

**City of Belleville**

**Façade Improvement Program**

**Design and Procedural Guidelines**



**Engineering & Development Services Department**

**August 2001**

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## **PART 1 – BACKGROUND**

### **1.1 Basis**

City Council, pursuant to the Official Plan for the City of Belleville, adopted a Community Improvement Plan for the downtown of Belleville that provides for the awarding of capital grants for the upgrading of existing buildings. Of particular interest under this Plan are improvements to building façades.

This Design and Procedural Guideline has been prepared by the City as required by the policies of the Community Improvement Plan for the downtown of Belleville to define the terms of the *Façade Improvement Program*. It is designed to be read in its entirety, and should be considered as a whole.

### **1.2 Purpose**

The primary purpose of the *Façade Improvement Program* is to encourage preservation of the architectural traditions upon which the character of the downtown of the City of Belleville is based. The whole of the downtown can benefit from a Program that confirms and maintains consistency in design of existing buildings, or ensures that existing buildings are maintained or restored in a manner sympathetic to their architectural style and which brings continuity to the downtown.

The *Façade Improvement Program* encourages restoration and rehabilitation of older downtown buildings in a fashion that has regard to their original design, the downtown and the provisions of the *Ontario Building Code*.

The purpose of this document is to define the criteria to be used by the City to select projects that will be eligible for grants under the *Façade Improvement Program*. A description of available grants and the application process are outlined in this document.

### **1.3 Nature of the Program**

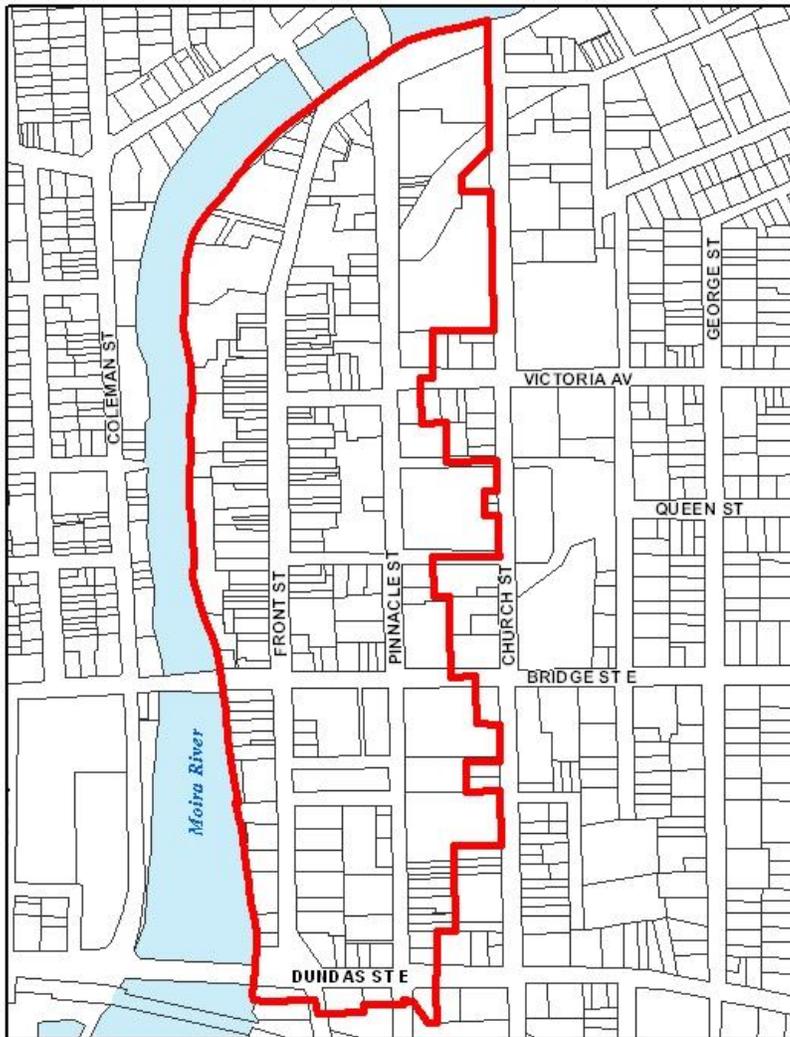
Under the *Façade Improvement Program*, grants in the form of non-repayable financial contributions will be provided by the City of Belleville to owners or qualifying tenants of buildings in the City's downtown to improve the façades of downtown buildings.

