, with a value up to 50% of eligible project costs incurred, to a maximum of \$15,000 for the applicable building façade.

2. ELIGIBLE PROPERTIES

- i) Only properties within certain neighbourhoods, and having lot frontage on specific street segments therein, are eligible for the FIP grant. The applicable neighbourhoods include Downtown and vicinity, old downtown Merritton, Facer Street, and the Port Dalhousie commercial core area.

Mapping of the eligible specific street segments are identified in Schedule 1 of this Guideline.

- ii) The property owner shall not be in arrears of any property taxes, local improvement charges or any other arrears or charges from the City, Region or the Province.

3. ELIGIBLE FACADES

- a) The type and context of building facades located on properties in Section 2 above, and eligible for a FIP grant, are as follows:

- i) a street-facing building facade that has ground floor commercial (office, retail, service commercial), indoor recreation or institutional uses excluding a Place of Worship;
- ii) a rear facade of a building that is located on the southeast side of St. Paul Street between Ontario Street and Carlisle Street;
- iii) a exterior side facade of a building where both the exterior side façade and the front façade have ground floor commercial (office, retail, service commercial), indoor recreation or institutional uses excluding a Place of Worship. This may include both building facades on a corner lot where one of

the facades may not front of face onto a street segment identified in Section 2 above;

- iv) a side yard building façade that is directly adjacent to and facing a public space, and where the street-facing façade of the building has ground floor commercial (office, retail, service commercial), indoor recreation or institutional uses excluding a Place of Worship.
- b) A building façade improvement receiving a FIP grant from the municipality in the previous 10 years is not eligible for a grant.

4. ELIGIBLE LANDSCAPING COMPONENT

Permanent hard landscaping is eligible for part of the FIP grant where undertaken in conjunction with a building façade improvement located on the same property, and where contiguous and immediately adjacent to the applicable façade improvement. Permanent hard landscaping costs may be claimed up to 20% of total eligible project costs.

5. PROJECT EVALUATION

Projects must be consistent with municipal urban design guidelines and comply with the City's Zoning By-law, Ontario Building Code, Fire Code and any other agency standards or regulations.

Each proposed building façade improvement shall be evaluated based on the Project Evaluation System set out in Schedule 2 of this Guideline. Schedule 2, Part A establishes 10 criteria components to evaluate a building façade improvement.

- i) At least 8 criteria components in Part A must be satisfied to qualify for approval.
- ii) A building façade improvement under Section 3 a) ii) and iv) above needs only to satisfy 5 of the criteria components in Part A to qualify for approval.
- iii) In addition to satisfying i) or ii) above, projects that include heritage restoration and applying for a HFIP grant must also satisfy all of the heritage restoration criteria set out in Schedule 2, Part B to qualify for approval.

6. ELIGIBLE PROJECT COSTS

- i) Only project costs incurred directly by the property owner are eligible.
- ii) Eligible and ineligible project costs are set out in Schedule 3 of this Guideline.

7. NO RETROACTIVE APPROVAL

Prospective applicants should not commence a building façade improvement project prior to formal approval by the municipality. Project costs incurred prior to formal

approval of a FIP or HFIP grant are not eligible for the grant.

8. APPLICATION SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Applications that do not meet all submission requirements will be deemed incomplete and not processed further or considered for approval.

Applicants are encouraged to consult with municipal staff prior to application submission.

The following is required to be submitted for a complete application.

- A detailed elevation plan for each building façade, and where applicable, a landscape plan, identifying all project components;
- Current pictures of the applicable façade(s), and any proposed landscape area, taken at time of application;
- Estimated Project Costs

An itemized estimate of total project costs, and component project costs, including proposed service providers. The estimate must be broken down to address each of the eligible project costs set out in Schedule 3.

9. PROCESS/ REQUIRED TIMELINE

- i) Applications are processed on a first come basis and are subject to available program budget allocation.
- ii) The Director of Planning and Building Services (PBS), or delegate, is the approval authority for a FIP or HFIP grant.
- iii) An approved project must be completed to the satisfaction of the municipality within 9 months from the date of approval issued by the Director of PBS or delegate.
- iv) To commence the grant payment, the applicant must:
 - provide written notice to the Director of PBS, or delegate, within 30 days after project completion requesting the grant payment; and
 - satisfy all requirements of the grant approval, and as set out in Section 10 below.

