

BUDGET COMMITTEE REQUEST:

Staff report the process to increase the Heritage Grant.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- That the information be received.

KEY FACTS:

- The Heritage Grant Program (the Program) has been offered on an annual basis since 2013. The Program provides funding to assist with conservation and restoration projects for designated heritage properties in the Town of Oakville.
- In 2023, the budget for the Program was \$120,000. Even with funding increases in 2017 and 2022, almost every year of the Heritage Grant Program has been over-subscribed with total grant applications typically doubling or even tripling the Program budget.

COMMENTS/OPTIONS:

The Heritage Grant Program was approved by Council on an annual basis on May 16, 2016, following the successful completion of a three-year pilot program started in 2013. The grant program was developed to provide funding for owners of properties designated under Part IV or Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

The program sets out criteria for eligible conservation work, and defines what projects are not eligible to receive funding. Grants can be applied for as matching funding up to a maximum contribution of \$15,000. Staff has received feedback from property owners who have received a grant that funding from the town was integral to the completion of their conservation work.

The program now offers a total of \$120,000 in funding each year through the Town's operating budget (increased from \$90,000 for the 2022 program) but occasionally additional funds are available from unused grants, developer contributions or heritage fees. Even with funding increases in 2017 and 2022, almost every year of the Heritage Grant Program has been over-subscribed by at least double or triple the amount of funding provided.

Designation Program Incentive

The town's conservation and designation project is underway to designate as many listed properties as possible before January 1, 2025. The Heritage Grant Program is the town's biggest incentive for property owners to assist in conserving private heritage buildings. Property owners have stated previously that financial incentives can help balance any perceived negative impacts from heritage designation. The town has fully designated 36 properties under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* since January 1, 2023, with an additional 55 properties that are in various stages of the designation process. The town's goal for the Designation Program is 100 properties.

The following chart provides an overview of the Heritage Grant Program statistics to date:

Program Year	Number of Projects	Requested Funding	Funding Available	Value of Projects
2014 (pilot)	28	\$235,000	\$80,000	\$500,000
2015 (pilot)	26	\$172,000	\$80,000	\$466,000
2016 (pilot)	23	\$138,000	\$80,000	\$370,000
2017	25	\$181,000	\$90,000	\$402,000
co	19	\$164,000	\$90,000 + \$5,000	\$478,000
2019	51	\$379,000	\$90,000 + \$25,175	\$1,000,000
2020	25	\$207,000	\$90,000	\$510,000
2021	39	\$253,000	\$90,000 + \$53,275	\$740,000
2022	32	\$244,000	\$120,000 + \$26,834	\$827,000
2023	55	\$485,000	\$120,000 + \$17,965	\$2.1 million
2024	42	\$287,000	\$120,000 + \$35,340	\$717,000

The above chart demonstrates the over-subscription of the Program, as well as the total value of the approved projects. The return on the town's investment of \$120,000 in 2023 was over \$715,000. The conservation and restoration projects supported by the Heritage Grant Program have in turn supported local trades and businesses who are in demand for their specialized skills and materials. Owners of designated properties pay premiums in order to maintain their properties in accordance with the best practices in heritage conservation and greatly appreciate the financial support and recognition that comes from the Heritage Grant Program.