While not specifically covered in the Program, City Council at its sole discretion may agree to approve a project that has a component of the work related to resolution of structural problems of a building in concert with façade improvements.

City Council, at its sole discretion, will approve or select eligible projects based on the criteria set out in this document, available funds, the nature of competing applications, and other applicable policies of the Municipality.

#### 1.4 Location of Eligible Properties

Properties located in the Belleville Downtown Improvement Area are eligible for grants under the *Façade Improvement Program*. Also eligible are properties fronting on the east side of Pinnacle Street and the south side of Dundas Street adjacent to the boundary of the BDIA, as shown on the map below.



#### 1.5 Who is Eligible to Apply?

Building owners and tenants of buildings who operate a business in the area described above may apply for grants under this Program. Any applicant who does not own the property subject to improvements must provide authorization from the owner.

## **PART 2 – DESIGN AND IMPROVEMENT CRITERIA**

### **2.1 Design Character of Belleville's Downtown**

Belleville's downtown consists of a variety of architectural styles typical of downtowns built in Ontario in the mid/late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many of these buildings exhibit unique architectural characteristics and are worthy of preservation as they contribute greatly to the character of the downtown and the City. These buildings are typically referred to as having *traditional façades*.

In addition however, there are numerous buildings located in the downtown built post World War II that exhibit characteristics much different from older buildings. While not as numerous as the more traditional downtown buildings, these too have significant impact upon the character of the downtown. These buildings are typically referred to as having *non-traditional façades*.

### **2.2 General Eligibility Criteria**

All proposed improvement projects will be assessed under three main considerations:

1. Consistencies with these design guidelines and the original architectural design of the building.
2. The extent to which a project improves the overall appearance of the property and of adjacent and nearby buildings.
3. The overall benefit to the downtown and consistency with the City's Official Plan and other applicable policies.

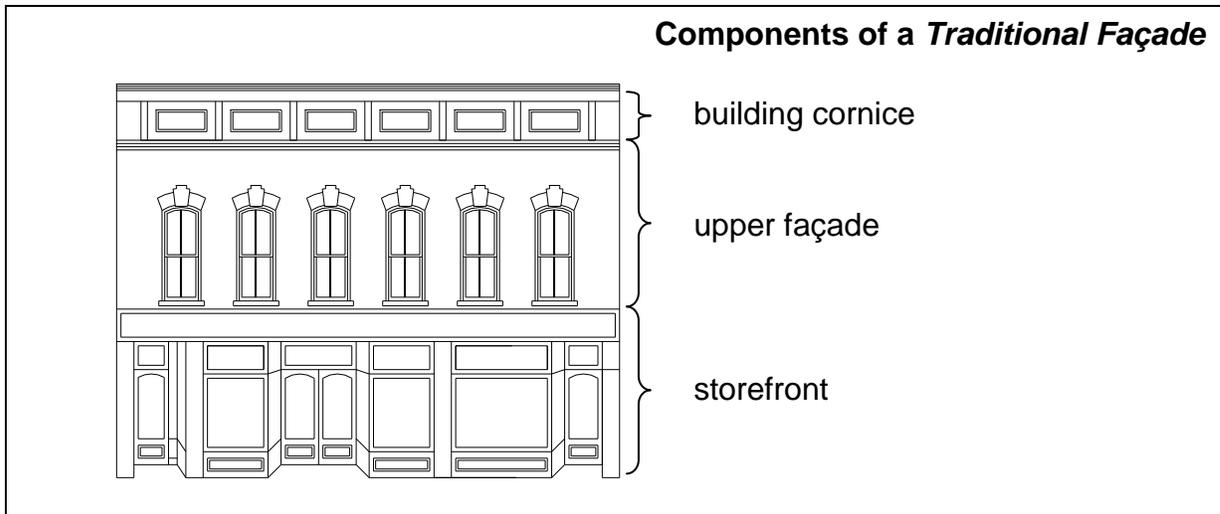
Projects for buildings with major structural problems will not be eligible for grants under this Program.

Projects where facades are to be altered that would not enhance the building's architectural characteristics, the aesthetics of the property, or be compatible with adjoining buildings will not be eligible for grants under this Program.

While not specifically covered by the Program, Council may approve projects that have a component pertaining to correcting structural deficiencies provided that there is improvement to the façade included in the project.