10. REQUIREMENTS FOR COMMENCEMENT OF GRANT


- i) That all municipal property taxes levied on the property are paid in full;
- ii) Confirmation that the project has been completed in accordance with approved concept and elevation plans for the building façade improvement, and other plans where applicable (landscape plan);
- iii) Picture documentation, taken at time of project completion, of the building façade and, where applicable, the landscape area;
- iv) Submission of an itemized and detailed breakdown of all eligible project costs incurred by the property owner, and broken down by components set out in Schedule 3; and including provision of detailed invoices, contracts, service /material provider, materials supplied, purchase orders, and proof of payment;
- v) Declaration of any grants or financial incentives that have been secured, or received conditional approval, for the same project from other government agencies, non-profit groups, or other agencies and associations. The amount, duration and provider of the incentives must be set out in the declaration;
- v) Satisfaction of a Municipal Compliance Audit and confirmation of no tax arrears, outstanding work orders, local improvement charges or any other charges of the City or other agencies, property standards compliance, and may include third party review or audit of eligible project costs at the expense of the property owner.

11. OTHER INCENTIVES

- i) Applicants approved for a FIP or HFIP grant may also be eligible to receive a matching grant through the Region of Niagara Smarter Niagara Incentive Program (SNIP). Not all eligible building façade types set out in Section 3 above, or the total value of the grant provided by the City, may be eligible for the matching grant under the SNIP. The SNIP is currently under review, and prospective applicants are encouraged to contact the Region of Niagara for availability and eligibility.
- ii) Any combined total grant approved by the City and the Region of Niagara shall not exceed 50 % of eligible project costs incurred.
- iii) Financial incentives may also be available from other agencies. Where other incentives, combined with the City grant, is greater than total project costs incurred, the value of the FIP or HFIP grant will be decreased accordingly to ensure that all incentives provided do not exceed total project costs incurred.

GUIDELINE SCHEDULES

SCHEDULE 1: ELIGIBLE PROPERTIES

-  Street Segments to which Properties Located thereon are Eligible for the Facade Improvement Program (FIP)

DOWNTOWN and Vicinity



SCHEDULE 2: PROJECT EVALUATION SYSTEM

Each proposed building façade improvement shall be evaluated based on the 10 Project Criteria Components set out in Part A below.

- i) At least 8 project criteria components must be satisfied to qualify for approval of a FIP grant.
- ii) Eligible façades under Section 3 a) ii) and iv) of this Guideline need only satisfy 5 of the project criteria components to qualify for approval of a FIP
- iii) HFIP grant: In addition to satisfying i) or ii) above, projects that include heritage restoration and applying for a heritage FIP grant (HFIP) must also satisfy all of the heritage restoration criteria set out in Part B below.

PART A – Project Criteria Components

1. **Comprehensiveness** - Façade improvements should represent a holistic restoration and improvement strategy for the entire eligible façade, including entrances, ground floor, upper floors and rooflines.
2. **Entrances** - Ground floor facades should include a prominent, well-defined pedestrian entrance for each ground floor use or lobby, which is oriented to the sidewalk. Where new entrances are proposed, they shall be recessed from the sidewalk. Each new principle entrance shall be flush with the sidewalk or ramped in order to minimize barriers for people with disabilities or mobility challenges.
3. **Storefront** - Ground floor facades shall include a complete traditional storefront, including large clear glass display windows, a clear glazed or decorative door, and an appropriately designed cornice and bulkhead
4. **Cultural Integrity** - All distinctive original architectural elements should be retained and restored. This includes but is not limited to cornices, brickwork, window moldings, carvings, pilasters, bulkheads, parapets, transoms and other details. If a specific architectural element cannot be retained due to irreparable deterioration, replacement elements shall be compatible with the original to the greatest extent possible. Original architectural elements, including window openings and entrances shall not be covered, filled or obscured.
5. **Materials and Cladding** - The façade shall primarily be clad in brick or stone which is in a good state or repair or restored. Unpainted brick or stone should not be painted or covered. Previously painted masonry may be repainted. Masonry and mortar that must be repaired or replaced should match the existing material in colour, style and texture as closely as possible. Façade and accent colours shall be selected that reflect and enhance place character.

