
DOWNTOWN AND HEALTH WELLNESS CLUSTER BUILDING IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM GUIDE

1) Program Description

This program provides a financial incentive in the form of a grant to promote interior and exterior maintenance and improvement works to existing commercial, institutional and mixed use buildings and properties.

2) Who can apply?

Only owners of properties within the Community Improvement Project Area that meet the program eligibility requirements may apply.

The City retains the right and absolute discretion to reject an application received from a person or corporation which in the opinion of the City or its professional advisers, does not possess the experience, financial, technical, personnel or other resources that may be required to carry out the obligations that the applicant proposes to assume under the terms of its application and grant agreement.

3) How does the program work?

The program is structured as a matching grant program where the City will provide a grant equal to 50% of the cost of certain types of building maintenance and improvement works, up to a maximum grant of \$12,500 per property/project.

4) What types of work are eligible for a grant?

The following types of building maintenance and improvement works on commercial, institutional and mixed use buildings are considered eligible for a grant under this program:

- i) Entrance modifications to provide barrier-free accessibility
- ii) Installation/upgrading of fire protection systems;
- iii) Repair/replacement of roof;
- iv) Structural repairs to walls, ceilings, floors and foundations;
- v) Water/flood/weatherproofing;
- vi) Repair/replacement of windows and doors;
- vii) Extension/upgrading of plumbing and electrical services for the creation of retail, office or residential space;
- viii) Installation/alteration of required window openings to residential spaces;
- ix) Required improvements to heating and ventilation systems; and,
- x) Other similar repairs/improvements related to health and safety issues, as may be approved.

5) What conditions must be met to be eligible for a grant?

In addition to the General Program Requirements, the following program specific requirements must also be met:

- Eligible works must conform to the City's Urban Design Guidelines, and appropriate reference material as determined by City staff;
- For buildings designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, the restoration and improvement works should be supported by documentation in the form of historic photographs or drawings clearly showing the feature(s) to be restored or reconstructed;
- The applicant will be required to submit at least two (2) cost estimates from bona fide licensed contractors, including a detailed breakdown of costs;
- Construction of all proposed improvements is to be completed within two (2) years of the date of approval of the grant. If the work is not completed within two (2) years, the grant approval will cease and the grant will not be paid.

6) Is there a fee to apply?

No.

7) When will the grant funds be advanced?

The grant will be advanced in full when:

- a Grant agreement has been signed and executed;
- construction is complete;
- the building has been inspected by municipal staff; and,
- the applicant provides proof that all contractors have been paid.

8) What are the default provisions?

The default provisions are contained in the Grant Agreement. Payment of the grant may be cancelled if:

- property taxes on the property are more than three (3) months in arrears;
- the building is demolished or any of the heritage features are altered in any way that would compromise the reason for designation;
- the applicant declares bankruptcy;
- the applicant uses the grant for works that are not eligible for this program;
- the applicant fails to maintain the improvements as required in the Grant Agreement; and,
- the applicant is in default of any of the provisions of the Grant Agreement.

9) How do I apply for a grant?

- a) Arrange a pre-application meeting with staff in order to determine program eligibility, proposed scope of work, project timing, etc...
- b) If authorized to apply for a grant, complete and submit an application form. Ensure that all required signatures have been provided and that the application is accompanied by all required documentation as shown in the required documents checklist.

10) What happens next?

- Applications and supporting documentation are reviewed by staff to ensure that they meet all of the eligibility requirements. If your application does not meet the eligibility requirements, you will be notified of this in writing.
- Staff may request clarification or additional supporting documentation.
- Once you have submitted a complete application, you will be notified of this in writing.

- Staff will perform an initial site visit(s) and inspection(s) of the property (as necessary).
- A recommendation on the grant application will be made by staff and forwarded to Council or Council's designate.
- You will be notified in writing of the decision made by Council or Council's designate on your application.
- If Council or Council's designate approves of your application, you will be sent a Grant Agreement for your signature, and then the grant agreement will be executed by the City. A copy of the executed agreement(s) is then returned to you for your records.
- Construction of the approved works may now commence, subject to issuance of a building permit(s).
- Contact City staff toward the completion of the works.
- Upon completion of the works, staff will conduct a final site visit(s) and inspection(s) (as necessary) to ensure compliance with the Grant Agreement, Urban Design Guidelines and any permits pursuant to the Ontario Heritage Act.
- Submit to the City, copies of paid invoices and "after" picture(s) of the completed works.
- Upon review and approval of all submitted documentation, the City will issue a grant cheque to the applicant for the full amount of the approved funding.
- The applicant will be asked to complete a grant receipt form and return this to the City.
- The City reserves the right to audit the cost of the works prior to advancing the grant payment.

For further information on this program, please contact Christine Rossetto, Planning Assistant at (905) 735-1700, Extension 2258 or via e-mail at christine.rossetto@welland.ca