The traditional façade of storefronts is found on buildings built in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While these façades have a variety of sizes, shapes and styles, they essentially consist of the storefront, upper façade, and cornice.

- The storefront is the lower part of the building around the main commercial entrance at street level.
- The upper façade is the middle part of the building constructed of stone, brick or wood with regularly spaced windows.
- The building cornice at the top of the structure decoratively caps the building.



Project proposals should address **all three parts of the façade**. Projects that are in keeping with the characteristics of the traditional façade will be acceptable. Priority may be given to projects that restore or replicate original elements. Items that should be considered include:

- restoration of original elements and architectural detailing;
- window and door sizes, shapes, proportions, detailing, and locations;
- signage details (size, location, colour, lighting methods);
- appropriate style and use of awnings;
- paint colours and effective use of colour to enhance building aesthetics; and
- use of natural and traditional building materials.

It is not required that traditional façades be restored precisely to their original condition – an approach that gives sympathy to the building's original façade and building characteristics but uses modern materials and building and design techniques would be acceptable. The Program does however encourage restoration of façades to their original state using authentic or original materials.

### 2.3 Restoration of Original Elements

This Program encourages removal of vinyl or aluminum siding and the restoration of original brick, stone or wood on *traditional façades*. Where it may not be possible to restore original materials, the use of natural materials (i.e. real or replicated wood) is encouraged where the form and scale of the original façade is maintained.



Where new materials are used in the restoration of a *traditional façade*, they should match the texture, colour, size, shape and detail of the original material where possible.

**Some hints on masonry restoration:**

Generally, cleaning of historic masonry is not recommended, as it may cause damage. If cleaning is undertaken, it should be done gently so as not to remove the patina of the material, and should not be done simply to create a new appearance.

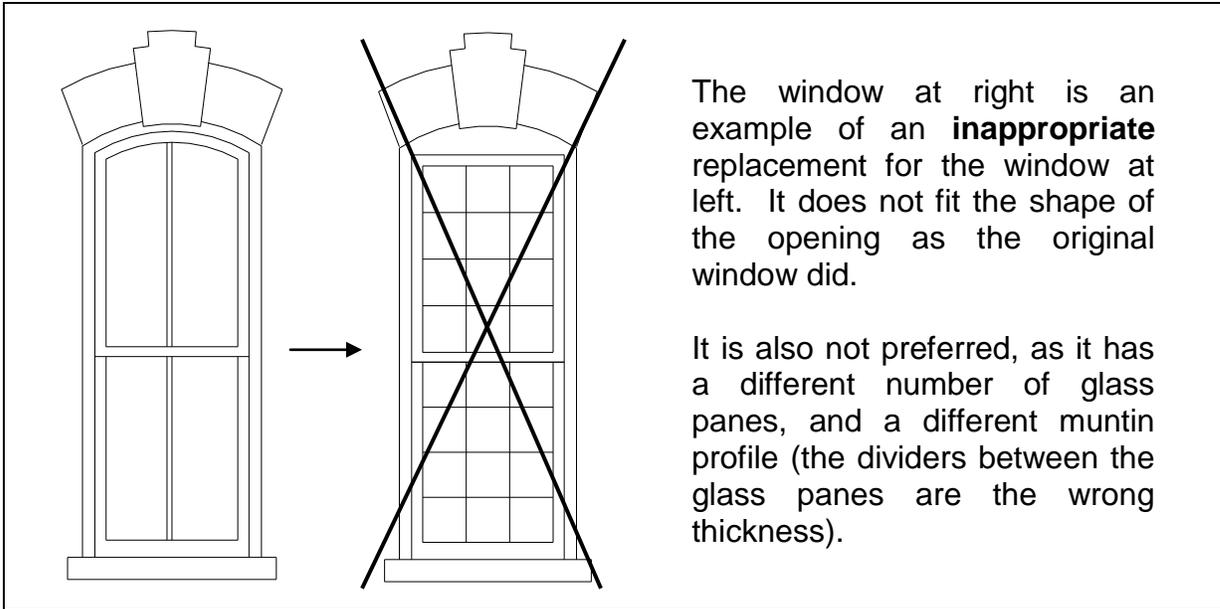
Abrasive cleaning such as sandblasting is extremely damaging to *traditional façade* materials, and will accelerate masonry deterioration. It can also greatly change the appearance of a building. Masonry surfaces that were historically painted should generally remain painted.

