



## **Committee of the Whole Report**

### **For the Meeting of February 15, 2024**

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**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** February 1, 2024  
**From:** Kerri Moore, Director of Business and Community Relations  
**Subject:** Amendment - Business Façade Beautification Reimbursement Program

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

1. Authorize amendments to the Downtown Victoria Business Association (DVBA) Partnering Agreement for the Business Façade Beautification Initiative Reimbursement program based on the terms satisfactory to the Director of Business and Community Relations and in the form satisfactory to the City Solicitor, as follows:
  - a. to allow an individual business to apply for a grant reimbursement of up to \$2500;
  - b. to allow a property owner to apply for a grant reimbursement of up to \$2500 per commercial tenant with a street-facing storefront, for a maximum of six such tenants; and
  - c. to allow DVBA to allocate funds to eligible applicants as described in (a) and (b).
2. Authorize the Director of Business & Community Relations to execute the amended agreement on behalf of the City.
3. That the above motions be forwarded to the daytime Council of Feb 15, 2024, for ratification.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to recommend amendments to DVBA Partnering Agreement for the Business Façade Beautification Reimbursement Program.

At the August 3, 2023 meeting, Council approved the Business Façade Beautification Reimbursement Program, as a program within the Downtown Revitalization Project. Under the themes of 'clean and beautification' the program provides businesses support through a grant subsidy administered through the DVBA under a partnering agreement to provide services on behalf of the City related to improving the look and cleanliness of downtown business storefronts. The City committed to funding \$50,000 to this grant in 2023, and an additional \$50,000 for 2024; for a total of \$100,000 available to be accessed through to the end of 2024.

The DVBA launched the Business Facade Beautification Program on September 8, 2023, and the first reporting requirement was due to the City by January 30, 2024. The DVBA report (Appendix A) suggested the need to adjust the eligibility requirements for businesses to reduce barriers to the program.

The DVBA reported spending an estimated 75 hours discussing the program with a variety of interested parties, however much of the feedback received pointed to challenges in pursuing the grant due to the requirement of 50% of the block approving and participating in the application and plan and indicated that no formal applications for a grant in the program had been received to date.

The Partnering Agreement currently requires that at least 50% of businesses operating on a City Block have approved and will participate in a Block Improvement Plan, and limits reimbursement to \$10,000 per block. In order to encourage applications to the program and improve service delivery, staff recommend amending the agreement to allow for an individual business to apply for a grant reimbursement for up to \$2500 and to allow for a property owner to apply for a grant reimbursement for up to \$2500 per commercial tenant with a street-facing storefront, with a cap of \$15,000 available per property owner, without requiring individual tenants to submit or participate in a Block Improvement Program.

## **OPTIONS & IMPACTS**

### **Option 1: Amend the existing agreement with expanded opportunities for business operators (*Recommended*)**

1. Authorize amendments to the Downtown Victoria Business Association (DVBA) Partnering Agreement for the Business Façade Beautification Initiative Reimbursement program based on the terms satisfactory to the Director of Business and Community Relations and in the form satisfactory to the City Solicitor, as follows:
  - a. to allow an individual business to apply for a grant reimbursement of up to \$2500;
  - b. to allow a property owner to apply for a grant reimbursement of up to \$2500 per commercial tenant with a street-facing storefront, for a maximum of six such tenants; and
  - c. to allow DVBA to allocate funds to eligible applicants as described in (a) and (b).
2. Authorize the Director of Business & Community Relations to execute the amended agreement on behalf of the City.
3. That the above motions be forwarded to the daytime Council of Feb 15, 2024, for ratification.

This option provides broader eligibility for businesses to encourage participation in the program, improves service delivery, and helps to maintain vibrancy and viability of the downtown and deliver on actions outlined in the City's economic action plan *Victoria 3.0 Recovery Reinvention Resilience*, as well as deliverables within the Downtown Revitalization Program.

### **Option 2:**

#### **Continue with existing agreement, without amendments.**

This option would continue the grant program as existing and maintain current eligibility requirements for businesses within the agreement. This may continue to impact business participation in accessing the grant due to block participation requirements, therefore reducing the number of grant applications that would contribute to improving the look and cleanliness of downtown storefronts.

### *Accessibility Impact Statement*

There are no impacts to accessibility.

### *20203 – 2026 Strategic Plan*

Under Economic Health and Community Vitality, the following strategic plan objectives will be achieved:

- Support small businesses and the visitor economy and work to strengthen and add vitality to the downtown core.
- Activate streets, sidewalks, patios and public space and support business initiatives and ideas.

### *Impacts to Financial Plan*

There are no impacts to the Financial Plan.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of the partnership agreement with the DVBA is to provide City support to help maintain Victoria's downtown vibrancy and vitality. The proposed amendment outlined in this report is based on feedback from business representatives and is anticipated to add an important new opportunity to expand the benefits of this City grant program.

Respectfully submitted,

Quinn Anglin  
Manager, Economic Development

Kerri Moore  
Director of Business & Community Relations

**Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager.**

## **List of Appendices**

Appendix A – DVBA Report\_Jan2024