

Town of Whitby

Staff Report

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Report Title: Gateway Removal Grant: One-Year Pilot Program

Report to: Committee of the Whole

Date of meeting: June 9, 2025

Report Number: CMS 08-25

Department(s) Responsible:

Community Services Department

Submitted by:

John Romano, Commissioner,
Community Services

Acknowledged by M. Gaskell, Chief Administrative Officer

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1. Recommendation:

1. That Report CMS 08-25 be received for information;
2. That Council approve the Gateway Removal Grant: One-Year Pilot Program, as outlined in Staff Report CMS 08-25, and direct Staff to implement this program commencing in the first quarter of 2026;
3. That staff report back with the results of the program and recommendations on continuation or conclusion of the one-year grant pilot program; and,
4. That NUB Item #GG-0039 "That Staff be directed to report back on the opportunity for a grant program for homeowners to offset their costs of removing gateway and masonry features and columns located on private property prior to the introduction of the 2026 Strong Mayor Budget" be removed from the New and Unfinished Business Listing.

2. Highlights:

- There are 63 masonry gateway or masonry fences located throughout the Town as well as over 600 masonry piers (columns).

- The Town will remove and sod over any failing masonry features located on the Town's right-of-way.
- The Town does not maintain the 32 masonry features located on private property or Regional right-of-ways.
- Staff provided a report to Council in September 2024 on options to maintain private and regional masonry features. Council adopted Option #1 to continue with status quo however requested that staff report back on opportunities for a grant program to offset costs for homeowners to remove such features if deemed structurally unsafe.
- A grant program framework has been proposed for the Town to cover 50% of the cost of removing masonry features up to \$14,000 per property.
- The total available annual funding would be capped at \$28,000 and would be granted on a first-come, first-serve basis.
- The funds would be drawn from the annually funded Capital project of Fence Replacement, in Right-of-way Services.

3. Background:

On September 23, 2024, staff reported to Council on options for a Town-wide gateway feature maintenance program in Staff Report [CMS 10-24](#). This report was completed as directed under the closed NUB item GG-0022,

“That staff be directed to report to Council on the implementation of a gateway maintenance program, including additional resources required, to address the repair and rehabilitation of deteriorating gateway signage in subdivisions throughout the Town of Whitby”.

In 2024, staff conducted an audit of all masonry gateway features within the Town, which included a high-level assessment of their condition. In all, there are 63 masonry gateway features or sections of decorative masonry fences. This total does not include masonry features that are located on private commercial property. Of the 63 masonry features, 31 are located within the Town's right-of-way or on the property line. The remaining 32 features are located either on the Region's right-of-way or completely within private property. Additionally, there are nearly 600 masonry piers (columns) incorporated into various fencing throughout the Town, both within the Town's right-of-way, Region's right-of-way, or private property.

Of the 32 decorative masonry features, 23 are located on Regional right-of-way's and 9 are located solely on private property. Of the features:

- 15 are in excellent or very good condition
- 3 are in fair condition
- 12 have considerable cosmetic damage
- 2 locations are structurally failing

Current and past practice has been that masonry features and columns which are placed on Town property or property line, and which are structurally unsafe and failing, the features are removed and replaced with sod. Effective January 2009, the practice of

the Town conducting regional road fence maintenance ended, including all masonry features and columns located on Regional roadways. The Region of Durham has advised that they do not maintain fencing on regional right-of-ways including masonry features. The Town does not maintain fencing, or masonry features located on Regional or private property.

In Report CMS 10-24, Staff presented three options for consideration.

- Option 1: Maintain the current fence and masonry feature maintenance program (Status-quo).
- Option 2: Expand the removal of failing/unsafe fences, masonry columns and masonry features. This option would expand the current program to include decorative iron fencing, masonry features and columns located on Regional or private property, to remove those features which are structurally failing or have considerable cosmetic damage and replace them with sod. This option required one-time funding of \$579,000 and an ongoing annual expense of \$106,000.
- Option 3: Expand the fence and masonry feature maintenance program to include full replacement. This option would extend the fence maintenance program and to increase service levels for all masonry features, columns and iron fencing located on Town, Regional or private property to include full restoration or replacement if they are structurally failing or have considerable cosmetic damage. This option required one-time funding of \$2,272,500 and an ongoing annual cost of \$420,000.