When repointing (repairing deteriorated mortar joints), it is important that new mortar match the original in strength, composition, and colour. New mortars made with Portland cement are much harder than historic lime mortars, and can damage *traditional* masonry. The use of power tools to remove old mortar on *traditional façades* is also not recommended, as they can easily cause irreparable damage.

## **2.4 Windows and Doors**

Original windows should be repaired wherever possible. The use of replacement vinyl and or other low maintenance windows and doors on *traditional façades* is discouraged by the Program. In such cases, interior storm windows may be used to make original windows more energy efficient without affecting their appearance.

Where it is not possible to repair the originals, or where older replacements have already been installed, new replacement windows and doors should fit the shape of the opening and any architectural detailing around the opening should not be covered. Preferred projects are those that most closely replicate the original window and door design including the number of glass panes, profiles of the sash rails and muntins, and frame colours.



### Heritage Properties



Properties designated under the Heritage Act require special consideration. In such instances, restoration to historic conditions is usually a strong consideration. Structural or façade improvement projects undertaken on designated properties under *The Ontario Heritage Act* shall be consistent with the designation and in accordance with the recommendations of *Heritage Belleville* (the municipal heritage committee).

## 2.5 Non-Traditional Façades (later 20<sup>th</sup> Century Buildings)

*Non-traditional façades* are typically found on buildings that were constructed post World War II. They can exhibit a tremendous range of architectural style and building characteristics with wide variation in elements such as colour, building materials, height and massing, architectural detailing, and window and door treatment.

*Non-traditional façades* represent a unique issue under this Program. The intent of this Program is that they be considered where there would be a measurable improvement in the appearance and quality of the façade. The Program encourages development of such façades in a manner that is sympathetic to *traditional façades*. Approved projects will maintain and enhance or establish an attractive façade that reflects the characteristics of the building and is sympathetic to adjacent buildings and their architectural style.

Components of a *non-traditional façade* that would be of importance under this Program include:

- window and door sizes, shapes, detailing, and locations;
- signage details (size, location, colour, lighting methods);

- appropriate style and use of awnings;
- architectural detailing;
- paint colours and effective use of colour to enhance building aesthetics; and
- use of natural and traditional building materials (or products that responsibly replicate such materials).

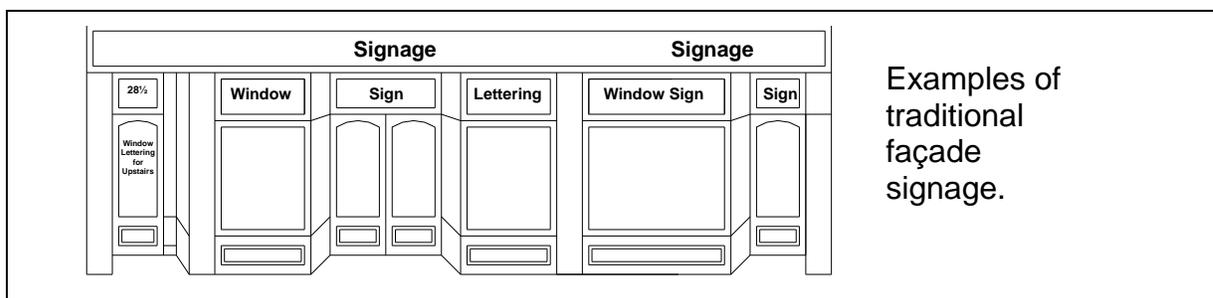
While it is important that the design of the façade reflect the architectural characteristics of the building, this Program encourages the use of unique techniques that enhance the attractiveness of existing buildings (i.e. embossed signs, indirect lighting, attractive window and door framing) that are reflective of traditional façades.

As buildings with non-traditional façades are typically located adjacent to buildings with traditional façades, care must be exercised to ensure enhancements to non-traditional façades reflect the scale of such adjoining buildings.