- 6. Ground Floor Windows** - The surface area of the ground floor façade should be covered by at least 50% clear glazing that provides views to active interior space or lobbies. To allow people to clearly see in and out, tinted or reflective glazing is not permitted. Use of security grills or bars over windows is also not permitted. With the exception of limited traditional painted or decal window signs, signage and posters over windows shall be avoided.
- 7. Upper Windows** - Original upper storey window openings should be retained, along with the traditional configuration of window panes and sashes. This includes retention of existing round head windows. Where new windows are proposed, they should reflect the size and spacing of original windows and those of adjacent buildings. Original window sills, surrounds and shutters should be retained and restored where possible, or replaced with a compatible alternative. Any window box air conditioners and wall- mounted satellite dishes shall be removed.
- 8. Compatibility and Proportions** - The composition of the building should reflect characteristic proportions of surrounding buildings through the use of appropriate horizontal and vertical articulation, including typical facade widths and height, cornice heights, window and door composition and rooflines. The composition of the façade should reflect the established rhythm and spacing of the surrounding facades. Large facades will be visually broken down into smaller components.
- 9. Signage** - All signage is appropriately sized to compliment the character and proportions of the façade and the established character of the block. Signage is generally limited to a dedicated sign band above the ground floor or storefront and will compliment, not clutter the streetscape. Signage should not occupy more than 15% of the surface area of the ground floor façade nor cover or obscure any architectural elements.
- 10. Streetscape Vibrancy** - Facade improvements will include design elements that improve the vibrancy and pedestrian experience of the streetscape. These elements include but may not be limited to the provision of awnings, canopies, flower boxes, hard landscaping, decorative lighting, patios or art installations. Note that some of the elements may require additional approvals

PART B – Additional HFIP Grant Heritage Restoration Criteria

- 1. Materials** - Principle exterior finish of the building shall be masonry. Accent materials may include wood, masonry, metals, glass, plaster and stucco; and, repair or replacement materials to match the original as closely as possible, both visually and physically.

- 2. Windows** - Wooden windows to be retained and restored as necessary. Storm windows with a matching or a one-over-one pane configuration may be used to improve energy efficiency;

Window components such as sash, muntins, glazing, pane configuration, sills, mullions, casings, brick molds and shutters are also significant and shall be retained and restored as necessary: and

Where windows must be replaced, replacements shall match the old in material, design, and finish.

- 3. Storefront** - Original or period storefront elements to be retained and restored including, hardware, display cases and windows, sign bands, entrances transoms and awnings; and

Storefronts to be restored using recognized conservation methods, or the limited replacement in kind, or with a compatible substitute material, of those extensively deteriorated or missing components, matching the existing work as closely as possible, both in both material and look.

- 4. Character Defining Elements** - Character-defining architectural elements shall be retained and restored. These elements may include parapets, cornices, brickwork, window moldings, pilasters, bulkheads, etc.;

If restoration is not possible due to irreparable deterioration, replacement elements should be in kind (like-for-like materials, design, scale, colour and finish); and

Character-defining architectural elements, including windows and doors, shall not be covered, filled or obscured.

SCHEDULE 3: ELIGIBLE PROJECT COSTS

Eligible and ineligible project costs are set out below.

1. Eligible Project Costs

- a) decorative or glazed doors;
- b) windows;
- c) exterior paint;
- d) stonework;
- e) brickwork;
- f) restoration of surfaces and architectural elements;
- g) exterior accessibility improvements;
- h) storefront and accent lighting;
- i) awnings and canopies;
- j) signage frame or backdrop;
- k) qualified contracted labour and design services; and
- l) permanent hard landscaping contiguous and immediately adjacent to the building façade improvement.

2. Ineligible Project Costs

- a) financing, consulting fees, fees to prepare façade improvement/landscape plans
- b) business signs;
- c) spandrel panels;
- d) reflective or darkly tinted glass,
- e) maintenance work;
- f) incidental costs;
- g) exterior cladding, including stucco/EIFS, except where upgrading a portion of the building that has already been clad or where it has been demonstrated that the underlying masonry is irreparably deteriorated;
- h) any movable/temporary landscaping elements (e.g. planters, patio furniture, soft landscaping).