

## Letter to Mayor Lehman, Council, Circulation List and Heritage Barrie – Re: Newly Proposal CIP

I've been a resident of Barrie for 20 years and in 2012, I purchased a heritage home in Allandale. In 2017, I submitted an application to the City for our CIP grant, which gave preference to those whose homes were listed on the Heritage Registry as well as those adding a 2<sup>nd</sup> suite. Since my renovation included a significant heritage restoration and a secondary suite, I was also approved for the secondary suite, affordable housing grant offered by the County of Simcoe, which maintains a maximum rent amount in addition to qualifying a renter based on their income.

The recent presentation by City Staff to Council for the newly proposed CIP grants eliminates all previous grant programs and the existing Community Improvement Plan dated, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016. The newly proposed CIP grants included 2 project examples; one just under and one over \$1million each despite a current budget amount of \$2.5million, of which only a portion would be available. The inability of City staff to answer Council's questions regarding the implementation and maintenance of the affordable housing CIP grants was surprising.

We currently have a 26 page CIP, which includes 2 main programs:

**Renovation Grant Program** – to provide financial incentives to promote the renovation and restoration of existing buildings within the Urban Growth Centre and buildings listed on the Municipal Heritage Register.

**Redevelopment Grant Program** - to provide financial incentives for development/ redevelopment projects which provide affordable housing; remediate and redevelop Brownfield sites within the Built Boundary, and develop ground related commercial in combination with the appropriate density and built form to support transit, walkability and animated streets in the intensification areas identified on Schedule I on the Official Plan.

In addition to these programs the existing CIP also includes 2 “Other Community Programs”, specifically, **The Downtown:** (Next Wave Community Improvement Plan and the Allandale Community Improvement Plan) and **The Georgian College** Community Improvement Plans. Both of these have been discontinued; they are apparently the 2 programs City Staff is recommending be replaced by the newly proposed grants. There is no mention of the existing Renovation and Redevelopment Grant programs, which detail 5 types of affordable housing initiatives and grants, but which would also be eliminated.

The existing CIP Objectives:

- 1. To support the provision of a variety of affordable housing by offering different levels of support for a continuum of affordable housing options.**
2. To facilitate the redevelopment and remediation of Brownfield sites.
3. To reinforce the vision for development of the Intensification areas with more intensive mixed use development, by offering incentives to support the development of street level commercial uses in the Intensification areas.
4. To facilitate renovation restoration and adaptive reuse of existing buildings in the Urban Growth Centre and buildings included on the Municipal Heritage Register.

The newly proposed CIP Objectives:

- 1. Affordable Housing in order to support the provision of a variety of affordable/attainable housing options**
2. Development in the Urban Growth Centre and other intensification nodes and corridors for higher density residential development and mix of uses
3. Employment uses and redevelopment or intensification of employment uses on Employment Area lands

Unlike the newly proposed million dollar grant programs, the existing CIP grants are a maximum of \$25,000 in matching funding. The existing CIP programs benefit all stakeholders but the newly proposed one does not. The new proposed Redevelopment Grant program is for developers and the Affordable Housing CIP grant also benefits developers by offering dramatic reductions in building fees. The proposed plan appears to lack details regarding the implementation, maintenance, legal costs or the possibility of actually enforcing affordable rents over an unclear period of time ranging from 10 to 20 years.

The existing CIP grants with a maximum of \$25,000 in matching funding generate income for the city, because the approved resident is responsible for all building permits and fees, and has to commit an amount at least equal to the value of the grant. They are not complex since they follow the building permit process, which would be followed with or without the grant. They do not require a huge budget as they are approved and allocated on an individual basis for a maximum of \$25,000 in matching funding, which is well within the available budget. Residents adding a 2<sup>nd</sup> suite gain a source of income and increase the inventory of available rentals. Residents or businesses restoring heritage buildings enhance our community, preserve the history of our City and increase the inventory on our Barrie Heritage Registry. Unlike the proposed CIPs, there is not a huge burden to tax payers or to our legal department.

The secondary suite/affordable housing program grant is available to residents of Barrie from the County of Simcoe with no additional cost to our City. If the City of Barrie amended the current CIP, the grants could be provided to residents adding a secondary suite with an approval process based on the resident accepting an additional grant from the County of Simcoe to establish it as an affordable unit. Is City staff aware of the streamlined process the County of Simcoe has established for their affordable housing, secondary suite program? Rather than offering a developer \$1million to build a 36 unit building to include a portion of affordable housing units, why not offer that grant amount to residents to establish 40 affordable secondary suites? The City has the opportunity to work with developers to offer reasonable incentives in establishing affordable housing units within new multi-unit residential buildings, without forfeiting the full costs of building fees and giving away \$1million. Perhaps the City could work even closer with Redwood Park Communities; an organization that has the expertise and a history of proven success regarding affordable housing initiatives. All options dramatically reduce the huge costs and legal ramifications, which would exist with the newly proposed CIP's.

Our current CIP states:

"Annual reviews and tracking of programs and activities relating to the Built Boundary CIP shall be submitted to Council." However, I was unable to find a more recent report than 2017.

"As a result of this review; terms, conditions and details of any grant program may be changed, altered, amended or modified by the City of Barrie with direction from Council." Was Council able to review our current CIP and a recent annual review prior to their recommendations to City Staff?

Further, our CIP continues with; "The addition of a new grant or loan program shall require an amendment to this CIP; however, the City of Barrie may discontinue any program without requiring an amendment to this Plan." Why is the current CIP being scrapped and a completely new Community Improvement Plan introduced when the main objective of both are the same: affordable housing? Why not amend the existing CIP? What is obvious, with the newly proposed plan, is the elimination of any objective or grant referencing heritage. This also raises concerns regarding our new OP, since our current OP contains a section on Cultural Heritage Conservation goals, "a) To encourage the conservation of the City's cultural heritage resources including, but not limited to, buildings, structures, areas, districts, open spaces, and landscapes, artifacts of historical and/or architectural significance and to co-ordinate these conservation efforts with development and redevelopment initiatives." Will the new OP also eliminate any reference to heritage?

I understand that City Staff have huge workloads and deadlines to meet and that the programs, projects and initiatives are based on the recommendations received from Council. It is my hope that Council's intent was not to direct City Staff to scrap the current CIP, but rather to enhance the programs, which give consideration to affordable housing, redevelopment and heritage preservation.

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