## 2.6 Signs

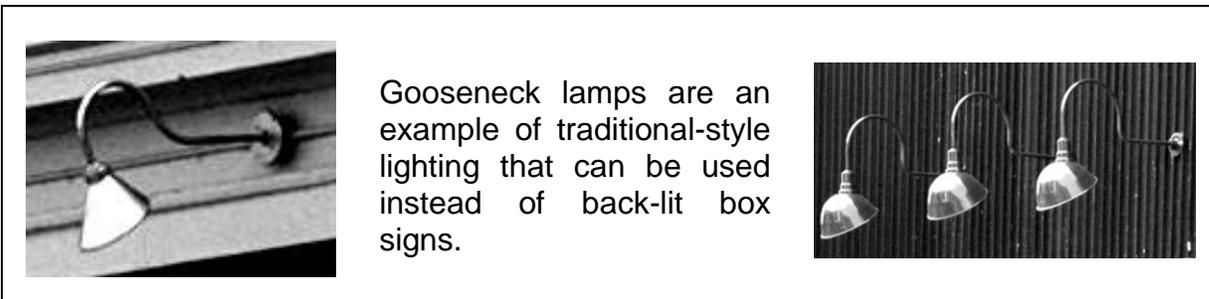
Signs will be eligible under this Program provided they are a component of an overall façade improvement proposal. Funding allocated specifically to sign replacement or improvements may be up to \$2,500, but shall not exceed 25% of the total grant.

Signs should reflect the scale and characteristics of the building's architecture, and be consistent with signage on traditional façades. Projects using natural materials with external lighting are preferred. Projecting wood signs in accordance with the Sign By-Law with wrought iron detailing and support are encouraged where located at the storefront level so as to avoid disrupting the window rhythm of the upper façade.



Signs consisting of individual decorative letters on the façade that enhance architectural characteristics of the building are encouraged. Fascia signs that do not detract from the architectural appearance of the façade may also be permitted.

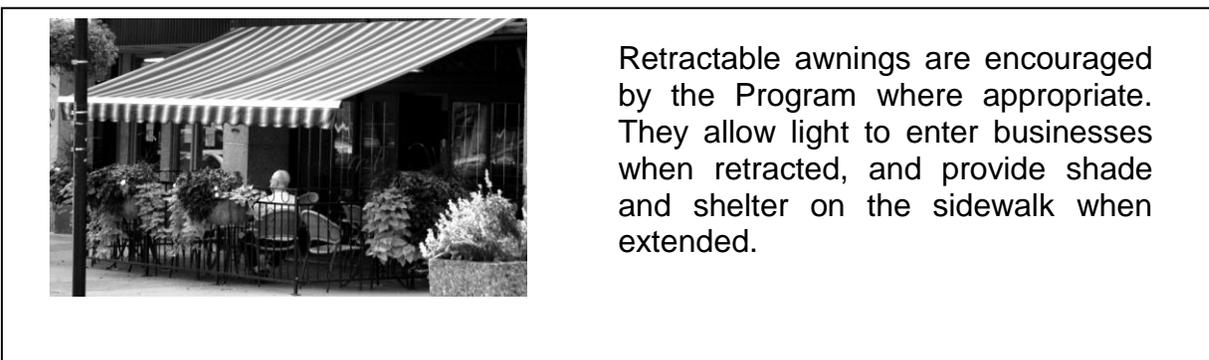
Projects incorporating back-lit fascia 'box' signs will not be eligible for grants under this Program. Instead, the program encourages the use of decoratively front-lit signs incorporating traditional-style lighting.



Sign colours should be restricted to original or authentic colours; otherwise traditional colours such as brown, green, blue, red, white or black are preferred.

## 2.7 Awnings

Retractable awnings are encouraged where consistent with the original building design. Non-retractable awnings that do not detract from the architectural appearance of the façade may also be permitted where consistent with the architectural style of the building. Retractable awnings are preferred over fixed awnings. Where an awning is to contain signage, it is preferable that signage consists of primarily individual block letters and be of a size and scale that is consistent with other buildings nearby.



## 2.8 Colour

To create an atmosphere of consistency throughout the downtown, the Program encourages applicants to:

- leave natural masonry unpainted where feasible;
- provide weather-protective finishes for wood surfaces;
- use muted colours for background finishes;
- use bright colours for accents only;
- colour test to find original colours of historic structures; and
- develop a scheme for the entire building to coordinate all façade elements, and to fit appropriately with adjacent buildings.

## **2.9 Second Façades**

The *Façade Improvement Program* provides additional grants for projects that involve a second façade. Where improvements to the main façade are planned, upgrading or establishment of a second façade opening towards a flanking street, a municipal parking lot, the Moira River and the Riverfront Trail, or other areas accessible to the public may qualify for the enriched grant.

Where one property contains two or more buildings each with distinctive façades (i.e. where two separate buildings have been acquired by the same owner such that titles have merged), the two façades on this one property may be considered eligible for the enriched grant notwithstanding the two façades may face the same direction.

