

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement helped to inform potential changes to the Facade Improvement and Development Incentive Programs. Proposed policy and process changes were identified through a combination of advice from program stakeholders and an internal program review (please see the September 10, 2018 Executive Committee report CR_5478 Facade Improvement Program/Development Incentive Program Review for details). Three key stakeholder groups were identified:

- Business Improvement Area Executive Directors,
- Past/future program participants, and
- City staff involved with the administration of the programs.

These stakeholder groups were engaged between October 2018 and March 2019 through two stages of engagement. Tactics included workshops, interviews, and online surveys. This stakeholder engagement also helped to inform the development of the Corner Store Program Policy.

Key Themes

Most of the advice from program stakeholders related to the Facade Improvement Program (as opposed to the Development Incentive Program). This is because it has been offered longer and more consistently, and as a result stakeholders had more experience and insight to share. There were some key areas of alignment, as well as some areas of divergence between the stakeholder groups.

Some key areas of alignment included:

- The programs are valuable and produce positive outcomes,
- The programs would benefit from better communications and marketing,
- The application process should be streamlined and simplified,
- Grant allocations could be adjusted to ensure that as many businesses and property owners as possible can benefit,
- Changing the name of the Facade Improvement Program to Storefront Improvement Program makes sense.

Some key areas of divergence included:

- Some applicants to the program strongly expressed that funding amounts should be based on building size, and that allocating grant amounts based on building size would better support large buildings and buildings with multiple tenants. Other applicants and many of the Business Improvement Area Executive Directors expressed a preference that the grants be

focused on smaller scale buildings that often support smaller/local businesses.

How was stakeholder advice incorporated into the refresh of the programs?

Administration considered the advice from stakeholders in the program refresh, and incorporated changes that reflect many of the common themes heard. This includes:

- Changing grant allocations for the Storefront Improvement Program and grant allocations for new construction through the Development Incentive Program to ensure that more property and business owners are able to benefit from program funding each year,
- Strengthening and better communicating the eligibility criteria for both programs,
- Streamlining the application processes through revised application forms, creating a program process flow chart to clarify the stages and timelines of the program and expectations at each stage, and reducing the number of quotes for the work from three to two to align with requirements for other City grant programs,
- Creating a communications and marketing plan to support the programs,
- Reworking the Design Guidelines for both programs to be easier to understand and meet, and
- Identifying how buildings with front parking lots may participate in the program.

Administration will launch these process changes at the same time as the potential policy changes, at the next application period.