During the September 23, 2024, Council meeting, the recommendation to maintain status quo (Option 1), was approved. Staff were directed “to report back on the opportunity for a grant program for homeowners to offset their costs of removing gateway and masonry features and columns located on private property prior to the introduction of the 2026 Strong Mayor Budget”. As the known structurally failing masonry features are located within the regional right-of-way, the grant program proposed herein will also include masonry features located on the regional right-of-way as eligible locations.

4. Discussion:

As per Council direction, staff have proposed a grant program designed to provide matching dollars to homeowners for the costs associated with the removal of masonry gateway features including masonry columns and decorative masonry fences that are failing or have significant cosmetic damage. The grant program would be a one-year pilot program to ensure that Town staff understand the demand for the program and potential budgetary impact in the longer term.

Program eligibility would be restricted to features located on private residential property or features located on regional right-of-ways that are adjacent to residential property. The program would not include features located on commercial property, multi-residential condominium or apartment building property, or features located solely on regional right-of-ways adjacent to such properties.

Eligible masonry features, including decorative masonry fences and columns, must have been constructed by the developer as a part of the original development. These features shall be in a state of disrepair requiring removal and will be subject to confirmation by Town staff that removal is required.

The scope of work eligible for the grant is solely the removal and disposal of the feature, replacement fill as needed and sod to cover the footprint of the pre-existing feature.

The landowner is required to obtain any permissions/approvals as required if any portion of the feature is located on the regional right-of-way or third-party property. The permissions/approvals shall be completed exclusively between the landowner and third parties, must be obtained prior to applying for the grant. The landowner would be required to provide proof of agreement with any third party landowner.

Landowners would need to submit an application to the Town, which will be located on the Town's website. The landowner will need to provide two quotes for the work to be completed satisfactory to the Town. The Town will commit to paying 50% of the cost to an upset limit of \$14,000 per property. This will include associated costs for all necessary permits and fees associated with performing the work.

The approved grant payment for construction costs will be issued to the applicant when construction is completed and the final bill providing proof of payment has been submitted. Payment will be based on the actual cost of the work and subject to the dollar upset limits of the program.

Upon Council approval of the Gateway Removal Grant: One-Year Pilot Program, staff will finalize the application, approval process and agreements with grant recipients, working with Financial Services, Communications and Creative Services, Legal Services and Technology and Innovation Services. The grant program will be implemented in Q1, 2026. Results from the pilot will be shared with Council following a one-year period at the conclusion of the pilot.

5. Financial Considerations:

The pilot program will be financed through the 2026 Capital Budget for Fence Replacements. This capital project is part of a \$400,000 annual program in the Right-of-way Services division for the repair and replacement of fences/acoustic fences on the Town's right-of-way (i.e., not fences on private property). The available funds will be capped at \$14,000 per property and a total of \$28,000 out of the \$400,000 budget and will be made available on a first-come, first-serve basis during the one-year pilot program.

The \$400,000 annual fence replacement program is funded from the property-tax-based Asset Management Reserve Fund. As noted in the June 9, 2025 Special Council Meeting Staff Report FS 29-25, a report on the Town's Municipal Asset Management Plan, the Town requires property tax increases over the next several years to have adequate annual funding and an Asset Management Reserve capable of funding the repair, maintain, and replace existing assets/Town infrastructure (such as fences on Town-owned property). Accordingly, utilizing this capital project to fund the pilot program will result in a reduction of available funds, in 2026, for acoustic fence

replacements on Town property. Further, should Council wish to continue the program after the pilot, a separate property tax increase to fund a private property fence grant program should be considered in order to maintain asset management funding to keep municipally-owned infrastructure in a state of good repair at the levels of service approved by Council in the Municipal Asset Management Plan.

6. Communication and Public Engagement:

If the Gateway Removal Grant: One-Year Pilot Program is approved by Council, staff will work with Communications and Creative Services to ensure that the program is promoted on appropriate media channels i.e. Town website.

7. Input from Departments/Sources:

Right-of-way Services has consulted with Communications and Creative Services, Legal Services and Financial Services.

8. Strategic Priorities:

This Report supports the Town's Community Strategic Plan under:

Pillar 4: Whitby's Government, Accountable & Responsive

- Objective 4.4.1: Deliver services that respond to community needs while balancing the impact to taxpayers.

9. Attachments:

N/A