The criteria for assessing the eligibility of the second façade shall be the same as applying to the main façade in terms of design, materials, signage and colours.

## **2.10 New Construction**

Additions to buildings (adding new floor area) are not eligible for grants under this Program unless the project involves replication of original architectural detail using proper materials and/or the addition results in a façade for the building that meets the requirements set out above.

## **2.11 Building Code**

To be considered, projects under the *Façade Improvement Program* shall comply with the provisions of *The Ontario Building Code* and applicable municipal By-Laws.

## **2.12 Permanent Landscaping**

Permanent non-movable landscaping will be eligible under this Program provided it is a component of an overall façade improvement proposal. Funding allocated specifically to landscaping may be up to \$1000, but shall not exceed 25% of the total grant.

Landscaping should reflect the scale and characteristics of the building's architecture, and be consistent with the downtown.

## **PART 3 – ADMINISTRATION AND APPLICATIONS**

### **3.1 Projects Eligible for Grants**

Projects eligible for funding under the *Façade Improvement Program* include the following:

- masonry restoration and stabilization;
- installation of storefront awnings;
- replacement of back-lit signs with decorative front-lit signage;
- painting of woodwork and metal;
- architectural lighting improvements;
- renovation of storefronts;
- entranceway modifications to improve accessibility for people with disabilities; and
- landscaping.

Projects not eligible for funding under the Program include:

- building insulation; and
- interior work.

### **3.2 Components Eligible for Grants**

Grants may be based on the following components of an improvement project:

- professional design fees (by an architect, architectural technician, technologist, or designer);
- contractor charges (material and labour);
- equipment rental;
- inspection fees; and/or
- applicable taxes on the above.

To determine eligible costs where an improvement project involves more than façade improvements, costs shall be apportioned based on the projected value of the work.

Half of the portion of the grant attributable to professional design fees may be issued following completion of such design work, and supply of a copy of such work to the municipality for inclusion in the project file. The other half would be payable with the rest of the grant following project completion, according to the procedure explained in Section 3.10.

### **3.3 Capital Grants**

Capital grants may be provided up to 50% of the cost of façade improvements that satisfy design guidelines set out in this document and other applicable requirements, to a maximum of \$15,000. Until December 31, 2017, (during the Build Belleville downtown construction period) grants may be provided up to 75% of the cost of improvements subject to meeting the above criteria.

For projects that include two façades (front and rear, or front and flanking, flanking and rear), capital grants may be provided up to 50% of the cost of façade improvements that satisfy the design guidelines set out in this document and other applicable requirements, to a maximum of \$20,000. Until December 31, 2017, (during the Build Belleville downtown construction period) grants may be provided up to 75% of the cost of improvements subject to meeting the above criteria.

Preference will be given to those projects which address *traditional façades*. Applicants may only make one application per property, per year. An approved grant would be payable by the City to the applicant after the applicant has:

- obtained the approval of the application by City Council;
- executed a commitment agreement with the City (may be registered against the subject property);
- completed the works defined in the commitment agreement; and
- provided documentation showing, to the City's satisfaction, that all works have been paid for in full.

### **3.4 Commitment Agreement**

The commitment agreement would specify the components of the eligible works and their estimated cost. The agreement would set out the anticipated timing for the approved works including the estimated completion date. The agreement would also stipulate that no changes to the approved façade improvements should be made for five years without first obtaining City approval.

Commitment agreements are to be executed by the applicant, the owner of the property where the owner is not the applicant, and the City. In cases where projects are financed through Trenval Business Development Corporation, Trenval must also be a party to the agreement. Commitment agreements may be registered against title to the subject property.

### **3.5 Application for Approval**

To apply under the *Façade Improvement Program*, an applicant shall fully complete and submit the required application form to the Engineering & Development Services Department. The application will not be accepted unless signed by the applicant and where the applicant is not the owner of the property, by the owner of the property as well.

There shall be no cost to make an application under the *Façade Improvement Program*.

Generally, applications will be considered on a first come, first served basis. However, where there are more applications than funds available, the Façade Improvement Program Committee may elect to recommend those applications to

Council it believes will produce the greatest benefits for the downtown and the community.

