

Mar 3, 2022

City of Regina Executive Committee,

Re: Item No. EX22-29 Heritage Building Rehabilitation Program Review

My name is Steve Pinel and I am representing the Nicor Group of Companies today for this discussion. I have headed Nicor Group's Consulting Department for 5 years and have worked closely with our internal Heritage expertise in Ross Keith as well as the City representatives during this time.

I am writing a submission to the Executive Committee today to recognize the great work that has been done by the City to improve its heritage policies and programs. The continued development of these policies supports the objectives of the Reginal Cultural Plan. With that I am writing in support of the proposed recommendations in item EX22-29.

Administrative Process Improvements in the Heritage Incentives Policy

I have active experience working with the City Administrative team on submissions for Heritage Designation and for incentives through the Heritage Building Rehabilitation Program. Working closely on these items affords me a ground level view of how the Program operates. Given my organization's long history of working with the City on Heritage matters we try to give feedback where appropriate.

This updated Heritage Incentives Policy contains several amendments that we view as a serious win regarding the practicality of the overall Program. We would like to specifically recognize just some of the valuable process improvements:

1. Section 5.1.3 allows for work carried out up to 1 year prior to the application deadline to still be considered for incentives. This is crucial in our experience as saving/reviving these heritage buildings still comes as part of a real project for the owner. Often this project has financing, construction and other deadlines that cannot wait for the full Heritage approval process. Supporting these projects by providing a defined period of consideration is infinitely more effective than the previous Retroactive Consideration Request process.
2. Providing a structured application submission deadline should greatly increase efficiency from the City Administration side by organizing the submissions. This will allow for better workflow of application review but also allow Executive and Council a way to understand the scope of submissions for the current year. This deadline can then work in concert with invoice submission deadline once the project is approved.

Administrative Process Improvements help build the success of the Program

The process improvements listed above and others found in this updated Policy will help to increase the practical usefulness of the Program. From the ground level, this Program is incentivizing owners to move forward with projects that will save and revitalize important and historic buildings in our City. However, there are currently some "snag" areas that can cause owners to abandon a potential project. Removing the timeline restriction of requiring the entire approval process being completed prior to any work commencing is a huge win in securing owner confidence in the Program and in moving forward with their projects.

Other refinements will have definite benefits for the City side of this Program as well. Both through improved Administrative workflows but also from a planning perspective for Executive and Council. The ability to see all applications submitted for the year period and consider them in concert will improve the City's ability to understand and

plan for the impact of those decisions. Current usage of the Program only results in a handful of submissions over several years. We believe that this can and should be increased and these amendments are one step towards doing so.

Continued support and improvements will allow the Program to help meet the City's objectives

Nicor Group has supported the City's efforts in heritage conservation for many years. The great work done by the City in establishing the Regina Community Plan and Cultural Plan is to be commended. The objectives laid out in those plans will help ensure that Regina remains a vibrant city full of arts, culture and history. Objectives need to be actively worked towards to ensure their success. The policies the City has in place regarding heritage conservation are excellent and continue to be improved as evidenced by this review item. In order for those policies to be successful the City needs to continue supporting them.

Current investment will yield both cultural and financial benefits in the future

In addition to the cultural benefits of securing our collective heritage, investments in the form of tax exemptions will also have positive financial benefits for the City. From the extreme examples of potential heritage buildings being demolished to the more common example of them sitting partially or fully unused, tax increases can be realized by funding this Program. Often after a project is completed to revitalize a building it is followed by a sharp increase in use, occupancy and valuation of that building. A functional building will generate more in taxes in the long run than the initial cost of any up-front exemptions compared to a vacant or worse a demolished building.

Tax Increment Financing models such as the one laid out in this Policy have been and continue to be successful in Canada, the United States and other parts of the world. This widely used tool is used to stimulate economic and thus tax growth while also revitalizing and saving our historic sites. Nicor Group would ask the City to consider the benefits in the long-term of this Policy and make the decision to plan for and fund the tax exemptions that will continue to make these future gains possible.



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