A complete application shall include:

- name, address, and phone number for the applicant (and owner if different than the applicant)
- municipal address of the subject property
- copy of the parcel register for the subject property (available from the Land Registry Office), to be submitted prior to the commitment agreement being executed (showing name of current owner and legal description)
- detailed description of the proposed façade improvement works, which usually will require submission of detailed and professionally prepared drawings to scale of the building's façade illustrating the nature of proposed work, to include details on:
  - building materials
  - colour (paint chips, brick/stone colour, etc)
  - sign specifications
  - exterior lighting
  - architectural detailing
  - door and window types and detailing including model, manufacturer, illustration and/or photograph
  - awnings
  - details on general renovations
- two (2) itemized independent quotes from qualified contractors on the cost of completing the proposed works, along with quotations and/or contracts for any other eligible expenses
  - NOTE: Due to the specialized nature of some work, the Committee may accept fewer than the required number of quotations, but only to a maximum contribution of 65%, and subject to a review of the costs submitted, including a comparison with invoices for similar projects where available.
- confirmation of whether or not the applicant intends to seek project funding from Trenval Business Development Corporation
- signature of the applicant (and owner if different than the applicant).

Where an approval has been given to a proposed project under the *Façade Improvement Program* and the applicant fails to complete the approved works prior to two (2) years following the date of approval, City Council may withdraw its approval and re-allocate the grant to another acceptable application.

### **3.6 Tax Arrears**

Municipal taxes for the subject property must not be in arrears. Where arrears exist, an application will not be approved and/or grants will not be advanced until arrears are eliminated.

### **3.7 Outstanding Work Orders**

While projects may be approved for buildings where there are outstanding work orders, approval would be granted on the premise of the reason for the work order being resolved during renovations to the building.

Where works to remedy issues that necessitated the issuing of work orders have not been completed, or where other work orders have been issued, the City may refuse to issue any approved grant under the *Façade Improvement Program*.

### **3.8 Staff Assistance**

City Hall Staff (Director of Engineering & Development Services and the Chief Building Official) can provide assistance in the development of preliminary design plans. Staff however will not prepare detailed plans or tender documents or specifications for planned work – proponents will need to secure their own professional assistance.

### **3.9 Retroactivity**

Work initiated before the *Façade Improvement Program* Application is received by the City of Belleville is not eligible for funding.

An applicant may initiate or proceed with work or improvements "at their own risk" between filing the application and receiving final approval from City Council. Beginning work at your own risk does not in any way guarantee approval.

### **3.10 Procedure**

City Council will determine the allocation of funds to the Program for the current year during budget preparation. Council at its option may hold in reserves any uncommitted funds to be used in subsequent years.

Projects will not be approved that result in over-expenditure to what has been allocated to the Program by City Council.

City Council reserves full right to either approve or reject any application at its sole discretion.

1. Applications under the *Façade Improvement Program* shall be submitted to the Development Services Department c/o Special Projects Planner.
2. City Staff will review the application for completeness and obtain from the City's Manager of Taxation confirmation there are no tax arrears applicable to the subject property.
3. The Special Projects Planner shall forward the application to the Façade Improvement Committee (appointed by City Council) who shall study the

application based on design criteria as defined by Council, the provisions of the Ontario Building Code, and any input it may solicit from others (i.e. *Heritage Belleville*). Members of the Façade Improvement Program Committee may require a visual inspection of the subject property in order to fully assess the application. *Note: Where it is deemed the application is not complete, the Façade Improvement Program Committee may return the application to the applicant with advice on how to remedy any deficiency.*

4. The Façade Improvement Program Committee shall forward a recommendation to City Council on the application. Where a recommendation is for rejection, or where the applicant does not agree with recommended conditions of approval, the applicant shall be provided an opportunity to appeal directly to City Council for approval.
5. Where appropriate, City Council shall confirm approval of the project by resolution.
6. Upon approval by City Council, Staff will prepare and the applicant (and the property owner if different than the applicant) shall execute the standard commitment agreement.
7. The applicant shall apply for the necessary building permit; no building permit fees will apply.
8. The City Solicitor may register the commitment agreement on title for the subject property.
9. The applicant shall complete the requisite works in accordance with the commitment agreement and the requirements of the building permit.
10. Upon completion of the project, the applicant shall submit to the Special Projects Planner all invoices and/or receipts pertaining to the approved works. The Chief Building Official (CBO) will inspect the completed project to ensure compliance with the commitment agreement. The CBO may obtain assistance from the Façade Improvement Program Committee as necessary.
11. At least 45 days following the completion of the project, the applicant shall submit the Program's Standard Declaration Form to the Special Projects Planner after having it signed by a Commissioner of Oaths. No signing fee shall apply for a Commissioner at the City of Belleville.
12. Upon acceptance of the works by the CBO, and the filing of the Standard Declaration Form, the City Treasurer shall be so advised and the owner, applicant, or their designate identified in the commitment agreement will be issued a cheque by the City up to the grant amount defined in the commitment agreement. *Note: If actual costs are less than provided for in the commitment agreement, the amount of the grant payment may be reduced; however, if costs are higher, the grant payment shall not exceed that defined in the commitment agreement without the approval of City Council.*
13. The CBO will periodically inspect projects once complete to ensure works approved under commitment agreements are maintained.

Note: This Program is offered at the pleasure of City Council, and may be rescinded by City Council at any time without notice being provided. Further, City Council may amend this manual at any time without notice, which may affect the way the Program applies to certain lands. For up-to-date information on this Program, you should contact City Hall at (613) 967-3319.

## APPENDIX 1



# Development Services Department **Memorandum**

**Date:** March 4, 2009  
**To:** Chair and Members of the Façade Improvement Committee  
**From:** Special Projects Planner  
**Subject:** **Brick Painting Research**

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### **Ontario Heritage Foundation Architectural Conservation Practice Manual**

The Ontario Heritage Foundation (now the Ontario Heritage Trust) provides several recommendations for the conservation of brick. They note that old brick was usually produced in smaller batches and is often less uniform than modern brick. They also note that face brick is usually more durable than interior brick, or sometimes even side or rear wall brick. A key to long-term preservation is to keep moisture out of walls, and to allow what moisture does enter to escape in a non-damaging way.

With regard to brick sealing, the Foundation provides the following:

"Do not seal brick surfaces with silicones or consolidants, which trap water vapour behind the surface of the brick; when that vapour condenses, it may freeze or leach salts that will eventually destroy the brick face. Similarly, do not slap stucco on a deteriorated brick surface to hide the problem; it will simply mask further deterioration that will eventually crumble both brick and stucco. Far more acceptable is repointing with porous mortar that lets the wall 'breathe' to the outside, allowing moisture to migrate and evaporate through the mortar, not the brick."

### **Local Restoration Specialist**

The City's Building Department suggested contacting a masonry restoration specialist, and referred me to a local firm that provided me with a great deal of information about brick.

Their advice was that brick should never be painted because it needs to breathe in order to release moisture that accumulates behind it. They suggested that moisture may come from leaks, but that it also occurs more gradually as a result of condensation from heating buildings in cold climates.

They noted that newer structures incorporate 'weeper holes' between bricks at the bottom of walls to release moisture, but that it does not all migrate to the areas where these holes are located.

They explained that painting brick seals it so that moisture does not easily escape, but that it can still get in through cracks or failed mortar, as well as through the back side as mentioned earlier. They noted that there are some new sealers intended for use on brick that are supposed to repel rain water while allowing trapped moisture to be released. They are called 'poly-siloxane sealers', and they are silicone-based but still breathe.

I asked about brick facades that have already been painted where the paint is in poor condition. They suggested that there's not much that can be done for paint removal unless the paint comes off with a hot water pressure-wash. They noted that chemical cleaners are available but that environmental regulations have evolved to the point where they feel that it is generally a prohibitively expensive process.

They suggested that the best thing to do with already-painted facades is probably to scrape off the loose paint and repaint. One of the most important considerations he outlined is to identify and correct any moisture problems first.

### **Paint Manufacturers**

I conducted some research and found that several manufacturers carry products designed to cover masonry, though information on their vapour permeability characteristics is not readily provided. Several companies list information on their websites about acrylic paints that are supposed to be safe for use on brick.

### **Brick Paint Specialists**

I also located two different types of brick painting companies. One advertises a silicate-based masonry stain with a 30-year warranty. It appears that the stain is designed to soak into the brick and allows the bricks to match any colour, or to completely change the colour of brickwork. The other type advertises an alternative to stripping existing paint from brickwork, and specializes in re-creating the appearance of natural brick over top of painted surfaces, providing several basic colours and the option of custom-blending to any shade. The key to these processes is that they use a specialized application technique to recreate the textured appearance of natural brick – there does not appear to be a single 'brick coloured paint' that can be purchased and applied with consistent success.